



Service Quality at Selected Fashion Retail Stores in the Greater Durban Area

BY

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## **ABSTRACT**

The interest of service quality in the fashion industry has grown over the last decade due to increasing competition, new fashion trends and new designs. This has led managers to finding ways of improving profitability. One area of interest is service quality and how it affects customer satisfaction and its impact on the bottom line, which is why ascertaining service quality at selected fashion retail stores in the Greater Durban Area is significant.

The purpose of this study is to examine the expectations and perceptions of customers in the selected fashion retail stores in the Greater Durban Area. The focus of the study is based on the measurement of the service quality dimensions and the effect of service quality on customer satisfaction in order to generate quality models of the Selected Fashion Retail Stores. This study focuses on the determination of customers' expectations and perceptions of service quality in the SFRS in the Greater Durban Area. The main objective is to ascertain the level of service quality in the selected retail fashion stores in the Greater Durban Area.

The study was descriptive, quantitative and cross-sectional in nature, probing the effect of service quality on customers' satisfaction. From the findings of this study, the fashion retail stores can identify specific failures in their service quality and seek to improve them. Service quality dimensions that appear to be good predictors of service quality for customers of the SFRS offering have been related to factors such as the "Tangibility", "Reliability", "Responsiveness", "Assurance" and "Empathy". It is hoped that the results obtained from this study will aid these fashion stores in adopting practical customer service quality measures that will assist them to succeed in the highly competitive fashion industry.

## **DECLARATION**

I, Ntombikayise Princess Magoso, hereby declare that the work in this dissertation represents my own original work and has not been submitted for a degree at any other university, with no prior publication in the form of conference papers and/or journal articles. Where other authors' work has been used, they have been referenced accordingly.

Ntombikayise Princess Magoso \_\_\_\_\_ Date 08/10/2020

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## **ACRONOMYS**

SFRS- Selected Fashion Retail Stores

KZN - KwaZulu-Natal

SA - South Africa

GDP - Gross Domestic Product

SERVQUAL - Service Quality Model

SADC - Southern African Development Community

RSQM - Retail Service Quality Model

SDS - Service Delivery System

# **1 CHAPTER ONE: ORIENTATION**

## **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

Service quality is the most fundamental retailing technique for retailers to control and to upgrade customers' shopping experience. Service quality is a tool to improve retailers' presentation in the market through expanding an incentive for the customers as a way to guarantee consumer satisfaction, Zameer, Tara, Kausar, and Mohsin (2015:442). The term of quality service and consumer's expectation and perception was defined. This chapter concentrated on service quality and retail service quality, explaining what the necessity for it, and what benefits and the correct application of it, followed by models that are utilized to quantify service quality. Thirdly, this chapter discussed the factors influencing the choice of selected fashion retailers in service quality dimensions

## **1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

The business of retailing is a vibrant, technological and competitive industry (Azman, Ranlan, Afiqah, 2016:190) that is always growing due to economic, political, social, legal and cultural influences. Yet, retailing remains the biggest contributor to the economy of the country. There are numerous suitable definitions or descriptions of retailing. According to Ismail, Zaki, Rose (2016:59), retailing consists of "the ultimate activities and steps needed either to put a product in the hands of the consumer or to offer a service to the consumer". In contrast, Osman, Karatepe (2016:1) define retailing as the "business activities involved in selling goods and services to consumers for their personal, family or household use".

Felix (2017:256), discovered that the elements that decided the choice of fashion retail stores by customers were costs, neatness, clothing quality, assortment, store area, representative frame of mind and store air. Felix, however notes of that the overall significance of all store factors recognized by fashion customers moved after some time and between trading areas because of monetary serious changes and shifts in customers' needs. The elements of less significance in the customers' decision, organized in a diving request, are store format, administrations, checkouts, exceptional offers, shows, stock

accessible, brands accessible, parking, advertising, item accessibility and working hours (Baumann, Hoadley, Hamin, Nugraha, 2017:74).

### **What is service quality?**

Service quality is the focal theme of this study and, therefore, it is important to understand what it means, why there is a need for it, and what benefits it can create. As this study revolves around selected fashion retailers, it is imperative for one to have knowledge of service quality within the retailing context (Shahid Iqbal, Hassan, and Habibah, 2018:23). Service quality is seen as a degree to which the service, the procedure and the service association can fulfil customers' desires. Service quality in the retail industry differs considerably from a pure service setting. Moreover, to ensure competitive survival, it has become essential for retailers to differentiate themselves in ways that are meaningful to their customers. It has been proven that service quality is the most basic retailing strategy for retailers to create competitive advantages and to enhance customers' shopping experience (Siah, Fam, Prastyo, Yanto, and Fam, 2018:11).

### **Customer service**

Blem (2017:2) defines customer service as "all the activities which create a bond between organisations and their clients or customers". Customer service involves activities and projects embraced by the retailer to ensure that the customer has a satisfying and pleasant shopping experience (Shabbir, Malik, and Janjua, 2017:34). This is achieved through a wide range of duties on the part of the retailer, such as assistance in selecting merchandise, optional methods of payment, guidance when signing contracts, efficient handling of customer complaints, and availability of repair services and provision of warranties. Retailers must differentiate themselves from competitors in the nature of service they deliver because, in the event that the customer isn't happy with the item offered or service delivered, he/she will not likely use the same retailer again (Alonso, Barreda, Olio, and Ibeas, 2018:164). Good customer service is, therefore, important for the continued viability of the business. Service quality and consumer satisfaction share certain things for all intents and purpose, yet fulfillment is by and large affected by service quality (Chen 2015:116).

## **Customers' expectations**

With South Africa's integration into the international market, local businesses are obliged to focus on delivering a high quality service. Accordingly, shoddy customer service will negatively affect the country's future in the retail world economy (Penceliah, Noel and Adat 2015:452). It is necessary, therefore, for businesses to understand the needs of their customers to achieve customer satisfaction.

Min, Zhang, Kim, and Srivastava (2016:744) state that customers' desires depend on the customers' information and encounters. In order to achieve good service quality, retailers must consider the customers' perceptions of the actual service offered as well as the expectations of their customers. The five customer service characteristics that affect perceptions of service quality are reliability, assurance, tangibility, empathy and responsiveness.

According to Lovelock and Wirtz (2015:19) consumers today are more sophisticated and knowledgeable. Therefore, they have become more demanding and expect better levels of service delivery. This also implies that retailers must keep up with current trends and comply with legal obligations, such as honest advertising, competitive prices and superior quality products, to avoid dissatisfied customers.

## **Customers' perceptions**

A customer's perception of a retail experience is extremely important in determining the quality of the service. Javornik (2016: 261) conclude that on the off chance that the service provided meets or surpasses the consumer's desires, the retailer will achieve high levels of customer satisfaction. However, dissatisfaction amongst consumers will bring about disloyalty, decline in marketing projections and disintegration of the piece of the overall industry.

## **Dimensions of service quality**

Sharma (2016:91) distinguish the five dimensions related with facility serious services as; the operational dimensions, the area dimensions the atmospheric and image dimension,



the shopper usages dimensions and the contact personnel dimension. Simmers and Keith (2015:126) built up a retail service quality model (RSQM) and recognized five dimensions significant in a retail set up. These dimensions are: tangibility, which incorporates the store appearance and store format; reliability, which assesses how well retailers stay faithful to their commitments and do the accurate things; empathy in regard of surveying the retail personnel as far as kindness, accommodation, and moving trust in customers; assurance in critical thinking, for example, the capacity of retail store personnel to deal with returns and exchanges, take care of customers issues and protests; and responsiveness on stock quality, parking, operation hours and credit cards (Steiner, Wiegand, Eggert, and Backhaus 2016:296).

This study was conducted utilizing a sample of 400 respondents (customers) at selected fashion retail stores (SFRS) in the greater Durban area. This study was descriptive and cross-sectional in nature and adopted a quantitative approach. A quantitative study is an excellent way of finalizing data and proving or disproving a hypothesis. Questionnaires were administered to respondents who were shopping at SFRS in the greater Durban area.

### **1.3 CONTRIBUTION TO THE STUDY**

Providing high service quality is essential to expand customers' buy aims, store reliability, good verbal suggestions and repurchase conduct. At the point when customer is happy with high service quality, business builds their market share and eventually improve their general monetary by means of higher customer maintenance and extended market share. These advantages can be delighted in by fashion retailers on the off chance that they are centered around accepting significant levels of service quality (Kurtz (2015:35).

### **1.4 CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH**

Abu, Bakar, Yusof, Tufail and Virgiyanti (2016:749) affirm that, in the present serious retail area, customers' requests will undoubtedly increment from time to time, because of the improvement of service quality in corresponding with item assortment. Due to the enormous development of the service businesses, where retailing segment assumes a significant job, it is crucial for retailers to comprehend the level of significance of tuning in

to the inward voice of customers' needs to make and build levels of satisfaction. Fashion retailing is the quickest developing portion after nourishment and basic food items; however, there are a few help insufficiencies like long hanging tight occasions for charging, inappropriate customers' treatment and poor dealing of customer complaints.

Service quality factors altogether influence consumer satisfaction. Chiu, and Leng, (2016: 36) substantiates with the above authors by expressing that service quality has been distinguished as a tool to improve retailer execution in the market through expanding an incentive for the customer, and to guarantee consumer satisfaction. Because of the intensity of South Africa's apparel retail industry and the expansion in the value consciousness, retailers look for approaches to streamline the value that they give to their customers. The serious idea of the business is compelling fashion retailers in the Greater Durban Area to move in giving high assistance quality to increase upper hand over their restriction so as to hold existing customers, draw in new customers, and at last increment their possibility of long-haul endurance (Islam and Rahman 2016:59).

## **1.5 RESEARCH PROBLEM**

While retailing has become a global, high-tech industry, likewise consumers' demand has increased and has become more complex in preferences and taste. Hence, consumers have become reliant on retail businesses to supply them with superior quality goods and services (Lee and Yun 2015:267). People have become so involved in retailing activities that these transactions are often taken for granted (Sarwary and Chaudhry 2015:329). There are so many consumers today who are faced with sub-standard services from retailers, for instance, inferior quality merchandise and poor customer service.

Retailing is characterized by high levels of competition, compelling retailers to effectively strategize their daily operations to ensure long-term customer relations and maintain a competitive advantage (Jin and Cedrola 2016:30). Excellent customer service and exceeding the expectations of customers are crucial in differentiating one fashion retailer from another (Lee and Nguyen 2017: 83). Therefore, businesses must provide goods and services that satisfy customers because satisfied customers develop trust and loyalty in suppliers and display strong repurchase intentions (Barnes, Ponder, Hopkins, 2015:441).

According to Agarwal and Singh (2016:77) quality service is a basic segment of customer perception about the service. Customers see benefits as far as their quality and how satisfied they are overall with their encounters. Subsequently, satisfying customers' needs through phenomenal quality assistance given by customer-oriented sales reps will improve the probability of customers coming back to shop and in the long run prescribing the stores to others, thus permitting the retailer to compete effectively in the market place. That is the reason the challenge which the retail specialist organizations face is to construct and hold great relationship with the customers by giving them astounding service beyond what many would consider possible and make customer satisfied, and, successively, bit by bit, get customers' reliability

The previously mentioned research problem was the inspiration behind this study, which intended to explore the effect of service quality on the satisfaction of customers in selected retail stores in the greater Durban Area. The primary area of enthusiasm for the study was service quality and how it influences customers' satisfaction. Energy for service quality has gotten increasingly dominating over the span of the latest decade because of growing contention, which has incited managers to find techniques for upgrading advantage through incredible retail service delivery. It is crucial for managers of the retail business to constantly improve quality service within the stores (Ali, Zhou, Hussain, Kumat, Neethiahnanthan and Ragavan 2016:94).

Every important element of retail condition ought to be assessed and investigated in order to become mindful of the general execution of the retail quality service in a store and finish up certain issues for its improvement.

## **1.6 AIM AND OBJECTIVES**

### **1.6.1 AIM**

The main aim of this study was to determine the customer's expectations and perceptions that impact service quality at selected fashion retail stores in the greater Durban Area.

## **1.6.2 Research Objectives**

The aim of this study is aligned to the following objectives:

- to determine customers' expectations of the service offering at selected fashion retail stores in the greater Durban area;
- to evaluate the customers' perception of the service quality at selected fashion retail stores in the greater Durban area;
- to assess the service gaps between expectations and perceptions; and
- to determine the biographical details of respondents.

## **1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **1.7.1 Research type**

The study was descriptive, cross-sectional and quantitative in nature. A sum of 400 questionnaires were distributed to achieve relevant data from participants of the study. According Rittichainuwat and Rattanaphinanchai (2015:147), quantitative research incorporates the utilization of very much idea out questions accompanied with answer choices that have been customised, and a group of respondents. Wildemuth (2016:1) further characterizes quantitative methods as purposeful measurements and arithmetical investigation of data assembled using questionnaires, polls or overviews. Prearranged questions questionnaires were utilized, making it simpler to assess the research data accumulated.

### **1.7.2 Research design and method**

A research design represents a framework followed by the researcher for the collection and analysis of the data from an identified population or social group (Drechslera and Hevner 2016:8). The formulation of the research design and research methods must take account of the aims and objectives of the research study.

The research design for this study is the quantitative research approach. Hence, a quantitative approach was used. Dwivedi, Wastell, Laumer, Henriksen, Myers, Bunker,

Elbanna, Ravishankar, and Srivastava, (2015:157) argues that both types of methods are equally important for good research. A mixed methods approach simply amounts to the collection and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data in a single study (Ben-Zvi, Bakker and Makar 2015:303).

Quantitative research approaches focus on the quantification of the data collected, and, therefore, entails a collection of numerical data (Eriksson and Kovalainen 2015:12). A quantitative researcher often believes that the best way to measure properties of phenomena, such as the attitudes of consumers towards retail business practices, is by assigning numbers to the perceived qualities of things (Rittichainuwat and Rattanaphinanchai 2015:147). On the other hand, qualitative researchers will “study human action from an insider’s perspective” and, hence, the goal here is to describe and understand rather than explain and predict (Bhat and Singh 2015:66).

### **1.7.3 Population and sample**

The research design was determined by who the participants of the research were (the population and sample) and how they were selected (the sampling method). A sample is usually drawn from a larger group that is the focus of the research. Hence, the larger group is called the population (Fjellström and Guttormsen 2016:126). The sample selected from the group of potential participants must be an accurate representation, in other words, an exact miniature of that population (Welman, Kruger and Mitchell 2011:55). So, in order for research findings to be credible, the sample must be representative of the population. The target population for this study included all consumers at SFRS in the greater Durban Area.

Welman, Kruger and Mitchell (2011:52) define the target population as the useful components or members, such as individuals, groups, organizations, human products and events, which are of interest in a study. Gay and Airasian (2011:121) describe population as a group of interest to the researcher, the group to which the researcher would like the results of the study to be generalized. Approximately 10 000 customers were the targeted market population of this study (Fouche 2016:55). A sample population comprises of members selected from a particular area to form the sample.

A sample population is a group extracted from the total population of that particular area as representative for the purpose of the study (Sekaran 2013:266). In this study, there were 400 customers who purchased their items at the SFRS in the Greater Durban Area. The sample population was used as a measurement to discover the service quality towards the SFRS in the Greater Durban Area.

The sample comprised 400 consumers of retail businesses. This sample size was guided by Sekaran and Bougie (2013:268) who suggest that, for a population exceeding 1 million, a sample of 384 was sufficient for the researcher to draw inferences.

#### **1.7.4 Sampling methods**

The non-probability sampling method was used in this study to select the sample, as it is less complicated and saves time and money. With non-probability sampling, the researcher cannot predict or guarantee that each member of the population will be represented in the sample. It is often used for small-scale or pilot studies as in the case of the present study. People will be included in the sample because they are available and willing to participate in the study (Wagner, Kawulich and Garner 2012:89).

The researcher chose to use the convenience sampling method, a type of non-probability sampling method, as it was the most appropriate method for the questionnaire approach. Convenience sampling is also known as accidental sampling. Here, the researcher uses participants who are easily accessible and readily available, Osorio (2014). Accordingly, for the purposes of this research study, random customers, who were handed a questionnaire by the researcher at that particular time, were included in the sample. This sample selection process continued until the required sample size was reached (Welman, Kruger and Mitchell 2011:69).

The non-probability sampling technique in the form of purposive sampling was ideal for this study as it was seeking a distinct trait from consumers who purchased items at the SFRS in the Greater Durban Area.

### **1.7.5 Data collection and analysis**

The research instrument used in the collection of data was questionnaires. The questionnaire is an effective tool to get opinions, attitudes and descriptions and is one of the most popular data collection methods in business studies, Neuman (2012:33). The researcher administered the questionnaires personally. The researcher had personal contact with the participants so that the purpose of the study and its relevance were explained. This ensured a higher response rate. This was one of the quickest ways of collecting data and saved time and money.

When the process of data collection was complete. The quantitative data was analysed by using the latest version of the SPSS computer software, that is, Statistical Package for the Social Sciences.

### **1.7.6 Validity and Reliability**

When researchers construct and evaluate measurements, they must pay careful attention to two technical considerations, that is, reliability and validity (Babbie and Mouton 2010:119). According to Blumberg, Cooper and Schindler (2013:379), the term validity refers to “the extent to which a test measures what we actually wish to measure” whilst reliability refers to “the accuracy and precision of a measurement procedure”.

Accordingly, the research instrument must test adequately all the relevant criteria or aspects of the research study. The questionnaire was subject to a pre-test to ensure reliability. Further, the Cronbach’s alpha, which is a measure of internal consistency, was also used in respect of the reliability of the study. To ensure validity of the quantitative study, factor analysis was undertaken.

### **1.7.7 Measuring instrument**

According to Mpinganjira (2015:130) measuring instruments are tools used in obtaining information for research purposes. For this study, questionnaires were used to collect relevant information from customers. SERVQUAL was used to measure quality in the

service sector. It is regarded as a breakthrough in the measurement methods used for service quality research. SERVQUAL is a dimensional research instrument, designed to capture consumer expectations and perceptions of a service along the five dimensions that are believed to represent service quality (Sharma 2016:91). SERVQUAL is built on the expectancy-disconfirmation paradigm, which means that service quality is understood as the extent to which consumers' pre-consumption expectations of quality are confirmed by their actual perceptions of the service experience. The SERVQUAL questionnaire has been described as the most popular standardized questionnaire to measure service quality.

### **1.7.8 Data analysis**

In order to make reasonable conclusions in this research, a statistician was employed to analyse the responses provided by the participants of the study. Data analysis was done through the SPSS version 23 to generate results of the research and to test variables to determine the findings of the study.

### **1.7.9 Pretesting**

A pilot study is designed to improve questionnaires to ensure that respondents will not experience problems in answering questionnaires. Pretesting also eliminates problems when analysing data (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2012:451). The pilot test provided the researcher with an understanding of the type of questionnaire and the type of questions that are more understandable to customers. Consequently, the researcher provided a good structured questionnaire after conducting the pilot process. A sample of ten (10) questionnaires were distributed for pre-test purposes to individuals who purchased items in the SFRS in the Greater Durban Area.

Sincero (2016:117) believes that, when conducting a pilot survey, the best strategy to use is a smaller sample compared to the original sample.



### **1.7.10 Anonymity and confidentiality**

The researcher guaranteed anonymity by not collecting identifying information of participants and there will be no link of individual responses with participant's identities as it is also not essential to the study protocol.

### **1.7.11 Ethical considerations**

The proposal was serving at the ethical clearance committee for approval. Whilst this study uses human beings as subjects, there was no threat of harm or there are no vulnerable populations that were asked to answer this questionnaire. The questions in the questionnaire are not intrusive or will infringe on the reputation or security of the respondent.

No form of incentives was used to encourage participation from respondents.

Respondents were informed that the research is strictly for academic pursuit and no information shall be disclosed to no one other than the institution under which the academic studies are pursued.

## **1.8 CHAPTER OUTLINE**

### **Chapter 1: Introduction**

This chapter will provide an overview of the study and serves to set out the problem statement, the purpose of the study, as well as the aims and objectives of this research study. It will also provide an outline of the remaining chapters in the research study.

### **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

This chapter will review existing literature dealing with the history of retailing and the various principles of retailing with a view to understanding this industry. Further, it will also analyse various issues relating to consumer protection and its impact on service delivery within the context of retail business operations.

### **Chapter 3: Research Methodology**

This chapter sets out the research design and methodology that will be used for the study. It will also explain the sampling methods used and the processes used in the collection of data and analysis of data.

### **Chapter 4: Data Analysis**

This chapter will examine and interpret the data collected from surveys and discuss the findings. It will then present the results and findings of the empirical investigation.

### **Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations**

This chapter will provide the conclusions derived from the analysis of the data. It will also make recommendations with regard to the implementation of legal provisions within retail business management.

## **1.9 CONCLUSION**

Quality service has become one of the most important factors for business professionals as well as researchers today because it is directly related to companies' performance and its growth it affects the costing customer for any product or service delivered to them. Since the nature of service is complex and its characteristics are quite different than goods, it is difficult to measure the quality service in different and formats (Selvakumar 2016: 12).

Chapter one presented the description and outline of the research study. This chapter also covered the introduction, aims, and objectives of the study, in addition to its other important scopes. In chapter two the theory of service quality, fashion retail stores in the greater Durban area will be discussed.

## **2 CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter provided an overview of the study. This chapter will review the literature within the confines of the study's aim and objectives. The chapter will commence by providing a narration on the historical evolution of the fashion industry. This aspect will also be discussed within the South African context with the core emphasis on the SFRS within the Durban region. More so, theories and concepts on service delivery will be discussed. This chapter will also include discussions on aspects, such as: service quality; the five most distinct dimensions of service quality; perception on service quality; customer preference; factors influencing the choice of SFRS; customer expectation and service quality; factors influencing customers' perceptions of service quality; and the relationship between service quality and customers' satisfaction. The chapter will finally address the relevant literature on customers' satisfaction and loyalty at SFRS.

### **2.2 THE HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF THE FASHION INDUSTRY**

The modern industry is said to have been initiated in the nineteenth century. This industry was centred on organisations and fashion houses run by specific designers. The work done by Charles Frederick Worth is considered to have pioneered the fashion industry (History of Fashion 2017:2). The pioneering work of Charles led to the opening of a notable fashion store in Paris. The then Queen of France - Marie Antoinette's fashion store had a substantial impact on style. Within a couple of years, the French Queen's fashion business had expanded to London. Her fashion business gained prominence and was widely accepted in several regions of the globe. Marie Antoinette's fashion business were greatly sought after and had a profound influence on public taste (Dalmoro, Pinto, Borges and Nique, 2015:736).

During the early years of the 1910's, the fashion industry turned out to be significantly more adaptable and fluid, in comparison to that of the 19th century. The fashion development began to emerge in this era, and its impact was evident in the designs of many couturiers of the time. Additionally, it is notable that the first real fashion shows were organised during this period in time, (Fashion United 2016:2).

Dealing in far bigger amounts, production cycles were longer than those of couture workshops, which meant that stylists planning their lines for the twice-yearly collections needed to try to guess more than a year in advance what their customers would want.

Until the 1960s, Paris was considered to be the centre of fashion throughout the world. During the late 20th century, fashion started to traverse international boundaries with speed. Well known western styles were adopted everywhere throughout the world, and numerous designers from outside of the west profoundly affected fashion. Fashion shows were transfigured into media-saturated spectacles and regularly televised, taking high priority in the social calendar. Appearance was connected to performance, which was of supreme significance to an entire generation of young urban professionals, whose desire to look the part related to a craving for power. The international fashion retail industry has demonstrated a modest growth rate and this trend is anticipated to continue in the next years (Forbes. (2015:2).

The designers and fashion styles were focused more into fashionable women. The fashion industry had commonly extended partly due to the more stable and independent lifestyle that many wealthy ladies were starting to receive and the practical garments they demanded. More designer clothes, such as Chanel and Dior, were based on fashionable women. Then, Vera Maxwell presented new designer outfits and introduced innovations to men's work clothes. More fashionable designs for men and women were produced; many influential and popular collections of designer clothes, such as Gucci, Prada, Michael Kors, Louis Vuitton, Dolce and Gabbana, began to trend internationally (Haefner, Rosenbloom and Haefner, (2016:373).

An examination concerning the development of the fashion industry by Frank and Watchravesringkan, (2016:170) discovered three critical changes that have occurred from the 1990's until the year 2000: the fading mass production systems; increases in the amount of fashion seasons; and changes in the structural characteristics of the industry. More so, the frequency in merchandise in store changes began to increase from the previous two seasons every year (summer and winter) to five and ten seasons for each year (Garg, Mukherjee, Biswas and Kataria 2016:153).

Having provided a synopsis of the main milestones in the fashion industry since its inception, a similar narration is provided in the subsequent section; this, however, is confined to the South African context.

### **2.3 THE FASHION INDUSTRY IN SOUTH AFRICA**

The South African fashion industry is a phenomenon which has significantly evolved since the post-apartheid era. Though this industry in South Africa traces back to the 1960's; this section will, however, only provide an insight into the current trends that had evolved over the last two decades. The South African fashion industry has radically transformed over the course of the post-apartheid era. Designers have been able to adopt and modify international brands in a skilful and creative manner (Haque, Anwar, Yasmin, Sarwar, Ibrahim and Momen 2015:12). Critics have, however, mentioned that such adoption and modification have excluded the South African identity.

South African local designs have developed an innovative and transformative fashion industry by interpreting international fashion trends without actually expressing a true sense of South African identity. Prior to 1994, the South African fashion industry mimicked a number of international brands, particularly those of Europe (Davvetas, Sichtmann, and Diamantopoulos 2015:434). South African local designers, such as Errol Arendz, Marianne Fassler, and Pascual, started growing during 1980's by joining the group of well-known local designers, namely, Greta Abrahamson, Peter Soldatos, Elzabetha Rosenworth and Chris Levin, (Ebrahim, Ghoneim, Irani and Fan 2016:30).

After the democracy in South Africa in 1994, international imports occurred and new trends were introduced (Forbes: 2016). International fashion started to shift by creating more of the South Africanism trend for more designers. In the discussion of the evolution of South Africa fashion identity, Cheah, Phau, Kea and Huang 2016:192) states that the local fashion often still does not sufficiently reflect a balance between cultural tradition and what is considered contemporary in the global context.

Cronje, Jacobs and Retief (2016:2) also emphasises that the local designers should focus on developing an aesthetic where fashion trends reflect the local culture and history, yet demonstrate awareness of international trends, to ensure relevance in terms of

international fashion design standards and requirements. India and Brazil are found to be comparable to South African fashion and show a few commonalities. The fashion industries within these countries have sought recognition internationally on their own terms, demonstrating an individual identity yet producing fashion that captures the imagination of the global market (Drennan, Bianchi, Cacho-Elizondo, Louriero, Guibert and Proud 2015:55). The fashion industry has grown geometrically over the last few years in South Africa and is forecasted to grow further in the next coming years, Pouragha and Zarei (2016:18). Stakeholders in the fashion industry have equally applauded the growth in the South African fashion industry as it has a multiplying effect. Hence, the imperativeness of the South African fashion is further discussed in the next sub-section.

## **2.4 THE IMPERATIVENESS OF THE FASHION INDUSTRY IN SOUTH AFRICA**

The fashion industry plays a crucial role to South Africa in a number of ways. This importance has been previously discussed by a number of authors over the years. This section will, however, outline six core means through which the fashion industry has played a pivotal role, particularly on the South African economy. Firstly, the fashion industry contributes 2.6 percent to the South African Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Carter and Maher 2015:32). The contribution of the fashion industry in South Africa, as a percentage of the GDP, has been on the increase. This shows that the fashion industry has been growing significantly for a couple of years. Secondly, the fashion industry provides employment opportunities for the citizens of South Africa. According to Statistics (Bartsch, Diamantopoulos, Paparoidamis and Chumpitaz 2016:69), an estimated 506 240 individuals were gainfully employed in the fashion industry. The South African government welcomes international fashion retailers to do business in the country. These international fashion retailers provide employment to South Africans and equally contribute to the property sector through rentals (Seo 2016:77).

Thirdly, the fashion industry has contributed to South Africa's export market. A significant tonnage of quality wears and fabrics are being exported from South Africa to neighbouring South African Development Community (SADC) countries, Africa, and the rest of the globe. Though this export market is not as huge as some of South African fashion counterparts such as Europe, or Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa (BRICS) countries; a surmountable quantity of export is made annually (Saran, Roy and

Sethuraman 2016:176). This export market has further expanded South Africa's bilateral trade dealings among a number of countries. Through this venture, South Africa has been able to further export tourism-related goods (Sharma, Kumar and Borah 2017:24). Furthermore, the imperativeness of the South African fashion industry is being underscored by its local fabrics and unique South African brands which have inversely contributed to the growth of the tourism sector. The fabrics has created trademarks for the nation. Tourists are able to identify with these unique fabrics. These opportunities and awareness through local fabrics may have been overshadowed if the fashion industry were not to be on par with international counterparts (Siu, Kwan and Zeng 2016:33). Trendwatching. (2016:17) mentions the role that shopping festivals, also referred to as trade fares, play in the economy of a country. The success of shopping festivals can, however, be attributed to the high quality of products which emanate from the fashion industry.

Fourthly, the fashion industry also facilitates an integration of South Africa into world economies, through which surmountable amounts of bilateral trade have been recorded in the last decades (Pels and Sheth 2017:19). In 2017, South Africa entered into the BRICS markets. This opened new opportunities for luxury brands and, specifically, high fashion brands. South Africa is seen as the gateway for Africa, where there is potential for sales growth in the fashion market (Pentz, Terblanche and Boshoff 2017:276). Hence, this view builds reliability for fashion brands. This phenomenon also opens the fashion market for international brands to enter with high prices and high quality.

Fifthly, this industry has been notable for its ability to generate foreign exchange. This is an added advantage as it inversely impacts on the South African Rand (Phau, Teah and Chuah 2015:187). Finally, the South African fashion industry has played a significant role in a number of communal development programmes. This has been achieved through some corporate social responsibility initiatives used by fashion retailers in reducing the trio challenges of poverty, inequality and marginalization (Salman and Naeem 2015: 278).



## **2.5 THE IMPACT OF FASHION IN SFRS IN DURBAN**

Fashion in South Africa has truly been driven by international trends. These international designs have propelled South African originators to deliver items that are intelligent of the trends experienced abroad (Ramadania, Gunawan and Rustam 2015:540). Notwithstanding, as per a recent study undertaken by Urban Econ Development Economists for eThekweni Municipality, neighbourhood designers have started designing (structuring) items that are extraordinarily South African. This is an extremely critical advance for designers in the business and places the business in a generally excellent position (Wang 2015:64).

In eThekweni, the fashion industry has developed since its commencement. Fashion is one of the priority sectors inside the city and acquires support from both the legislature and the private segment. It has added to job creation, transcendentally for Black and Colored females, while numerous understudies are currently enrolled for fashion related studies in the industry. The eThekweni Municipality is committed to supporting the design part through the settled KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) Fashion Council - an industry group aimed for propelling the seriousness levels of the sector Wolter, (Brach, Cronin and Bonn 2016: 793). The fashion industry presently offers progressively different items and comprises of numerous product offerings and is said to be driven via regularity and trends (Xie, Batra and Peng 2015:71).

## **2.6 SERVICE QUALITY**

This section centres on: the concept and theories of service quality; service quality in the retail business; and the five most distinct dimensions of service quality.

### **2.6.1 THEORIES AND CONCEPT ON SERVICE QUALITY**

Service quality is the principal theme of this study and, therefore, it is important to comprehend what it means, why there is a necessity for it, and what benefits it can create. Service quality is seen as a degree to which the service, the procedure and the service organisation can fulfil the customers' expectations (Javornik (2016:261). Service quality measures how well service is conveyed, contrasted with expectations.

Service quality is the most fundamental retailing technique for retailers to create competitive advantage and to improve customers shopping encounters. Service quality is tool to improve retailers' presentation in the market through expanding value for the customers as a way to guarantee customers satisfaction (Miotto and Parente 2015: 260). Kant and Jaiswal (2017:430) portray that, when an organization implements a service indiscreetly, it commits avoidable errors and neglects to convey on guarantees that it has made to draw in customers, it agitates the customers' certainty and bargains the organization's odds of accepting a notoriety of service excellence.

All in all, customers compare perceived service and with expected service. In the event that the previous misses the mark regarding the last mentioned, the customers are frustrated. The measurement of subjective aspects of customer service relies upon the similarity of the expected advantage with the perceived outcome. This, thusly, relies upon the customer's expectations in terms of service they may get and the service provider's capacity and ability to exhibit this expected service. Successful organizations add advantages to their contribution that fulfil the customers as well as surprise and please them (Kotler and Armstrong, 2016:22).

Overseeing service quality includes three particular viewpoints; planning the service product, structuring the service condition and conveying the service. The service product is whatever service 'features' are offered. The service product is the identification of applicable features or particulars to offer, henceforth, planning the service product is to some degree diverse theoretically from structuring the core physical product Gupta and Lovelock and Patterson (2015:55). The service environment is the setting and props are required to control the service, Chang, Chen and Lan (2013:83). It is additionally designed into the service on the other hand; the service delivery is the manner by which the service is given on a particular event, and service delivery process can be compared to role performance, Kumar, Anand, and Song (2016:35).

The rest of the section of this fragment will discuss about the principle hypotheses on service quality. It will expound on the SERVQUAL model dimensions and zero tolerance as they relate near the present study. Service quality is the principal subject of this study and, thusly, it is essential to understand what it means and why there is a need for it, and

what benefits it can make. As this study revolves around SFRS in the greater Durban Area, information on service quality is appropriate inside the retailing setting. Service quality is seen as a degree to which the service, the procedure and the service organisation can satisfy the customers' expectations (Foster and McLelland 2015:205). Service quality measures how well a service is delivered, contrasted with customers' expectations.

### **2.6.2 SERVICE QUALITY IN THE RETAIL INDUSTRY**

Services are portrayed as a progression of measures that expeditious an outcome, which will take care of customers' issues. Customers regularly take an interest in the origination procedure, Kant and Jaiswal (2017: 430). Rostami, Amir and Soltani (2016:36) consider service as every economic activity that happen in an association procedure for making consumer loyalty. Service quality in retailing is not the same as some other product or service environment. In retail stores, where there is a blend of products and services, retailers are probably going to impact service quality in contrast with product quality. As retailers make such impacts, service quality plays a significant strategic role in making quality perceptions. Supporting exceptional service quality inside the stores is no basic assignment as it requires continual measurements from time to time to screen and perceive areas of action that might be responsible for the values of service quality (Hsu, Qing, Wang and Hsieh 2018:36). To guarantee competitive survival, it has become essential for retailers to separate themselves in manners that are important to their customers. It has been demonstrated that service quality is the most essential retailing strategy for retailers to create competitive advantages and to improve customers' shopping encounters (Argerich and Cruz-Cázares 2017:330).

Service quality has numerous advantages and can be used to build value for customers. It can help with customer satisfaction and maintenance and is seen as methods for situating in a competitive environment. These advantages can be delighted in by SFRS in the Greater Durban Area in the event that they are focused on giving elevated levels of service quality (Brown, Loosemore 2015:389). Service quality is seen as a way to position within a competitive environment through upgrading customer satisfaction (Forsythe 2016:348). Research has demonstrated that service quality is a critical

predictor of customer 'loyalty-related intention', and that relationships are based on an establishment of service quality (Asshidin, Abidin and Borhan, 2016:643). More so, the term 'service quality' and 'customer satisfaction' are interlinked and interrelated (Aye, Balcilar, Gupta, and Majumdar, 2015:79).

Achieving competitive advantage through service quality requires comprehension of the quality requirements from customer's perceptions (Balabanis and Siamagka, 2017:182). Customers assess retail service by contrasting their perceptions of the service that they get with their expectations. SFRS in the Greater Durban Area monitor customer satisfaction consistently (Hee, Kim, and Won 2016:403). Customer satisfaction is a significant develop as satisfaction is a critical proportion of a business' prosperity. The degree of customer satisfaction has been appeared to affect approach and word-of-mouth communication to be a decent indicator of future buy conduct, to impact profit, and, in the long-run, to prompt store devotion (Kamran, Mantrala, Izquierdo and Martínez 2017:22). Besides, it has been demonstrated empirically that satisfied customers are willing to pay premium costs (Hoffman and Bateson 2017:117).

Service quality seems, by all accounts, to be an unending enthusiasm for customer satisfaction as a means for assessing execution. As indicated by Berkhout (2016:88) high customer satisfaction evaluations are generally accepted to be a main marker of an organization's money related wellbeing. SFRS in the Greater Durban Area use customer satisfaction as a rule for diagnosing product or service execution (Farooq and de Villiers 2017:316). SFRS in the Greater Durban Area, therefore, perceive that customer satisfaction plays a key role in a prosperous business strategy, and it is, subsequently, significant for managers to understand what drives customer satisfaction. Service quality and customer satisfaction share certain things in common, however satisfaction is generally impacted by service quality (Abdolvand and Kia 2016:187).

### **2.6.3 THE FIVE MOST DISTINCT DIMENSIONS OF SERVICE QUALITY**

Several studies have discovered significant dimensions of service quality within the retail sector. Some of these dimensions are discussed below and have been adopted for the purpose of this study.

Retail stores have improved from giving just physical items that satisfy customers' needs to offering solution centre that coordinates the sale of both physical product and worth added services to achieve competitive advantages. Phenomenal service can prompt more elevated levels of customer retention, increased sales and, thus, improve profits (Koutsothanassi, Bouranta and Psomas 2017:440). Several studies have found critical dimensions of service quality inside the retail segment. A portion of these dimensions are discussed below and have been received with the end goal of this study.

Similar studies led by Rauch, Collins, Nale and Barr (2015:106), various different authors, for example, Roslan, Wahab and Abdullah (2015:380), have similarly recognized five core dimensions to service quality. In any case, the dimensions of Roslan *et al* (2015:380) are clarified through the advancement of a retail service quality model (RSQM).

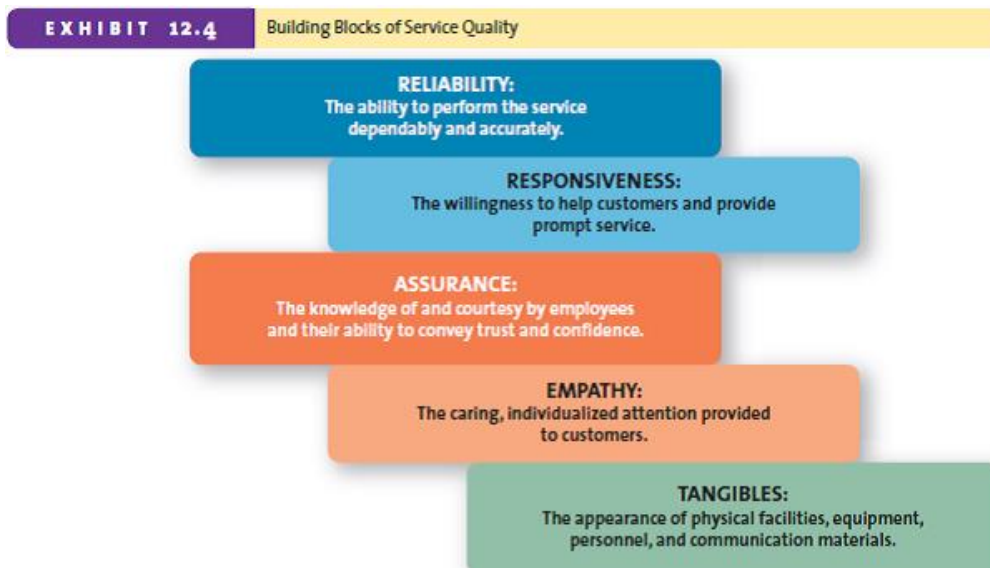
These dimensions show how to help customers to arrange their data with respect to service quality and help them in their decision-making when buying a specific product or acquiring a service. Sometimes, most of customers use every one of these dimensions in deciding service/quality perception/satisfaction.

- **Empathy (caring for customers on an interpersonal level).**

SERVQUAL is the degree and course of mistakes between customers' service perceptions and expectations. Sharmin, Tasnim and Shimul (2016:108) order the idea of SERVQUAL into 22 recognisable items. These items involve five dimensions (Figure 2.1):

- Tangibles (physical facilities, equipment, staff appearance etc);
- Reliability (trustworthy execution of obligation);
- Responsiveness (reacting to customers' needs promptly);
- Assurance (inspiring certainty and trust); and
- Empathy (thinking about customers on a relational level).

**Figure 2.1. The five most distinct dimensions of service quality**



**Source: Sharmin, Tasnim and Shimul (2016:108)**

### **2.6.3.1 Reliability**

The concept of reliability measures the store's capacity to offer the service that has been promised to customers precisely, and without mistake. This infers the store must practice a philosophy of getting it right first time, constantly. It must be able to stay faithful to its promises, meet deadlines and give opportune and exact information to customers. Using SERVQUAL (Sharma 2016:57). Accurate information incorporates clear product pricing, just as right and precise information in regard to the product.

Besides, reliability additionally alludes to the store having the option to have stock available when required. Thus, reliability implies infers a mix of keeping promises and 'doing it right' (Garg and Steyn 2015:257).

Randheer (2015:29), portray reliability as the capacity to play out the ensured service reliably and precisely. Reliability determinant is a significant dimension of service quality in SFRS in the Greater Durban Area. Miotto and Parente (2015:260), additionally clarify reliability as employees' capacity to play out the ensured services persistently. Paul, Modi and Patel (2016:134) prescribes that reliability assigns the merchant's capacity to supply the ensured yield at the communicated level.

Among SFRS in the Greater Durban Area, constrained availability of stock or long lines alludes to an absence of reliability on behalf of the retailer. It has been demonstrated that lengthy waits for till payments can result in customers developing negative perceptions and decreased customer satisfaction. As per Rahmawati and Muflikhati (2016:181), a stock outage can result in the customer leaving the store and prior the purchase to look for the item somewhere else. Besides, in the long-run, continuous stock outages could negatively affect future support, and result in detrimental perceptions and negative word-of-mouth.

### **2.6.3.2 Responsiveness**

Zheng and Chi (2015:77) characterize responsiveness as workers' capacity to help customers and bring about benefit. This dimension requires that service providers ought to be more flexible in in issues and requests. A concession among studies led by Naderian and Baharun (2015:22) assert that, as far as SFRS are concerned, responsiveness alludes to the brief consideration and ability of the sales associates to assist customers. Asefi (2017:11). Ali, Mannan and Ahmad (2015:42) admit that responsiveness introduces the associations' ability with respond to satisfy customers' desires. The capacity to react just as reaction speed are integral concerns, Moosavi, (2017:447) affirm that individual co-operation appears, apparently, to be a key central factor in perceived service quality.

Responsiveness is related to the phases of customer service. This infers personnel's capacity to create customised solutions for customers, while likewise helping customers to inquiries or attention regarding problems. Anwar and Almas (2015:88), contend that, regardless of whether the interaction occurs face-to-face or telephonically, the degree to which the service to which the service personnel show the capacity to deal with such issues viably, and whether they care about taking care of customers' requests, will without a doubt impact on perceptions of service quality

### **2.6.3.3 Assurance**

Randheer (2015:29) portray assurance as the employees' knowledge and loveliness, while the aims of the organisation is for its workers to move with belief and certainty.

Zameer, Tara, Kausar and Mohsin (2015:456) express that assurance discovers with the merchants' capacity to convey the outputs; especially to the extent the information, consideration and dependability of the agents are concerned. It likewise includes the employees' proficiency for answering questions, offering, providing prompt services, willingness to respond to customers' requests, giving customers individual attention and showing courtesy to customers.

The customer service offered by sales personnel is the most visible element of the service experience. Yilmaz, Varnali, and Kasnakoglu (2016:955) note the significance of the knowledge of sales staff in regards to new products, costs, and different varieties of store offerings, just as remarking on the significance of approaching the customer with deference are all aspects of the assurance concept.

#### **2.6.3.4 Empathy**

Satisfied customers are bound to repurchase when their complaints were managed sufficiently. It is, in this way, to the greatest advantage of the store to guarantee that sufficient and successful measures are executed so as to encourage problem solving for the customer (Whyte and Bytheway 2017:945). Wang, Fung So and Sparks (2017:577) defines empathy "as the comprehension and affectability conveying individualized attention given to customers". Such individualized attention is a core imperative within the fashion retail store.

This dimension is to deal with the expense of more facilities for present or potential customers and overhaul the service capacity, through customised or customisable service. It incorporates the store's capacity to communicate a true and real interest in solving the customer's problem and reaches out to the capacity of staff to deal with objections directly and promptly (Sachdeva and Goel 2015:83). It additionally refers to the store's ability of dealing with returns and exchanges, just as handling customers' problems and complaints effectively.



### **2.6.3.5 Tangibles**

Tangibles refers to the presence of facilities, equipment (hardware), personnel and communication materials (Foster and McLelland 2015:205). The store environment, facilities and even imagery thereof have become factors which retailers can use to pick up the competitive edge and impact customer satisfaction (Yildirim, Cagatay and Hidayetoglu 2015:726). Exemplary retailers demand store neatness, just as a layout that empowers customer direction and product identification. Since the tangibles and visual components of the site would be essential to profitability and also to the general impression of the firm and the brand, service organisations are likely going to use physical assets for improve their effects with another dimension to make a service quality strategy for the store (Foster and McLelland 2015:205).

Sade, Bojei and Donaldson (2015:188) declares that observing customers' satisfaction/dissatisfaction, needs and wants helps the SFRS to proficiently learn factors that may identify to the progression of key marketing plans. As per Abu (2015:11) a well configured store that is easy to navigate will reduce a consumer's search time. Furthermore, it is recommended that customers frequently don't find the products they look for, regardless of whether these products are inside the store, because of poor store layout which prompts poor perceptions and the consumer turning to a competitor for solutions.

## **2.7 CUSTOMER EXPECTATION**

Service quality is judged low when the demonstration was below expectation. Customer expectations and perceived service quality positively affect consumer satisfaction.

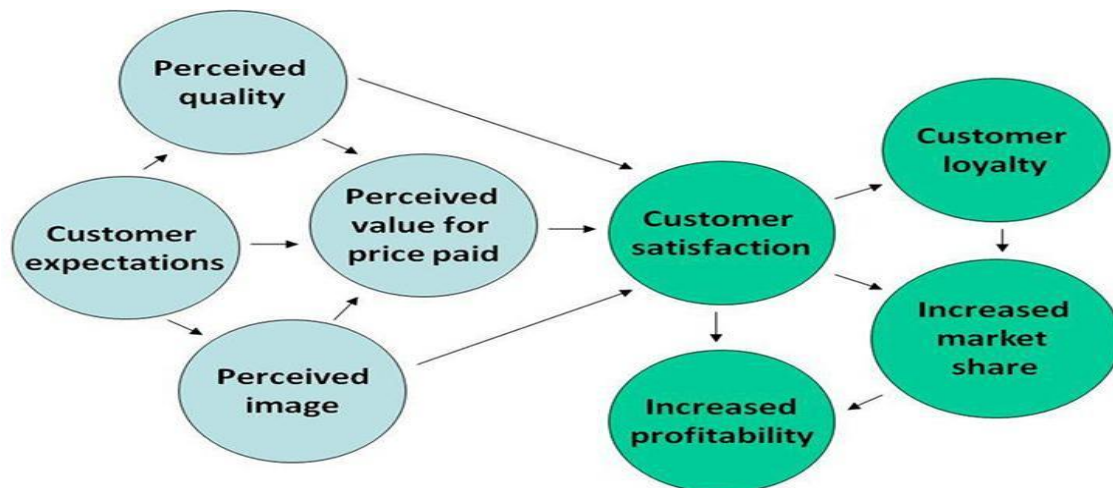
### **2.7.1 CUSTOMER EXPECTATION AND SERVICE QUALITY**

Studies on service quality are now and again complicated because of the fact the organisation's idea or objective of service quality does not generally match customers' expectations. This suggests most customers' expectations are perceptions about service

delivery that are at difference with that of the organisation, Azman, Hafizah and Ilyani (2016:59). Tecoalu (2015:410) express that customers' service expectations vary; they opine that customers' service expectations can be coveted service or satisfactory service. The authors describe coveted service as the degree of service that the customers trust and long to have.

Figure 2.2 defines a customer's perception model. It uncovers the inter-connectivity amongst characteristics, for example, customers' expectations, perceived quality, perceived image, perceived value for price paid, customer satisfaction, increased profitability, customer loyalty and increased market share.

**Figure 2.2: Customer's perception model**



**Source: Bellingkrodt, Wallenburg (2015:25)**

It has been engrained in the minds of customers as what they expect service quality to be. It is critical to comprehend and measure customers' expectations so as to recognize any gaps in delivering services with quality that could guarantee satisfaction. Customers hold various kinds of expectations regarding service; the most elevated types of these are desired service and adequate service (Bellingkrodt, Wallenburg 2015:25).

The 'diversity of expectation' definitions can be concluded that expectation is an uncontrollable factor which incorporates past experience, advertising, and customers' perceptions at the time of purchase, foundation, mentality and product's image. Besides, the impacts of customers' expectations are pre-buy convictions, word-of-mouth communications, individual needs, customers' expectations and other individual

mentalities. Various customers have various expectations dependent on the customers' knowledge of a product or service.

**2.7.2 Factors that influence adequate service expectation**

Sufficient service expectations must be observed consistently; the more extreme the competition, the more regular checking is required. Desired service expectations are unmistakably progressively stable since they are driven by all the more enduring elements. There are five fundamental elements affecting on adequate service. These are outlined in Table 2.1

**Table 2.1: Service expectation**

Elements on sufficient service	Comments	Comments
Temporary service intensifier	Incorporate some transient and individual components that make a customer more mindful of the requirement for a service.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The level of sufficient service will increase and the zone of tolerance will contract</li> <li>-Perceived service options imply that different contenders, who acquire similar service, can impact customers' decision and choice</li> </ul>
The customer' self-saw services	It benefit part is the third element influencing the level of sufficient service.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Since customers' expectations are halfway formed by how well they trust, they play out their own part in service conveyance</li> <li>- One part of the customers was to express the level of service anticipated</li> </ul>

Situational elements	It shows a few components that customer.	-However, perceive as part of the control of the service suppliers
Anticipated service	It's normally a gauge of the service a customer will receive in an individual exchange with their service supplier.	-Since customers are constantly prone to anticipate what will happen in the next service experience or exchange regarding their encounters, anticipated service is seen in this model as an impact of sufficient service.

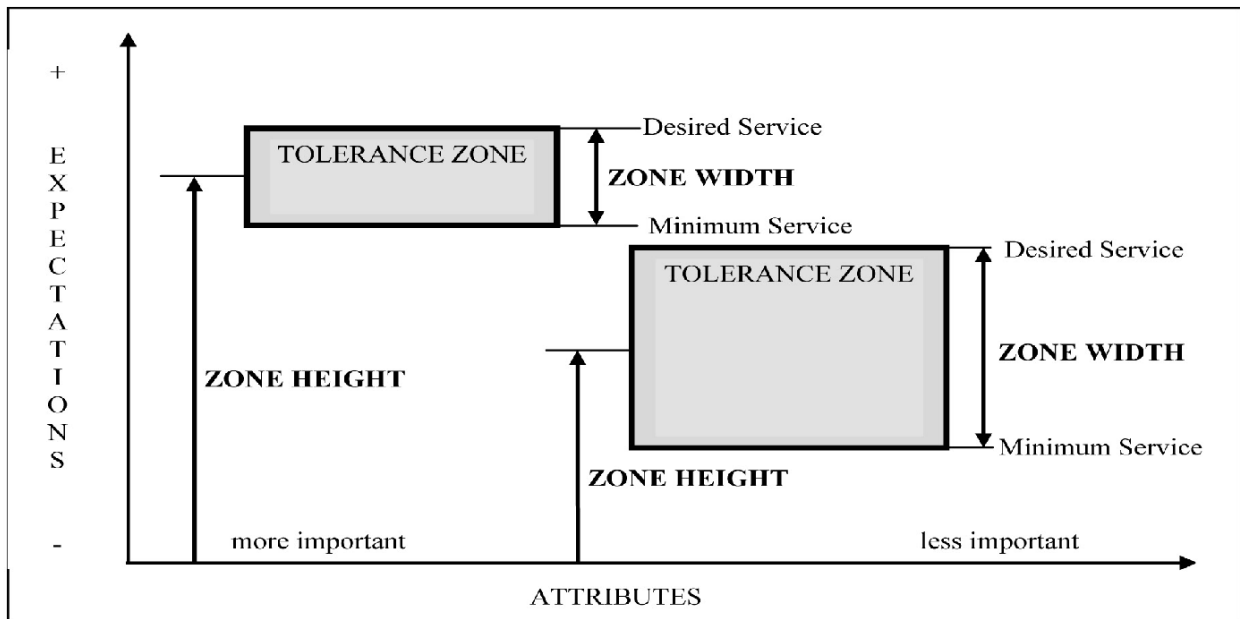
**Source: Osarenkhoe, Komunda and Byarugaba (2017: 208)**

As a rule, these elements are fleeting and tend to change more as often as possible than the elements that effect desired service.

## **2.8 THE ZONE OF TOLERANCE**

The zone of tolerance is sorted by what number of customers perceive and will recognize that service execution fluctuates (Osarenkhoe, Komunda and Byarugaba 2017: 208). The concept 'zone of tolerance' is the difference among wanted and satisfactory service. The gaps between these two sorts of service is what the customer can tolerate (Sachdeva and Goel 2015: 83). The tolerance zone can be set up by the customers' expectations for a determined service attribute, regardless of whether it isn't conveyed. When the service rendered adequately occurs, the customer assesses the degree of service received/perceived, through his or her own perceptions. The present develop being characterized proposes to assess two affirmations of Tecoalu (2015:410). Likewise, when service drops underneath a service level, customers are disappointed, and this may realize dissatisfaction with the service given by the organisation (Ghafoor and Abrar 2015: 439). Figure 2.3 demonstrates the instances of the zone of tolerance.

**Figure 2.3: Zone of tolerance**



**Source: (Chiekezie, Nzewi and Obianefo 2015)**

As shown in Figure 2.3, customers enter service experiences with various degrees of expectations. Desired service is 'the level of service the customers would like to get, then again, sufficient service is the degree of service the customers will acknowledge. The contrast between these two kinds of service is the zone of tolerance. Customers will have great responses with the business in the occasion where the service is over the zone of tolerance, and where the service performed outperforms the desired level (Hussain, Nasser and Hussain, 2015:175).

Looking back, this turns into an issue when service execution falls underneath what consumers will recognize. As Yeo, Thai and Roh, (2015:447) clarify, the service stands sufficiently apart to be seen in either a positive or a negative way. The zone of tolerance model suggests that satisfaction will result as long as customers' perceptions of service performance fall in the zone. Yuen, Thai and Van (2015:183) recommends that the zone of tolerance fluctuates across customers and can extend/contract with a similar customer. She likewise recommends that sufficient service expectation is liable to change, while desired service expectations are relatively enduring.

## **2.9 CUSTOMER PERCEPTION**

Service quality perceived by customers play a critical role in the success of the organisation. Customer satisfaction and the management of their expectation are a vital part of the maintainability of any organisation.

### **2.9.1 CUSTOMER PERCEPTION AND SERVICE QUALITY**

Thai (2015:23), state that that perceptions are comparative to expectations. Customers perceive service to the extent the quality of the service they get, whether or not they are content with their experiences. Peng and Moghavvemi (2015:122) propose that consumer loyalty is affected by specific service and impression of significant value. Satisfaction is similarly influenced by customers' "passionate responses, their qualities and their impression of sensibility" (Ha, Minh, Anh and Matsui 2015:101).

Singular individuals are intended to perceive, and when humans interact, perceptions take place. Perceptions occur at the degree of understanding the requirements and desires of the individual one is communicating with; understanding the belief system of that individual and even the individual's ideology. Customers likewise have a prior perception of organisations. Hui and Yee (2015:72) asserts that perceptions develop over some undefined time frame, and in this way reflects the way with which a customer has been treated. This perception is regularly shaped by customers' preferred qualities, needs, preferences and affectability to others.

The customers' service provider should imagine customers' opposition considering the customers' prior communications and work at outfitting the customers with splendid service, so their present perception is certain. Customers that are treated right frequently tell different customers of their experiences, while those treated severely will in all probability tell more customers of their bad experiences. In this way, Lunardo and Roux (2015: 667) express that customers may not recall everything about an ordeal, yet rather, whenever left with a positive inclination in the mix of various experiences, their perception of the organisation will be retained.

## 2.9.2 DESCRIPTIVE CUSTOMERS' PERCEPTIONS

Liu, Perry, Moore and Warnaby (2016:364) characterize perceived service quality as the shoppers' evaluation of the service execution received and how it contrasted with their expectations. These evaluations are not founded on service attributes; rather these rely upon a customer's emotions or memory. Along these lines, customers measure service quality as far as how much pleasure they have received from a service. Rahman, Wong and Yu (2016:164) reason that the role of perceived service quality in customer satisfaction is recognised yet the conditions under various dimensions of impact will or will not impact service quality evaluation and customer satisfaction. Kandampully, Zhang and Bilgihan (2015:414) confirms that the following parameters are significant in customers' discernment of service quality:

- **Customer care** - This is a necessary service that SFRS service providers must give to customers. Genuine provision to the customers may prompt more individuals and produce customers' confidence. As such, management should give cautious thought to this parameter so that customers' perceptions are improved;
- **Resolving customers' complaints** – This is the most important service quality factor: customers anticipate that the management to resolve their complaints. At the point when it appears though customers' perceptions are irrelevant in the extreme, the sales assistants must offer regard for customer complaints;
- **Confidentiality of customers** – This is an imperative parameter: customers need their personal information and important possessions to be protected arranged and consistently;
- **Various types of service offered** – From a theoretical perspective, SFRS offer various kinds of service to customers, for instance, by offering various styles, colours, sizes and trends;
- **Good behaviour and hospitality** – The behaviour and hospitality of the sales assistants is one of the methods of reliability of service quality that attracts customers. Sales assistants, therefore, need to improve in their behaviour; be courteous; provide sufficient assistance at the sales floor, while creating a conducive space for their customers;

- **Promptness, accuracy and service delivery** – Customers look for brief service, precision and great service delivery consistently and on time. It is comprehended that the perception of customers concerning these necessities is prominent for customer support, great conduct, and neighbourliness, as well as determining customers' complaints;
- **Modern store layout and merchandising** – SFRS premises should have an elevated expectations of store layout; merchandising and décor. In addition, a decent and clean environment is imperative. Creative store layout and merchandising enhances customers' convenience during the shopping process; and
- **Convenient operating hours** – SFRS are running their businesses within certain time frameworks; similarly, they should to be convenient to customers. Opening hours and days the store opens should be flexible, as a means to accommodating different cadres in the society.

### **2.9.3 FACTORS INFLUENCING CUSTOMER PERCEPTION OF SERVICE QUALITY AT SFRS IN GREATER DURBAN AREA**

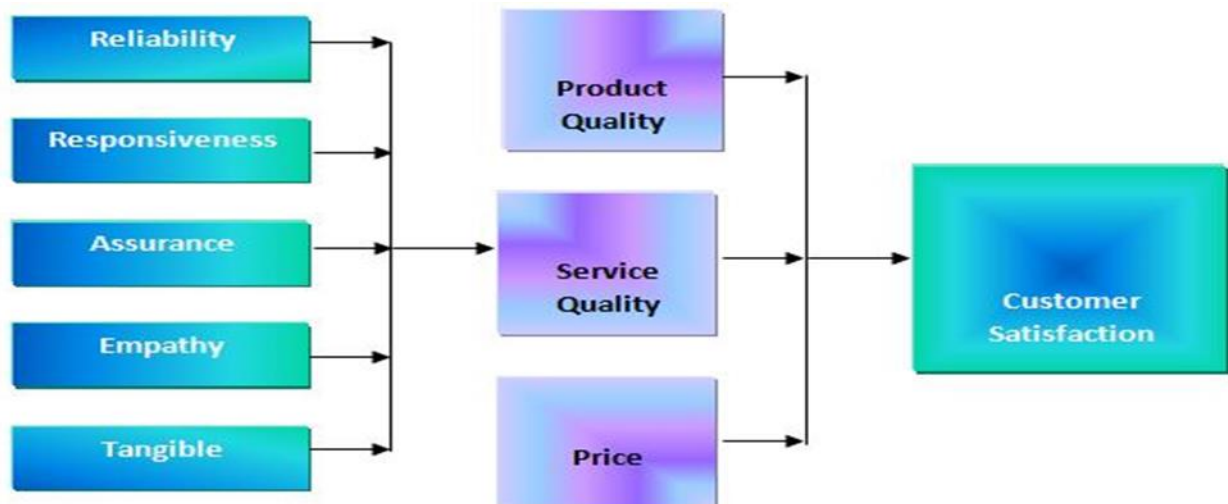
Customers' perceptions are also shaped by their involvement with particular components of tangibles. Figure 2.4 demonstrates the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction.

There are various fundamentals that impact customers' perceptions of service quality. Every now and again, customers' perceptions are measured by their own experience, Beneke and Carter (2015:35). As indicated by Fotaki (2015:66), excellent service quality can frequently dominate a negative experience with the product itself. If a consumer feels that he/she gets uncommon attention while experiencing an issue with a product, that customer is more likely to trust the brand or realizing that the producer or retailer gives a brief and effective reaction to problems. In any case, Sharmin, Tasnim and Shimul (2016:108), express that the five SERVQUAL dimensions, overall customers' satisfaction levels, and relational communication directly affect customers' perceptions of products or services rendered. Additionally, customers are shaped by their involvement with particular



components of tangibles. Figure 2.4 displays the connection between service quality and customer satisfaction.

**Figure 2.4: The relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction**



**Source: Fernie, Moore and Fernie (2015:71)**

Concerning connection between customer satisfaction and service quality, Figure 2.4 demonstrates the meaning and measurements of satisfaction and service quality. Kang (2015:101) states that the aspects that determine selection of SFRS by customers are costs, neatness, garments quality, assortment, store location, employee attitude and store atmosphere. Fernie, Moore and Fernie (2015:71), nonetheless, states that the relative significance of all store factors recognized by customers moved after some time and between trading areas due to economic competitive changes and shifts in customers' priorities.

In accordance with this, Giridhar, Joshi and Sadarangani (2015:185) argue that perceptions of service quality are the results of customers' comparisons of expected service with perceived service. They contend that the gaps between expected and actual/delivered service creates dissatisfaction. In this manner, the retailers' challenge is to minimise the gaps between expected and perceived service by first understanding customers' expectations and afterward conveying those expectations. The factors of more significance in the customers' choice of SFRS arranged in a descending order were store layout, services, checkout, special offers, displays, brands available, parking, advertising, product availability and convenient trading ours.

- Physical environment which relates to variables, such as store decor, lighting, ambience and layout, air conditioning, attractiveness of displays and advertising effectiveness;
- Staff, which included variables relating to the helpfulness, friendliness, courtesy and training of staff and customized relations with staff;
- Issues concerning to price promotions and included variables related to 'sale' items, such as selection/choice, discounts, and availability;
- Availability, such as convenience on store trading hours;
- Shopping ease, linking to ease of movement within the store as well as ease of finding items; and
- Image involving to reliability and reputation of the store.

## **2.10 HOW CUSTOMERS ASSESS SERVICE QUALITY**

It is significant for the retailer to perceive how customers evaluate service quality inside the store. This understanding allows the usage of appropriate alterations to increase the overall service package that satisfies customers. Customers knowingly utilize their perceptions and expectations to evaluate service quality. Yildirim, Cagatay and Hidayetoglu, (2015:726) describe perception as one's effort of selecting, sorting out and assembling improvements into a picture that is sensible and significant. Then again, expectations are simply based on customers' understanding, familiarity and experience. Kang (2015:101) clarify that customers are content when their perceptions on service surpass or equal their initial expectations, and they are dissatisfied if the opposite occurs.

## **2.11 CUSTOMER PREFERENCE**

Sasmita and Suki (2015: 292) clarifies customer preference as a character of a consumer. If product preferred by the customer is not available with one retailer, the customer goes to another retailer for a similar product. The manner by which a consumer is satisfied or unhappy about a product after his/her buy is called customer preference. When the customer prefers the product, there are more chances of buying it once more (Mafini and Dhurup 2015:31). Guercini and Runfola (2015:84) express that the role of customer

preference is the customer's individual attributes, for example, physical strength, mental strength and emotional quotient, which play a significant role in influencing customer preference and buying behaviour.

Izogo and Ogba (2015:269) have made attempts to research the factors liable for customer preference towards products and services. Their outcomes show that customer preferences are largely sensitive to the various product-related tangible and intangible factors and the other demographic factors of the customers. The various tangible factors related with garments products are the looks of the garments, the quality of fabrics, and the ambience of the stores. The intangible features related with the apparel are product price, the responsiveness of the sales persons, the social status attached to the products, ease of product availability, ease of payment for products and services, promotional strategies adopted by brands, lifestyle of customers and the country of origin of the apparel brands.

For example, global brands like Diesel, Armani, Gucci, etc., have opened stores in all major cities. These stores have a wide range of assortments which are appropriate for the Indian customers. Domestic brands have also stepped into the market with various assortments of products as per the district and culture. Brands are growing their presence from urban markets to rural markets to reach customers. In the past, customers were not given a comprehensive list of products; therefore, there were no unexpected preferences. In the present setting, there is wide range of assortment and brands for the purchaser to choose. Thus, the preferences of customers have a more extensive significance. During the 1990s, the buyers' market was dominant, as opposed the present buyers' market.

## **2.12 CUSTOMER SATISFACTION**

Customers' satisfaction can be analysed, in general, by what a customer recognizes in the wake of consuming an item or a service. Customer satisfaction is viewed as a "mental state (feeling) experienced resulting to buying and devouring an item or service" Beneke, Brito and Garvey (2015:62). Upadhyay (2016:3) noticed that customers have two degrees of expectations; wanted and satisfactory levels. Strickland further advises that, for an organization to accomplish the range between acceptable and desired levels, it needs to build up product and service quality specifications, employee performance metrics,

product performance and quality metrics, clear definitions of customers' expectations, service process management, service process metrics, on-going interactive customer orientation, iterative process monitoring, controls and corrective action procedures. In this manner, consumer loyalty mirrors "the joy level coming about because of devouring an item prompting positive feeling (fulfilment), negative (disappointment) or lack of concern (nonpartisan) feeling from expending an item or a service" (Jain and Aggarwa 2016:138).

Similarly, Zhou, Poon and Wang (2015:568) characterize the idea of consumer satisfaction as the general mentality a customer displays towards a provider of service; this response, this reaction, or emotional response is usually derived from an enthusiastic response to the contrast between what customers envision and what they obtain, with regards to the satisfaction of some need, objective or craving.

### **2.13 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CUSTOMERS' SATISFACTION AND SERVICE QUALITY**

Satisfaction is the customers' evaluation judgement of a product or service, to the extent whether that product or service has met customers' needs and expectations (Boone and Kurtz 2015:177). Beneke and Carter (2015:35) define consumer satisfaction as a kind of passionate reaction that emerges from a genuine encounter.

The connection between service quality and customers' satisfaction is still considered a riddle, irrespective of whether consumer loyalty was a predecessor of service quality or a different way. A few specialists/experts suggest that consumers' loyalty stimulates service quality (Li and Lin 2015:106).

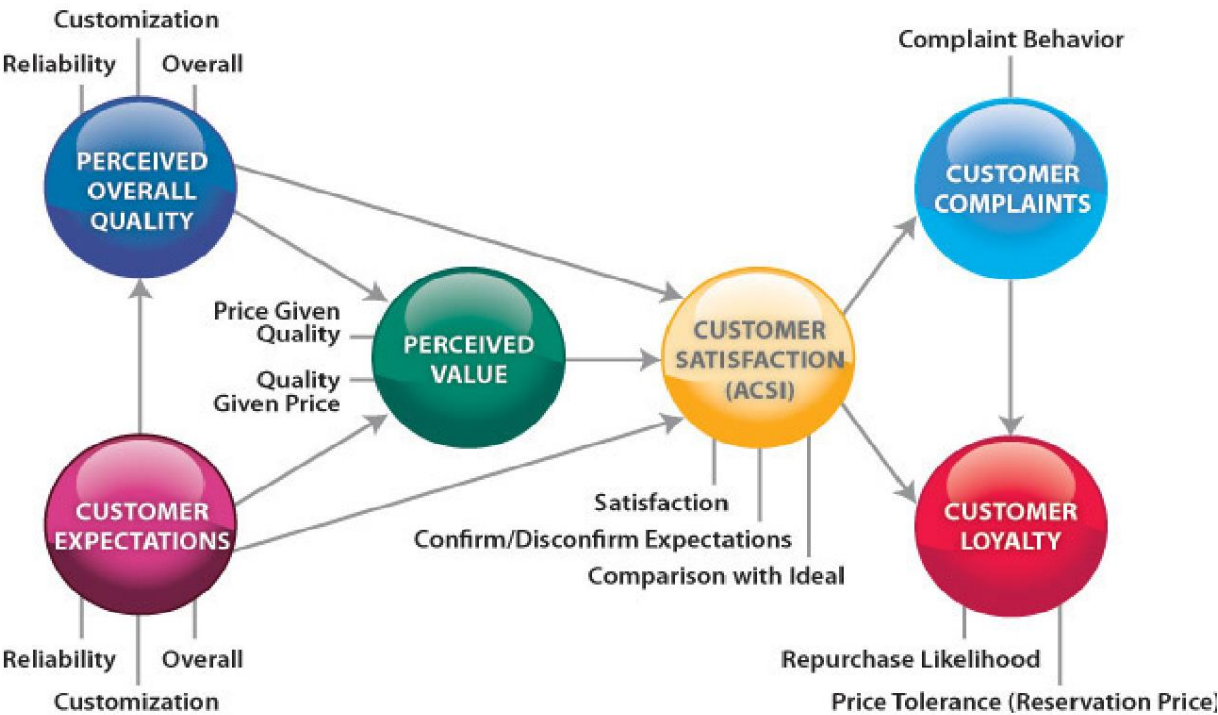
Grzeskowiak, Sirgy, Foscht and Swoboda (2016:138) express that consumer loyalty occurs in two conditions. One is the result of an item or genuine service that meets the customers' expectations. Shin and Eksioglu (2015:96) similarly show that satisfaction is the customers' satisfaction response. The other is the result that surpasses customers' expectations. Dissatisfaction will occur when the genuine service is below the normal level. In this regard, satisfaction and disappointment are the results of a subjective assessment.

In the occasion that experience of the service significantly surpasses the desires that customers have of the service, satisfaction will be high, and vice versa (Alshurideh, Al-Hawary, Mohammad, Al-Hawary, Al Kurdi, Pullman and Walton 2017:159). Similarly, this ought not be seen by service providers as a permit to drive down desires to achieve overwhelming and accompanying consumer loyalty with direct service quality: service quality is viewed as a forerunner to consumer loyalty (Noda 2015:60).

## **2.14 CUSTOMERS' SATISFACTION AND LOYALTY AT SFRS**

Bracíníková and Matušínková (2017:48) express the concept of customer satisfaction as the overall attitude a customer displays towards a provider of service. This response, or emotional reaction, is frequently derived from an enthusiastic reaction to the contrast between what customers imagine and what they get, with regards to the satisfaction of some need, objective or craving. Customers' satisfaction can be analysed by what a customer identifies in the wake of consuming an item or a service. Customer satisfaction is seen as a "mental state (feeling) experienced subsequent to purchasing and consuming a commodity or service" (Al-Jazzazi and Sultan 2017:297). In this manner, consumer loyalty mirrors "the joy level coming about because of consuming a commodity which may have prompted a positive feeling (fulfilment); a negative experience (disappointment), or lack of concern (non-partisan)" (Pentz, Terblanche and Boshoff 2017:276). Consumer satisfaction depicts a customer's "positive" state of mind after the purchase of a specific commodity or enjoying the benefits of a service" (Mandhachitara and Piamphongsant 2016:149). Figure 2.5 demonstrates the connections between the two ideas.

**Figure 2.5: South African customers' satisfaction index**



**Source: Kumar, Stauermann, Loganathan and Kumar (2015:52).**

It is a general belief that, when an organisation offers effective and superior service quality, there is a relating increment in support and customer maintenance (Kumar, Stauermann, Loganathan and Kumar 2015:52). When customers feel well treated, it normally prompts an improved degree of customer loyalty and support.

In the similar vein, Kakkos, Trivellas and Sdrolas (2015:528) maintain that customer satisfaction reveals itself in repeat visits to the business. It means the 'returnee' had an exceptionally satisfied first experience, subsequently prompting a return. The ability of nearly observing customer satisfaction will lay the foundation for rivalry in contention fields and gaining more market share. A large segment of these organisations have made ways to gather data about their customers' complaints, which will shape the premise on which they design or implement service quality ideals.

## 2.15 MEASURING SERVICE QUALITY FOR SFRS

Researchers and academics in the area of services around the world have been utilizing different instruments and methods to measure service quality. Their contributions have brought about the improvement of a valuable scale - SERVQUAL. The scale is extensively used for measuring service quality in various service segments (Sharma 2016:91).

The SERVQUAL model contains 22 items. These items are utilized for measuring customers' perceptions and expectations regarding the quality of service. This model is evaluated on a seven-point Likert scale which ranges from 'agreement' to 'disagreement'. The degree of service quality is signified by the gap between perceived and expected service. The SERVQUAL model is based on the following five service quality dimensions (Roslan, Wahab and Abdullah 2015:462).

**Tangible** - personnel appearance; equipment and physical facilities,

**Reliability** – ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately;

**Responsiveness** –provide prompt service and willingness to help customers;

**Assurance** – knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to gain trust and confidence; and

**Empathy** – proving individualised attention to customers.

The last two dimensions (assurance and empathy) include items representing seven original dimensions: communication, credibility, security, competence, courtesy, understanding customers, and access. These were not identified as separate factors after the two scale revisions. In this manner, while SERVQUAL has only five distinct dimensions, it captures 10 of the initially conceptualised dimensions. Currently, different organizations utilize an adjusted SERVQUAL instrument to measure customer satisfaction within their industry. This instrument is highly regarded for its capacity to measure the abstract phenomena of customer satisfaction when it is adapted to that specific industry. The measuring instrument requires responses to four or five questions within each of the defined dimensions listed above and measures the perceptions and attitudes of the respondents (Asún, Rdz-Navarro and Alvarado 2016:133).

The main body of the measuring instrument uses a Likert-type scale for each question. Each question is asked twice, once initially when measuring perceptions of the service and then when measuring expectations of the experienced service. Customers are also asked for supplementary demographic data, and additional questions are added, if deemed necessary by management and researchers.

The contrasts among expectations and perceptions are then calculated (in totality and then per dimension). The results of this once-off study advise the business about whether it is meeting customers' expectations and provides an indication of customers' perceptions of what service quality ought to be. A business or industry group can utilize the data gained from the analysis of the data to improve its position by following up on the outcomes and seeking to exceed customers' expectations on consistently. Additionally, the results of expectations-perceptions, along with the demographic data, may also facilitate effective customer segmentation.

## **2.16 EXPLORATION OF THE SERVICE GAPS**

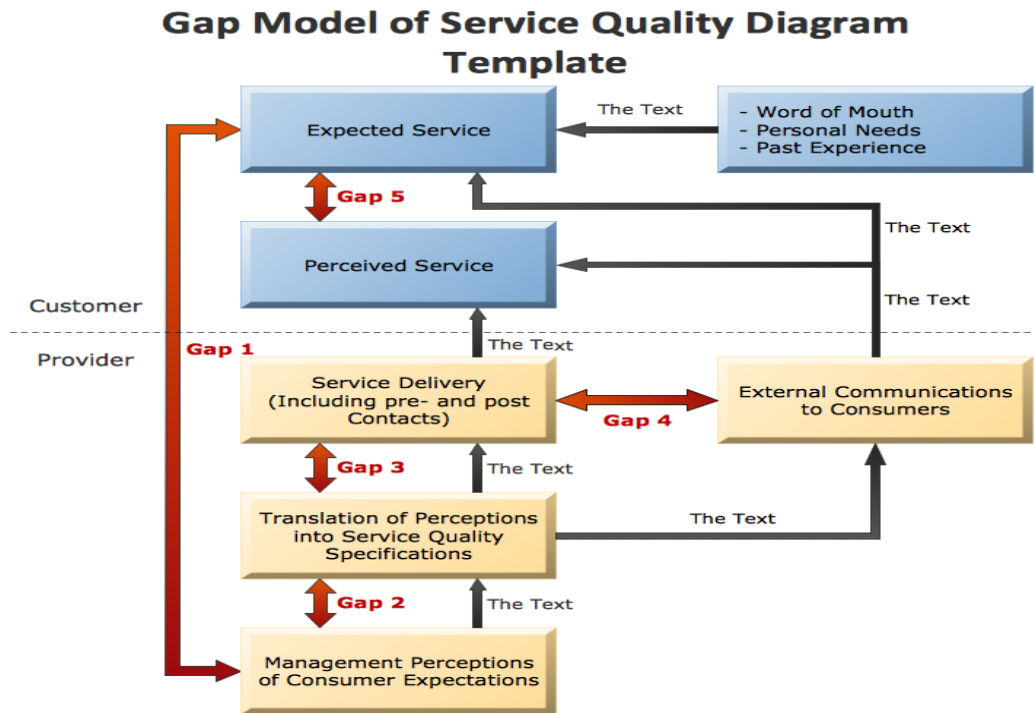
The goal of the conceptual 'gap models of service quality' is the service customer gap, which alludes to the difference between the expectations and the perceptions of customers. Businesses should generally strive to close this gap in order to satisfy their customers' needs and build long-term relationships with them. Figure 2.6 is used to elaborate on the service gaps. Kumar, Stauvermann, Loganathan and Kumar (2015:52), Conceptual Gap Model is regarded as the most effective scale for service quality measurement (Abu, Yusof, Tufail and Virgiyanti 2016:749)

This model gave specific consideration to service providers and customers and was based on an experimental study that examined providers' and customers' perceptions of service quality. Through this study, the authors realized that service quality is the function of "five gaps", of which four are internal to the business, and one is an external gap on the side of the customer. The gap model also identifies how customers' expectations are impacted by genuine service delivery and by external communication. The model highlights how customers' expectations can be a catalyst for change in the business's management style and practices, which will consequently impact service delivery. The model consists of two dimensions:



- Gaps 1 – 4: Service providers' internal gaps; and
- Gap 5: Perceived service quality (external gap).

**Figure 2.6: Gap Model of service quality**



- **Source: Sharmin, Tasnim and Shimul (2016:108).**

### 2.16.1 Service Provider Gap 1 - Information Gap

This gap is the contrast between customers' expectations and the business substances' degree of comprehension of those expectations. Senior management may not completely comprehend which parts of service quality are important to customers and what levels of execution are related with the features of service quality; and which are perceived to be of superior quality (Roslan, Wahab and Abdullah 2015:380). Management may believe that it recognizes what customers want and proceed to deliver consumers' needs, when, in fact, customers may expect something completely different.

### **2.16.2 Service Provider Gap 2 - Specifications Gap**

This gap is the difference between the organisations' comprehension of customer expectations and the improvement of service specifications and standards to meet those expectations. Management may not set particular targets or may characterize them ineffectively. Alternatively, management may set clear quality specifications but these may not be reachable attributable to current asset imperatives, both in human and resource capital (Sharmin, Tasnim and Shimul 2016:108).

### **2.16.3 Service Provider Gap 3 - Performance Gap**

This gap is the distinction between the established service specifications and standards, and actual service performance. Service specifications must be sustained and improved by the appropriate individuals, systems and technology together with performance management, if they are to be effective. Employees in the service interaction must also be compensated accordingly with adequate incentives to show the necessary practices. Unanticipated difficulties or absence of management oversight can lead to a service provider inadequate to meet service quality specifications. This may be due to human error or mechanical and procedural malfunction (Aghdaie and Alimardani 2015: 278).

### **2.16.4 Service Provider Gap 4 - Communications Gap**

This refers to the contrast between the business's promise and what is actually delivered. Promises made through advertising, the business's sales force and other external communications may raise customers' expectations to a level that becomes the standard against which customers measure the service quality of the business. There might be disappointment with a service due to excessively heightened expectations created through the service (Lai 2015:138).

### **2.16.5 Service Customer Gap 5 - Perceived Service Quality Gap**

This gap identifies the distinction between customers' expectations and their perceptions of the delivered service. This gap is a consequence of the different four internal provider gaps. The employer and service employee must eliminate service quality gaps in order to guarantee that the customer receives an elevated level of service quality. The gap model, as illustrated in figure 2.6, is helpful as it permits management to make an analytical assessment of the reasons of poor service quality. If the first gap is significant, the task of bridging the subsequent gaps becomes greater. It is evident from the literature that the Conceptual Gaps Model is a multidimensional concept that is inter-related and inter-consequential. The Conceptual Gaps Model has been additionally improved by Lai in order to link service quality gaps with both organisational and managerial theories. This is known as the Extended Gaps Model.

## **2.17 SERVICE QUALITY MODELS**

It is generally agreed that service quality and its perception varies from industry to industry. Vigolo and Ugolini (2016:434) that service quality models for recreation and relaxation centres have a tendency to differ significantly by setting and have, from time to time, been approved by different researchers. Thus, the Parasuraman-Zeithaml-Berry Service Quality Model seeks to offer a service quality assessment model that is tailor-made for the fashion industry.

During the 1980s, three American researchers, Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, examined the quality of services, how it emerges and how it very well may be improved. Their ground-breaking research was based on customers' perceived quality undertaken in four service industries: banks, credit card companies, stockbrokers and service companies for household machines, Venter, Chuchu and Pattison (2016:54).

Using focus group interviews with three groups in each industry, they analysed their findings into ten factors or dimensions: tangibles; reliability; responsiveness; competence; courtesy; credibility; security; access; communication; and understanding the customer. Their initial phase in developing an instrument to measure perceived service quality, based on the ten dimensions, was to generate statements, which could serve as a

measure of each dimension. The initial instrument comprised of ninety-seven items and ten dimensions. In a later study Azman, Ilyani Ranlan and Afiqah (2016:190), through scale purification and successful elimination of items, reduced the number of dimensions to five, namely: tangibles; reliability; responsiveness; assurance; and empathy.

## **2.18 The SERVQUAL (SERVICE QUALITY) INSTRUMENT**

Researchers and academics in the area of services around the globe have been utilizing different tools and techniques to measure service quality. Accordingly, they have been successful in developing a scale like SERVQUAL. This scale is broadly utilized for measuring service quality in different service sections in different geographical locations, Sharmin, Tasnima and Shimul (2016:108). The model contains 22 items for evaluating customers' perceptions and expectations regarding the quality of service. A degree of agreement or disagreement with a given time is appraised on a five-point Likert scale. Five of the 22 explanations were used to measure reliability quality, four to evaluate responsiveness, four to quantify assurance, five to gauge empathy and four to gauge tangibles. Communication in both segments may use a five-point Likert scale from "Strongly Agree" (5) to "Strongly Disagree" (1) Asún, Rdz-Navarro and Alvarado (2016: 133). The level of service quality is represented by the gap between perceived and expected service.

The gaps or difference are realized by customers' expectations and perceptions related to the provided service, their perceptions of service quality and, additionally, comprises an evaluated measure of service quality (Sharma 2016:85). The SERVQUAL model is based on five service quality dimensions, namely, tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy.

By differentiating every value distinction between each of the 22 expectations and perceptions, the degree of quality can be confirmed (Sá, Rocha, and Pérez, 2015:71). For example, when the perception value is higher than the expectation value, it can be assumed that the service is pleasing or perfect. Nevertheless, should the expectation value be lower than the perception value, the service quality level could be seen as inadmissible or even unacceptable. Modifying customers' expectations and perceptions

and closing the gaps between them are vital should an organisation offer superb quality service.

On completion of the exploratory study, this progression of detailed meetings and focus group gatherings can be contained in four chosen service classifications. (Slusarczyk 2017:231) find that reliability is the most imperative of these classifications, with tangibles identified as the least essential in every one of the five SERVQUAL dimensions (Sharmin, Tasnim and Shimul 2016:108).

(Sharmin, Tasnim and Shimul 2016:108) introduce the following purposes for measuring quality with the present SERVQUAL:

- Evaluation of quality execution on each SERVQUAL dimension;
- Appraisal of service execution difference to direct contenders;
- Classification of different customer portions; and
- Records of changes in service quality perceptions among customers over a particular day and age.

At present, this model, over an expansive scope of service classes, has been extensively used as a component of various specific circumstances, societies and nations, as a measurement of service quality by researchers and professionals (Roslan, Wahab and Abdullah 2015:462). The factors (Table 2.2) reveal that SERVQUAL has a variety of uses. It could help an extensive variety of businesses and open division associations in surveying customer expectations about and perceptions of service quality. Table 2.2 below shows the items under each dimension in the SERVQUAL scale.

**Table 2.2: The original SERVQUAL item battery, Roslan, Wahab and Abdullah (2015:462)**

<b>Reliability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Providing services as promised.</li> <li>2. Dependability on handling customers' service problems.</li> <li>3. Performing services correctly the first time.</li> <li>4. Providing services at the promised time.</li> <li>5. Maintaining error-free records.</li> </ul>
<b>Responsiveness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. Keeping customers informed about when services will be performed.</li> <li>7. Prompt service to customers.</li> <li>8. Willingness to help customers</li> <li>9. Readiness to respond to customers' requests.</li> </ul>
<b>Assurance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10. Employees who instill confidence in customers.</li> <li>11. Making customers feel safe in their transactions.</li> <li>12. Employees who are consistently courteous.</li> <li>13. Employees who have the knowledge to answer customer questions.</li> </ul>
<b>Empathy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>14. Giving customers individual attention.</li> <li>15. Employees who deal with customers in a caring fashion.</li> <li>16. Having the customer's best interest at heart.</li> <li>17. Employees who understand the needs of their customers.</li> <li>18. Convenient business hours.</li> </ul>
<b>Tangibles</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>19. Modern equipment.</li> <li>20. Visually appealing facilities.</li> <li>21. Employees who have a neat, professional appearance.</li> <li>22. Visually appealing materials associated with the service.</li> </ul>

By way of illustration, an adjusted adaptation of SERVQUAL was used as part of a human services setting (Sharmin, Tasnim and Shimul 2016:108), a lodging setting Sharma 2016: 85) and an exhibition hall setting (Roslan, Wahab and Abdullah 2015:462), to measure customers' expectations concerning service quality.

## **2.19 SERVICE DELIVERY SYSTEM (SDS)**

The service delivery system (SDS) is the major means by which the customer will be served. The manner by which the SDS is displayed to the customer can create the competitive advantage between competitors in a particular market (Hussain, Al Nasser and Hussain 2015:175). The customers' preferences for some elements within the SDS can impact their decisions to service providers. According to Kaura, Prasad and Sharma (2015: 422) there are three main categories - people, physical evidence and the service-scape. Every one of these features may impact the quality of a service in the service delivery process. These are discussed in the following sections.

### **2.19.1 Individuals (People)**

Several studies place more emphasis on the roles played by service representatives and customers in the service delivery process, as far as the vital part played by individuals in the present service marketing hypothesis (Azman, Hafizah, and Ilyani 2016:59). Likewise, marketers and authoritative behaviourists provide careful consideration to the relationship amongst individuals and quality over the span of service delivery.

#### **2.19.1.1 The role of service employees in service delivery**

The role of service employees in any service delivery process is exceptionally critical to service operators, because the following five dimensions of service quality can be impacted by service employees (Thai 2015:23):

- The dress code and appearance of the employees display the tangible dimension of service quality;
- Services employees can completely control the reliability dimension of service quality;
- Frontline employees directly show the reliability service quality by offering their personal willingness to help customers;

- The assurance dimension of service quality is due to the behaviours of the employees in communicating their credibility and instils trust in the customers; and
- Treating customers as individuals.

The function of service workers is very crucial to service operations in various service delivery forms, since service representatives can explicitly affect the greater part of the accompanying five dimensions of service quality (Kaura Prasad and Sharma 2015:422).

Bhat and Singh (2015:66) demonstrate that service employees are a part of the service delivery system that may impact the image of the entire service organisation. The following paragraphs outline the critical significance of the image of the organisation.

**Frontline service employees** - play a role between the external customers and the internal operations of the organisation. Employees' research assists with uncovering why service problems occur, and what companies might take care of these issues. Since internal service quality influences external service quality, measuring internal service quality is vital. Barnes, Ponder and Hopkins (2015:441) additionally indicates that the front-line service employees, as internal customers of a service operator, are the only people who can assess internal service quality.

**Internal service quality affects external service quality** - Measuring internal service quality is critical. Front-line employees see more than customers see and they see the service delivery system from an alternate point (Jianu, Jianu and Urlea 2017:21).

**Sophisticated employees** - have more knowledge to the SDS. They frequently anticipate the disappointment before it happens. If the best employees leave the organisation, it can be detrimental to customer satisfaction, employee morale and overall service quality (Jung, and Seock 2016:20).

In this manner, service organisations should concentrate on the imperative part of service employees and create techniques to unravel human resource (HR) issues that will ensure customer-oriented service that closes the service delivery gaps (Erdil, 2015:205). In accordance with the above assertion (Burger, Steenekamp, van der Berg and Zoch



2015:40) propose four specific policies, namely: - procuring and enlisting the right people; training and developing people to deliver service quality; providing the needed support system; and retaining the best employees.

### **2.19.1.2 The role of customers in service delivery**

According to Hoffman and Bateson (2017:18), customers, as an imperative part of the marketing discipline, still assume a critical part for the survival of all operators. Since customers have and play more convoluted roles in the domain of services than other industries, many researchers and academics have to constantly recognize these services. The most considerable changes of the customers' role are from an external acceptor to a suitable participator in the service creation and delivery process. Therefore, customers cannot only impact on the organisation's productive capacity and both quality and quantity of service, yet additionally control and contribute these results to their own satisfaction.

As a result of customers' participation in service delivery and production, gap 3 within the gap model of service quality is likewise impacted. Asshidin, Abidin and Borhan (2016: 643) identify the following three fundamental roles of the customers in the current SDS.

Firstly, customers are considered as a kind of productive resource and can bring some recognisable productivity benefits for service operations. Since an ever-increasing number of advanced tools and devices are applied in the service market, the collaboration of customers and self-service mechanisations are gradually substituting roles that low-technology and front-line service employees played before by improving the service capacity of service operations. Some management professionals have even called the self-service customers as "fractional employees" of the service organisation, although the controllability and uncertainty of customers' perspectives and action still puzzle all service research studies (Kimes and Collier 2015:237).

Secondly, customers' role in service delivery is to contribute to their own satisfaction in terms of the service and the ultimate quality of services they received. Isa, Saud and Ismail (2015:18) express that numerous researchers have affirmed that customers'

participation to the service delivery process and interaction with the service providers depend on their own needs.

Lastly, the role of customers is likewise seen as a prospective participant since some self-service customers could perform the entire or part-service by themselves and not rely upon the service operations at all (Ali, Zhou, Hussain, Kumat, Neethiahnanthan and Ragavan 2016:94).

Consequently, customer participation in the service process can influence an organisation's productivity, its service quality, and its customers' satisfaction. When customers are unable to perform their role effectually, they may extend the service delivery gaps. Such service delivery gaps may be extended due to customers' lack of understanding of their roles; customers' inability to perform their role; customers not been remunerated for good performance; interference from other customers; or due to market incompatibility (Kotler and Keller 2015:81).

### **2.19.1.3 Physical evidence and the service-scape**

Discounts prices, more convenience services, or some other tangible benefits make the service to be more attractive. Customers frequently assume that it is hard to obtain comprehension distinctive understanding of what they will receive before the actual interaction takes place (Kumar, Kumar and Narayana 2016:11). The physical aspects of the service, specifically physical evidence, identify with all parts of a service, and impact customer perceptions and decisions in the different service settings (Lee and Lee 2015: 26).

Customers assume that physical evidence will be discovered successfully and essentially used when they visit a service facility. In the meantime, service operators attempt to offer secured and capable service delivery. Nevertheless, the actual physical evidence establishes that the service operator offer is neither generally as per customer thinking nor as physical developments in the service delivery process. Such shortcomings influence customers' perceptions of service quality (Sade, Bojei and Donaldson, 2015:19).

According to Marques, Trindade and Santos 2015:18), physical evidence is the environment in which the service was performed and in which the firm and the customers interact. Physical evidence also includes any tangible products that motivate performance or communication of the service. Lee, Lee and Joo (2015:24) assert that physical evidence of service has the accompanying three general types: service-scape; service environment; and service materials. These physical attributes are outlined as follows:

- The service-scape is the physical area where the service is performed;
- The service environment refers to the general environmental factors of a service location; and
- Service materials refer to physical signs, with a consistent capacity in experience for the employees or the customers.

The 'service environment' in the American literature on service has been referenced as the "service-scape" (Jani and Mzalendo 2015:17). Mobrezi and Khoshtinat (2016:447) describe service-scape as "the style and appearance of the physical surroundings where customers and service suppliers communicate". This service-scape influences customers by amending conduct at customer level (Burger, Louw, Pegado and van der Berg 2015: 56). Situational elements influence customers' perceptions and impact on their behaviour.

Right when service suppliers settle on policies and choices for passing on and receiving quality service, they consistently focus on three crucial calculations of the service delivery process: location; time; and channel (Klopotan, Vrhovec-Žohar and Mahič 2016:88).

#### **2.19.1.4 Service location**

The service delivery location, as a type of physical evidence, can affect the customers' behaviour (Simmers and Keith 2015:126). The service area splitting permits the customer to decide on the place of service delivery and offers a more convenient and attractive place (Hennayake 2017:161). According to Potluri, Angati and Narayana (2016:28) service location is a place in which the service is produced, delivered and consumed.

As per the characteristics of service types and customers' needs, service operations usually have three choices for the service location: at the provider's location; at the customer's location and at a third party's location (Naik and Byram 2016:74).

The service delivery location, as a sort physical evidence, can affect the customer's behaviour (Muahmmad Sharifah, Mohsin and Syamsulang 2015:40). Azman, Hafizah and Ilyani (2016:59) indicate the following three aspects: the importance of quality characteristics in the customers' perceptions; the customers' incorporation into the service process; as well as the customer buying decisions.

Despite the fact that customer convenience is vital, service operators need to consider various restrictions when they choose the area of their service delivery. In specific, the profitability-oriented impacts are of concern to all service providers (Vida, 2015:136). For example, the costs and capacity of service location are limited by the economies of scale of the service provider.

#### **2.19.1.5 Service timing**

The time flexibility of service delivery means that the timing of service providers can meet the requirements of certain customers at a specific time (Shahin and Shahiverdi 2015: 32). The degree of service delivery is a fundamental standard of service providers (Pederzoli and Kuppelwieser 2015:894). The permanence of service availability means the actual operating time of service providers Brozovic, Ravald and Nordin 2015:644).

Timing procedures of service delivery frequently limit service availability and cause inconvenience for customers. Meanwhile, service resources, limits and other outer factors additionally limit the time flexibility and operating of service providers (Rao, Kondasani and Panda 2015:467). Sriram, Chintagunta and Machanda (2015:61) summarise the accompanying four dimensions of service timing:

Firstly, the extent of service delivery, as a fundamental standard of service delivery, is of concern to both customers and service providers. Most customers focus on service extent. They select the different service providers by the different extent of service

delivery. Service management control and fluctuate the extent of service delivery within their ability so as to acquire benefits and get the specific segment of the service market (Kaura, Prasad and Sharma 2015:422).

Secondly, the time adaptability of service delivery proposes that the service timing of service providers can meet few customers' needs at a particular time. There are three degrees of customers' adaptability in the service market. As a matter of first importance, all periods of service delivery are prearranged by service providers. This is an altered time that customers cannot choose. Then, all the periods of service delivery are recorded ahead of time by service providers and customers can pick a definite time from the timetable. Consequently, the delivery times of service are not fixed. Nevertheless, service resources and limits frequently limit the time adaptability of service delivery, Cervellon, MSylvie and Ngobo (2015:51).

Thirdly, the permanence of service convenience means the genuine operating time of the service provider (Garaus, Wagner and Kummer 2015:68). Since numerous organizations have different convenient hours, customers repeatedly experience numerous inconveniences. Subsequently, the present pattern of service convenience is "24 hours a day, 7 days a week" Bhat and Singh 2015:66).

Lastly, there is an interval period, specifically, time-tag, between the customers' demand for a service and the actual delivery of the service. In the service delivery process, both customers' and service providers' expectations to decrease the time-tag between demand and delivery, since customers' needs can be met timeously and the service provider could profit more benefit through serving more customers, Rahmawati and Muflikhati (2016:19).

#### **2.19.1.6 Channel role of service delivery**

He and Wang (2015:68) express that the channel of service delivery is viewed as a mediator of disseminating and delivery of service from service provider to customers. There are numerous kinds of service delivery directives in today's service industries. Normally, two kinds of service channels are for the most part perceived by researchers.

This concerns different service carriers; specifically, individual channels and electronic channels.

The common delivery channel for a service is the personal service delivery. According to the association of creation and consumption in service, the instant contact between the service maker and the customers is vital. The two kinds of personal channels utilized in service delivery are company-owned channels and the third-party channels (Halkias, Davvetas and Diamantopoulos 2016:69).

For most services, a service organisation has a company-owned channel. The advantage of company-owned channels is that the owner can keep up consistency in the service delivery process. Since all divisions in the entire service follow a typical standard, the service organisation has unlimited control over the nature of the service. Simultaneously, company-owned channels have two clear duties. One is the developing service chains bringing about potential financial risk. The other is that service associations, with company-owned channels, need specialists in close markets (Gupta, Balmer and Low 2015:10).

Notwithstanding what may be expected, the third-party channel can limit the financial risk and make services locally accessible. Moreover, several lawful, social and language barriers of personal connection encourage service organisations to focus on the cost-effective channels (Claiborne and Sirgy 2015:7). The third-party channel of service delivery incorporates franchisees, consultants and intermediaries.

Nevertheless, the third-party channels are not without disadvantages. For example, the primary service providers find difficulty in sustaining the consistency of service quality. The most recognisable reason is due to customer connections that are controlled by the third-party service firms (Claiborne and Sirgy 2015:7).

With the quick improvement of telecommunications and Personal Computer (PC) innovation over the most recent two decades, electronic channels, as another sort of service channel, have been perceived and connected by more service providers and customers Das (2015:193). Erdil (2015:205) outline four significant types of electronic delivery channels: service machines; phones; internet; and portable channels.

Electronic channels only depend on technology and/or equipment for service production. Service providers utilize these channels to interact with their customers and effectively take care of issues associated with service indivisibility and non-institutionalisation personal service delivery process and provide more facilities to customers (Das 2015:193).

For example, a booking system permits access to a service producer by customers through service machines, not just joining customers completely into the service delivery process to save the potential employees' cost, yet in addition gives facilities to customers and increases customers' satisfaction. Nevertheless, service providers likewise experience some new difficulties when they deliver service through electronic channels. The benefits and difficulties in using electronic channels are recorded in Table 2.3.

**Table 2.3: Benefits and challenges in electronic distribution of services**

<u>Benefits</u>	<u>Difficulties</u>
Consistent delivery for standardised service	Price competition
Low cost	Inability to customise with highly standardised services
Wide distribution	Changes in consumer behaviour
Customer choice and ability to customise	Security concerns
Quick customer feedback	Competition from widening geographies
Customer convenience	Lack of consistency due to customer involvement

**Source: Bellini (2015:19)**

As highlighted in Table 2.3, benefits in electronic distribution of services are in opposition to challenges, based on the characteristics of electronic delivery system. Since customers do not directly contact individuals in the electronic delivery system, costs of services are difficult to differentiate, while established service can be executed dependably. Similarly, customers inconveniently change with exceedingly established services, while service organisations reduce the expense of operation.

Another test is that customers must be well-acquainted with the service interface before they can access this service. Therefore, customers are satisfied with the service in a more extensive region if consumer conduct can be changed (Bellini 2015:19).

Customers can pick and change the distinctive service processes. However, the security of individual data is a traceable issue; mainly their health and financial-related information. Service organisations can learn immediately what customers think of the service, at an equivalent time, they may deal with more competitors far from the local area.

Chen and Quester (2015:18) affirm that various service firms offer diverse service channels simultaneously, since each channel offers its own different profits to service providers and their customers. Generally, the choice of a service channel can impact service execution during the process of service delivery.



## **2.20 Conclusion**

This chapter provided extensive and relevant literature within the ambit of the study's aim and objectives. It looked closely at service quality within the South African fashion industry. This was later narrowed down to a number of SFRS within the Durban region. While the chapter reviewed relevant theories and concepts relevant to service delivery, it further discussed service quality alongside the precepts of service quality. The chapter placed emphasis on customer preference, factors influencing the choice of SFRS; customer expectation and service quality; factors that influence customers' perceptions of service quality; including the relationship between service quality and customers' satisfaction. The chapter also addressed literature on customers' satisfaction and loyalty at SFRS.

The next chapter will concentrate on the research methodology used to measure respondents' perspectives on the study topic, and will introduce the design, population, sample and data collection methods, analysis and ethical considerations of the study.

### **3 CHAPTER THREE**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter discussed the literature review. This chapter will present the research methodology and design adopted in this study. Aspects such as population, sample and sampling method will be discussed. Furthermore, this chapter will highlight the data collection method, as well as how the collected data will be analysed. This will be followed by how the researcher ensured validity and reliability of the data collected. This chapter will also discuss pretesting of the research instrument, anonymity and confidentiality. Finally, the chapter will address the ethical requirements for the study.

#### **3.2 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The main aim of this study was to determine customers' expectations and perceptions that impact on service quality at selected fashion retail stores in the greater Durban Area.

##### Research Objectives

This study addresses the following objectives:

- to determine customers' expectations of the service offering at selected fashion retail stores in the Greater Durban Area;
- to evaluate the customers' perceptions of the service quality at selected fashion retail stores in the Greater Durban Area;
- to assess the service gaps between expectations and perceptions; and
- to determine the biographical details of respondents.

#### **3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN**

Mouton (2012: 107) expresses research design as resembling a course organiser. It is an arrangement of rules and directions on the most capable technique to accomplish the objective - the notion of "planning and building". Furthermore, May (2011:98) states that research design represents a framework followed by the researcher for the collection and analysis of the data from an identified population or social group. The formulation of the

research design and research methods must take account of the aim and objectives of the research study.

The purpose for the study was to examine the different dimensions of service quality and, consequently, recognize the basic parts of service quality in the current service offering at the SFRS in Durban. The research, accordingly, connected a vivid study to inspect perspectives that influence service quality in the SFRS. Cooper and Schindler (2013: 149) express that distinct research is a sort of study that attempts to figure out who, what, when, where, or how much.

The study was descriptive, cross-sectional and quantitative in nature. Cross-sectional studies are low-cost and the most frequently practiced illustrative designs in marketing research. Collis and Hussey (2014:61) state that cross-sectional studies are regularly used to probe economic traits of many individuals or organisations, when there are limitations of time or assets. The study pursued a quantitative research approach wherein questionnaires were administered to 400 participants. According to Burns and Bush (2014:204), quantitative research incorporates the utilization of very much idea out questions accompanied with reply choices that had been programmed, and a group of respondents.

Labaree (2013:4) further expresses quantitative methods as purposeful measurements and arithmetical scrutiny of data collected through utilization of surveys, questionnaires or overviews. Prearranged questions in questionnaires were used. This made it simpler to evaluate the research data gathered. Quantitative method was suitable for the study since the researcher made a generalization to the population, test theories and compared data in a systematic way.

The quantitative approach was likewise utilized as a way to inspect the different dimensions of service quality and recognized the basic parts of service quality among existing SFRS in the greater Durban area.

Quantitative research approaches focus on the quantification of the data collected, and, therefore, entails a collection of numerical data (Bryman and Bell 2011:31). A quantitative researcher often believes that the most ideal approach to measure properties of

phenomena, such as the attitudes of consumers towards retail business practices, is by assigning numbers to the perceived qualities of things (Babbie and Mouton 2010:49). On the other hand, qualitative researchers will “study human action from an insider’s perspective” and, hence, the goal here is to describe and understand rather than explain and predict (Babbie and Mouton 2010:53).

### **3.4 POPULATION**

Population refers to the general impression formed from units falling into various subdivisions, by which the researcher might be captivated. The chosen sample, as a sub-category of the target population, afforded information from which data can be drawn and resolutions made regarding the bigger group and totally reflect the populace (Curtis and Curtis 2011:126) further expresses that population refers to the study of objects and may include individuals, stores and homes. The population is the entire group of individuals about whom the researcher needs to obtain data, Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009). The population size of the fashion customers in KZN is in excess of 1 million, with population size exceeding 1 million, Sekaran, (2013:268) asserts that a sample size of 384 would be adequate to support research findings. To avoid non response, therefore, a total of 400 questionnaires will be administered. The population of this study comprised of customers who purchased items at selected fashion retail stores in the greater Durban Area (Sekaran and Bougie 2013:89).

#### **3.4.1 Targeted population**

Welman, Kruger and Mitchell (2011:52) define the target population as the useful components or members, such as individuals, groups, organisations, human products and events which are of interest in a study. Gay and Airasian (2011:121) describe a population as a group of importance to the researcher; the group to which the researcher would like the outcomes of the study to be generalised. In addition, the target population refers to sub-groups of the total that is made up from units from different sub-groups in which the researcher might be interested Sekaran, (2013:268). All things considered, the target population refers to the population in which the researcher preferably would like to generalise the outcomes. Consequently, extraordinary consideration ought to be taken to

acquire a representative sample to prevent a biased result. The targeted population for this study comprised 4 fashion retail stores in the greater Durban Area.

### **3.5 SAMPLING**

Aaker, Kumar, Leone and Day (2013: 327-328) declares that sampling is the procedure or method of choosing an appropriate sample or representative part of the population for determining parameters or characteristics of the entire population. There are number of motivations to utilize the sample. Some of these reasons are inclusive of lower cost, greater accuracy of result, speed of data collection and availability of population elements (Cooper and Schindler 2013:163). A sample population includes members/units selected from an area to form the sample. A sample population is a group extracted from the total population of that area as representative for the study (Sekaran 2013:266).

#### **3.5.1 Sampling method**

There are various sampling strategies that can be applied to choose a sample. Jankowicz (2004: 202) recommends two main classifications of sampling - probability and non-probability. Probability sampling is the most as often as possible utilized method when focused deductions need to be made from the populace. Non-probability sampling does not consider the aggregate population as far as the researcher's individual judgment is concerned. The non-probability sampling technique was applied in the current study. With non-probability sampling, the researcher cannot predict or guarantee that each member of the population will be represented in the sample. It is often used for small-scale or pilot studies, as in the case of the present study. Participants were included in the sample as the researcher considered them to be able to understand the content of the questionnaire; each of the participants was available and keen to participate in the study (Wagner, Kawulich and Garner 2012:89).

The researcher chose to use the purposive sampling method. This type of non-probability sampling method is utilised when a researcher identifies suitable participants for a study (Sekaran 2010: 277). Purposive sampling is also known as accidental sampling. Here the researcher used participants who were easily accessible and readily available, (Cooper

and Schindler 2013:163). In accordance to the earlier assertion, the researcher administered questionnaires to random customers who were willing to participate in this study. This sample selection process continued until the required sample size was reached (Welman, Kruger and Mitchell 2011:69). This is further elaborated in Table 3.1.

**Table 3.1: Population size**

s/n		<b>Sampling approach</b>	<b>Rationale</b>	<b>No of outlets</b>
1	Population	Judgmental	All retail stores in Durban	74
2	Target population	Purposive	Retail stores within the Durban CBD	22
3	Sample	Purposive	4 largest retail stores in Durban	4
4	Sample size	Purposive	100 randomly selected customers in each of the '4' SFRS	4 outlets x 100 participants = <b>400</b>

### 3.5.2 Sample size

According to Aaker, Kumar, Leone and Day (2013: 328), the size of a sample can be settled either by applying statistical strategies or through some specially selected strategies. The ethos of improvised methods is used when it is known for a fact what test size to embrace or where there are a couple of objectives, for instance, budgetary limitations that direct the sample estimate. The sample selected from the group of potential participants must be an accurate representation, in other words, an exact miniature of that population (Welman, Kruger and Mitchell 2011:55). In selecting the sample size, the researcher used the judgmental sampling technique to select 74 amongst the largest 4 retail stores around Durban. The SFRS were Woolworths, Truworths, Edgars and Foschini, the researcher selected these 4 high fashion retail

stores because they are one of the top fashion retail stores in South Africa, and they are known for providing the best quality in fashion and also provide every known local and international brands. In each of these SFRS, a purposive sampling method was employed wherein the researcher administered questionnaires to 100 customers from each of these 4 fashion retail stores.

The researcher selected 400 respondents from the SFRS in the Greater Durban Area. Therefore, the research findings were credible, because the sample was representative of the population.

### **3.6 DATA COLLECTION**

According to Sapsford (2014), data collection is the progression of gathering and assessing data on some particular factors in an established systematic fashion, which then allows one to answer significant questions and evaluate results. Data can be gathered through questionnaires, interviewing of participants, observation and by reading. The researcher is required to guarantee that the instruments selected are dependable and effective in conducting the study. However, the reliability and validity of a study are to a great extent dependent upon the suitability of the instruments (Annum 2014:1). The research instrument used in the collection of data was the questionnaire. The questionnaire is an effective tool to get opinions, perspectives and descriptions and is one of the most popular data collection methods in business studies (Cooper and Schindler 2013:163). The researcher administered the questionnaires personally and was assisted by a research assistant. The presence of the researcher was important as she was able to explain questions that were unclear to the study participants. The presence of the researcher was also beneficial as it enhanced the response rate. It took each participant an estimated 10-25 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

### **3.7 QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN**

Questionnaire design refers to the design (text, order, and conditions for skipping) of the questions used to get the data required for the survey Mohajan (2016:31). A questionnaire is a written instrument used to acquire data from the study subjects.

Developing a questionnaire is the last step in designing a study after all variables of interest have been recognized. By first identifying the information needed to answer the study objectives, questions will be limited to those expected to acquire the necessary data. Generally, the questionnaire ought to be as simple as possible, collect only needed information. SERVQUAL was used to measure quality in the service sector. It is regarded as a breakthrough in the measurement methods used for service quality research. SERVQUAL is a dimensional research instrument, designed to capture consumer expectations and perceptions of a service along the five dimensions that are believed to represent service quality (Parasuraman, Berry and Zeithaml 2012: 3).

The design of a questionnaire is critical to ensure that appropriate research questions are addressed and that accurate data for statistical analysis are collected, Robson (2011:19). The questions presented were in a format of the Likert-scale line of questioning wherein participants could rank their level of agreement or disagreement. The questions were written in English.

### **3.7.1 Questionnaire content**

A questionnaire with 44 questions was the principal data collection instrument used to investigate SFRS customers' expectations and perceptions. Andrews (2012:12) further expresses that, as a rule, SERVQUAL has been seen to be a generally basic and economical instrument that gives significant information on an association's service quality. Different experts have utilized the SERVQUAL model to measure service quality in the fashion industry.

### **3.7.2 Question format and type**

Leedy and Ormrod (2010: 189) advocate the Likert scale as the most comprehensively used type of scaled measurement where the respondents select a point on the scale that best speaks to their view. The rating scales are likewise valuable when a behaviour, attitude and other phenomenon of trust need to be assessed. There are mainly four



questionnaire designs, namely, Likert scale, dichotomy, open-ended and closed-ended questionnaires.

The primary form of the measuring instrument uses a Likert-type scale for each question. Each question is asked twice, once initially when measuring the expectations of the service and then when measuring perceptions of the experienced service. Customers are likewise asked for supplementary demographic data and additional questions are additionally included, whenever considered important, by management and researchers. Scoring for the scale ranged from (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) uncertain, (4) agree and (5) strongly agree. The questions were compiled in English and all the respondents (customers) were assured that they would remain anonymous.

### **3.8 PILOT TESTING**

A pilot study is designed to ensuring that respondents have a clear understanding of questions being asked in the questionnaire. Pilot testing also enables the researcher to identify possible flaws in the questionnaire design (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2012:451). Through the pilot testing, the researcher could identify which questions in the questionnaire were not easily understood by the research participants. Hence, such questions were rephrased in simpler English to guarantee that the researcher provided a good structured questionnaire after the piloting process. For this study, a sample of twenty-five (25) questionnaires were distributed among customers who purchased items at SFRS within the greater Durban area.

### **3.9 DATA ANALYSIS**

Marshall and Rossman (2016:150) express data analysis as the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of gathered information. It is portrayed as chaotic, equivocal and time-consuming, but also as a creative and fascinating process. Schwandt (2007:6) states that, while it does not proceed in linear fashion, it is the activity of making sense of interpreting and theorizing data that signify a search for general statements among categories of data. Mouton (2009:166) clarifies that that data examination concerns research of elements, the connections amongst factors and the examples in these connections. The data obtained through the questionnaires was

analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS version 24.0) and the necessary statistical tests were therefore conducted. To make reasonable conclusions in this study, a statistician was employed to analyse the responses provided by the participants of the study. The core findings were additionally illustrated through bar charts, histograms, figures and tables.

### **3.9.1 Data preparation**

The information must be examined, coded, edited, entered into a computer, cleaned, transformed and documented Cooper and Schindler (2013:379). As indicated by Tustin et al. (2005:414), data preparation is frequently regarded as a tedious administration task, but its significance can hardly be over-emphasised, since the quality of the analytical results depends on the accuracy of the raw data. Copper and Schindler (2011:112) likewise verify that data entry is a significant step to analyse the responses from a large questionnaire survey using a computer statistics package.

The technique of modifying all questionnaires conformed to the requirements. All codes were made ahead of schedule in the research process, since the survey comprised of closed-ended questions. The pre-coding procedure made the coding and data approval clearer, quicker and easy flowing.

### **3.9.2 The t- test**

This test is utilized to decide if there are any noteworthy contrasts in the methods for two groups in the variable of interest (Sekaran 2010: 376). In this study, the paired t-test was done to test the momentous difference between the two means of expectations and perceptions.

### **3.10 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY**

When researchers construct and evaluate measurements, careful attention must be paid to two technical considerations, that is, reliability and validity (Babbie and Mouton 2010:119). As per Blumberg, Cooper and Schindler (2013:379), the term validity refers to “the extent to which a test measures what we actually were to measure” whilst reliability refers to “the accuracy and precision of a measurement procedure”. Furthermore, Maree and Pietersen (2007:155) state that authenticity and constancy are two terms consistently utilized as a part of association with measurement.

The authenticity and dependability quality of a measurement instrument impact the level to which something can be learnt about the topic under examination, the probability that factual significance data investigation will be obtained, and the degree to which significant determination can be established from the information.

#### **3.10.1 Validity**

Validity is the degree to which the research findings represent the real occurrence in a particular situation (Welman, Kruger and Mitchell 2011:142). Mohajan (2017:29) have an alternate interpretation on validity stating that, a test is valid for measuring an attribute if (a) the attribute exists and (b) variations in the attribute causally produce variation in the measurement”. Validity is a key concept in assessing the nature of research. It refers to how well a research design conveys accurate, clear and uncertain proof with which to answer the research problem.

The questionnaire depended on a well-known customer satisfaction-measuring model, referred to as the SERVQUAL. This model has been approved in numerous studies Smith (2008). Survey questions depended on the literature review and frame of reference to guarantee the validity of the result. The questionnaire was additionally examined by a panel of experts for face validity. This panel consisted of two supervisors and a statistician.

### **3.10.2 Reliability**

Reliability is concerned with whether the results of the data analysis will create similar outcomes on different events or whether other observers with comparable perceptions come to a similar end results from the raw data (Saunnders, Lewis and Thornhill 2009:149). Williams (2007:65) likewise express that reliability is the degree to which the research result would be stable or reliable if the similar techniques were used repeatedly.

In this study, the researcher used the following measures to guarantee the reliability of the study:

- All field workers were trained so that they could direct meetings with the same approach;
- A pilot study of the questionnaire was undertaken to ensure that all questions and statements were important and easily understood; and
- Cronbach alpha was calculated to measure the reliability of the measurement.

### **3.11 ANONYMITY AND CONFIDENTIALITY**

The researcher guaranteed anonymity by not requesting for names or identity of research participants. This made their respective views confidential. More so, there were no links of individual responses with participants' identities. Hence, the anonymity and confidentiality approach enhanced the level of truthfulness and frankness among research participants (Wilson 2010:27).

### **3.12 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The study adhered to the ethical standards upheld by the Faculty of Management Sciences of the Durban University of Technology. Ethical considerations were also strengthened by the supervisors' roles who ensured that specific research standards were followed. Whilst this study used human beings as subjects, there was no threat of harm or there were no vulnerable populations that were requested to answer the questionnaire. The questions contained in the questionnaire were not intrusive and did not infringe on the reputation or security of the respondents or business entities.

### **3.13 CONCLUSION**

This chapter provided the research methodology pursued in this study. It addressed aspects such as population, sample and sampling method. This chapter also addressed the data collection method, data analysis, validity and reliability, pilot test, anonymity and confidentiality, and ethical standards. The next chapter will focus on the data analysis and interpretation of this study.

## 4 CHAPTER FOUR FINDINGS OF THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

In chapter three, the research design, data collection methods and questionnaire design were discussed. This chapter will present the results and discuss the findings obtained from the questionnaires in this study. The questionnaire was the primary tool that was utilized to collect data and was administered to selected fashion retail store customers in the Greater Durban Area. The data collected from the responses were analysed with SPSS version 25.0. The results will present the descriptive statistics in the form of graphs, cross tabulations and different figures for the quantitative data that were gathered. Inferential techniques will include the utilization of correlations and chi square test values, which will be interpreted using the p-values.

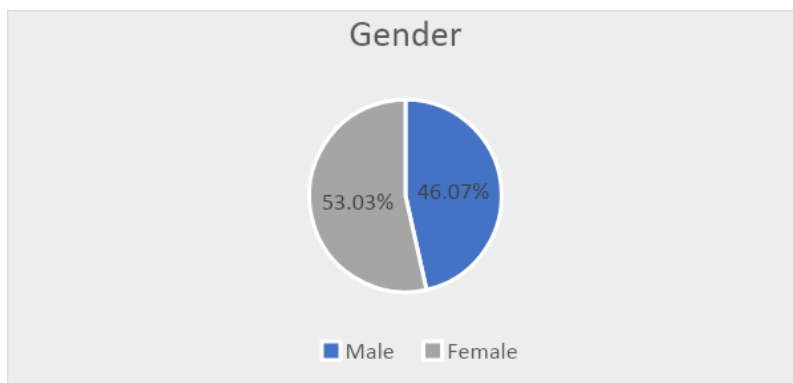
### 4.2 DEMOGRAPHIC DETAILS OF RESPONDENTS

This section describes the demographic profile of the 400 respondents, including gender, age, and regional distribution.

#### 4.2.1 Gender

As revealed in Figure 4.1, the percentage of male respondents was 46.07%, while the percentage of female respondents was 53.03%. This sample was made up of more females (211) than males (185).

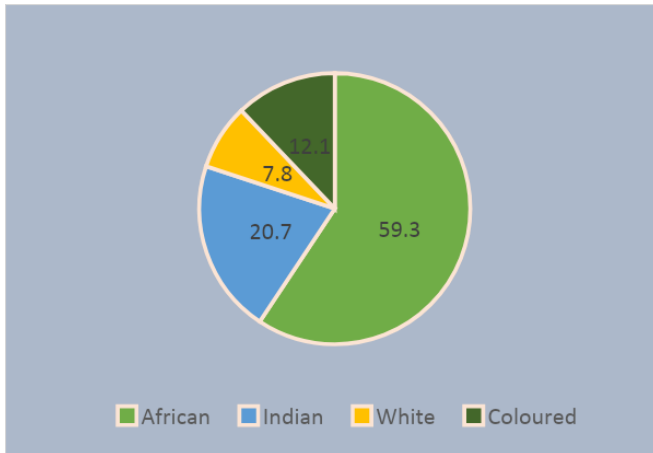
**Figure 4.1: Gender of respondents**



### 4.2.2 Race

As reflected in Figure 4.2, 59.3 % (235) of the respondents were African, followed by 20.7% (82) Asian, 7.8%, (31) White and 12.1% (48) Coloured.

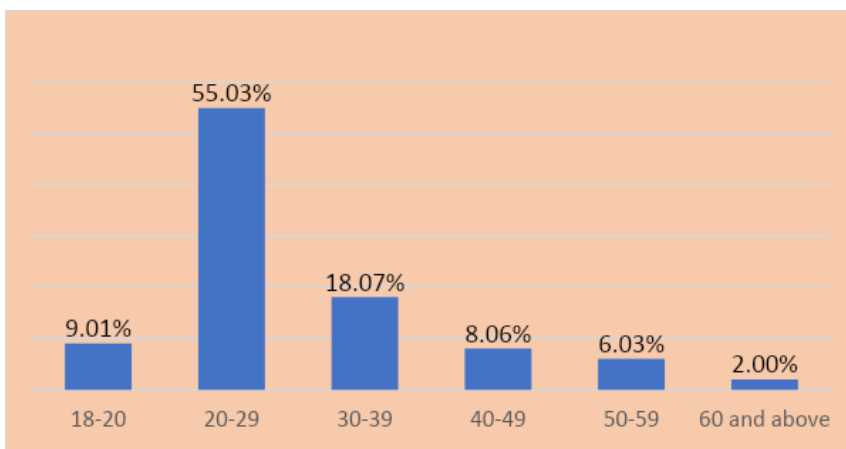
**Figure 4.2: Race of respondents**



### 4.2.3 Age

As reflected in Figure 4.3, 9,1% (36) of the respondents were in the 18-20 age group, followed by 55.3 % (219) in the 20-29 age group, 18.7% (74) in the 30-39 age group, 8.6% (34) in the age group of 40-49, 6.3% (25) in the age group of 50-59 and 2.0% (8) in the age group of 60 years and above. The demographic age profile of this study demonstrates that the 20 to 29 age group was the leading group.

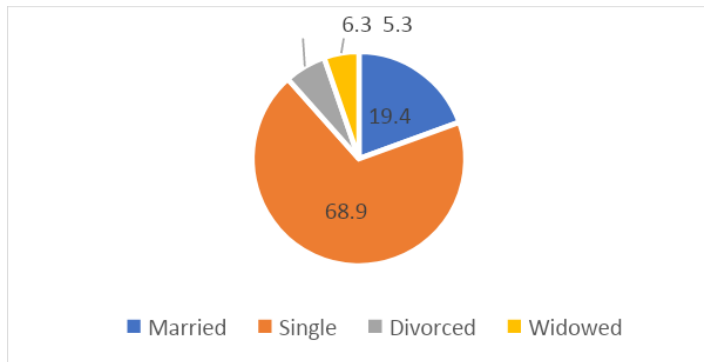
**Figure 4.3: Age of respondents**



#### 4.2.4 Marital status

Figure 4.4 shows that 68.09% (273) of the respondents were single, followed by 19.04% (77) who were married, 6.03% (25) were divorced and 5.03% (21) were widowed.

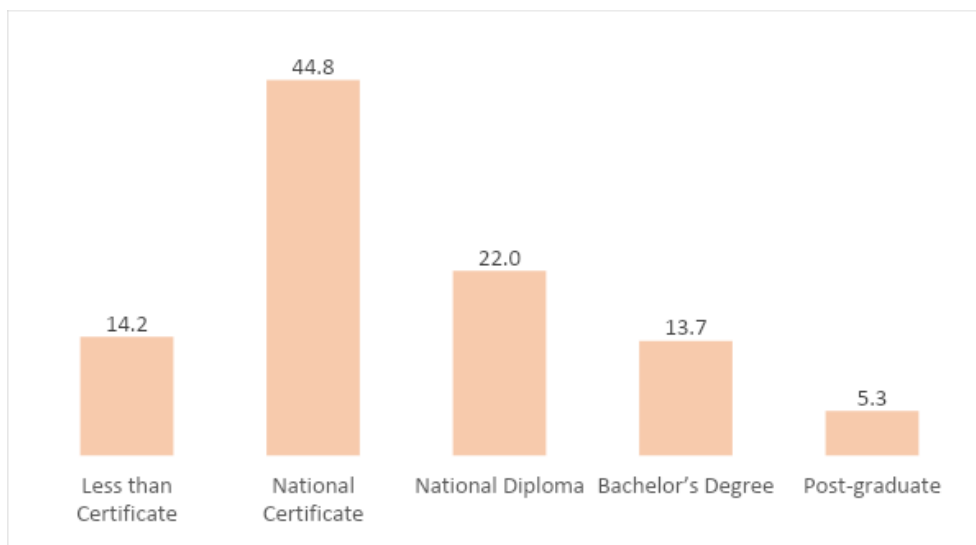
**Figure 4.4: Marital status**



#### 4.2.5 Educational level

Figure 4.5 indicates that 14.02% (56) have less than a certificate, 44.08% (177) of the respondents have a national certificate, followed by 22.0% (87) who have a national diploma, 13.07% (54) have a bachelor's degree, and 5.03% (21) have a post-graduate qualification. The demographic level of study profile demonstrated that the national certificate level of study was the dominant group.

**Figure 4.5: Educational level**

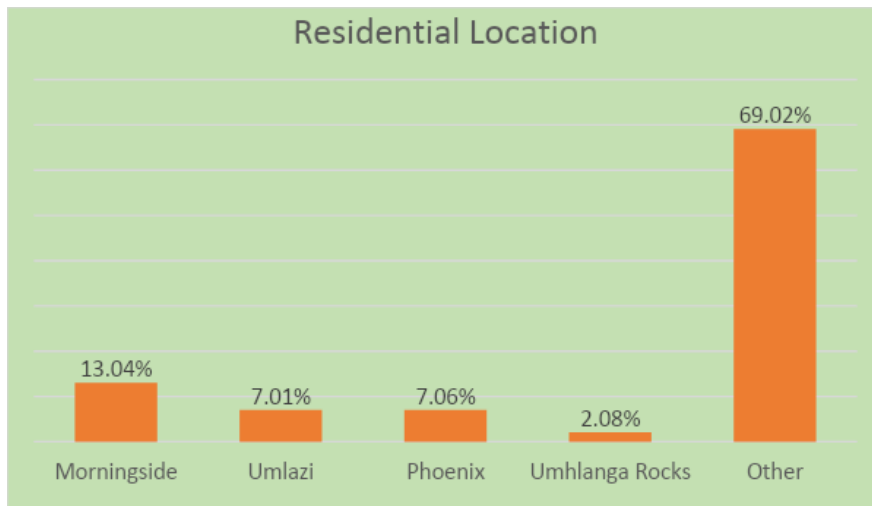




#### 4.2.6 Residential location

As shown in Figure 4.6, the percentage of respondents residing in Morningside was 13.04% (53), 7.1% (28) in Umlazi, 7.06% (30) in Phoenix, 2.08% (11) in Umhlanga Rocks and 69.2 % (274) in different locations in Durban.

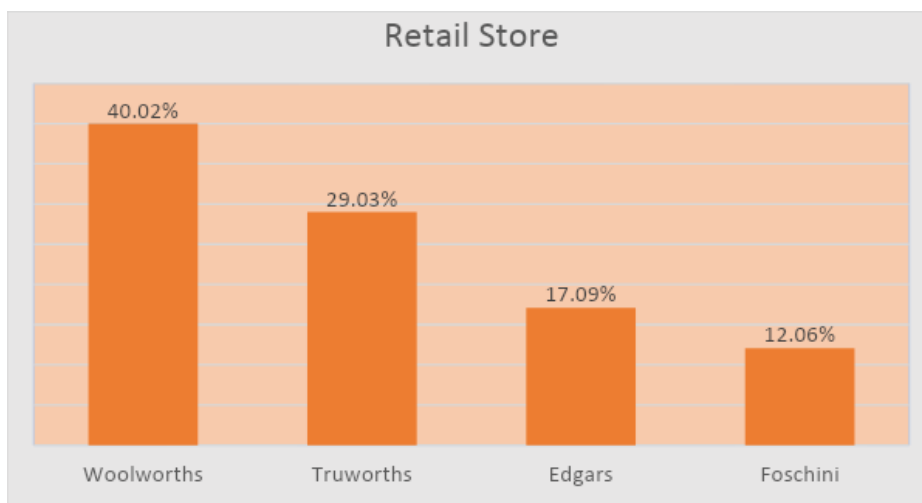
**Figure 4.6: Residential location of respondents**



#### 4.2.7 Retail store

As reflected in Figure 4.7, 40.02% (159) of the respondents' shop at Woolworths, followed by 29.03% (116) at Truworths, 17.09% (71) at Edgars and 12.06% (50) at Foschini.

**Figure 4.7: Retail Store**



**4.3 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS ON THE DIMENSIONS**

The research on measuring service quality focused mainly on meeting or exceeding customers’ expectations. The following sections are comprehensive statistics of the original 22 statements with reference to customers’ service. All statements are measured on five-point scales ranging from “1=strongly disagree” to 5 “strongly agree”.

**4.3.1 Statement 1: Equipment is modern looking**

The data in Figure 4.8 revealed the following expectations of respondents in this study in terms of the modern looking equipment at SFRS: 0.08% (strongly disagree); 2.05% (disagree); 17.09% (neutral); 47.50% (agree) and 31.30% (strongly agree). The significant perceptions were as follows: 0.03% (strongly disagree); 1.08% (disagree); 5.08% (neutral); 55.60% (agree); and 36.40% (strongly agree).

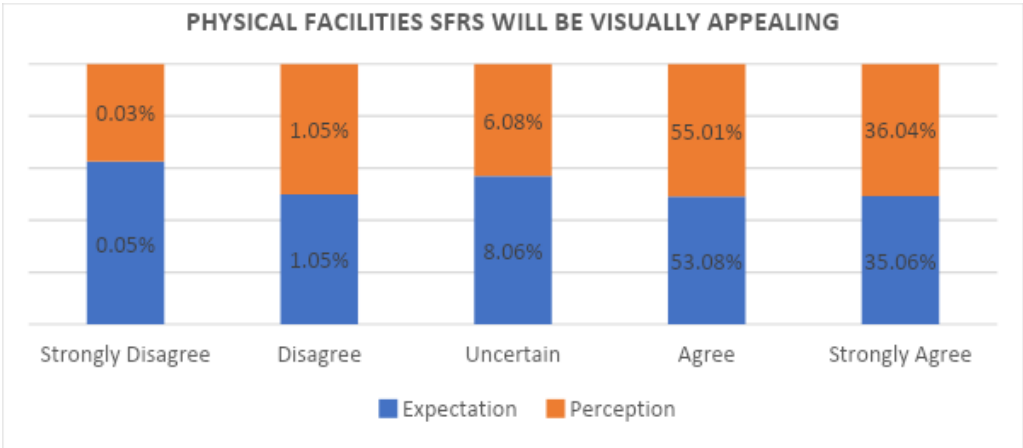
**Figure 4.8: Equipment is modern looking**



**4.3.2 Statement 2: Physical facilities are visually appealing**

The aim of statement 2 was to gain the customers’ perceptions on the appearance of the physical facilities in the retail stores. As shown in Figure 4.9, the expectations were as follows: 0.05% (strongly disagree); 1.05% (disagree); 8.06 (uncertain); 53.08% (agree); and 35.06% (strongly agree). The perceptions of respondents were: 0.03% (strongly disagree); 1.05% (disagree); 6.08% (neutral); 55.01% (agree); and 36.04% (strongly agree).

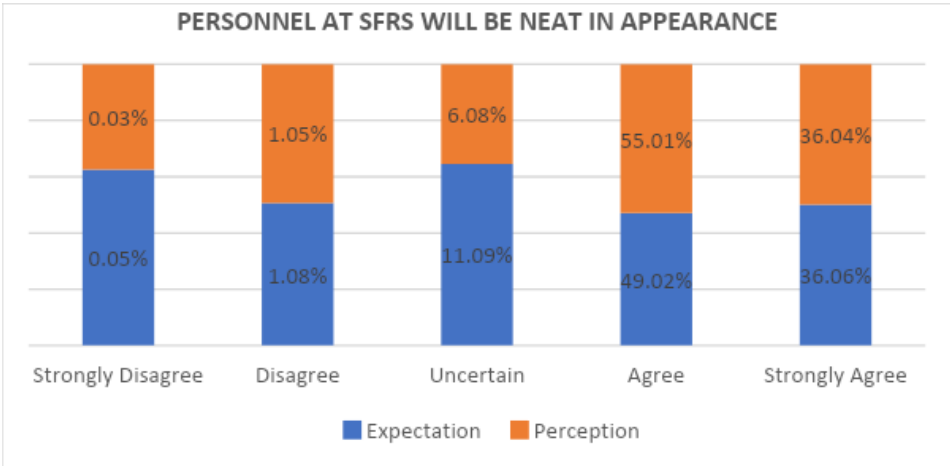
**Figure 4.9: Physical facilities are visually appealing**



**4.3.3 Statement 3: The dress of personnel is neat and smart**

The aim of statement 3 was to gain the customers’ perceptions of whether the personnel working at the retail stores were neat and smart in appearance. As shown in Figure 4.10, the perceptions of respondents were as follows: 0.03% (strongly disagree); 1.05% (disagree); 6.08% (neutral); 55.01% (agree); and 36.04% (strongly agree). The customers’ expectations were: 0.05% (strongly disagree); 1.08% (disagree); 11.09% (uncertain); 49.02% (agree); and 36.06% (strongly agree).

**Figure 4.10: The dress of personnel is neat and smart**

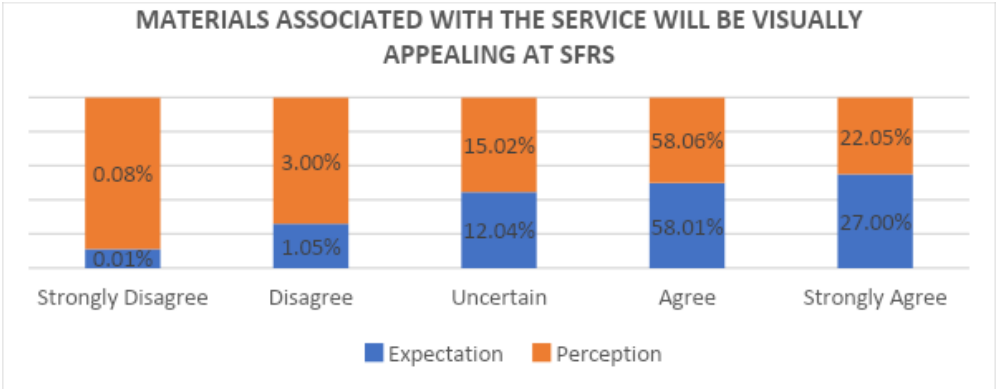


**4.3.4 Statement 4: Materials are visually appealing**

The aim of statement 4 was to gain the customers’ perceptions of the materials associated with the service provided by the retail stores. As shown in Figure 4.11, customers’

perceptions were as follows: 0.08% (strongly disagree); 3.00% (disagree); 15.02% (neutral); 58.06% (agree); and 22.05% (strongly agree). Customers' expectations were as follows: 0.01% (strongly disagree); 1.05% (disagree); 12.04% (uncertain); 58.01% (agree); and 27.00% (strongly agree).

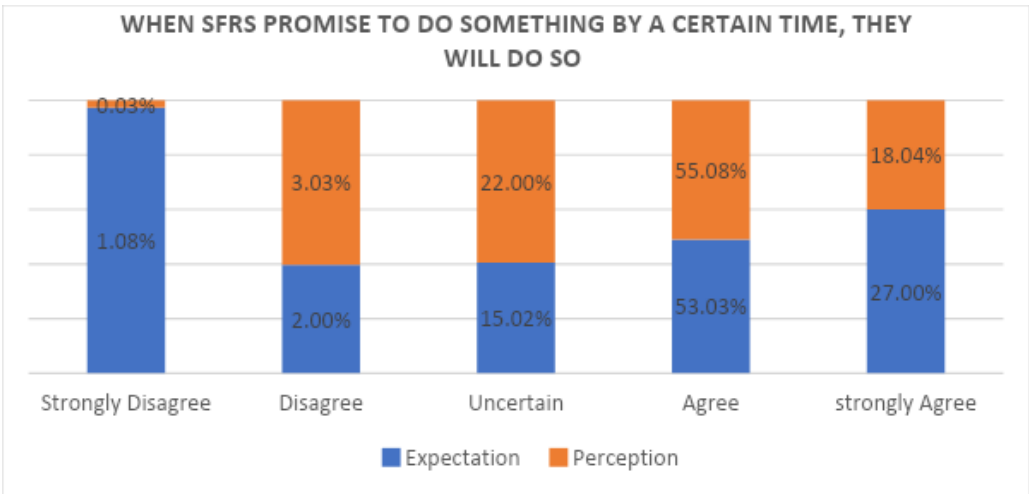
**Figure 4.11: Materials are visually appealing**



**4.3.5 Statement 5: Promise to do something on time**

The response to statement 5 indicated that SFRS lags in terms of the fulfilment of promises. The expectations to the statement as per Figure 4.12 were as follows: 1.08% (strongly disagree); 2.00% (disagree); 15.02% (neutral); 53.03% (agree); and 27.00% (strongly agree). The relevant perceptions were as follows: 0.03% (strongly disagree); 3.03% (disagree); 22.00% (neutral); 55.08% (agree); and 18.04% (strongly agree).

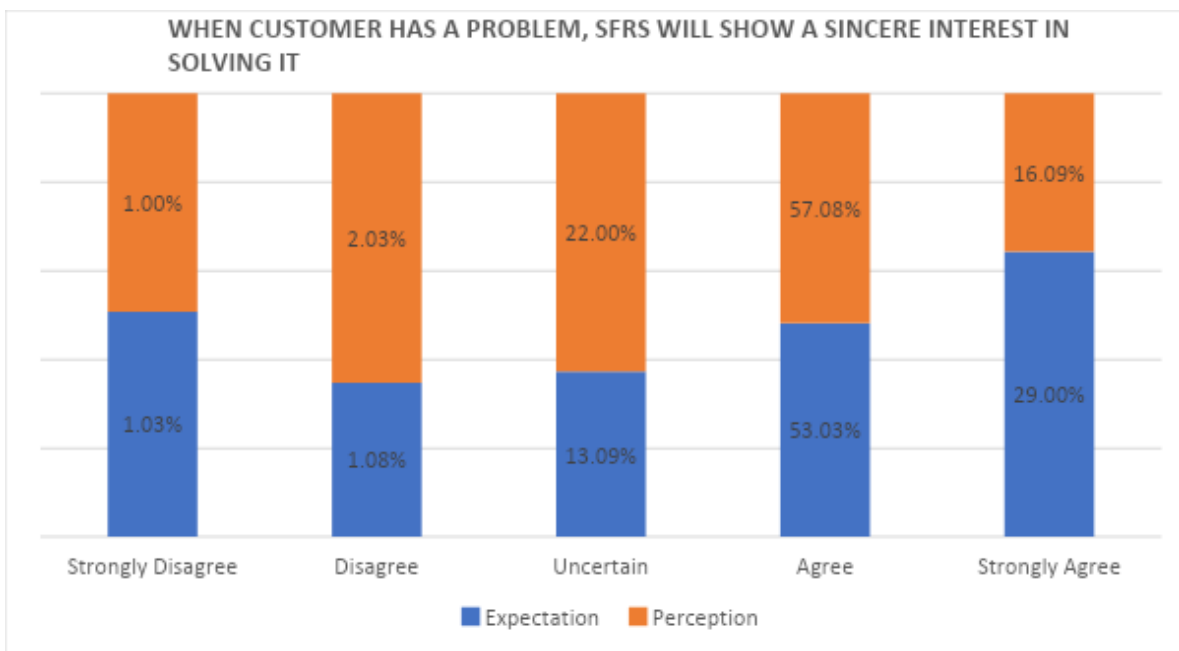
**Figure 4.12: Promise to do something on time**



#### 4.3.6 Statement 6: Willing to solve customers' problems

Statement 6 aimed to assess whether the SFRS showed a sincere interest in problem-solving. As shown in Figure 4.13, customers' expectations were as follows: 1.03% (strongly disagree); 1.08% (disagree); 13.09% (neutral); 53.03% (agree); and 29.00% (strongly agree). The relevant perceptions were as follows: 1.00% (strongly disagree); 2.03% (disagree); 22.00% (neutral); 57.08% (agree); and 16.09% (strongly agree)

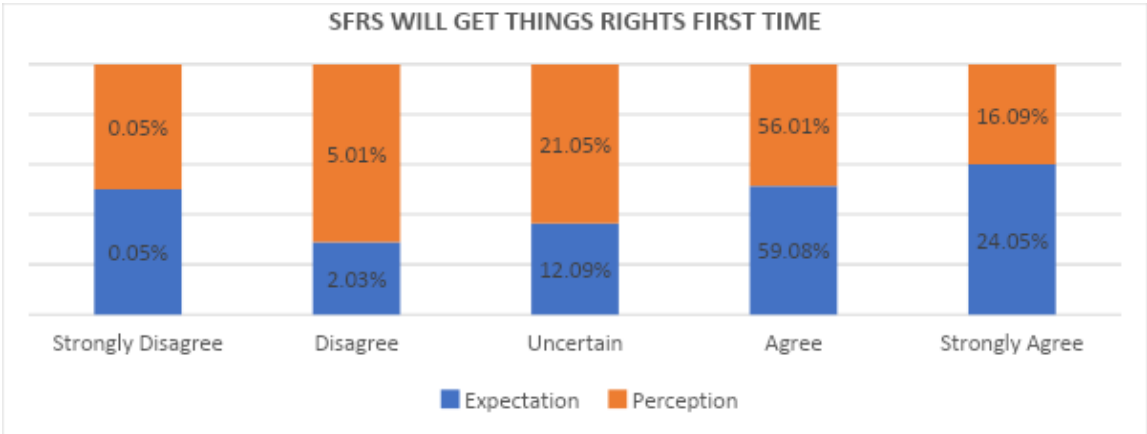
**Figure 4.13: Willing to solve customers' problems**



#### 4.3.7 Statement 7: Get things right the first time

The aim of statement 7 was to gain the customers' perceptions of the personnel get things right the first time. As shown in Figure 4.14, the perceptions of respondents were as follows: 0.05% (strongly disagree); 5.01% (disagree); 21.05% (neutral); 56.01% (agree); and 16.09% (strongly agree). Customers' expectations were as follows: 0.05% (strongly disagree); 2.03% (disagree); 12.09% (uncertain); 59.08% (agree); and 24.05% (strongly agree).

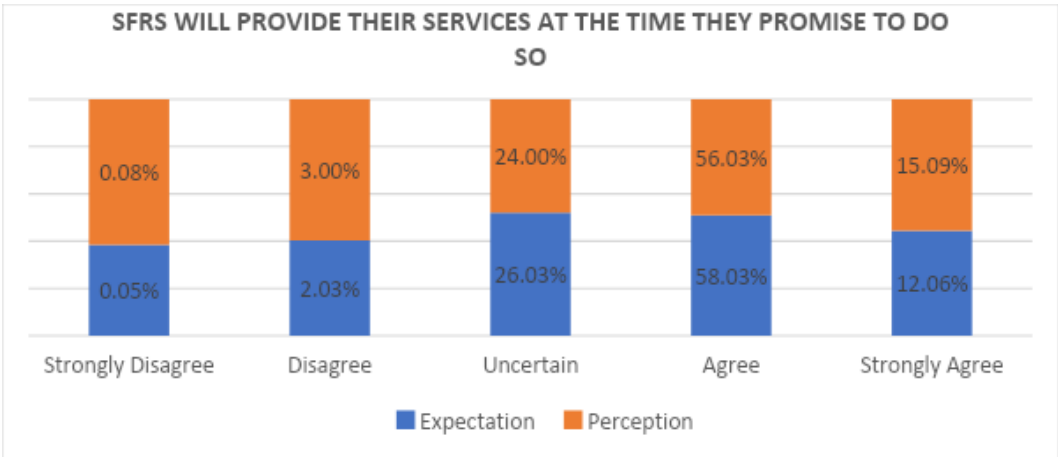
**Figure 4.14: Get things right the first time**



**4.3.8 Statement 8: Services are rendered at promised times**

The aim of statement 8 was to gain the customers’ perceptions as to whether services are rendered on time. As shown in Figure 4.15, the perceptions of respondents were as follows: 0.8% (strongly disagree); 3.00% (disagree); 24% (neutral); 56.03% (agree); and 15.09% (strongly agree). Customers’ expectations were as follows: 0.05% (strongly disagree); 2.03% (disagree); 26.03% (uncertain); 58.03% (agree); and 12.06% (strongly agree).

**Figure 4.15: Services are rendered at promised times**

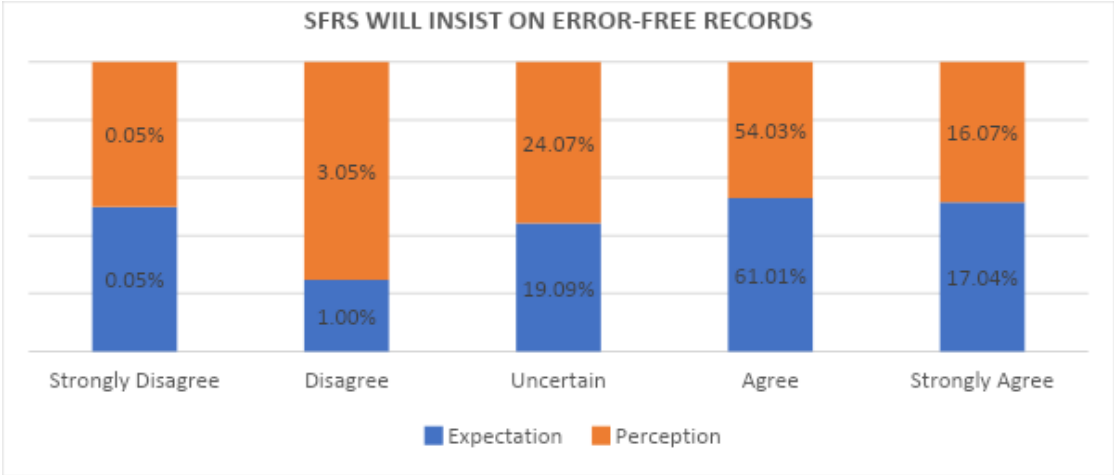


**4.3.9 Statement 9: Staff at SFRS insist on error-free records**

As indicated in Figure 4.16, customers’ expectations regarding the personnel at SFRS insist on error-free records were as follows: 0.05% (strongly disagree); 1.00% (disagree); 19.09% (neutral); 61.01% (agree); and 17.04% (strongly agree). The relevant customers’

perceptions were as follows: 0.05% (strongly disagree); 3.05% (disagree); 24.07% (neutral); 54.03% (agree); and 16.07% (strongly agree).

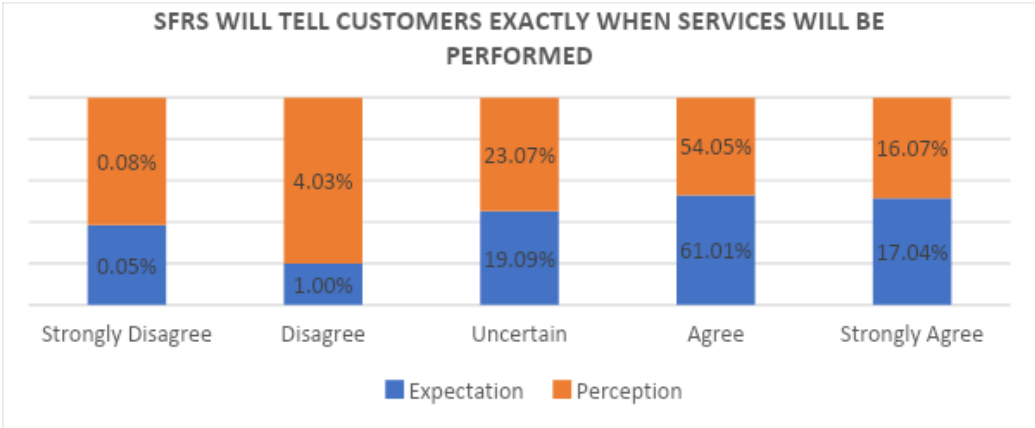
**Figure 4.16: Personnel at SFRS insist on error-free records**



**4.3.10 Statement 10: Getting information about the service offerings**

The purpose of statement 10 was to assess whether customers can easily gain information about the service offerings. As shown in Figure 4.17, the customers’ perceptions to the statement were as follows: 0.08% (strongly disagree); 4.03% (disagree); 23.07% (uncertain); 54.05% (Agree); and 16.07% (Strongly agree). Customers’ expectations were 0.05% (strongly disagree); 1.00% (disagree); 19.09% (uncertain); 61.01% (agree); and 17.04% (strongly agree).

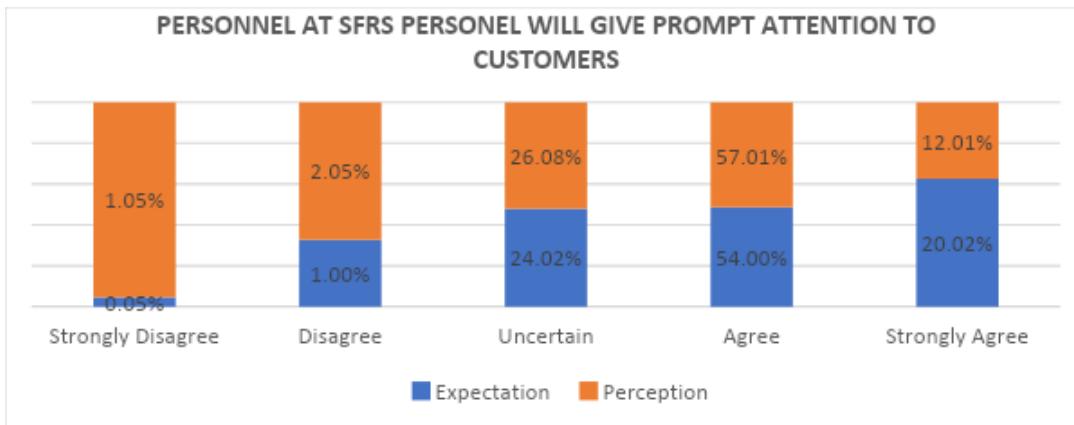
**Figure 4.17: Getting information about service offerings**



#### 4.3.11 Statement 11: Personnel will give prompt attention to customers

Figure 4.18 revealed customers' expectations and perceptions in terms of the response rate of staff. Customers' expectations were as follows: 0.05% (strongly disagree); 1.00% (disagree); 24.02% (neutral); 54.00% (agree); and 20.02% (strongly agree). The relevant customers' perceptions were as follows: 1.05% (strongly disagree); 2.05% (disagree); 26.08% (neutral); 57.01% (agree); and 12.01% (strongly agree).

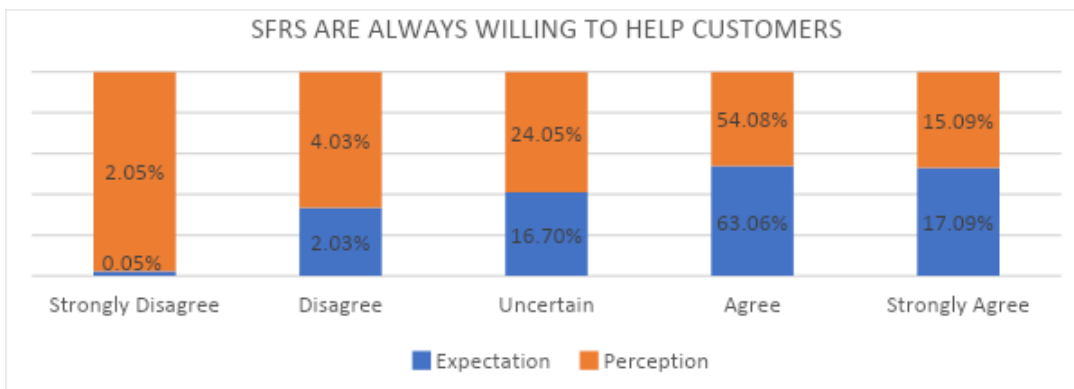
**Figure 4.18: Personnel will give prompt attention to customers**



#### 4.3.12 Statement 12: Personnel are always willing to help customers

According to Figure 4.19, customers' expectations and perceptions of staff's willingness to help them. Customers' expectations were as follows: 0.05% (strongly disagree); 2.03% (disagree); 16.70% (neutral); 63.06% (agree); and 17.09% (strongly agree). Customers' perceptions were as follows: 2.05% (strongly disagree); 4.03% (disagree); 24.05% (neutral); 54.08% (agree); and 15.09% (strongly agree).

**Figure 4.19: Personnel are always willing to help customers**

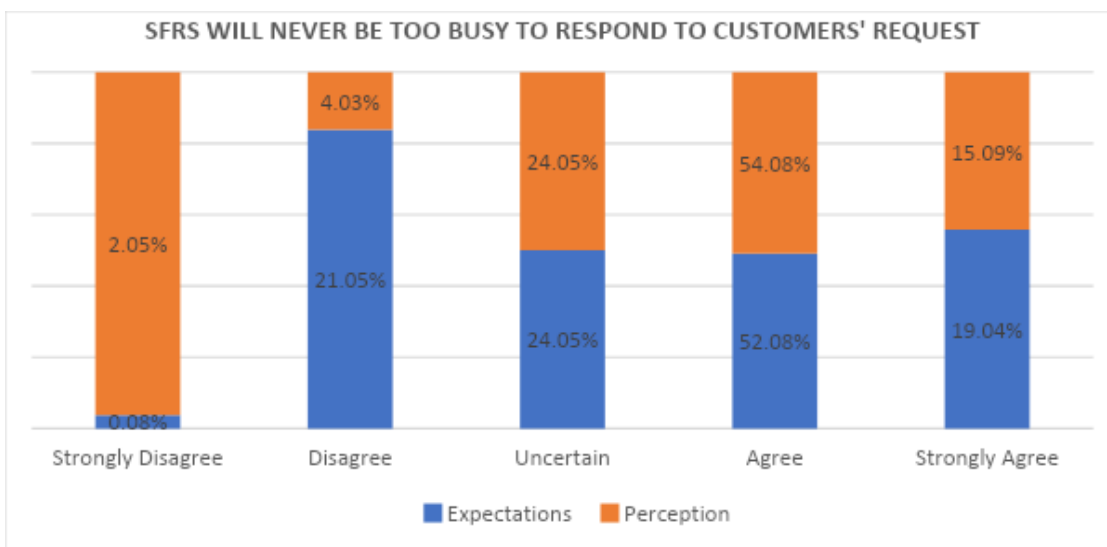




#### 4.3.13 Statement 13: Personnel response to customers' requests

Figure 4.20 shows that customers' expectations and perceptions in terms of response of staff in the SFRS in the Greater Durban Area. Customers' expectations were as follows: 0.08% (strongly disagree); 21.05% (disagree); 24.05% (neutral); 52.08% (agree); and 19.04% (strongly agree). Customers' perceptions were as follows: 2.05% (strongly disagree); 4.03% (disagree); 24.05% (neutral); 54.08% (agree); and 15.09% (strongly agree).

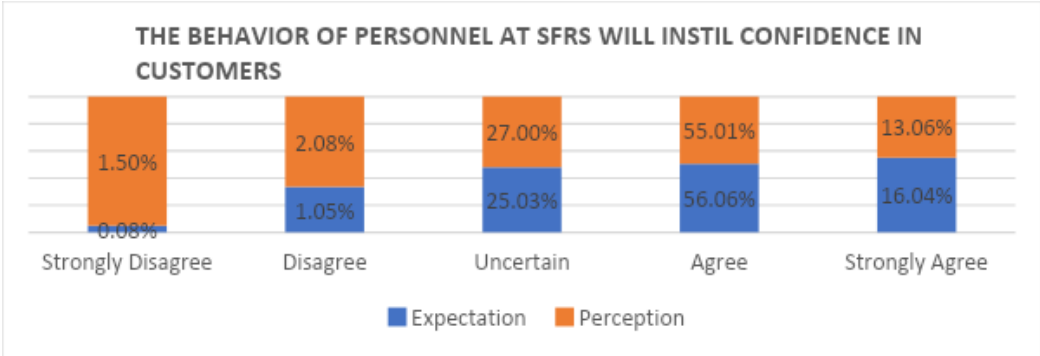
**Figure 4.20: Personnel response to customers' request**



#### 4.3.14 Statement 14: Personnel behaviour instils confidence in customers

The purpose of statement 14 was to assess whether personnel behaviour instils confidence in customers. As shown in Figure 4.21, customers' expectations were as follows: 0.08% (strongly disagree); 1.05% (disagree); 25.03% (neutral); 56.06% (agree); and 13.06% (strongly agree). Customers' perceptions were as follows: 1.50% (strongly disagree); 2.08% (disagree); 27.00% (neutral); 55.01% (agree); and 13.06% (strongly agree).

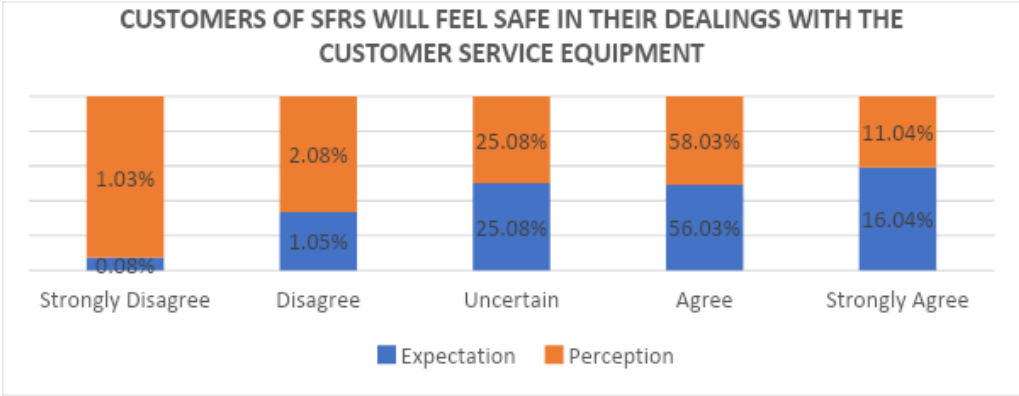
**Figure 4.21: Personnel behaviour instils confidence in customers**



**4.3.15 Statement 15: Customers feel safe in their dealings with customer service equipment**

As shown in Figure 4.22, customers’ expectations with regard to their safety were as follows: 0.08% (strongly disagree); 1.05% (disagree); 25.08% (neutral); 56.03% (agree); and 16.04% (strongly agree). Customers’ perceptions were as follows: 1.03% (strongly disagree); 2.08% (disagree); 25.08% (neutral); 58.03% (agree); and 11.04% (strongly agree)

**Figure 4.22: Customers feel safe in their dealings with the customer service equipment.**

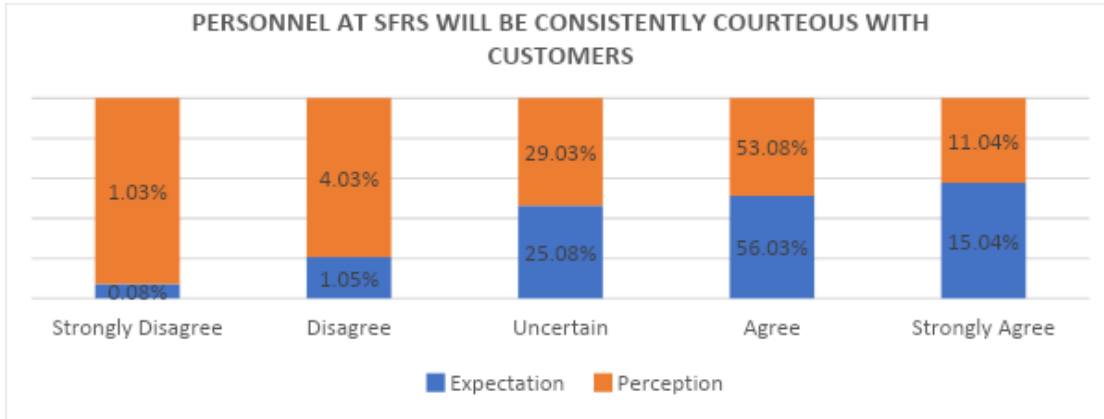


**4.3.16 Statement 16: Personnel are always polite**

Figure 4.23 revealed customers’ expectations and perceptions in terms of courtesy of personnel at the SFRS. Customers’ expectations were as follows: 0.08% (strongly disagree); 1.05% (disagree); 25.08% (neutral); 56.03% (agree); and 15.04% (strongly

agree). Customers' perceptions were as follows: 1.03% (strongly disagree); 4.03% (disagree); 29.03% (neutral); 53.08% (agree); and 11.04% (strongly agree).

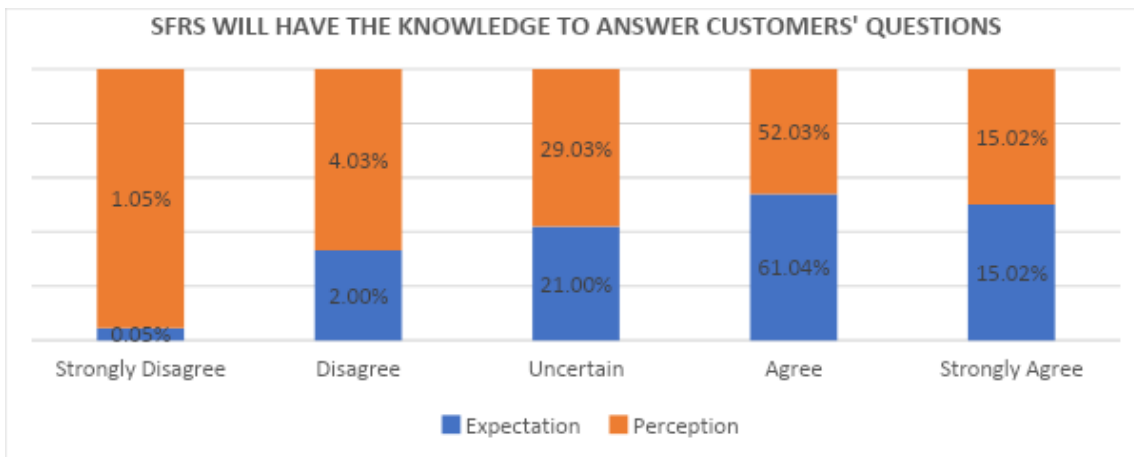
**Figure 4.23: Personnel are always polite**



**4.3.17 Statement 17: Personnel can provide complete answers when they attend to customers' requests**

The aim of statement 17 was to evaluate the impact of the knowledge and enthusiasm of staff. Customers' expectations to the statement in Figure 24 were as follows: 0.05% (strongly disagree); 2% (disagree); 21% (neutral); 61.04% (agree); and 15.02% (strongly agree). Customers' perceptions were as follows: 1.05% (strongly disagree); 4.03% (disagree); 29.03% (neutral); 52.03% (agree); and 15.02% (strongly agree). As with statement 15, the neutral point of the scale is high.

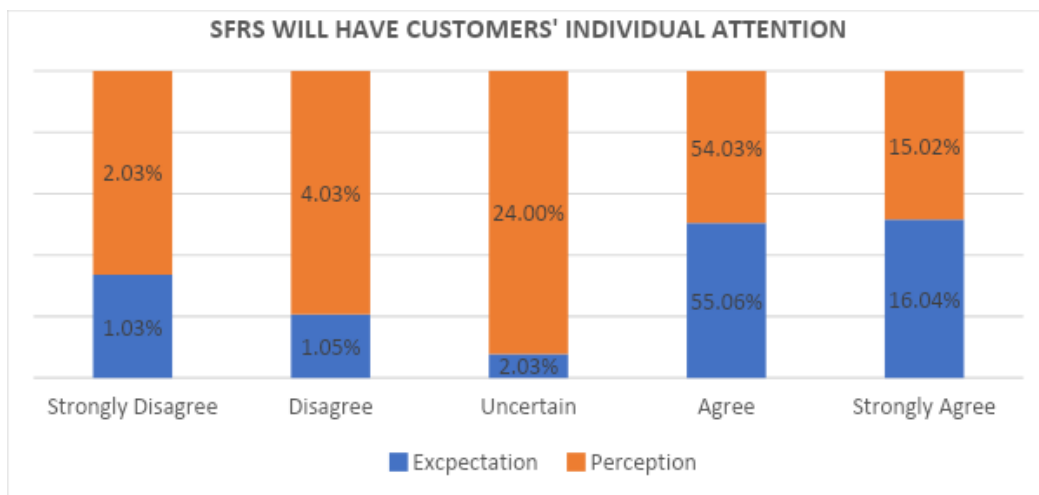
**Figure 4.24: Personnel can provide complete answers when they attend to customers' request**



#### 4.3.18 Statement 18: Personnel can provide individualised attention to help customers

Statement 18 revealed customers' expectations and perceptions in terms of individualised attention of staff. As shown in Figure 4.25, customers' expectations to this statement were as follows: 1.03% (strongly disagree); 1.05% (disagree); 2.03% (neutral); 55.06% (agree); and 16.04% (strongly agree). Customers' perceptions were as follows: 2.03% (strongly disagree); 4.03% (disagree); 24.00% (neutral); 54.03% (agree); and 15.02% (strongly agree).

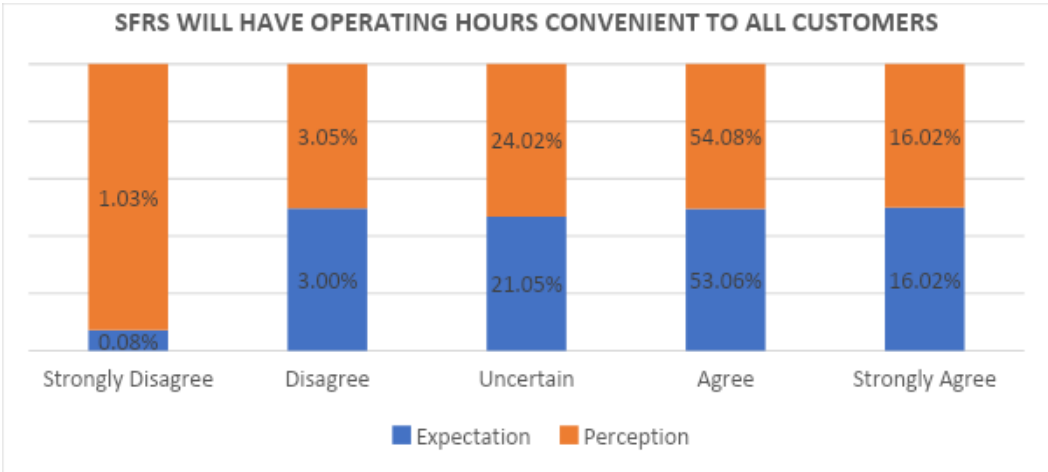
**Figure 4.25: Personnel provide individualised attention to help customers**



#### 4.3.19 Statement 19: SFRS have operating hours convenient to all customers

In Figure 4.26, the data revealed customers' expectations and perceptions in terms of the convenience of the retail store's operating hours. Customers' expectations to statement 19 were as follows: 0.8% (strongly disagree); 3.00% (disagree); 21.05% (neutral); 53.06% (agree); and 16.02% (strongly agree). Customers' perceptions were as follows: 1.03% (strongly disagree); 3.05% (disagree); 24.02% (uncertain); 54.08% (agree); and 16.02% (strongly agree).

**Figure 4.26: SFRS have operating hours convenient to all customers**



**4.3.20 Statement 20: Have staff that provides personal attention to help customers**

Statement 20 revealed customers’ expectations and perceptions in terms of personal attention of staff. As indicated in Figure 4.27, customers’ expectations to this statement were as follows: 1.00% (strongly disagree); 3.00% (disagree); 23.00% (neutral); 58.01% (agree); and 14.07% (strongly agree). Customers’ perceptions were as follows: 2.00% (strongly disagree); 4.00% (disagree); 28.00% (uncertain); 52.03% (agree); and 13.04% (strongly agree).

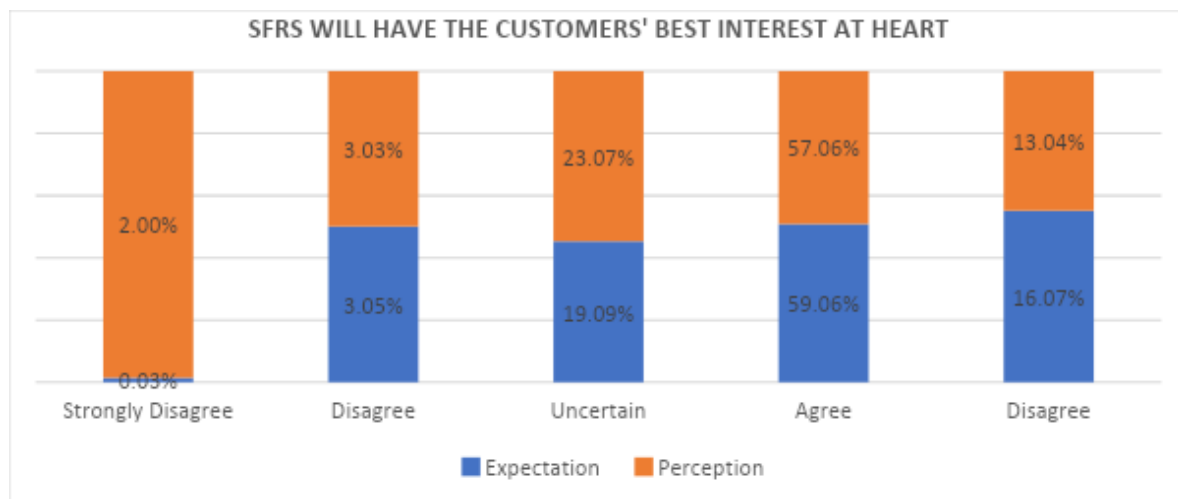
**Figure 4.27: Have staff that provides personal attention to help customers**



#### 4.3.21 Statement 21: Personnel will always look after the best interests of their customers

Statement 21 aimed to determine whether the personnel of SFRS always had the best interest of their customers. As shown in Figure 4.28, customers' expectations were as follows: 0.03% (strongly disagree); 3.05% (disagree); 19.09% (neutral); 59.06% (agree); and 16.07% (strongly agree). Customers' perceptions were as follows: 2.00% (strongly disagree); 3.03% (disagree); 23.07% (neutral); 57.06% (agree); and 13.04% (strongly agree).

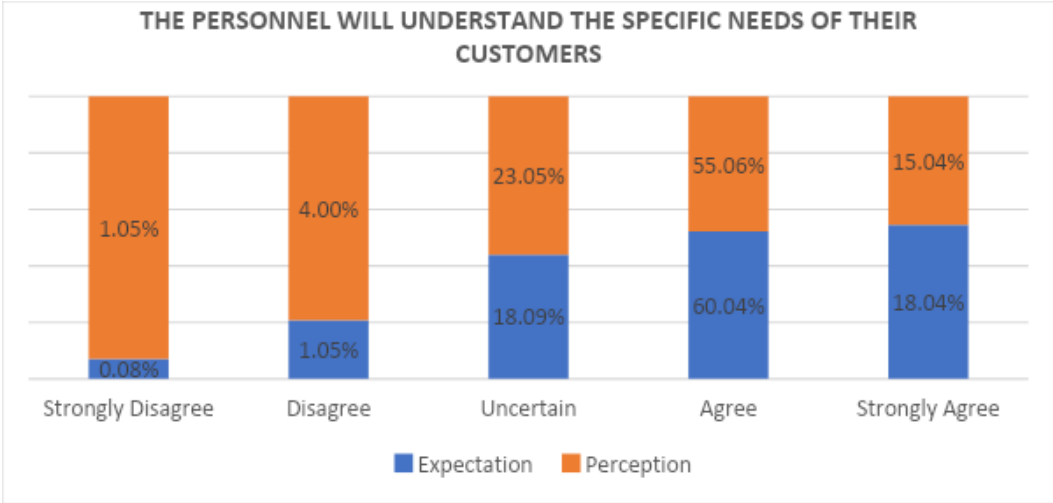
**Figure 4.28: Personnel will always look after the best interest of their customers**



#### 4.3.22 Statement 22: Staff understands the specific needs of their customers

The aim of statement 22 was to estimate whether the SFRS understood the specific needs of their customers. As shown in Figure 4.29, customers' expectations to statement 22 were as follows: 0.8% (strongly disagree); 1.05% (disagree); 18.09% (neutral); 60.04% (agree); and 18.04% (strongly agree). Customers' perceptions were as follows: 1.05% (strongly disagree); 4.00% (disagree); 23.05% (uncertain); 55.06% (agree); and 15.04% (strongly agree).

**Figure 4.29: Personnel understands the specific needs of their customers**

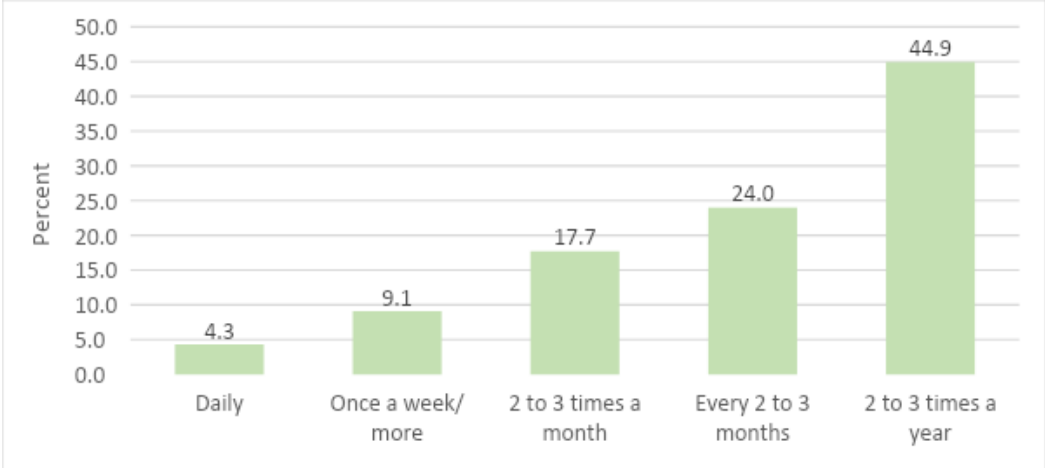


**4.4 CUSTOMER SATISFACTION**

**4.4.1 Frequency of SFRS use**

As shown in Figure 4.30, 44.09% (178) of the customers go to the SFRS two to three times a year, followed by 24.0% (95) that visit the SFRS every 2 to 3 months, 17.07% (70) go to the SFRS 2 to 3 times a month, 9.01% (36) once a month, and the balance of 4.03% (17) go to the SFRS daily.

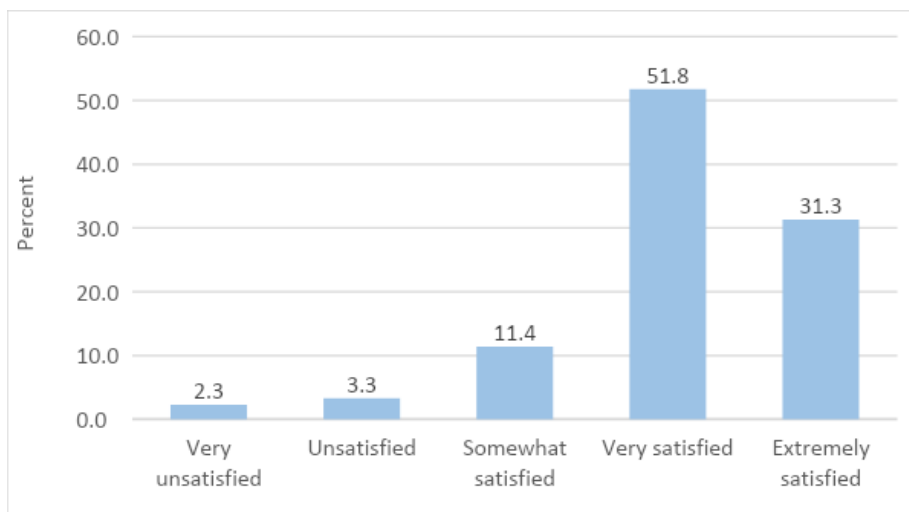
**Figure 4.30: Frequency of respondents visiting the store**



#### 4.4.2 Overall satisfaction of SFRS

Figure 4.31 illustrates that 2.03% (9) of the customers indicated that they were very unsatisfied with the SFRS, 3.03 (13) of the customers showed they were unsatisfied with the SFRS, 11.04% (45) of the customers showed that they were somewhat satisfied, while 51.08% (205) stated they were very satisfied, with the balance of 31.03% (124) indicating they were extremely satisfied.

**Figure 4.31: Satisfaction levels of respondents**

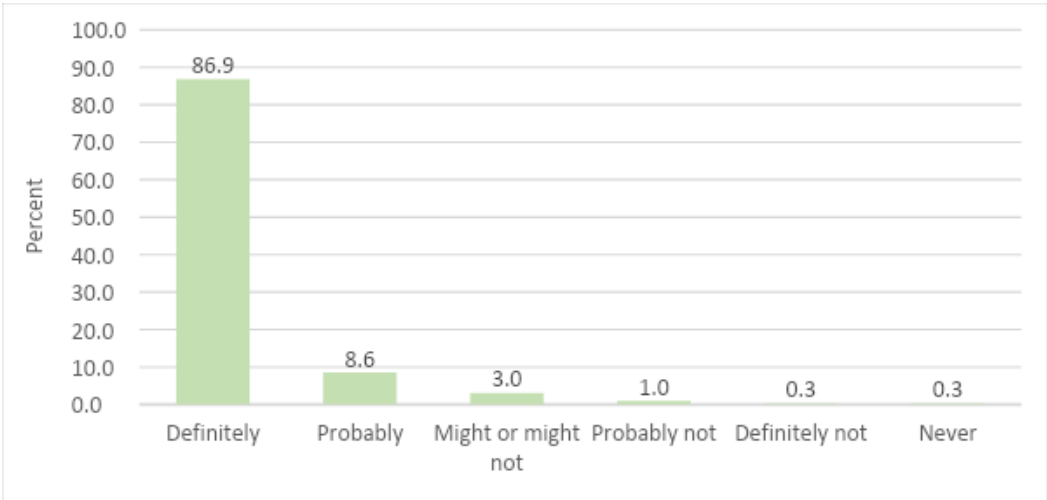


#### 4.4.3 Repeat use of the SFRS

As shown in Figure 4.32 86.09% (344) of the respondents that they will definitely use the SFRS again, 8.06% (34) said they would use the SFRS again, 3.03% (12) indicated that they might or might not use the SFRS, 1.0% (4) of the respondents indicated that they probably will not use the SFRS, and the remaining 0.3% (1) indicated that he/she will definitely not use the SFRS again.



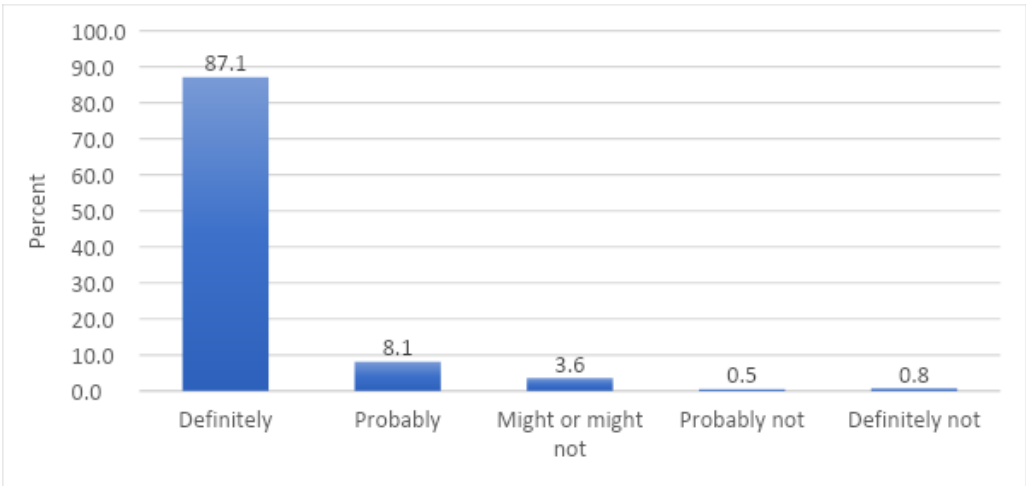
**Figure 4.32: Repeat use of the SFRS**



**4.4.4 Recommend the SFRS to others**

As illustrated in Figure 4.33, 87.01% (343) of the respondents specified they will definitely recommend the SFRS to others, 8.1% (32) of the respondents would probably recommend the SFRS, 3.6% (14) indicated that they might or might not recommend the SFRS, 0.05% (2) of the respondents indicated that they would probably not recommend the SFRS to others, and the remaining 0.08% (3) of the respondents will definitely not recommend the SFRS.

**Figure 4.33: Recommendation of the SFRS**



## **4.5 GAPS ANALYSIS**

As specified in the literature review, there are five dimensions in assessing overall service quality. In this section of the chapter, the data analyses focus on the mean gaps scores on the expectations' and perceptions' scales for each of the modified 25 service quality attributes and the five related factors.

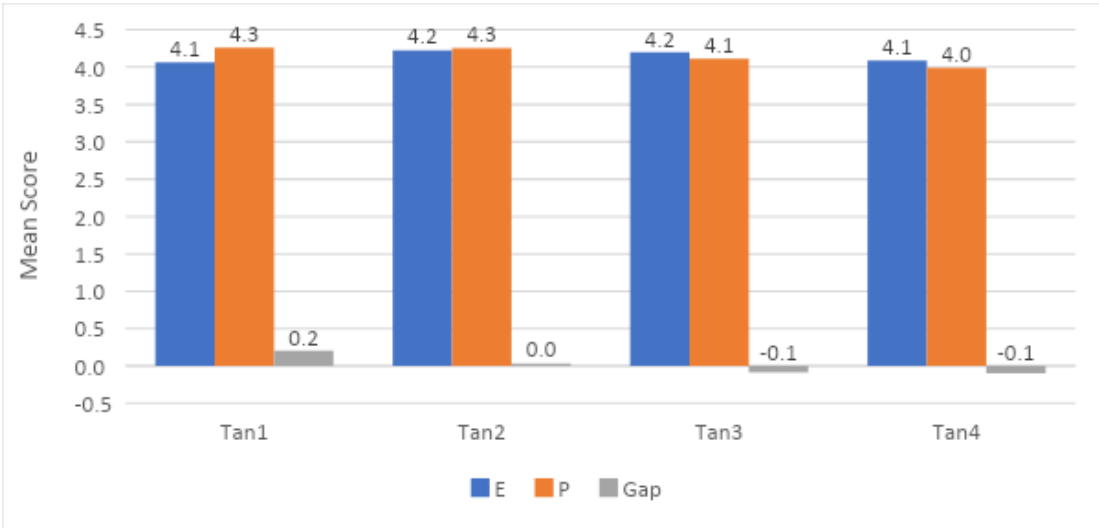
### **4.5.1 Dimension - 1 Tangibles**

This quality dimension is related to physical facilities, equipment, materials, and appearance of the service delivery. As presented in Table 4.1 and Figure 4.34, the expectation mean score of 4.1 is attributed to "materials are visually appealing", and "modern looking equipment" while "physical facilities are visually appealing" and "personnel are neat in appearance" for expectation achieved common mean scores of 4.2.

The perception common mean scores were 4.3 for "modern looking equipment" and "physical facilities are visually appealing", respectively. However, the mean scores for "personnel are neat in appearance" and "materials are visually appealing" were 4.1 and 4.0, respectively.

A comparison of the mean expectation and perception indicated a large difference between the dimensions. However, there were positive gap scores for "modern looking equipment" ( $G=0.2$ ) and ( $G= 0.0$ ) for "physical facilities are visually appealing". The largest gaps ( $G=-0.1$ ) were found to be common both in the service quality statements: "Personnel are neat in appearance" and "Materials are visually appealing". The latter was indicative that respondents were satisfied overall.

**Figure 4.34: Dimension - 1 Tangibles**



**Table 4.1: Dimension - 1 Tangibles**

Statements	Expectations' Means (SD)	Perceptions' Means (SD)	Gap (PM-EM)
Modern looking equipment	4.1	4.3	0.2
Physical facilities are visually appealing	4.2	4.3	0.0
Personnel are neat in appearance	4.2	4.1	-0.1
Materials are visually appealing	4.1	4.0	-0.1

**4.5.2 Dimension - 2 Reliability**

The motivation behind this dimension was to evaluate the reliability of service quality regarding the SFRS in the greater Durban Area. As indicated in Table 4.2 and Figure 4.35, the two statements had a similar expectation mean score of 4.1 for “personnel show

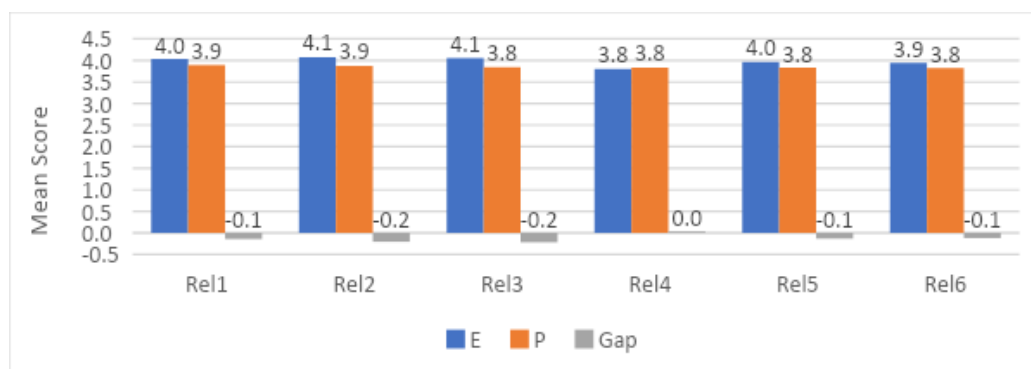
sincere interest”, and “personnel get things right the first time”, followed by “personnel keep promises when they promised to do something by the certain time” (4.0) and “personnel will insist on error-free record” (4.0). The statements which had the low expectation mean scores were “personnel will tell customers exactly when services will be performed” (3.9) and “staff provides their services at the time they promise to do so” (3.8).

The perception statements “personnel show sincere interest in solving problems” and “personnel keep promises when they promised to do something by the certain time” had the same and large mean score of 3.9.

It is interesting to note that the perception statements “personnel get things right the first time”, “personnel provide their services at the time they promise to do so”, “personnel will insist on error-free records” and “personnel will tell customers exactly when the service will be performed” achieved the common score of 3.8.

The highest gap score of  $G=-0.2$  is attributed to “personnel show a sincere interest in solving customers’ problems” and “personnel get things right the first time”, followed by “personnel keep promises when they promised to do something by the certain time”, “personnel will insist on error-free records” and “personnel will tell customers exactly when the service will be performed” with a gap score of  $G=0.1$ . It is likewise fascinating to take note of that the statement “personnel provide services at the time they promised to do so” had the positive gap score of  $G=0.0$ , which suggests that customers’ expectations were met by the perceived service.

**Figure 4.35: Dimension - 2 Reliability**



**Table 4.2: Dimension - 2 Reliability**

<b>Statements</b>	<b>Expectations' Means (SD)</b>	<b>Perceptions' Means (SD)</b>	<b>Gap (PM-EM)</b>
<b>Personnel keep promises when they promised to do something by a certain time.</b>	4.0	3.9	-0.1
<b>Personnel show a sincere interest in solving customers' problems.</b>	4.1	3.9	-0.2
<b>Personnel get things right the first time.</b>	4.1	3.8	-0.2
<b>Personnel provide their services at the time they promise to do so.</b>	3.8	3.8	0.0
<b>Personnel will insist on error-free records.</b>	4.0	3.8	-0.1
<b>Personnel will tell customers exactly when the service will be performed.</b>	3.9	3.8	-0.1

### **4.5.3 Dimension - 3 Responsiveness**

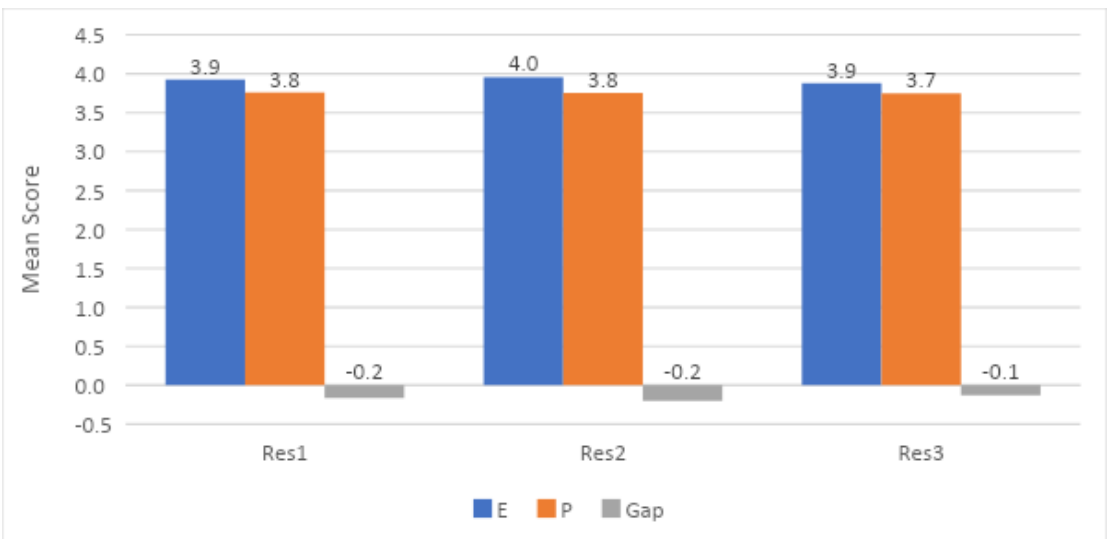
Statements for this dimension primarily described the willingness of the SFRS to help customers and provide prompt service, as well as the employees' skills and abilities to interact with people. As evidenced in Table 4.3 and Figure 4.36, the expectation scores

ranged between 3.9 and 4.0, respectively, for “personnel give prompt service to customers”, “personnel are never too busy to respond to customers’ requests” and “personnel are always willing to help customers”.

The perception scores ranged between 3.7 and 3.8, respectively, for “personnel are never busy to respond to customer’ requests”, “personnel are willing to help customers” and “personnel give prompt service to customers”.

The largest gap was  $G=-0.2$  for “personnel give prompt service to customers” and “personnel are always willing to help customers”, while the lowest gap was  $G=-0.1$  for “personnel are never too busy to respond to customers’ request”.

**Figure 4.36: Dimension - 3 Responsiveness**



**Table 4.3: Dimension - 3 Responsiveness**

Statements	Expectations’ Means (SD)	Perceptions’ Means (SD)	Gap (PM-EM)
Personnel give prompt service to customers.	3.9	3.8	-0.2

<b>Personnel are always willing to help customers.</b>	4.0	3.8	-0.2
<b>Personnel are never be too busy to respond to customers' requests</b>	3.9	3.7	-0.1

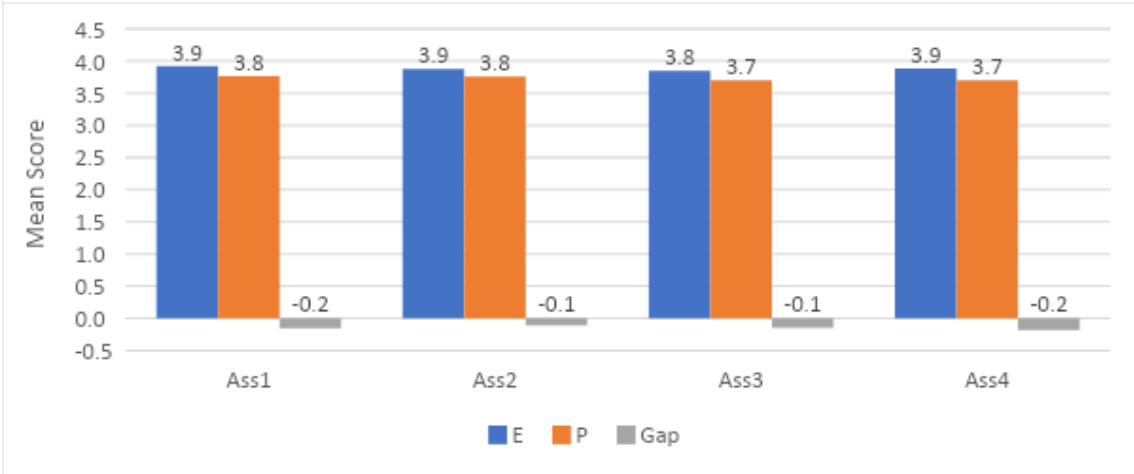
#### 4.5.4 Dimension - 4 Assurance

As shown in Table 4.4 and Figure 4.37, the expectations' means statements, which respectively had the highest mean score of 3.9, were "behaviour of personnel instils confidence in customers", "customers feel safe in their dealings with the service equipment", "personnel have the knowledge to answer customers' question" and "personnel have the knowledge to answer customers' questions". The lowest mean score (3.8) was attributed to the statement "personnel is consistently courteous with customers".

The perceptions' means statements indicated that two statements had similar means scores, namely, "customers feel safe in their dealings with the service equipment" and "behaviour of personnel instils confidence in customers" (3.8). The lowest mean score (3.7) was attributed to the statements "personnel is consistently courteous with customers" and "personnel has the knowledge to answer customers' questions".

A comparison of the mean expectation and perception indicated a large difference between the dimensions. The largest gaps ( $G=-0.2$ ) were found in the service quality "behaviour of personnel instills confidence in customers" and "personnel have the knowledge to answer customers' questions". The smallest gap ( $G=-0.1$ ) was for the statements "customers feel safe in their dealings with the customers' service equipment" and "personnel has the knowledge to answer customers' questions".

**Figure 4.37: Dimension - 4 Assurance**



**Table 4.4: Dimension - 4 Assurance**

Statements	Expectations' Means (SD)	Perceptions' Means (SD)	Gap (PM-EM)
Behaviour of personnel instils confidence in customers.	3.9	3.8	-0.2
Customers feel safe in their dealings with the service equipment.	3.9	3.8	-0.1
Personnel are consistently courteous with customers.	3.8	3.7	-0.1
Personnel has the knowledge to answer customers' questions.	3.9	3.7	-0.2

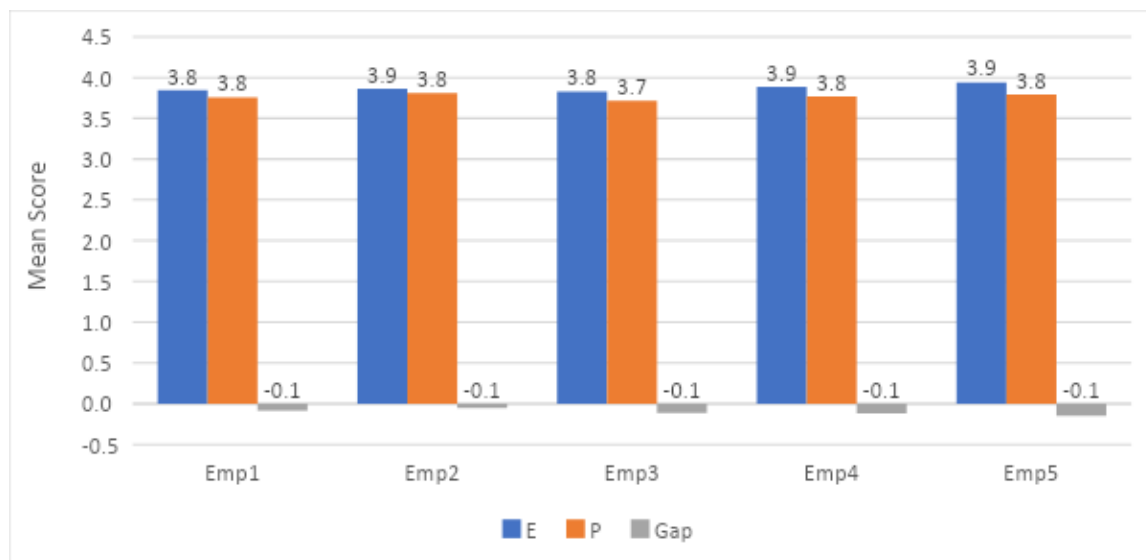


#### 4.5.5 Dimension - 5 Empathy

The purpose of Table 4.5 and Figure 4.38 was to assess the empathy dimension of service quality of the SFRS. Three expectations' statements for empathy, namely: "operating hours are convenient to all customers", "personnel understand the specific needs of their customers" and "personnel have the customers best interest at heart" had similar expectation scores of 3.9. The expectations' mean scores for "personnel give customers' individual attention" and "personnel give to customers' personal attention" (3.8) were the lowest in this dimension of service quality.

The lowest perception means score 3.7 is for the statement "personnel gives customers individual attention". The highest perception score of 3.8 is for "Personnel give customer individual attention", "Operating hours are convenient to all customers", "Personnel have the customer's best interests at heart" and "Personnel understands the specific needs of their customers". When comparing the attributes' gap scores, it is evident that all the dimensions had the same gap (G=-0.1).

**Figure 4.38: Dimension - 5 Empathy**



**Table 4.5: Dimension - 5 Empathy**

Statements	Expectations' Means (SD)	Perceptions' Means (SD)	Gap (PM-EM)

<b>Personnel give customers individual attention.</b>	3.8	3.8	-0.1
<b>Operating hours are convenient to all customers.</b>	3.9	3.8	-0.1
<b>Personnel give customers personal attention.</b>	3.8	3.7	-0.1
<b>Personnel have the customers' best interests at heart</b>	3.9	3.8	-0.1
<b>Personnel understands the specific needs of their customers</b>	3.9	3.8	-0.1

#### 4.6 Factor Analysis

The importance of factor analysis

Factor analysis is a numerical system whose fundamental objective is data reduction. A typical use of factor analysis is in survey research, where a researcher wishes to represent an amount of questions with few speculative elements. For instance, as part of a national survey on political opinions, participants may respond three separate questions in regards to environmental policy, reflecting issues at the local, state and national level. Each question, by itself, would be an inadequate measure of attitude towards environmental policy, but, together, they may provide a better measure of the attitude. Factor analysis can be utilized to establish whether the three measures do, actually, measure something very similar. Assuming this is the case, they would then be able to

be joined to make another variable, a factor score variable that contains a score for every respondent on the factor. Factor methods are appropriate to a variety of circumstances.

A researcher might need to know whether the skills required to be a decathlete are as differed as the ten occasions, or if a small number of core skills are needed to be successful in a decathlon. One need not believe that factors actually exist in order to perform a factor analysis, but, in practice, the factors are typically interpreted, given names, and discussed as genuine things.

The matrix table is preceded by a summarised table that reflects the results of KMO and Bartlett's Test. The obligation is that Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy should be greater than 0.50 and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity less than 0.05. In all instances, the conditions are satisfied which allows for the factor analysis procedure.

Factor analysis is done only for the Likert-scale items. Certain components divided into finer components. This is clarified below in the rotated component matrix.

**Table 4.6: KMO and Bartlett's Test**

	Expectation				Perception			
	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity			Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity		
		Approx. Chi-Square	df	Sig.		Approx. Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Tangibles	0.773	421.860	6	0.000	0.761	334.142	6	0.000
Reliability	0.870	751.888	15	0.000	0.862	688.218	15	0.000

Responsiveness	0.632	210.678	3	0.000	0.695	340.339	3	0.000
Assurance	0.743	284.861	6	0.000	0.796	474.119	6	0.000
Empathy	0.822	526.635	10	0.000	0.839	797.338	10	0.000

All of the conditions are satisfied for factor analysis. That is, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy value should be greater than 0.500 and the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity sig. value should be less than 0.05.

#### 4.7 Rotated Component Matrix

An example of one matrix is shown below. All of the dimensions' reveal exactly the same structure.

**Table 4.7: Component Matrix**

**Component Matrix<sup>a</sup>**

	Component 1
Tan1_E	0.811
Tan2_E	0.807
Tan3_E	0.760
Tan4_E	0.726

Extraction Method: Principal

Component Analysis.

a. 1 components extracted.

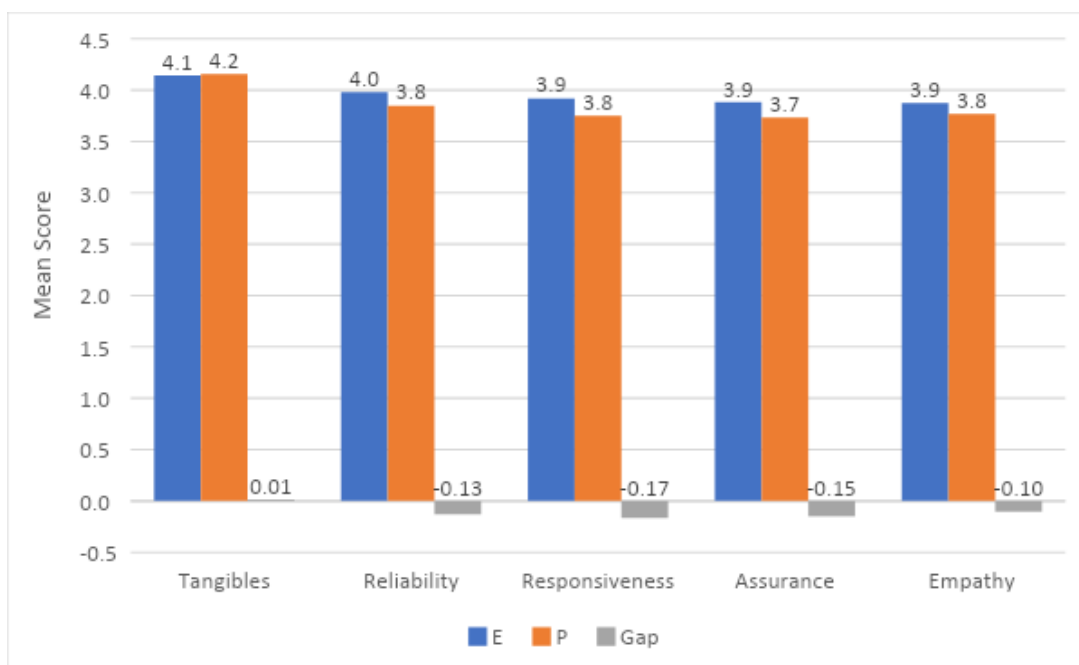
Factor analysis is a statistical system whose primary objective is data reduction. A typical use of factor analysis is in survey research, where a researcher wishes to represent various questions with a small number of hypothetical factors. With reference to the Table 4.7:

- The standard component analysis was utilized as the extraction method, and the rotation method was Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. This is an orthogonal rotation method that minimizes the number of variables that have high loadings on each factor. It simplifies the interpretation of the factors;
- Factor analysis/loading show inter-correlations between variables; and
- Items of questions that loaded similarly imply measurement along a comparative factor. An examination of the content of items loading at or above 0.5 (and using the higher or highest loading in instances where items cross-loaded at greater than this value) effectively measured along the different components.

The statements that constituted each section loaded perfectly along a single component. This suggests that the statements that constituted these sections perfectly measured what it set out to measure.

#### 4.8 Means' Comparisons

**Figure 4.39: Means' Comparisons**



**Table 4.8: Means' Comparisons**

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Expectation Mean</b>	<b>Perception Mean</b>	<b>Gap PM- EM</b>
<b>Tangibles</b>	4.01	4.02	0.01
<b>Reliability</b>	4.00	3.08	-0.13
<b>Responsiveness</b>	3.09	3.08	-0.17
<b>Assurance</b>	3.09	3.07	-0.15
<b>Empathy</b>	3.09	3.08	-0.10

As reflected in Figure 4.38, Table 4.8, all the dimensions display negative mean gap scores ranging from G=-0.10 to G=-0.17, and one dimension (tangibles) displayed a positive gap of G=0.01.

The tangibles dimension for the statement “Modern looking equipment” had the highest positive mean gap score of G=0.01, while empathy, for the statement “Personnel give customers individual attention” had the smallest negative mean gap score of G–0.10.

Overall, the findings express that, comparatively speaking, SFRS customers experience less irregularity between their expectations and perceptions towards “Materials were visually appealing”, than towards “Personnel provides their services at the time they promise to do so”.

Table 4.8 reflects that even though the scores for expectations were higher than those for perceptions at the level for each of dimension, the gap scores demonstrate that the scores between expectations and perceptions were, nonetheless, very close to one another. In the mean gap scores analysis of the service expectations and perceptions, “Empathy” was lowest (G= 0.10) among the expectations and perceptions of service quality. Conversely, this finding does not mean that the “empathy” dimension was not significant. This finding essentially means that “empathy” was relatively less significant, in comparison to the other factors in the service quality dimension, as reflected by respondents in the survey.

Evident from the five dimensions, is that expectations for tangibles at the SFRS were rated the highest (4.01), followed by reliability (4.00), assurance, and empathy rates the lowest (3.09). Perceptions for tangibles were rated the highest (4.02), followed by reliability (4.00) and common score of 3.09 for responsiveness, assurance and empathy, respectively.

In spite of the fact that the gaps were minor between dimensions, the highest gap score (G= 0.01) was credited to the “tangibles” dimension. As expressed in the literature (Table 2.1), “tangibles” apparently was the most critical factor influencing SFRS. The gap scores for the three different dimensions, namely, “reliability” (G= 0.13), “responsiveness” (G= -0.17), “empathy” (G= -0.15) and “assurance” (G= -0.10) were likewise close.

#### 4.9 Cronbach's alpha test reliability statistics

The two most significant parts of precision are reliability and validity. Reliability is computed by taking several measurements on the same subjects. A reliability coefficient of 0.70 or higher is considered as “acceptable”.

Table 4.9 reflects the Cronbach’s alpha score for all the items that constituted the questionnaire.

**Table 4.9: Cronbach's alpha test**

	Expectation		Perception	
	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Tangibles	0.780	4	0.740	4
Reliability	0.831	6	0.822	6
Responsiveness	0.707	3	0.783	3
Assurance	0.719	4	0.805	4
Empathy	0.795	5	0.848	5

The reliability scores for all sections surpass the suggested Cronbach's alpha value. This shows a level of acceptable, consistent scoring for these sections of the study.



#### **4.10 CONCLUSION**

The results of the empirical study were presented and analysed in this chapter. Firstly, the explanation of the results started with the discussion of the demographic information and percentages. These findings indicated that most of the respondents were between the ages 20-29 (55.03%) and 53.03% of the total respondents were female.

Secondly, a comparison of the service quality expectations and perceptions of the SFRS in the Greater Durban Area were determined by PC numeric tables. The results of all statements demonstrated that the definite service quality in this type of environment were able to meet the customers' expectations. As per the GAP analysis of service dimensions, the gap between expectations and perceptions of the SFRS in the Greater Durban Area was the largest for "tangibles" and the lowest for "empathy" (see Table 4.28).

In general, all dimensions of service quality have proved to be vital. The following chapter consists of the conclusions and recommendations pertaining to the findings.

## **5 CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter analysed the data obtained from 400 questionnaires distributed to SFRS customers with the guide of descriptive and inferential statistics. As a synopsis of the research, this chapter will talk about the findings of the literature and empirical study, followed by the overview of the limitations of this study and key recommendations for improving service quality in the SFRS in the Greater Durban Area. Finally, the conclusions of the study will be presented.

The SERVQUAL instrument has a noteworthy indicative part to play in assessing and observing service quality at SFRS in the greater Durban Area, permitting them to figure out where updates are required from the reactions to the survey. From the real outcomes, the service quality, expectations, perceptions and customer satisfaction scale were strong and genuine instruments used for measuring the relationship as a part of this study, considering that the research findings offer different administrative ramifications.

The study results discussed in the previous chapter indicated that five service quality dimensions were interconnected with the general service quality and are, evidently, drivers of service quality that incredibly influence expectations, perception and customer satisfaction. The study results recommended that all the uniform coefficients identifying to the service quality dimensions and general service quality and consumer satisfaction have a foreseen positive significance and were measurably crucial. Thusly, there is a certainly positive relationship associating every one of the five service quality dimensions notwithstanding the total service quality, expectations, perceptions and consumer satisfaction.

The findings demonstrated that all the institutionalized estimations relating to the service quality dimensions indicated foreseen positive centrality and were truly essential. Henceforth, the dimensions were seen as focal drivers of service quality and consumer loyalty.

The assessment of regression of the five factors of service quality with consumer satisfaction was important in all elements of service quality. More explicitly, customer determined high satisfaction with the five dimensions of service quality analyzed in the study (reliability, responsiveness, empathy, assurance, and tangibles).

Taking everything into account, the study was unsurprising with those of past research in finding that service quality is a critical determinant of consumer satisfaction, and service quality is the direct component that impacts consumer satisfaction. Subsequently, high quality service is viewed as an indispensable step-by-step measure of survival, the higher the service quality, the higher the consumer satisfaction.

## **5.2 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY**

As shown in Figure 4.6, the consequence of the gap analysis demonstrated that customers' perceptions were reliably lower than their expectations. These negative gaps showed that the conveyed service level was falling beneath customers' expectation for service quality in the SFRS in the Greater Durban Area.

Customers' evaluations of the five dimensions of service performance, as reflected in Figure 4.38 and Table 4.8 in mean comparison, demonstrated that responsiveness is the central point affecting on consumers' satisfaction in the SFRS. Responsiveness accomplished the highest negative mean comparison of - 0,17. Responsiveness factors show that personnel at the SFRS in the Greater Durban Area should give more consideration to their customers and facilitate matters in the service delivery process; and keeping in mind that personnel are occupied with different duties at the business floor, they ought to likewise give more consideration to customers.

However, as reflected in Figure 4.35 and Table 4.2, the reliability dimension achieved the closed gap of 0.0 score in gaps analysis for the statement 'personnel provide their service at the time they promised to do so' which means the service which the customers perceived was what they anticipated. Figure 4.34 and Table 4.1 uncovered that the tangibles dimension accomplished positive scores for the statement 'Modern looking equipment' (0.02) and 'Physical facility are visually appealing' (0.0). In means'

comparison the dimension tangibles accomplished a positive mean score of 0.01. It is critical that the tangibles dimension surpassed customers' expectation.

The focal point of the research study was to determine customers' perceptions and expectations in the SFRS in the Greater Durban Area. The fundamental point of this study was to determine whether service quality could foresee customer satisfaction in the SFRS in the Greater Durban Area. Accordingly, the SFRS need to hold and get numerous customers, both new and old customers, and create great relationships.

In chapter two (literature review), the gaps model was critically analysed for the improvement and management of the SFRS in the Greater Durban Area. In this manner, it will be simpler to recognize service issues, service quality, as well as customers' perceptions and expectations which will help the management in deciding their own significant disappointment focuses.

The research has additionally watched and read that many research studies have focussed for the most part on reducing the five recognized gaps, without taking the disappointments and the serious issues available into consideration. Through this research study, help might be offered to SFRS personnel in regards to interior and outer correspondence, the association of management (staff) and customers. Thus, this would bring about positive customers' perception and expectation, which could prompt consumer satisfaction. Retail fashion stores the management/personnel (staff) should do a wide range of investigation to empower checking and appraisal of every one of their customers' needs all the time.

The nature of the study delivered results that were phenomenal and comparable for all service quality dimensions, from a gaps point viewpoint.

Considering this finding, the service quality dimensions are discussed below.

### **5.2.1 Tangibility**

The tangible dimension was identified with the measurement of the physical assets of the five dimensions of SERVQUAL. As detailed in chapter two, physical resources are utilized by customers to assess the idea of administration. Physical resources incorporate a wide assortment of articles, for instance, covering, work areas, hardware, layouts, lighting, divider shades, flyers, consistently correspondence and the appearance of the personnel

The study demonstrated that the positive gap in this component was related to the statement "Modern looking equipment" and "physical facilities are visually appealing", which attained the mean scores of 0.2 and 0.0, respectively.

The study indicated that the positive gap in this element was related to the statement "Modern looking equipment" and "physical facilities are visually appealing", which reached the mean scores of 0.2 and 0.0, individually. This is a significant response from customers because the perceived level of service quality in terms of tangibles exceed the customers' expectations; customers were very satisfied.

### **5.2.2 Reliability**

The reliability dimension quality measurement was a mix of the first dependability and believability dimensions of the SERVQUAL show. The study demonstrates that a relentless quality dimension suggests the limit of a service association to pass on its assurance and to decide service issues experienced by customers. Solid directors can play out the guaranteed service continually and accurately.

The study uncovered that the greatest gap in this dimension that customers didn't get ensured service. This proposes SFRS personnel neglected to play out the ensured service continually and decisively. This could be a result of overpromising by the SFRS personnel in commercials, either intentionally or unexpectedly. Four statements achieved the gap store from -0.1 to -0.2, however, the first statement, 'Personnel providing their services at the promised time they promised' had a closed gap (0.0), meaning that customers were satisfied.

### **5.2.3 Responsiveness**

The responsiveness dimension was related to the dimensions of the five dimensions in the SERVQUAL model. Responsiveness alludes to the willingness and status of personnel to manage customer demands, questions, objections and issues. Responsive managers are the individuals who put forth an attempt to support customers and give a prompt response.

The study uncovered that the greatest gap in this dimension identified with the disappointment of SFRS personnel in being not able to help customers with their requests in the necessary time at the SFRS facilities. The responsive dimension for 'Personnel give prompt service to customers' and 'Personnel are always willing to help customers' accomplished a comparative gap score of - 0.2, while 'Personnel are never too busy to respond to customers' accomplished a hole score of - 0.1. These discoveries recommend that SFRS personnel were viewed as insufficient service providers and, generally, fail to respond instantly. This deficiency might be a direct result of poor working methods just as an absence of supervision by managers.

### **5.2.4 Assurance**

The assurance dimension was a mix of the friendliness, capability, security and fulfilment dimensions of the SERVQUAL model. The hypothetical study uncovered that representatives' information, politeness and their ability to move trust and certainty are fundamental. Trust and certainty can likewise be granted to customers when facilities are deliberately set. Some SFRS personnel were seen as scholarly and obliging individuals who were prepared to motivate individual trust and certainty.

The observational study uncovered that the greatest gap in this dimension could be related to the unwillingness of personnel to help customers to find facilities. All statements accomplished the negative gap scores between - 0.1 to - 0.2. These discoveries recommend that personnel required certainty and, accordingly, fail to manufacture openness and of simplicity contact. This could be attributed to disregarding the consideration and requirements of customers who were not familiar with the environment

### **5.2.5 Empathy**

The empathy dimension was a blend of the original correspondence and comprehension dimension of the SERVQUAL model. The study exhibited that correspondence suggests dealing with individualized consideration provided to customers. The substance of correspondence was that customers feel excellent and remarkable through modified or altered service, while prepared personnel can likewise build positive correspondence relationship with them.

To apply this component, SFRS personnel should make every effort to comprehend customers' needs, and personnel should utilize simple language when speaking with customers. All the statements accomplished the negative gap score of - 0.1.

The exploratory study uncovered that the biggest gap was connected with the failure of SFRS personnel to grasp the specific needs of customers. This discovering induces that personnel disregard to talk with customers about what they anticipate, which influences what they would think about the SFRS contributions. This was a direct result of the need to talk with customers and poor appreciation of their needs.

Also, an entrancing finding that emerged from this survey was that the respondents, who were neutral or not satisfied with a couple of service dimensions, were yet satisfied in general. For instance, respondents, who were not satisfied with the service dimensions of tangibles however exceptionally evaluated the empathy dimension, still perceived SFRS as having high service quality.

## **5.3 DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS IN SERVICE QUALITY**

### **5.3.1 Gender**

The study revealed that gender played a critical role in how respondents/customers see service quality at the SFRS. The results showed that male customers evaluated service quality lower than female customers in the SFRS. This could be because of a more

prominent degree of inclusion by males, just as more profound comprehension of what could be viewed as quality services.

The exploratory study showed that male customers evaluated the perceptions of the SFRS services lower than females; moreover, they had lower expectation levels. Taking everything into account, males had a greater whole score than females. This finding could indicate that males had less enthusiasm for shopping than females; and that, males give more consideration to service quality.

### **5.3.2 Race groups**

In terms of race, the study found that African customers evaluated service quality higher than those from the other race groups. Further analysis showed that African customers rated service quality higher than those from the other race groups. This result could be attributed to African customers' higher level of involvement in fashion retail industry in the greater Durban area. Moreover, cultural background does play an important role in how customers rate service quality.

The experimental study demonstrated that African customers' perception and expectation levels were high. By and large, African customers had a bigger gap score than the other race groups.

### **5.3.3 Age**

The empirical study pointed out that age has an important role to play in service quality. The customers between the ages of 20-29 years rated service quality to be at the highest compared to the other age groups.

It is possible that these customers have more experience and interest in using the services of SFRS than the older or younger age groups. This could also be ascribed to this age group having high levels of involvement in SFRS. Therefore, they might use different levels of assessments criteria to evaluate the service at SFRS.



### **5.3.4 Marital Status**

Marital status was discovered by the empirical study to play an important role in how respondents/customers view service quality at the SFRS. The study reveals that single customers rated service quality higher than the married, divorced, and widowed customers in the SFRS.

This could be as a result of a higher level of involvement by singles, as well as deeper appreciative of what could be considered quality services at SFRS. Single customers are always appreciative and involved of the new trends and fashion introduced in the SFRS.

## **5.4 KEY RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE SERVICE QUALITY**

In view of the research discoveries, the outcomes infer that there is an opportunity to obtain better results in all five the previously mentioned dimensions of the SERVQUAL model. The biggest quality gap was in the responsiveness gap. The accompanying suggestions are made:

Having carefully analysed literature and empirical studies, the findings reveal that a gap exists between expected and perceived service quality. In other words, this means that all five the dimensions of SERVQUAL need improvement and enhancement.

From the analysis carried out, it was determined that the SERVQUAL model is a good instrument to measure service quality at SFRS in greater Durban area because, from the gap score analysis carried out, it was found that the overall service quality is high as perceived by consumers in SFRS and hence, customer satisfaction is rated accordingly. Customer perceptions are found to be close to their expectations. In some cases, they matched or exceeded expectations. To answer the research objectives, the gap scores analysis carried out provided answers to these questions. As a result of this gap, it is clear that consumers are satisfied with service levels at SFRS in greater Durban area. Evaluating the perceptions and expectations of consumers, it can be seen that all dimensions of service quality bring customer satisfaction.

### **5.4.1 Tangibility**

The statement “Modern looking equipment” had a large positive gap of  $G=0.2$ , meaning customers are satisfied, followed by “Physical facilities are visually appealing” with a closed gap of 0.0, which means that the expectations of customers are fulfilled. To close the rest of the ‘tangibility’ gaps, as identified in 4.6.1. and as evidenced from the study, it has been recognized that there is a significant connection between “Personnel is neat in appearance” and “Materials associated with the service (such as pamphlets or statements) are visually appealing at SFRS”. Respondents indicated that the more presentable personnel at SFRS, the more helpful personnel were, and vice versa. In this respect, SFRS should pay attention to the following recommendations within their stores to enhance the brand:

- SFRS personnel should be appropriately attired (uniform) considering that it improves the image of the SFRS facilities;
- Facilities and materials ought to be kept clean and presentable at all times. It is additionally significant that modern-looking equipment ought to be set up to improve perceived service delivery for customers;
- Materials associated with the service (such as pamphlets or statements) ought to be more visually appealing at SFRS; and
- The SFRS personnel must ensure that all facilities, such as equipment, lighting, flooring, and accounts, are checked all the time.

### **5.4.2 Reliability**

The following recommendations are offered for the reliability dimension:

- The SFRS personnel ought to comprehend the importance of remaining dedicated to their duties to individuals and the risk of overpromising and not delivering ;
- The personnel at the SFRS should attempt to utilize various techniques to find out what customers’ wants and needs are and then provide them in a way that satisfies customers’ desires of expectations of quality and service;

- Personnel ought to be properly trained deliver on promises, as well as providing customers with relevant and timely information;
- It was vital that the degree to which services are timeously delivered is regularly used to assess service providers. Moreover, personnel should utilize creative ways to determine what customers' needs are and make arrangement for these in accordance with expectations of value and quality.

### **5.4.3 Responsiveness**

To close all the reliability gaps, the unwavering quality gap was seen to be the biggest gap. The following recommendations are offered for the responsiveness dimension:

- The personnel at the SFRS should be able to tell customers exactly when services will be performed;
- The SFRS personnel must guarantee that customers are furnished with satisfactory and clear information, as well as giving answers about their queries;
- The SFRS personnel should display a high level of professional complaint handling skills and personal initiatives to proffer solutions to customers' problems/challenges;
- The SFRS ought to be effectively involved in discharging their duties and responsibilities in order to improve the delivery of efficient service. Likewise, experienced and skilled personnel should be recruited to increase customer care and overall service quality; and
- Internal working connections by the SFRS personnel should be maintained through meetings held on a regular basis (daily, weekly or monthly) to discuss key issues to enable them to answer customers' questions and build new relationships with customers.

### **5.4.4 Assurance**

The recommendations for the assurance dimension are as follows:

- The personnel at the SFRS should meet the customers' needs in a friendly and helpful manner;

- Moreover, suggestions should be welcome from customers through suggestion boxes, emails and pin boards in order to identify critical areas of concern for customers;
- Furthermore, the SFRS management ought to guarantee that qualified personnel monitor the attitudes, behaviour and work ethics of the SFRS personnel to enable service quality improvement.

#### **5.4.5 Empathy**

To address the gaps recognized in the empathy dimension, the following recommendations are offered:

- It is vital that personnel connect and speak with customers. This allows for an in-depth knowledge of what each customer needs, and the capacity they need to keep on enhancing to the needs of such customers.
- Personnel should adopt a more holistic customer-orientation approach by demonstrating a human dimension in their interaction with customers. Furthermore, an assessment of the needs of customers could be conducted to keep track of any changing needs;
- Programmes could be re-evaluated and the necessary changes made as programmes and services develop and technology improves;
- Up-to-date programmes should be provided to illuminate experiences and the quality of service delivered to customers.

### **5.5 CUSTOMER SATISFACTION**

As confirmed by the study, customers at the SFRS demonstrated dedication to their service providers; it was, in this way, settled that customers will come back to the SFRS in a predictable way. Moreover, they will strongly recommend the SFRS to others. Considering this finding, the study reveals that service providers have a close and individual relationship with customers. With the high level of satisfaction, customer relationships on the loyalty ladder were dominantly at 'platinum level'. It has been established that there is a critical connection between:

- Tangibles and customer satisfaction;

- Responsiveness and customer satisfaction;
- Reliability and customer satisfaction;
- Assurance and customer satisfaction; and
- Empathy and customer satisfaction.

Subsequently, this causal relationship makes it plainly apparent that the degree of customer satisfaction at SFRS in the greater Durban Area is dependent on the service quality dimensions.

## **5.6 ATTAINMENT OF RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

A discussion of how the research objectives of this study were achieved are discussed below.

The first objective of the study was:

- To determine customers' expectations of the service offering at selected fashion retail stores in the Greater Durban Area.

Chapter two contained of the literature review on the five dimensions of service quality. Customers' expectations were recognised, tested and analysed in chapter four. The gap between customers' expectations and perceptions were estimated by the measured according to customers' expectations of the delivery of the five service quality dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. The outcomes uncovered customers' expectations at the SFRS in the Greater Durban Area.

The findings of the study demonstrate that upgrades are essential over every one of the five dimensions. The gaps represent a test to the management of the SFRS to create procedures to close these gaps. Along these lines, the principal objective has been accomplished.

The second objective of the study was:

- To evaluate the customers' perception of the service quality.

As shown in the literature review, the procedure of service delivery is affected by the five dimensions of service quality. The literature review depicted every one of the five dimensions and featured their significance in achieving customer satisfaction. In chapter four, customers' perceptions of services were measured at the SFRS in the greater Durban Area. The outcomes demonstrated negative reactions indicating that customers' expectations surpassed their perception at SFRS. These outcomes indicated that customers are not receiving quality service. Chapter two comprised of the literature review on the five dimensions of service quality delivery at the SFRS in the Greater Durban Area. Subsequently, this objective has been accomplished.

The third objective of the study was:

- To assess the service gaps between expectations and perceptions.

In chapter four, a statistical analysis demonstrated the calculations and measurements of the data gathered from the 400 respondents. 44 items were measured using the SERVQUAL instrument. The analysis of the dimensions demonstrated that there were gaps among expectations and perceptions. In any case, it must be noticed that the biggest and positive gap score generally was for tangibles (0.01) and the biggest negative gap score was for responsiveness (- 0.17). In the last piece of chapter five, the recommendations on the best way to improve customer satisfaction were revealed and, accordingly, this objective has additionally been accomplished.

These gap scores together with the literature review on the five service quality dimensions will be discussed below as far as assessing levels of consumer satisfaction.

The fourth objective of this study was:

- To determine the biographical details of respondents.

In chapter four, a statistical analysis discovered calculations and measurements of the data collected from the 400 respondents. 44 items were measured using the SERVQUAL instrument. Biographics were revealed by the experimental study to play a huge role in how respondents/customers see service quality at the SFRS. The study further uncovered that female customer's evaluated service quality higher than the male

customers in the SFRS. Further study demonstrated that African customers evaluated service quality higher than those from the other race groups. The customers between the ages of 20-29 years evaluated service quality to be at the highest compared to the other age groups. The study revealed that single customers evaluated service quality higher than the married, divorced, and widowed customers in the SFRS.

These scores together with the literature review on the five service quality dimensions uncovers that there is a distinction in contribution of customers and their terms of assessing levels of customer satisfaction.

Thusly, the fourth objective of the study has been accomplished.

## **5.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

Likewise, with all empirical studies, the present research had certain constraints. In order to assess the degree of service (P-E) where P represents perception and E represents expectation, the accompanying condition ought to be applied: If  $P=E$  or  $P>E$ , the degree of service is viewed as brilliant. Perceptions are acquired from customers, while expectations are obtained from the service providers and customers. In any case, for this study, the degree of service was measured from the customers' point of view only.

### **The following are further restrictions of the study:**

- There is nearly nothing, assuming any, published research examining service quality at SFRS in South Africa;
- In request to totally review the degree of service quality, all accomplices should be evaluated. This prerequisite was beyond the degree of this study; and
- The data was collected in a specific geographic domain of SA (Durban). In this manner, the study may contain a few information and results that can be specific to Durban in KZN. The findings of this study probably won't be illustrative of the entire populace because convenience sampling was used to gather the data

## **5.8 DIRECTION OF FUTURE STUDY**

The current research focused on advanced fundamental and fascinating bits of knowledge into evaluating customers' fulfilment in SFRS. In spite of the fact that the setting in which this study was led was essential, regarding the kind of service industry and the substantial sample size, the research study was restricted to the SFRS in the Greater Durban Area. Augmenting the extent of this examination to different SFRS in all towns in SA would add substantially to this region of research.

Another aspect that ought to be investigated is to set up whether customer satisfaction shifts basically among SFRS in the Greater Durban Area. Such an investigation would enable SFRS to benchmark themselves against their own specific past execution, against other comparative centres and against the outstandingly evaluated SFRS from both local and international points of view.

In addition, further study ought to include key players (service providers and customers), with the aim of comprehensively assessing service quality levels in the SFRS. The involvement of key players would give an altogether more grounded establishment to improving inductions with respect to quality service delivery.

## **5.9 MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The conclusions of the study have distinguished positive gapes for management at SFRS, especially in terms of the quality of services at present being given; and its impact on consumer satisfaction. Nonetheless, management needs to guarantee that these gapes are sustained, especially when considering about the ensuing causal connections as recognized in this study, between the different dimensions of service quality.

Tangibles was particularly critical in supporting satisfaction for customers of SFRS. Tangibles play a fundamental role in deciding consumer satisfaction, proposing that the specialized qualities that management may impact to drive consumer satisfaction are not vital to the customer. It was evident that concentrating on offering high quality service to improve service quality adequately was vital to consumer satisfaction.



Moreover, the satisfaction of customers' wants was essentially affected by the dimensions of tangibles and empathy. In this manner, it was clear that management of SFRS could evaluate and screen service quality intermittently, to empower the SFRS to distinguish where revisions were required from the customers' review stage, and to feature the fundamental dimensions of service quality, particularly on assurance and should begin with improving service quality so as to raise consumer satisfaction.

In this study, was additionally demonstrated that management and decision makers in SFRS will acquire more effective data when they base their assessment of service quality more transparently on the dimensions' scores. Every one of these dimensions ought to be surveyed utilizing a rundown of appropriate items that may profit by giving data about the effect of individual components of service quality on consumer satisfaction that can be explicitly controlled for development. The utilization of these scores was probably going to bring about increasingly appropriate decision-making and perceiving the key service segments that drive satisfaction.

For the most part, the management of the SFRS must monitor the changes in perceptions and expectations for their customers. As showed, the essential discovering demonstrated that tangibles were the most significant driver of service quality, though, as indicated by the literature review, reliability was the most significant driver of service quality. These outcomes, consequently, uncovered that management needs to keep up-to-date with the latest with the adjustments in perceptions and expectations. This will empower SFRS to have influence on those key angles that drive customers' satisfaction and fabricate dependability.

## **5.10 CONCLUSION**

The study featured that there is a need to upgrade service quality in the SFRS in the greater Durban Area. The responsiveness dimension and the assurance dimension of service quality were two significant affecting elements in the SFRS in the Greater Durban Area. Further, the responsiveness dimension was a higher priority than the other four service quality dimension because of the poor outer correspondence in this industry.

This chapter likewise reasoned that demographic factors (e.g., gender, age and marital status) affect customers' perceptions and expectations in the SFRS in the Greater Durban Area.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX ONE - Questionnaire

I Ntombikayise Princess Magoso a student of Durban University of Technology working on my research, studying towards my Master's Degree in Marketing.

My research topic: Service Quality at Selected Fashion Retail Stores (SFRS) in the Greater Durban Area. I will humbly request that you fill the questionnaire as honestly as possible, be assured that your anonymity will be respected and preserved.

#### Section A

1.	<b>Gender</b>	Male	Female
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2.	<b>Racial Group</b>	African	Indian	White	Colored
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3.	<b>Age group</b>	Under 20	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60 and above
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4.	<b>Marital</b>	Married	Single	Divorced	Widowed
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5.	<b>Educational level</b>	Less than Certificate	National certificate	National Diploma	Bachelor's Degree	Post-graduate
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6.	<b>Residential location</b>	
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7.	<b>Retail store</b>	Woolworths	Truworths	Edgars	Foschini
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#### SECTION B

1- <b>STRONGLY DISAGREE</b>
2- <b>DISAGREE</b>
3- <b>UNCERTAIN</b>
4- <b>AGREE</b>
5- <b>STRONGLY AGREE</b>

**EXPECTATIONS:** what the customer/client needs to receive

<b>EXPERIENCE/ IMPRESSION</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
1. Excellent layout at selected fashion retail stores (SFRS) in the greater Durban area will have modern looking equipment					
2. The physical facilities at SFRS in the greater Durban area will be visually appealing					
3. SFRS in the greater Durban area are neat and presentable					
4. Materials associated with the service (such as pamphlets or statements) are visually appealing at SFRS in the greater Durban area					

5. When management at SFRS promise to do something by a certain time, they will do so					
6. When a customer has a problem, personnel at SFRS in the greater Durban area will show a sincere interest in solving it					
7. Personnel at SFRS in the greater Durban area will get things right the first time					
8. Personnel at SFRS in the greater Durban area will provide their service at the time they promise to do so					
9. The management at SFRS will insist on error-free records					
10. Management at SFRS in the greater Durban area will tell customers exactly when service will be performed					
11. The management at SFRS in the greater Durban area will prompt service to its customers					
12. The management at SFRS in the greater Durban area management will always be willing to help their customers					
13. The management at SFRS in the greater Durban area will never be too busy to respond to customers					
14. The behaviour of employees in SFRS in the greater Durban area will instil confidence in customers					
15. Customers of SFRS in the greater Durban area will feel safe in their dealings with the customer service equipment					
16. Employees/management will be consistently courteous with their customers					
17. Employees/management will have the knowledge to answer customers' questions					
18. SFRS in the greater Durban area give customers' individual attention					
19. SFRS in the greater Durban area has operating hours convenient to all their customers					
20. Do the SFRS in the greater Durban area give customers personal attention					
21. SFRS in the greater Durban area have the customers' best interests at heart					
22. SFRS in the greater Durban area employees understands and caters to your specific needs					

**PERCEPTION:** what the customer/client received

<b>EXPERIENCE/ IMPRESSION</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
1. Excellent layout at SFRS in the greater Durban area does have modern looking equipment					
2. The physical facilities at SFRS in the greater Durban area are visually appealing					
3. SFRS stores in the greater Durban area are neat and presentable					
4. Materials associated with the service (such as pamphlets or statements) are visually appealing at the SFRS in the greater Durban area					
5. When management at SFRS promise to do something by a certain time, they do so					
6. When a customer has a problem, the SFRS in the greater Durban area personnel does show a sincere interest in solving it					
7. Personnel at SFRS in the greater Durban area does get things right the first time					
8. Personnel at SFRS in the greater Durban area does provide their service at the time they promise to do so					
9. The management does insist on error-free records					
10. Management at SFRS in the greater Durban area does tell customers exactly when service will be performed					
11. Management at SFRS in the greater Durban area does prompt service to its customers					
12. Management at SFRS in the greater Durban area management are always willing to help their customers					
13. Management at SFRS in the greater Durban area management are never be too busy to respond to customers					

14. The behaviour of employees in SFRS in the greater Durban area does instil confidence in customers					
15. Customers of SFRS in the greater Durban area does feel safe in their dealings with the customer service equipment					
16. Employees/management are consistently courteous with their customers					
17. Employees/management does have the knowledge to answer customers' questions					
18. Large high-end fashion in the greater Durban area gives customers' individual attention?					
19. SFRS in the greater Durban area has operating hours convenient to all their customers					
20. Do the SFRS in the greater Durban area give customers personal attention					
21. SFRS in the greater Durban area have the customers' best interests at heart					
22. SFRS in the greater Durban area employees understands and caters to your specific needs?					

### SECTION C - CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

Please tick one answer from the questions below

**1. How often do you use fashion retail store?**

1. Daily
2. Once a week/ more
3. Once a month
4. 2 to 3 times a month
5. Every 2 to 3 months
6. 2 to 3 times a year

**2. Overall how satisfied are you with the fashion retail stores?**

1. Very satisfied
2. Unsatisfied
3. Somewhat satisfied
4. Very satisfied
5. Extremely satisfied

**3. Would you use the fashion retail store again?**

1. Definitely
2. Probably
3. Might or might not
4. Probably not
5. Definitely not
6. Never

**4. Would you recommend the fashion retail store to others?**

1. Definitely
2. Probably
3. Might or might not
4. Probably not
5. Definitely not
6. N/A

Your participation is highly appreciated

**The End**



## APPENDIX TWO -Gatekeeper's letter



RE: GATEKEEPER'S LETTER (TO GATHER INFORMATION OF MY STUDY)

My name is Ntombikayise Princess Magoso; I am a registered student at the Durban University of Technology studying for a Master's degree in Marketing from the Department of the Management Sciences. The title of my research study is: "Service Quality at Selected Fashion Retail Stores (SFRS) in the Greater Durban Area". I will focus on four retail stores in Durban and its surroundings.

The main aim of my study is to determine whether service quality offered at the selected stores can predict customer satisfaction. This will be examined by considering the important factors that underpin service quality, namely; infrastructure, maintenance, services rendered by the staff and management and availability and cleanliness of the equipment. This study will also help to identify barriers that the customers face and other related challenges that need to be addressed. Hundred questionnaires per store will be issued out to the regular users of these selected fashion retail stores, the questionnaire will only take 20 minutes of your time.

The study will benefit the customers and retail stores as it will help them get more awareness on the operation of the stores which will in turn help better the service quality, improve infrastructure and service delivery, as well as improve the relationship.

Participation in the study is voluntary, and no employee will be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way for choosing to complete or not complete the questionnaire. Anonymity will be assured as there will be no identifying characteristics that will lead to the exposure of individual participant's identity. While questions are asked about your personal circumstances, no identifying information, such as your name or Identity Document number is asked for, and as such you will remain anonymous. Responses will not be used for any purposes, other than research and will be stored in a confidential manner.

Thank you for your co-operation. For more information, please contact my supervisor:

Mr Nad M Pillay telephonically on: 0314093449 / 0842298420 or

Email: [nadp@dut.ac.za](mailto:nadp@dut.ac.za)

Sincerely yours,

Ms Ntombikayise Princess Magoso

0789345021

Email: [ntombikayiseprincess0@gmail.com](mailto:ntombikayiseprincess0@gmail.com).

### APPENDIX THREE - APPENDIX CORRELATIONS

		Correlations									
		Tangibles_R	Reliability_R	Responsiveness_R	Assurance_R	Empathy_E	Tangibles_F	Reliability_F	Responsiveness_F	Assurance_F	Empathy_P
Tangibles_R	Pearson Correlation	1									
	Sig. (2-tailed)										
	N	396									
Reliability_R	Pearson Correlation	.635**	1								
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,000									
	N	396	396								
Responsiveness_R	Pearson Correlation	.432**	.718**	1							
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,000	0,000								
	N	396	396	396							
Assurance_R	Pearson Correlation	.418**	.677**	.728**	1						
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,000	0,000	0,000							
	N	396	396	396	396						
Empathy_E	Pearson Correlation	.455**	.623**	.629**	.701**	1					
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000						
	N	396	396	396	396	396					
Tangibles_F	Pearson Correlation	.538**	.482**	.369**	.328**	.434**	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000					
	N	396	396	396	396	396	396				
Reliability_F	Pearson Correlation	.418**	.603**	.581**	.604**	.616**	.563**	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000				
	N	396	396	396	396	396	396	396			
Responsiveness_F	Pearson Correlation	.313**	.515**	.512**	.577**	.628**	.426**	.741**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000			
	N	396	396	396	396	396	396	396	396		
Assurance_F	Pearson Correlation	.331**	.497**	.525**	.577**	.649**	.463**	.698**	.762**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000		
	N	396	396	396	396	396	396	396	396	396	
Empathy_F	Pearson Correlation	.276**	.484**	.499**	.560**	.626**	.442**	.650**	.726**	.788**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	
	N	396	396	396	396	396	396	396	396	396	396

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

## APPENDIX FOUR - Chi-square chart

	Chi-Square	df	Asymp. Sig.
Gender	1,707	1	0,191
Racial Group	262,727	3	0,000
Age Group	461,242	5	0,000
Marital Status	427,475	3	0,000
Educational Level	179,57	4	0,000
Location	610,187	4	0,000
Retail Store	71,455	3	0,000
Tan1_E	309,429	4	0,000
Tan2_E	442,965	4	0,000
Tan3_E	378,141	4	0,000
Tan4_E	447,46	4	0,000
Rel1_E	365,793	4	0,000
Rel2_E	381,109	4	0,000
Rel3_E	465,919	4	0,000
Rel4_E	446,955	4	0,000
Rel5_E	612,965	4	0,000
Rel6_E	482,611	4	0,000
Res1_E	379,657	4	0,000
Res2_E	500,288	4	0,000
Res3_E	350,566	4	0,000
Ass1_E	490,667	4	0,000
Ass2_E	417,611	4	0,000
Ass3_E	413,848	4	0,000
Ass4_E	482,864	4	0,000
Emp1_E	395,49	4	0,000
Emp2_E	428,47	4	0,000
Emp3_E	422,46	4	0,000
Emp4_E	443,52	4	0,000
Emp5_E	464,101	4	0,000
Tan1_P	487,468	4	0,000
Tan2_P	475,54	4	0,000
Tan3_P	209,273	3	0,000
Tan4_P	430,995	4	0,000
Rel1_P	388,658	4	0,000
Rel2_P	419,606	4	0,000
Rel3_P	379,278	4	0,000
Rel4_P	397,889	4	0,000
Rel5_P	369,367	4	0,000
Rel6_P	363,419	4	0,000
Res1_P	421,576	4	0,000
Res2_P	329,354	4	0,000
Res3_P	334,101	4	0,000
Ass1_P	387,409	4	0,000
Ass2_P	442,751	4	0,000
Ass3_P	376,273	4	0,000
Ass4_P	350,591	4	0,000
Emp1_P	351,727	4	0,000
Emp2_P	369,429	4	0,000
Emp3_P	341,449	4	0,000
Emp4_P	410,338	4	0,000
Emp5_P	374,985	4	0,000
How often do you use fashion r	199,884	4	0,000
Overall how satisfied are you w	357,485	4	0,000
Would you use the fashion reta	1416,939	5	0,000
Would you recommend the fast	1114,655	4	0,000