

**DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF
TECHNOLOGY**

**CUSTOMERS' PERCEPTIONS OF
SERVICE DELIVERY BY TRADE AND
INVESTMENT KWAZULU-NATAL IN
THE GREATER DURBAN AREA**

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SEPTEMBER 2022



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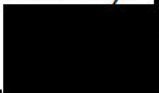
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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Anamika Somera, student number 19601713, declare and confirm that, I am the sole author of the written work herein. This is the result of my own investigation; research and I have compiled the work in my own words. Where research has been utilised and reiterated, it has been acknowledged and referenced as per the University referencing guideline. I confirm that this work has not been previously submitted to any university.



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ABSTRACT

This study aims to evaluate the perceptions of customers regarding the service delivery of Trade and Investment KwaZulu-Natal. Several research studies on service quality have resulted in positive outcomes for organisations which have proven that services can be improved upon, revenues can be increased, customer retention can be maintained, and this can result in attracting new customers through positive word-of-mouth outreach.

This research unravelled a level of awareness as identified by the Corporate Strategy Plan compiled by Sigma International 2019 of the services offered by Trade and Investment KwaZulu-Natal (TIKZN). The gaps that highlighted the perceptions and expectations created were the motivation behind this study, which examined the effect of service delivery from a sample size of 400 businesses locally within Central Durban, Amanzimtoti, Umhlanga, Westville and Morningside, as well as some of the businesses that lie on the outskirts of the greater Durban area.

A quantitative approach was adopted in this study and data was gathered through questionnaires. The study also used the probability cluster sampling technique to draw a sample from the Trade and Investment KwaZulu-Natal's database. Customer perception and expectations of service quality were measured using the SERVQUAL instrument, which consists of five dimensions: reliability, tangibles, responsiveness, empathy, and assurance. Gap analysis was used to evaluate gaps in terms of the quality of services delivered. The data collection procedure ensured that ethical considerations were followed in collecting data from the respondents. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse data by means of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS version 27®).

The findings of this study using SERVQUAL illustrate that customer expectations were higher than perceptions across all five service quality dimensions. The results

imply that customers were not happy with the level of service being delivered by Trade and Investment KwaZulu-Natal on each of the dimensions.

Based on the findings of this study, recommendations have been proposed to close the gaps and ultimately improve service quality so that Trade and Investment KwaZulu-Natal is able to achieve customer satisfaction and improve service delivery. These findings of the study are limited to KZN and should not be generalised beyond this region. Therefore, it is recommended that future research investigate employee-related aspects of service quality effectiveness, such as role stress, ambiguity, conflict and job satisfaction, as well as other customer-related service outcomes apart from perceived service quality.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY.....	I
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	II
ABSTRACT	III
TABLE OF CONTENTS	V
LIST OF FIGURES.....	XII
LIST OF TABLES.....	XIII
CHAPTER 1	14
1.1 Introduction.....	14
1.2 Context of the research.....	16
1.2.1 Background of investment promotion.....	16
1.3 Research problem and aims	17
1.3.1 What is the problem?	17
1.3.2 What is the aim of the study?.....	18
1.4 What are the study objectives?.....	18
1.5 Research questions	18
1.6 Justification of the study.....	19
1.7 Summary of the research methodology	20

1.8 Organisation of the study.....	21
1.9 Conclusion	22
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	23
2.1 Introduction.....	23
2.1.1 Service delivery and governance	23
2.1.2 Trade and investment KwaZulu-Natal service offerings	23
2.1.3 Service delivery of these offerings.....	24
A. Marketing communication strategies	25
B. Digital marketing channels	25
2.1.4 The customers.....	25
2.1.4.1 TIKZN customers.....	26
2.2 Definition of key terms	26
2.2.1 Service delivery	26
2.2.1.1 Public sector service delivery.....	27
2.2.1.2 Public Private Partnership sector service delivery.....	27
2.2.2 Customer perception and expectation	28
2.2.3 Perception-building.....	29
2.3 Aspects of service delivery	30
2.3.1 Service quality	30

2.3.2 Dimensions of service quality	31
2.3.3 Service standards	33
2.3.4 Service quality assessment	34
2.3.5 Customer services	34
2.4 Communication and customer service evaluation.....	35
2.5 Stages of customer feedback	35
2.6 Obtaining customer perceptions	36
2.7 Community or communication audits	37
2.8 Overview and analysis of customer perceptions	37
2.9 Frameworks for customer service delivery quality assessment	38
2.9.1 The batho pele framework	39
2.10 Public service quality assessment in south africa	41
2.11 Service delivery for public value.....	41
2.12 Customer participation and value systems.....	42
2.13 Distinguishing public from private services	42
2.14 Service quality assessment.....	43
2.15 Service quality expectations.....	44
2.16 Theoretical framework.....	44
2.17 Addressing the gaps	47

2.18 Conclusion	47
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY.....	49
3.1 Introduction.....	49
3.2 Research design	49
3.3 Target population	50
3.4 Sampling size	50
3.5 Sampling method.....	50
3.5.1 Probability sampling method.....	50
3.5.2 Non-probability sampling method.....	51
3.6 Measuring instrument	52
3.7 Data collection	53
3.8 Pilot study.....	54
3.9 Data analysis.....	55
3.10 Reliability and validity.....	55
3.11 Anonymity and confidentiality	56
3.12 Ethical considerations	56
3.12.1 Ensuring participants have given informed consent.....	57
3.12.2 Ensuring no harm comes to participants	57
3.12.3 Ensuring that permission is obtained	57

3.12 Conclusion	58
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION.....	59
4.1 Social demographic characteristics	60
4.1.1 Gender	60
4.1.2 Age group.....	61
4.1.3 Racial group	61
4.1.4 Level of education.....	62
4.1.5 Business area	63
4.1.6 Business sector	64
4.2 Reliability test	65
4.3 Service quality.....	66
4.3.1 Expectation and perception of service quality	66
4.3.2 Association between the demographic characteristics and expectation and perception of service quality	69
4.3.3 Correlation analysis.....	72
4.4 Validating the service quality	73
4.4.1 Validation of the expectation of service quality	73
4.4.2 Validation perception of service quality	75
4.5 Conclusion: analysis, interpretation and discussion of results.....	77

4.5.1 Expectations and perceptions.....	78
CHAPTER FIVE - CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	81
5.1 Introduction.....	81
5.2 Findings from the study	82
5.2.1 Overview of chapter 1.....	82
5.2.2 Findings from the literature review	82
5.2.3 Findings from the primary research.....	84
5.3 Conclusions gained from the study	85
5.3.1 Objective one: to investigate customers’ expectations of the service quality by Trade and Investment KwaZulu-Natal (TIKZN).....	85
5.3.2 Objective two: to determine the gaps that lie between the expectations and perceptions of the service quality offered by TIKZN	85
5.3.3 Objective three: to make appropriate recommendations on improving the service quality of TIKZN...	86
5.4 Limitations	88
5.5 Conclusion	88
5.6 Recommendations	89
REFERENCES.....	91
APPENDICES	107
APPENDIX A	107

APPENDIX B.....	111
APPENDIX C.....	116
APPENDIX D	117
APPENDIX E.....	118
APPENDIX F.....	119
APPENDIX G	120
APPENDIX H	121
APPENDIX I.....	122

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 4.1:	Respondents Gender	Page 60
Figure 4.2:	Pie Chart Showing the Age Distribution of the Respondents	Page 61
Figure 4.3:	Racial profile of the Respondents	Page 62
Figure 4.4:	Respondents level of education	Page 63
Figure 4.5:	Showing the Business Area Around Greater Durban	Page 64
Figure 4.6:	Overall Service Quality Score Showing Mean Gap Difference	Page 69

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1:	The tool developed for citizen evaluation of public services is quoted below	Page 26
Table 4.1:	Showing the Business Sectors	Page 64
Table 4.2:	Other Sectors of Business	Page 65
Table 4.3:	Reliability test for the Service Quality Instrument	Page 66
Table 4.4:	Showing the Respondents Expectation and Perception of Service Quality	Page 67
Table 4.5:	Association Between Expectation Perception and Respondents Socio Demographic Variables	Page 71
Table 4.6:	Correlation Between Expectation and Perception of Service Quality	Page 72
Table 4.7:	KMO and Bartlett's Test for Expectation and Perception of Service Delivery	Page 73
Table 4.8:	Explored Service Quality Dimension for Expectations	Page 74
Table 4.9:	Showing the Reliability, Discriminant and Convergent Validity	Page 75
Table 4.10	Explored Service Quality Dimension for Expectation	Page 76

CHAPTER 1

1.1 Introduction

According to Peters (2022), over the past thirty years, the public division's conventional purpose has moved away from being a financier, owner and project manager to allocating aspects of how services are delivered using "alternative service delivery" (ASD) procedures. These types of procedures (ASD) differ in their use from "public-private partnerships" (PPPs) of organisations. Peters (2022) states that this is not a new concept in South Africa as many government divisions have a selection of actions and obligations. A crucial distinguishing aspect of agencies is their narrower, specific purposes. In principle, this distinctive attribute, coupled with substantial working independence, allows organisations to circumvent many of the disputes that their governmental equivalents experience, thus providing the possibility for advancement.

Armah (2020) states that to attract foreign direct investment, nine provincial investment promotion agencies were created to focus on the advancement of trade and investment to and from corresponding provinces. Considering the above, Mazibuko (2020) observes that it is the role of investment promotion organisations to collect and disseminate information to investors to encourage them to invest in South Africa

Worldwide, "service delivery" is a common phrase that is used to signify the movement of basic communal requirements and services, particularly housing, water and public health, property, energy and structures, which resident communities are dependent on and have taken for granted (Zerihun and Mashigo, 2022). Nevertheless, in the South African context, the distribution and constant upkeep of these basic services have demonstrated that occasionally they are undependable, greatly disrupting and jeopardising local communities (Amesho et al., 2021).

According to Nieuwenhuizen (2019), the regulatory environment and restrictive legislation are responsible for the minimal growth in the formal business sectors. Asha and Makalela (2020) and Kolae, Ghaffari and Divkoti (2022) are consistent in their statements about strategies and legislation being the most valuable restraints to business progress in emerging countries. Government policies and strategies were revealed as a constraining factor to business movement by 60% of the participants in a study by Mazibela and Matsiliza (2020).

Ameso et al. (2021) argue that “red tape” is an extremely common cause of the collapse of many businesses. The Small Business Project (SBP) states that 78% of the contributing businesses reported an increasingly unfavourable situation for business progress as this is mostly enforced by government regulations (SBP, 2020). South Africa is very reliant upon different-sized organisations and businesses for the stability of the economy, expansions and employment as stated by the Small Business Project (2020). The effects of regulations and the very changing economy impede the growth and survival of businesses. Mazibela and Matsiliza (2020) add that there is a low entry level of entrepreneurial activity at 6.9%, with a rating of 52nd out of 65 countries for South Africa. Some of the other issues businesses face, according to Kurdi et al. (2022) are the lack of ease of doing business, the inefficiencies of government bureaucracy and the restrictive regulations for labour. These concerns are indicative that small businesses are important contributors to employment, GDP and prosperity and that they are not doing very well in South Africa. These are some of the challenges that deter foreign investment in South Africa as well.

The value of perception-building rests in the pledge to the stakeholder or the local business that the investment decision will reduce exploration times, offer social tolerance and provide psychological support for the investment (Ndinga-Kanga, Van der Merwe and Hartford, 2020). Zerihun and Mashigo, 2022) attest that a stable correlation between service delivery and governance is substantial in the South African local, municipal, or provincial government framework. These statements

reinforce the significance of perceptions of service within a government context and aid in building an argument to showcase the aspects that impact perceptions and how agencies of government can learn to understand and measure the information received.

The research is based on the perceptions of the customers of Trade and Investment KwaZulu-Natal, one of the nine Investment promotion agencies created to help grow KwaZulu-Natal's economy.

1.2 Context of the research

1.2.1 Background of investment promotion

According to Nyawo and Mubangizi (2021) the basis for investment promotion is to correct or alleviate market limitations and to be able to ensure that the information received is precise and properly guided. Further to this statement, Nyawo and Mubangizi (2021) outlines that investment promotion agencies (IPAs) are there to attract quality foreign direct investment (FDI) both internationally and locally, as well as address distorted risk perceptions, close information gaps, overcome bureaucratic hurdles and portray the correct image of the country.

There are many investment promotion agencies (IPAs) with very similar mandates and key performance indicators in South Africa. South Africa has investment promotion agencies operational in almost every region that have been established to perform tasks for the government at the operational level with the outlook and aim of attracting investment into their respective provinces and effectively into South Africa. Trade and Investment KwaZulu-Natal (TIKZN) is one such IPA.

According to the Corporate Strategy Plan compiled by Sigma International for Trade and Investment KwaZulu-Natal (Singh, 2019), there are many challenges facing Trade and Investment KwaZulu-Natal's (TIKZN's) presence in the investment markets associated with the perceptions that they are a funding agency; that they

charge a consulting fee; or being a government agency, they do not have all the proper resources or databases required when compared to other IPAs.

The above-mentioned factors have given rise to this study in trying to understand the role of the Investment Promotion Agency as well as the various business sectors' expectations and perceptions of the organisation.

Despite the success stories and roadshow campaigns, customers are not fully aware of Trade and Investment KwaZulu-Natal's (TIKZN) full suite of service offerings.

This proposal aimed to investigate customers' perceptions of Trade and Investment KwaZulu-Natal (TIKZN)'s delivery of the service offerings.

1.3 Research problem and aims

1.3.1 What is the problem?

Noko (2019) explains that a problem statement is a brief and snappy description of a challenge that needs to be resolved. A problem statement identifies the inequality that exists between the current condition and the desire to achieve set goals, which helps to confront a present problem that needs resolution. As clarified in the above statement by Noko (2019), in relation to this research proposal, the objective is to understand the perceptions of the service delivery of TIKZN offerings. It has been stated in the Corporate Strategy Plan compiled by Sigma International for Trade and Investment KwaZulu-Natal (Singh, 2019) that the customers do not fully understand the full suite of offerings. Customers are not completely aware of exactly what the service offerings are or how they are delivered, revealed Singh (2019).

Trade and Investment KwaZulu-Natal is a South African commerce promotion organisation, founded to support the KwaZulu-Natal province as a destination worthy of investing in and to create trade deals by facilitating assistance to the local companies' access to international markets. "The organisation was created after government's decision to rid investment promotion from the provinces, rather than

have this retained as a national function” (TIKZN, 2018). Based on the above, Trade and Investment KwaZulu-Natal should have a focused drive that thrives on facilitating investment and trade.

1.3.2 What is the aim of the study?

The aim of the study was to identify and scrutinise the customers’ experiences of service delivery by the Trade and Investment KwaZulu-Natal Agency in the greater Durban area. Through a close and fine-grained analysis of the Gaps Model and the Service Model, this research showed that there are means and ways to address the perception problems that may arise.

1.4 What are the study objectives?

- i. To evaluate customers’ expectations of the service delivery by Trade and Investment KwaZulu-Natal (TIKZN).
- ii. To measure the gaps that lie between the expectations and perceptions of the service quality offered by TIKZN.
- iii. To make appropriate recommendations on improving the service delivery of TIKZN.

1.5 Research questions

The study addressed the following questions:

- i. What do the customers of Trade and Investment KwaZulu-Natal perceive as good service quality?
- ii. What are the customers’ expectations of Trade and Investment KwaZulu-Natal?
- iii. What are the gaps between expectations and perceptions and how can these gaps be closed?

iv. What dimensions of service quality could be gauged to assure better service delivery?

1.6 Justification of the study

Service quality has been clearly explained as the degree and course between customer service expectations and perceptions (Pawish, 2021). Further to this, Kolae et al. (2022: 203) define perceived service quality as the assessment of the service across the episodes when compared to some explicit or implicit standard. What this tells us is that customers benchmark the service quality received by an organisation against an internal standard of expectation.

Based on research and case studies of the impact on service delivery amongst many service providers and product manufacturers, trying to understand the impact of an organisation's service delivery on its customers is an integral aspect of the ongoing support it will receive as well as the survival of a company. There are many investment promotion agencies and the competitiveness is ever rising as the economy changes and the difficulties to create investments grow stronger. It is possible to create and set up an organisation's reputation apart from the many agencies through its service delivery. As stated by Nyawo and Mubangizi (2021: 9) the purpose of the IPAs is to reduce the costs of foreign direct investments (FDIs) and to assist by providing information on the host country and ensuring there is a seamless process followed through. This being an integral role that IPAs play in the economic sector, means such research will have an impact on future FDIs and how the country is perceived by its service delivery and the quality offered. KwaZulu-Natal is where the hub of many sectors gives rise to entrepreneurs who seek to acquire company information about acquisitions, business linkages and foreign investments. Therefore, this study was imperative to understand and mitigate those gaps.

1.7 Summary of the research methodology

This study is quantitative in nature. As identified by Bhasin (2020), quantitative research is a methodical approach to gathering information via sampling methods, for example, questionnaires, online polls and online surveys. It is collected from both prospective and present customers and clients and represented in numerical terms. The best sampling methodology for this study was the probability sampling technique. According to Saunders et al. (2019), probability sampling techniques use the random collection technique to help select elements from the sampling structure to be included in the sample. Each person has a non-zero possibility of being chosen. Further to this, Saunders et al. (2019) explains that the benefit of probability sampling is that sampling error can be determined. This holds true for the sample selected for this, study as they are representatives of various businesses within the greater Durban area.

The purpose of this research was to investigate the customer's perceptions of the service quality of trade and investment in KwaZulu-Natal in the greater Durban Area. Information was collected through a quantitative survey questionnaire as part of the research strategy making use of a 5-point Likert scale. The research was descriptive. This closed response questionnaire, which was constructed using the SERVQUAL survey, was self-administered and constructed around the primary purpose, namely, customers' perceptions of the service quality of trade and investment in KwaZulu-Natal in the greater Durban Area. The sample involved the entire population of 400 customers who utilise the services of Trade and Investment KwaZulu-Natal in the greater Durban area. Data was accumulated using questionnaires that were administered by the researcher to customers during 2020 and processed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS version 27®) for the creation of results. The evaluation and understanding of data were offered using illustrative and inferential statistics.

1.8 Organisation of the study

Chapter 1

Introduces the topic, problem information, the aim of the study and the research objectives. The research methodology was also discussed.

Chapter 2

This chapter presents a relevant literature review on how investment promotion agencies are regulated and the impacts they have on their outreach to businesses. The service quality, Gaps Model, customer service as well as the government sphere were outlined and explained in detail.

Chapter 3

This chapter focuses on the research methodology appropriate to the study undertaken, whereby the type of study chosen, the sampling techniques, population chosen, data collection and analysis, are all examined.

Chapter 4

This chapter concentrates on the statement, interpretation, and discussion of findings. The purpose of this research is to find remedies to perceived problems in the organisation.

Chapter 5

This chapter centres on the deductions and suggestions of the study. Bringing the various strands of thought together and using the statistical analysis to substantiate why certain conclusions are drawn.

1.9 Conclusion

This chapter explains the introduction and background to investment promotion agencies and the offerings of Trade and Investment in KwaZulu-Natal. Chapter 1 delves further into the process and structure of evaluating customers' perceptions of service delivery by trade and investment in KwaZulu-Natal in the greater Durban area. It includes the purpose, objectives, and problems of the research. This section also explains to the reader what the actual problem is and the reason for this research.

The following chapter summarises the relevant academic literature, aiming to perform a thorough exploration and assessment of the theoretical basis related to the research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The importance of perception-building lies in the assurance by the investor or the local business that the investment result will decrease exploration times and provide social approval, as well as psychological fortification of the investment conclusion (Mazibuko, 2020).

2.1.1 Service delivery and governance

Breakfast, Bradshaw and Bradshaw (2019) attest that a stable relationship between service delivery and governance is substantial in the South African local, municipal or provincial government context. These statements reinforce the significance of the perceptions of service within a government context and build an argument to showcase the aspects that impact perceptions and how agencies of government can learn to understand and measure the information received.

This chapter reviews the literature on the concept of service delivery and customers' perceptions of service delivery. The chapter also looks at various aspects of the subject and provides a reflection and evaluation of what other scholars say about the consumers' perceptions of service delivery and how service delivery is perceived as core to the development and improvement of services that TIKZN mandated. It is imperative to note that the amount of literature on the issue of service delivery in South Africa is rather overwhelming, but this study provided a summarised overview and reflection of the subject.

2.1.2 Trade and investment KwaZulu-Natal service offerings

The review of the service delivery models includes an analysis of the current effective service marketing communications strategy against its effectiveness within the various sectors in the greater Durban area. The service offerings are comprehensively outlined in the literature review in Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

The core services of TIKZN are quoted below:

“Assists investors to locate suitable premises and to secure project and operational financing.”

“The facilitation of joint ventures and business linkages between small and big business.”

“The timeous provision of relevant, reliable information to both potential and existing investors and traders.”

“The provision of assistance to both existing and new investors with regards to applications for investment and export marketing incentives.”

“Aid foreign investors in terms of applications for business permits.”

“Negotiation of local government incentives on behalf of investors.”

“Provision of project support and aftercare services to investors.”

“Provision of assistance to emerging international traders and with international trade enquiries.”

“Provision of quality market intelligence on various industries and countries.”

2.1.3 Service delivery of these offerings

Trade and Investment KwaZulu-Natal (TIKZN) currently employs social, electronic, print and audio-visual media to promote its product offerings. Occasionally, roadshows and information booklets are also used to supplement the awareness. Roadshows and content creation are part of the service marketing communications

strategy to create awareness, highlight the services and showcase success stories through publications to municipalities and districts.

A. Marketing communication strategies

Meshalkin et al. (2020: 2) comment that marketing communication strategies and their channels of communication are often viewed in isolation. The mistake is often made that different customers respond differently to alternate forms of communication media. However, as highlighted by Bel and Sebó (2021) if a customer-centred view is taken by the organisation when communicating product information, customers would very often pay scant regard to whether the communication is public relations, advertising, or any other media channel if it is relevant and convenient to their customer requirements at that point in time. It is therefore anticipated that these strategies will influence the image of the organisation and the perceptions of the customer.

B. Digital marketing channels

Kurdi, Alshurideh, Akour, Alzoubi, Obeidat and AlHamad (2022) state that the increasing enhancements of technological developments have allowed businesses operations to use these modern activities to assist in promoting their products and services. Further, Kurdi, et al. (2022) notes that the digital marketing channels such as online advertising, social media, emails marketing, and websites search engine are imperative when enhancing the consumer buying power.

2.1.4 The customers

It has been observed that marketing often concentrates on customer focus as the core of their strategy. This is highlighted by Ahmed, ElKorany and ElSayed (2022: 2) who define the customer-focused perspective as the customary beliefs that put the customer's interests first, while not eliminating those of all other participants, such as

managers, owners and employees. This is seen as essential to developing a long-term, profitable organisation.

2.1.4.1 TIKZN customers

TIKZN's customers comprise both local and international businesses. These businesses are investors, attendees at information sharing workshops, exporters, and business clients requiring one-stop-shop advice and information as well as email or walk-in enquiries.

The customers locally are both black-owned businesses and non-black-owned businesses. These businesses are a part of some of the major priority sectors in KwaZulu-Natal such as "Manufacturing; Agriculture; Business Services; Clothing, Textile, Leather and Footwear; Energy and Water; Health Services; Mining and Beneficiation as well as Tourism and Property Development". According to Tarnowska and Ras (2021: 10), market alignment is considered a strategic adoption a firm can make to achieve competitive advantage. These competitive advantages can be realised through the provision of differentiating customer value or the attainment of lower operating costs. This is an age-old dilemma that faces organisations, including Trade and Investment KwaZulu-Natal (TIKZN). Does the organisation focus on cost reduction or the creation of customer value via customer-focused strategies?

2.2 Definition of key terms

2.2.1 Service delivery

Service delivery is regarded as a sustained process of accessing affordable and satisfactory services provided by both the public and private sector players (Dam, 2020: 23). Bong and Boldt (2020: 162) note that service providers are constitutionally mandated to provide better services and take various social factors into consideration. Bong and Boldt (2020: 162) further note that service provision involves the even reallocation and rearrangement of resources to ensure equality

and social equity, which ultimately results in the improvement of living conditions for people. Therefore, considering the above, sustained service delivery should stimulate economic growth.

2.2.1.1. Public sector service delivery

Masuku and Jilli (2019) addresses the public service delivery classification as being recognized as one of the most eminent ways of decreasing poverty or a lack of economic growth through poverty alleviation programmes. As part of the South African government's cooperative system, key investors in municipalities should adopt a combined approach to public service delivery. A combined approach to public service delivery needs local municipalities, together with relevant stakeholders to integrate processes and services to ensure effective and efficient service delivery.

Information is a critical component of government and citizens' decision-making; therefore, improvements in its availability and reliability stand to benefit many dimensions of governance, including service delivery. Service delivery is especially difficult in rural areas which contain the majority of the world's poor but face unique logistical challenges due to their remoteness.

2.2.1.2. Public Private Partnership sector service delivery

The Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) is the recent and embryonic environment in which shifting technologies and trends such as the Internet of Things (IoT) and artificial intelligence (AI) are transforming the way government's function. Governments are gradually facing new risks and opportunities due to the progression of the 4IR. Governments need to find ways to adapt to the 4IR. Innovation is a prerequisite for adapting to the 4IR (Nel and Masilela, 2020).

Based on the above, the private sector plays a pivotal role in ensuring that 4IR integrates and leverages of the public sector to enhance the economy.

Nel, 2020, states that a public private partnership (PPP) is a contract between a public and a private party to attain a strategic objective. The PPP model is established on three principles: risk allocation and transfer, affordability, and value for money. Conventionally, PPPs have been leveraged for hard service progress such as infrastructure development. The innovation of technology within the perspective of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) has coined new prospects and stakes for PPPs as prominent mechanisms for the promotion of development. The 4IR has consequences for government service delivery, which have conveyed about an increased demand for service delivery revolution and the development of information and communications technology (ICT). Although PPPs have customarily focused on hard services, it is important to consider PPPs for soft service delivery. It is therefore necessary to rethink the role of the PPP model as an alternative service delivery mechanism.

2.2.2 Customer perception and expectation

According to Ahmed et al. (2022: 8), marketing often concentrates on customer focus as core of its strategy. Customer-focused perspectives is the collection of beliefs that places the customer's concerns first, while not excluding those of all other participants, such as managers, owners and employees, which are essential in developing a long-term profitable organisation (Ahmed et al., 2022: 8), Customer expectations incorporate everything that a customer anticipates from a product, service, or corporation (Muthwa, 2021: 65). Smith (2020) maintains that customer expectations are expressed through the feelings, ideas and needs of the customers towards a trademark or brand's services or products. The above definition concurs with Pawish (2021: 78) who note that expectations are designed in the minds of customers centred upon their individual experiences and what they have discovered, blended with their pre-existing understanding and knowledge.

From TIKZN's perspective, the organisation's image is directly related to the expectations of customers. The TIKZN brand is expected to have a positive impact

on the customers' expectations of the service offering. Consumers will have mutually explicit and implicit expectations relating to the product or service that they have attained. They will have performance expectations that incorporate a robust element expected to predict changes to the product or service over time. Importantly, customers will also have personal- and service-level expectations which connect directly to the customer relationship and interface with a business or organisation (Smith, 2020: 1).

2.2.3 Perception-building

Perception-building is the manner by which people explain sensory impressions into a clear and cohesive view of the world all around them (Meshalkin et al., 2020: 57). Though essentially based on unfinished and unconfirmed (or unreliable) information, perception is equated with reality for most practical purposes and guides human behaviour overall (Tarnowska and Ras, 2021: 12). Perception-building endeavours can be classified into three groups, namely advertising, promotional material and participation in events (Meshalkin et al., 2020: 57). Independent Procurement Advisory Services (IPAs) typically spend a quarter of their total expenditure on perception-building activities, which are viewed as an element of marketing communication (Pawish, 2021, 78). As directed by Breakfast et al. (2019), marketing communication is centred on a distinct corporate image. Conveying these marketing activities to an investor or local business provides the customer with a condensed image and creates a stable impact in the mind of the customer. This is very relevant to TIKZN, which is seen as a financially stable organisation, promoting the sustainability of SMMEs. Therefore, the perception is that customer interaction with the organisation will result in a positive outcome.

Perception-building can be performed through an array of sources, such as videos, newspapers and editorials, and can also bring corporations together through trade shows and trade missions to create optimistic perceptions (UNCTAD, 2020). In the same vein, Meshalkin et al. (2020: 57) states that generating a positive perception

can thus be used by IPAs as a further incentive for businesses to invest. Previous studies on maintainable consumption have revealed many issues characterised by miscellaneous outcomes, and scholars have often treated sustainability as a uni-dimensional structure, neglecting important differences and impeding a better understanding of consumer response (Pawish, 2021: 78). Meshalkin et al. (2020: 57) observe that consumers distinguish the social and environmental elements of sustainability as psychologically distinct in academic and reasonably important ways. Consumers correlate the social dimension of sustainability more with emotional, short-term, and local factors and the environmental component more with intellectual, long-term, and global concerns (Tarnowska and Ras, 2021: 12).

2.3 Aspects of service delivery

Empirical studies show the various aspects of customer service delivery, which include service quality, service standards and service quality assessment (Rohadin, 2021: 110). It is also critical to acknowledge that poor service delivery and inadequate infrastructure may result in negative implications for people's lifestyles, especially at the grassroots level. The key aspects of service delivery are outlined and explained below.

2.3.1 Service quality

Service quality is generally referred to as a key driver, especially in the development of frameworks within which community audits and surveys are conducted (Uzir et al., 2021: 102721). Singh *et al.* (2020: 79) note that service quality is the customers' reference of satisfaction for good organisational performance where consumers or customers compare their expectations and the actual services delivered. The notion of service quality involves the comparison of perceptions, expectations and the actual performance or services rendered (Mabizela and Matsiliza, 2020). Bel and Sebő (2021) argue that service quality is an organisational commitment to the

continuous improvement of quality satisfaction and any institution that dreams of success, should consider investing in developing procedures that are determined to manage output quality while integrating perceptions with institutional goals for growth and development. Total quality management strengthens institutional commitment to service quality management and improvement (Vencataya et al.,2019: 100).

Considering the above definitions, in South Africa, Batho Pele principles are observed to ensure effective and efficient service delivery. The Batho Pele principles guide the planning and implementation of community or customer surveys and audits and are meant to promote enhanced customer service delivery (Mojapelo, Modiba and Mnkeni-Saurombe, 2021: 23). Mojapelo et al. (2021: 23). further note that the principles provide mechanisms for assessing service quality through laying out the steps and guidelines for better service delivery, which include public consultations; the establishment of service standards, enabling and increasing access, providing information, courtesy, redressing, as well as ensuring value for money. In other words, the principles do not only guide the way in which key customer services are delivered, but they serve as a basis for guiding how critical services are rendered. Rohadin (2021: 110) maintain that over the years, scholars have concurred on the definition of service quality, agreeing that service quality is simply the difference between the expectations and perceptions of customers.

2.3.2 Dimensions of service quality

A **SERVQUAL** survey is a generic measurement tool which can also be referred to as a relationship survey (Hwang, Chao and Kim, 2021: 6). The SERVQUAL survey is regarded as a mechanism that helps in the collection of customer satisfaction with the services being rendered to them. The outcome of SERVQUAL surveys is generally a comprehensive approach that exposes the user's relationship with the service provider (Raza et al., 2022: 6). The SERVQUAL was developed to determine the quality of services being offered and it also measures the satisfaction of services

offered. Arlen (2019: 14) notes that there are five SERVQUAL dimensions, namely: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy.

Tangibles refer to the form of physical amenities, equipment, personnel, and communication tools (Arlen, 2019: 15). Breakfast and Bradshaw (2019, 109) note that many service industries lack physical characteristics, thus customers are not able to clearly assess the value they would gain from engaging in such a service with tangible signs. Thus, taking note of the above, TIKZN is centrally situated in Durban and easily accessible for walk-ins and appointments. The company is fully equipped as a one-stop-shop service with employees assisting with business-related queries and information-sharing documents. Hence, TIKZN's expectations and perceptions of this aspect would depend entirely on the experience a customer has.

Reliability, which is another component of service quality, refers to the competence to perform the promised service without fail and accurately. Rohadin (2021: 115) defines reliability as the ability of a service provider to offer committed products and services consistently and truthfully. In this case, customers are bound to be satisfied when they are provided with trustable services on which they can rely. Thus, in the case of TIKZN, the organisation is mandated by various legislations and policies from parliament to provide services; therefore, it needs to maintain the promise of providing such services.

Another critical dimension of service quality as provided in the SERVQUAL survey is **responsiveness**, which is the willingness to help customers and provide prompt service. Piyasunthornsakul, Yangprayong and Phayaphrom (2022: 9) observe that responsiveness is the employee's readiness or willingness to provide services to customers. Responsiveness involves service timeliness and deals with understanding the customers' needs, wants and desires (Arlen, 2019: 16). A further extension of responsiveness is staff attention given to customers, the convenience of operating hours, properly attending to and solving the customers' problems and ease and safety in their transactions (Piyasunthornsakul et al., 2022: 9).

Assurance is another dimension of service quality, which is the ability of employees to express trust and certainty. Tarnowska and Ras (2021: 12) describe quality assurance as the processes that are engaged in prior to and for the period of customer encounters to guarantee gratification. Arlen (2019: 15) concurs with the above and notes that quality assurance is about ensuring that each product and/or service one sells is of the finest quality and that one's brand can be dependable to deliver the same excellence each time.

Last, but not least, **empathy** is a critical component of the dimensions of service quality as it has a strong bearing on the business' 'well-being'. According to Piyasunthornsakul et al. (2022: 9), empathy is about customer care and giving attention to each problem presented by the customer. The authors further note that it is important to address the problems properly and effectively, which in turn addresses the needs and concerns of the customer and finally solves their problems. Harmse (2020) observes that it is possible to use the SERVQUAL instrument to assess the service quality along each of the five dimensions. Hwang, Chao and Kim (2021: 6), however, criticised the SERVQUAL survey for only rendering credible results while focusing on a small group of people.

2.3.3 Service standards

Service standards entail setting basic standards for the provision of quality basic services (Ellen, 2020). Service standards can also mean the performance a customer or consumer anticipates from a service salesperson or representation during their dealings or interaction (Talavera, 2020: 38). Ellen (2020) further notes that service standards are also regarded as measures for the basic quality of services that ought to be precise, relevant, realistic and measurable. Tarnowska and Ras (2021: 12) argue that organisations' endeavours to raise their bars high and continuously work on improving the standards of their services have high chances of building superior customer relations.

Considering the above, service standards can assist providers of services or products and their clients by enhancing the quality of the products or services offered in relation to safety or enhanced communication or interaction between the customers and service providers (European Commission, 2020). In the same vein, service standards are critical in that they can reduce costs, open new markets for firms, as well as provide customers and consumers with confidence in the service provider. According to Singh (2019), amicability, speed, accuracy, efficiency, availability, honesty, and quality are critical to achieving excellence in service standards.

2.3.4 Service quality assessment

Service quality assessment entails the monitoring and evaluation of a service rendered to ensure that it meets the requirements and basic aspects outlined in the Batho Pele principles (Uzir et al., 2021: 102721). For instance, such assessments include the service delivery and budget implementation plans and the frontline service delivery monitoring. Quality assessments are crucial as they help to foster service quality management and continuous improvement of quality standards of service delivery.

2.3.5 Customer services

According to Wren (2020: 1), customer focus is the intention of prioritising customers' needs. Customer-focused organisations nurture a company's culture committed to enhancing customer gratification and building solid customer relationships (Wren, 2020: 1). To be customer-focused means that marketers will be concerned about the needs and responses of customers when developing business strategies; hence, it is important for marketers to explore their markets before implementing strategic business decisions (Anh, 2022: 16). Morgan (2019: 1) maintains that customer experience is firmly positioned as a competitive advantage and something most companies are prioritising.

On another hand, services are deeds, performances and processes which are provided by an entity to a customer (Asha and Makalela, 2020: 4). These include economic actions with a non-physical output generally consumed at the time of delivery or production. According to Singh (2019) services are usually not tangible to customers and they represent intangible offerings with value to customers who are willing to pay for the service. Various studies have shown that the intangibility aspect of services makes it hard to evaluate the services (Ellen, 2020: 35; Uzir et al., 2021: 102721).

2.4 Communication and customer service evaluation

Communication is crucial in customers' evaluation of services and products as it closes the gap between perceptions and the actual services delivered (Bostanci and Ederm, 2020: 100754). Arlen (2020) asserts that communication is a two-way process whereby feedback is transferred from one party to the other through numerous communication channels. Considering the above, customers' perceptions are crucial as they serve as significant feedback for corporate decision makers whose mandate should be to improve service delivery (Lapaas, 2019). According to Bostanci and Ederm (2020: 100754), perceptions and feedback involve important details about customers' ratings of service satisfaction, and service providers are informed of the service quality expectations that enable them to improve their services and products. In this respect, customer feedback and perceptions of service delivery should be incorporated into institutional performance management systems and procedures.

2.5 Stages of customer feedback

Customer feedback can be achieved through the use of customer feedback loops, which is a plan or strategy for continuous product or service improvement centred on the consumers' or customers' suggestions and thoughts (Perzynska, 2020). The customers' feedback loops entail replying to customers or clients in a reasonable manner each time they give their feedback about a certain product or service offered.

Considering the above, there are two stages of customer feedback, namely input information and feedback information. Public institutions require feedback in the form of perceptions, and such input information is what guides the development of strategies to upgrade customer services (Amesho et al., 2021: 104). Public institutions also anticipate some feedback in terms of the satisfaction of service performance and delivery (Hwang, Chao and Kim, 2021: 6). In this regard, citizen feedback has become crucial in the collection of customers' perceptions of the services.

2.6 Obtaining customer perceptions

According to Zedan, Daas and Awwad (2020: 213), evaluation is a powerful and necessary tool for obtaining customer feedback and perceptions of public and private service delivery. Obtaining customer perceptions entails public involvement in the decision-making processes of public and private companies (Perzynska, 2020: 45). Zedan et al. (2020: 213)) concur and further note that involvement of the general populace through customer service evaluation is vital to ensure collection of the right feedback information that enables institutions to work hard in improving service delivery. This in turn will transform the livelihoods of others who are less privileged.

Nyawo and Mubangizi (2021: 12) note that there are several ways of incorporating customer perceptions of service delivery. Customer satisfaction surveys are a very good example, and these are in the form of community audits or communication. Raza et al. (2020: 56) maintains that customer satisfaction surveys encompass customer evaluation of public and private essential services and products. Such communication or community audits are very significant considering their implications for increased access to better services and products (Perzynska, 2020: 45).

According to Uzir et al. (2021: 102721) customer satisfaction surveys are vital and helpful in measuring the effectiveness of private and public service performance. Customer surveys are becoming popular prescriptions for improving customer

service provision through gathering perceptions and are one of the most widely used performance measurement instruments adopted by local governments as well as private institutions (Lapaas, 2019: 56). Examples of such surveys have been conducted in various cities by the government of China, for instance, in Shenyang City in 1998, City of Zhuhai, and in the City of Hangzhou ever since 2007 (Morgan, 2019). Evaluation of customer satisfaction can, therefore, result in the broadening of the best public or customer services.

2.7 Community or communication audits

The purpose of community or communication audits is to collect customer perceptions and feedback for evaluations that reflect customer perceptions of basic public and private services rendered over time (Lapaas, 2019: 57). Such evaluations are based on citizens' perceptions of basic or essential services. Considering the above, Rohadin (2021: 112) postulates that communication or community audits convey important customer information from the generality of customers to the corporate public and private officials with regard to the general extent of satisfaction with the services delivered. Thus, these audits are not only key to collecting customer satisfaction of service provision, but also help in the formulation of better corporate strategies which are determined to ensure better public service delivery (Hwang, Chao and Kim, 2021: 6). More so, community or communication audits assist in the improvement of customer services and strategies which are customer-centric as opposed to services that decision-makers think customers want (Perzynska, 2020). Community audits are therefore crucial in maximising customer service satisfaction.

2.8 Overview and analysis of customer perceptions

Customer perceptions are widely considered in South Africa's public value system. In this case, customer participation and perceptions are essential as they have been incorporated into the public value system (Hwang, Chao and Kim, 2021: 6). It is very

crucial to acknowledge that there are numerous factors which also affect the effective incorporation of customers' active participation in the public value system.

Meshalkin, et al. (2020: 54) note that perceptions play a significant role in customer service quality assessment. Rohadin (2021: 112) concurs with the above noting that a good assessment of the service quality performance comprises both organisational service and customer service perceptions. Perception surveys, which include customer or community audits and customer perception surveys, are good for public service management and can provide crucial results as they bring out different prospects (Morgan, 2019).

2.9 Frameworks for customer service delivery quality assessment

There is a framework in South Africa for assessing and improving customer service, which is essential to continuous improvement based on perceptions (Meshalkin et al., 2020: 56). These frameworks ensure that organisations integrate both soft and hard customer service through customer perceptions. According to Wren (2020, 4), institutions are mandated to perform these service quality assessments, especially using feedback and perceptions from customers, which will then result in the determination of factors that may hinder the efficient and effective delivery of quality services. This was further reinforced by Vu (2021) who notes that service quality assessments help in providing direction for managers who may need to improve service quality for their customers. Therefore, it is imperative to note that the frameworks are generally supported by implementation strategies to ensure that they are enforced. Addressing customer service quality gaps should be a pre-requisite for progressive institutions, whether private or public, as this helps in creating quality dimensions which are suitable for public and private sector institutions (Ahmad and Papastathopoulos, 2019: 350).

Zygiaris et al. (2022: 256) maintain that monitoring and evaluation mechanisms should also be put in place to ensure full implementation of the customer service strategies determined to improve customer service quality. The monitoring and

evaluation mechanisms are generally regarded as diagnostic instruments which also help in the determination of factors preventing the efficient and effective delivery of quality services to customers (Alzaydi et al., 2019: 295). Zygiaris et al. (2022: 256) further note that these diagnostic instruments are purposively designed to classify service quality problems that relate to institutional customer service performance. In other words, they help in assessing the capabilities and competences of institutions to deliver quality customer service as enshrined in the constitution of South Africa.

2.9.1 The batho pele framework

Batho Pele means people first (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2014: 4). The Batho Pele Framework was adopted as a framework of democratic principles and it outlines several principles that are determined to provide quality services to customers (Hwang, Chao and Kim, 2021: 6). The principles and the attitudinal declarations were built and prepared by the South African Social Attitudes Survey to aid the public assessment of basic services while evaluating the extent to which service delivery principles guide service delivery actions (Hwang, Chao and Kim, 2021: 6).

Table 2.1: The tool developed for citizen evaluation of public services is quoted below.

The Batho Pele Principles	Application
Consultation	Consult with communities on basic services
Setting Service Standards	Provision of quality basic services
Increasing Access	Working towards giving South African equal access to basic services
Courtesy	Treating all people with respect
Providing Information	Striving to disseminate information regarding services
Openness and Transparency	Providing regular feedback on its performance and delivering services
Redress	Responding to complaints regarding service

	<p>delivery</p> <p>Also following up on service delivery complains and providing solutions for the problem or complains.</p>
Value for Money	<p>People getting good value for the money they are charged for basic services</p>

Adopted from Mojapelo et al. (2020: 54)

The Batho Pele principles also emphasise the importance of the active participation of citizens or customers in creating a positive service-oriented culture through providing feedback on public services rendered (Mabizela and Matsiliza, 2020: 54). Feedback and perceptions are essential in the improvement of services delivered. In this case, customers can be involved by the satisfaction surveys they take or through participating actively in community audits. For this reason, customer satisfaction surveys are regarded as service performance measurement tools (Arlen, 2019: 17). Arlen (2019: 16) further postulates that customers' perceptions and opinions regarding basic services rendered are captured using these perception measurement tools. By adhering to the principle of courtesy, customers are entitled to be heard and treated with the utmost respect, thus filling the listening gap (Mojapelo et al., 2020: 54).

Mojapelo et al. (2020: 54) further maintain that through the redress basis, the major attention is on promoting service retrieval and closing the listening gap to address customer concerns and needs satisfactorily. Considering the above, complaints are received and dealt with to ensure efficient public service delivery. More so, transparency and openness are promoted, and these enable institutions to communicate with their customers while maintaining two-way effective communication between stakeholders (Mabizela and Matsiliza, 2020: 54).

2.10 Public service quality assessment in south africa

Public service quality assessment in South Africa is done through the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME), which provides public service assessment mechanisms as its operational framework to ensure quality public service delivery (Singh, 2019). The Department is instructed to spearhead the establishment of delivery pacts targeting cross-cutting main concerns and to observe and weigh the roll-out for these plants (Ajayi and Vries, 2019: 296).

The DPME is also mandated to conduct monitoring and evaluations on performance from the individual level up to provincial and national level departments (DPME, 2015: 5). The department also performs key evaluations promoting good monitoring and evaluation practices for and on behalf of the government and can, at any given time, conduct unannounced visits to monitor the quality of services produced, especially at targeted and selected sites (DPME, 2015: 5). The intention is primarily to guarantee quality services and customer satisfaction.

2.11 Service delivery for public value

Pooe and Munyayi (2022: 243) define service delivery as “any contact with the public administration during which consumers, residents, enterprises, customers or citizens provide or seek data, handle their affairs or fulfil their duties.” Service delivery should be provided in an affordable, reliable, predictable and effective manner. Considering the above, Mu, Wu and Haershan (2021: 15) maintain that service delivery is determined to promote public value and achieve public good, which is determined by customer perceptions of the anticipated quality of service, which forms the theoretical basis of this study. Smith (2020) observes that it is imperative to have a deeper understanding of the value systems that shape the public when discussing public services. On the same note, Mojapelo et al. (2020: 54) postulate that the difference between public and private value is that private value focuses on the individual, whereas, with public value, the focus is on the collective or the generality of the populace.

2.12 Customer participation and value systems

Customer participation is critical in in-service delivery as it includes customers or clients who provide positive suggestions and feedback or reactions on the service provider's services and products (Wang, 2022: 48). It was further found out by Wang (2022: 48) that customers or clients not only share their appreciation or concerns but also their thoughts on new services or products. Customer's active participation ensures the incorporation of their perceptions which are critical inputs to the public value systems processes Yi, Ul Haq and Ahmed (2023: 208) further note that when customers or citizens are not engaged and their expectations are not met, the staging of protests is the result. In other words, the negative value would have been created by the poor or lack of engagement processes in which perceptions were neglected. Customer service expectations represent their perceptions of anticipated services and hence, should form a vital part of the public service delivery process (Yi et al., 2023: 208).

2.13 Distinguishing public from private services

Majuri (2022: 250) notes that it is imperative to distinguish between public and private services. Public services refer to the collective services which are barely provided by the private sector (Chen and Liu, 2020: 152). This is owing to the combined nature of the services and the fact that they are meant to fulfil government objectives and goals (Majuri, 2022: 250). Public services can be offered more collectively, advantageously, and cost-effectively when offered by public institutions (Chen and Liu, 2020: 152). In private sector services, the term customer is constantly used and preferred, but in public service delivery, the term citizen is more preferred and widely used when referring to service delivery (Chen and Liu, 2020: 152). Majuri (2022: 250) maintains that the private sector players aim to make a profit, and this is contrary to the public sector players, who are determined to fulfil their mandate and constitutional responsibility. Therefore, considering the above, it is important to note

that private and public sector players sometimes compete and complement each other in their actions.

As highlighted above, private and public services are differentiated by their nature in question, whereby services can be seen as collective or quasi-collective (Chen and Liu, 2020: 152). Collective or quasi-collective services lie under public services (Majuri, 2022: 250). However, not all services offered by the public sector are public and likewise, not all services that are offered by the private sector are private (Yalley, 2021: 5). Nevertheless, customer perceptions are essential in determining the quality standards of services rendered regardless of whether they are being offered to individuals or the public.

2.14 Service quality assessment

Service quality assessment is crucial in promoting continuous service quality improvement and management. According to Malefane (2019: 50), it is crucial to engage communities and apply their views and perceptions, particularly on service performance, as such assessments may lead to better service quality standards. The inclusion of perceptions in service quality assessments is very crucial, especially when exploring public services (Yalley, 2021: 5). The quality of services is what determines customer satisfaction with the services.

Zygiaris et al. (2022: 142) identifies six perspectives on quality, and among these is, firstly, the transcendent view, which is tantamount to excellence and entails high achievement with uncompromising standards. The second one is the product-based approach which views quality as a palpable variant without taking cognisance of other variances that include personal choices and preferences of the customer or user. Thirdly, the user-centred approach compares service quality with high customer satisfaction, and this depends on demand. The fourth is the manufacturing-based approach, which focuses on engineering and manufacturing practices. The fifth is affordable excellence, and this views quality in terms of value and price. The

sixth, which is a service-based approach, speaks to the precise nature of services requiring unique approaches to measuring quality.

2.15 Service quality expectations

Yalley (2021: 5) notes that customer expected services have different levels, with one being the desired service and the other being adequate service. The customer's desired services are presumed, and adequate service is what the customer or user will then accept (Malefane, 2019: 53). Furthermore, it is imperative to note that the level of customer service quality is determined by the level of service quality offered by the service provider. Smith (2020), however, notes that an institution may need to consider the perceptions and expectations of customers to ensure quality service provision that meets the requirements and needs of the customer. Perceptions and expectations of customers are largely influenced by their previous experiences, and since perceptions may change from time to time, institutions may therefore need to consider maintaining quality standards for their customers (Smith, 2020).

2.16 Theoretical framework

The GAP Model, first proposed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry in 1985 was applied in this research paper. This model aids enterprises to realise customer satisfaction. The GAP Model is extensively used in the service sector to recognise different deviations in service delivery to potential customers (Alsaffar, 2020: 54). According to Lapaas (2019: 1), by identifying the gap between developments and creating direction for the entire service delivery progression, the comprehensive model can function resourcefully and effectively, enabling service providers to identify the inadequacy in their service delivery processes. The GAP Model has five gaps as identified by Lapaas (2019: 3) and these are discussed below:

GAP 1: Gap between Management Perception and Customer Expectation

This gap occurs when management or the service provider does not appropriately explore what the customer wants or needs. In many instances, organisations can make the grave error of guessing what a customer's needs are based on market trends or what they would read on social media and create offers based on that (Lapaas, 2019: 3). Sometimes this may not even be aligned to their agreed strategy, as they could be keeping abreast of marketing changes. Considering possible misconfiguration between managers and customers is also an imperative strategic benefit that can be leveraged for greater customer satisfaction applications and achieving customer loyalty (Yalley, 2021: 5).

This gap has also been regarded as the disconnect that exists between what customers want and what they get from a current service agency or institution (Lapaas, 2019: 3). Customers generally have generally positive expectations of the quality of services they prefer to enjoy; however, there have been gaps between the expectations and the actual services that are delivered to customers (Yalley, 2021: 5). Empirical evidence shows that the customer service perceptions or expectations and the authentic service delivered are two significant different factors which determine and shape customer insights into public services (Smith, 2020). Closing the customer perception gap may go a long way in ensuring the delivery of quality services to customers.

GAP 2: Gap between Service Quality Specification and Management Perception

This gap arises when the organisation or service provider might precisely comprehend what the customer demands but may not set a functioning standard. The service quality or customer service gap generally refers to the difference between customer perceptions or customer expectations and the reality of the services rendered or delivered (Lapaas, 2019: 4). According to Ellen (2020), the service value framework is the policy gap, which illustrates the difference of opinion between management's perception of consumer expectations and actual customer service specifications. Here, an organisation may understand customer expectations

but that has not been implemented as an operating policy with great effect (Alsaffar, 2020: 54). To be specific is of key importance in this instance; an example would be if the phone needs to be answered in a timely manner, which is open to clarification. The question that must be asked is what exactly is considered timely, 2 or 3 rings?

In this regard, the perceived or expected service may differ from the actual service delivered or enjoyed by the customer, and such is what is called the service quality or customer gap (Xin et al., 2021: 14). As the user, the customer has perceptions and expectations that, in this case, serve as reference points that are to be brought into a service experience by the delivering institution or agency (Alsaffar, 2020: 54).

GAP 3: Gap between Service Quality Specification and Service Delivery

This gap may arise from circumstances existing among the service personnel. It may occur due to unsuitable training, inability, or disinclination to meet the set service standards. Ellen (2020) further elaborates that these may result from ineffective internal marketing, a failure to match demand and supply, or a complete lack of proper customer education and training. An example could relate to the hospitality industry, as explained by Ellen (2020). A client could complain about perceived bad service in a restaurant even though the food may be up to standard.

GAP 4: Gap between External Communication and Service Delivery

Consumer expectations are exceedingly motivated by the declarations made by the company's ambassadors and billboards. This gap arises when these assumed expectations are not fulfilled at the time of the delivery of service. For example, if an advertisement promises that an item of clothing is made to suit all shapes and sizes, but upon purchase, the customer experiences discomfort with that garment, Gap 4 would arise.

GAP 5: Gap between Experienced Service and Expected Service

This gap begins when the consumer misinterprets the service quality. An example here would be if customers read the name Trade and Investment KwaZulu-Natal and further acknowledge the tagline, which reads, “Your Knowledge Partner in business”, they would expect such an organisation to be some repository for information regarding businesses, trading of foreign currency as well as financial investments, like most banks would offer.

2.17 Addressing the gaps

Xin et al. (2021: 18) note that it is important to acknowledge the existence of gaps between customer perceptions of service delivery and the actual service rendered. Understanding and appreciating general perceptions of customers helps in closing the gaps between perceptions or expectations and the actual services delivered by institutions (Lapaas, 2019: 4). Yi et al. (2023: 208) postulate that consultation is a pre-requisite as it helps to close these gaps through the improvement of quality standards and adherence to mechanisms that have been set to ensure the provision of basic service standards. Ellen (2020) concurs with the above and further notes that customer consultations help to avoid inadequate market research and the lack of effective upward communication between service providers and customers. However, most public institutions are monopolistic in nature and, as such, hinder effective service delivery, hence the need to address these challenges.

2.18 Conclusion

This chapter reviewed the literature on the concept of service delivery and customer perceptions of service delivery. The chapter also looked at various aspects of the subject and provided a reflection and evaluation of what other scholars said about the consumers’ perceptions of service delivery and how service delivery is perceived as core to the development and improvement of services that TIKZN mandated. This chapter also discussed the theoretical framework, the Gap Model, that was found to be relevant to this study.

The next chapter will discuss the research design and research methodology that will be used to collect data from the research participants. The chapter will also discuss data collection instruments as well as the ethical issues that will be considered in this study, among other issues.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter reviewed and discussed literature related to the study and this literature was reviewed in line with the research objectives and attempted to answer the research questions. This chapter discusses the research design and methodology that were used in this study. A quantitative approach was adopted in this study, and data was gathered using questionnaires. The study also used the probability cluster sampling technique to draw a sample from the Trade and Investment KwaZulu-Natal's database. The chapter discusses the research design for this study, target population, sample size and sampling method as well as the instrument that was used to collect data, the data collection procedure, the pilot study, data analysis, reliability and validity as well as the ethical considerations that were followed in collecting data from the respondents.

3.2 Research design

Research design refers to the structure that supports the wide purpose of the study. A research design provides the basis for the whole research process, from outlining research questions to analysing and reporting the data (Bornstein, 2015: 01). Sekaran and Bougie (2016: 95) define research design as the strategy outlining how data which is directly related to the objectives of the research is gathered, assessed and analysed.

The following research designs are available to social science; descriptive research design, explanatory research, causal-comparative research design, exploratory research design and correlational research design. Considering the above definitions, a descriptive research design was used to evaluate the perceptions of customers regarding the service delivery of Trade and Investment KwaZulu-Natal in order to provide a valid and accurate representation of the factors concerning customer satisfaction levels.

3.3 Target population

The target population for this research was 400 customers within the greater Durban area. Allen (2017) notes that the geographic and progressive characteristics of the target population as well as the types of units being incorporated need to be defined. Given that the target population epitomises the entire population for which any given study intends to scrutinise, it is significant for the researcher to be accurate in defining this group, which is also occasionally referred to as the theoretical population (Whaley, 2020). This control is a highlight of the sampling design as summarised by Etikan and Bala (2017) who assert that the sample population is frequently too large and presents time and resource boundaries for the researcher, consequently choosing a sample becomes necessary.

3.4 Sampling size

Saunders, Lewis, Thornhill, and Bristow (2019) define a sample as a unit of the population that is chosen to represent the entire population in the research study. Taking note of the above, the study's sample size is 100 customers from various businesses dealing with TIKZN.

3.5 Sampling method

Sampling is the process of choosing or recruiting participants for the study and allows for the generalisation of the results of the research to the entire population (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). There are two major sampling methods available to social science researchers, and these are probability and non-probability sampling (Etikan and Bala, 2017; Whaley, 2020).

3.5.1 Probability sampling method

The probability sampling method is associated with quantitative research. In the probability sampling method, each individual or representative of the populace has a known non-zero probability of being selected into the sample (Bhasin, 2020: 1).

Maheshwari (2017) maintains that probability sampling procedures use casual selection to help pick out units from the sampling frame to be included in the sample. Further to this, Maheshwari (2017) explains that the gain of probability sampling is that selection error can be assessed. The following sampling techniques are associated with the probability sampling method: cluster sampling technique, simple random sampling technique, stratified random sampling and systematic sampling technique. These techniques are also used as inclusion and exclusion criteria.

3.5.2 Non-probability sampling method

The non-probability sampling method is aligned with qualitative research, and it involves the selection of research participants by the discretionary individual judgement of the researcher based on his or her experience, professional standing and personal judgement (Bhasin, 2020: 2). Noting the above, it is impossible in non-probability sampling to include every individual, member, or unit of the population in a sample. The non-probability sampling method includes the use of the following sampling techniques: snowball sampling, purposive sampling, quota sampling and convenience sampling (Maheshwari, 2017: 5).

This study adopted the probability sampling method using the cluster sampling technique to select the relevant sample size for this study, which is representative of various businesses within the greater Durban area. Cluster sampling, as defined by Thomas (2020), is a method of probability sampling that is frequently used to examine large populations, especially those that are broadly geographically scattered. Scholars usually use pre-existing groups such as schools or cities as their clusters. McCombes (2019) identifies sampling as measuring any section of a population as symbolic of that population or universe. To verify the sample size, which is required for a survey, the entire population being studied must be reflected (Zamboni, 2018). Zamboni (2018) further notes that researchers must consider the standard deviation they expect to see in the data. A standard deviation measures

how much individual pieces of information vary from the average information measured.

Noting that the businesses of the greater Durban area were estimated to be over 250 000 units (eThekweni, 2017), a sample size of 100 customers from various businesses dealing with TIKZN was selected. The choice of the cluster sampling technique was informed by the fact that it is more cost effective and time efficient.

3.6 Measuring instrument

A measuring instrument refers to the tool that is used to collect and analyse primary data from the research participants for the researchers to achieve or fulfil the research objectives (Trigueros, Juan and Sandoval, 2017: 14). Burns and Bush (2014, 214) describe a measuring instrument as a tool used to gather information in a planned manner for the sole purpose of research. According to Annum (2017, 1), questionnaires, interviews and observation are the most commonly used measuring instruments in quantitative research.

A questionnaire is a methodically prepared document with a set of questions purposively designed to provoke reactions from the research participants for the purpose of gathering information or data (Anum, 2017: 1). In other words, a questionnaire is a type of investigation form that comprises a sequence of methodically assembled prearranged questions planned to stimulate responses that will provide an understanding of the type of the problem under study (Saunders et al., 2019). Considering the above, Annum (2017: 2) notes that there are two types of questionnaires, and these are structured questionnaires and unstructured questionnaires. Structured questionnaires give guidance or control for the answer and require a 'yes' or 'no' response kind of answer while the unstructured questionnaire is non-restrictive and allow for the elaboration of the answers provided by the respondent.

An interview is a critical data collection instrument that allows for face-to-face communication or interaction between the researcher and the participant. Annum (2017) defines an interview as an interaction in which verbal questions are asked by the researcher to provoke reactions from the participant. Three types of research interviews are available to social science researchers: structured interviews, semi-structured interviews and unstructured interviews.

This study used the questionnaire method, particularly the close-ended (structured) questions, for collecting and analysing data. The SERVQUAL questionnaire was designed using Google Docs and was distributed online to the respondents in the TIKZN's database. This method was imperative due to the severity of the social distancing required during the global COVID-19 pandemic. Using the questionnaire, especially the digital questionnaire, was cheap and allowed for the provision of quick responses from the research participants. Also, the questionnaire was conceived in a manner that ensured that relevant information was captured from the customers.

3.7 Data collection

Data collection refers to the process of collecting, computing and analysing correct data from diverse and applicable sources for the sake of finding answers to research problems (Burns and Bush, 2014: 216). Taking note of the above, (Trigueros *et al.*, 2017: 20) maintain that various procedures of collecting data are available to social science researchers and these include but are not limited to surveys, face-to-face interviews, focus group discussions, observations, voice over internet protocol (VOIP) calls and emails, among others. In this study, emails were used to administer questionnaires to the respondents in the TIKZN database. The respondents were given two weeks to attend to the questionnaires and return the completed questionnaires via email to the researcher. The respondents were also advised to respond to all the questions as honestly as they could.

The questionnaire employed in this study was informed by the literature review and divided into three sections to make data collection and analysis easier. Section One

introduced the respondents to the purpose of the study and sought to capture the respondents' demographic evidence such as age, gender, race, level of education, location and business/company. The second and third sections, being the SERVQUAL questionnaire were based on expectations and perceptions. The questions portion of Section Three was structured to deliver the objectives of the study in a direct and easy to analyse manner. The question portion had 12 questions that involved marking the appropriate answer across five levels of understanding as per the Likert scale.

3.8 Pilot study

A pilot study is a test conducted on a small scale to test research methods, procedures, sampling strategies and data collection instruments in preparation for the main study (Brown and Harvey, 2018: 5). Braun and Clarke note that a pilot study is carried out to evaluate the adverse events, cost, duration, feasibility and to perfect the research design before carrying out the main research. Hilton (2017) explains that a pilot study helps the researcher to understand whether the questions asked are easily understood and whether the receiver understands what is required of them.

Hu (2014) states that the pilot study phase in survey investigation is when survey questions are assessed on representatives of the target population to assess the dependability and authenticity of the survey instruments preceding their ultimate distribution. Pretesting elaborates Hu (2014) is widely regarded as crucial in survey questionnaire development and is also vital to improving data collection for quality research. In terms of this study, a pilot study was carried out on five customers/businesses outside of the sample to assess the feasibility and validity of the research instrument. A draft close-ended questionnaire was distributed to the respondents via email, which proved to be quick in attaining the preferred results for the study. The feedback obtained resulted in a few changes being made to the final questionnaire.

3.9 Data analysis

Quantitative analysis is a practice that uses mathematical and statistical modelling, measurement, and research to understand actions (Kenton, 2020: 1). In this study, data was analysed using the latest version of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS version 27®) and a statistical team utilised by Durban University of Technology was used to conduct the data analysis to ensure accuracy.

3.10 Reliability and validity

Reliability outlines the level to which the magnitude of a trend provides steady and dependable results (Taherdoost, 2016). In this study, reliability was ensured by using a consistent research instrument and applying standardised research conditions, that is, administering the research instrument to all respondents by email. According to Yuan and Gao (2019), SERVQUAL is the most widely used measure of service quality in different service environments.

A study by Yuan and Gao (2019) on whether SERVQUAL was still appropriate for gauging the quality-of-service industries concluded that, despite the quality of some service industries, which cannot be entirely measured by using SERVQUAL, the magnitude of the rules in most industries are allied to SERVQUAL's five dimensions. SERVQUAL is still respected for service quality scale development. This implied that this type of measuring instrument proved effective for reaching the problem at TIKZN.

According to Taherdoost (2016), validity describes how perfectly the collected data comprises the actual area of investigation. Validity means that researchers are set to measure what is intended to be measured. The data validity in this research was ensured by using a questionnaire that was based on reliable and valid sources of information from the literature review. The questionnaire was consistent and carefully worded to add to the validity of the data. Validity was also achieved by administering

questionnaires that were sent through email to 100 customers of TIKZN, as well as ensuring that each question item was related to a group representing the objective.

3.11 Anonymity and confidentiality

Allen (2017) maintains that confidentiality and anonymity are principled methods created to safeguard the discretion of mortal subjects while accumulating, examining, and reporting statistics. Confidentiality relates to differentiating or modifying any personal information provided by contributors from the data. The author further adds that, by contrast, anonymity relates to collecting data without procuring any private, recognisable information (Allen, 2017). Commonly, anonymity is the practice followed in quantitative studies, and confidentiality is maintained in qualitative studies (Kaiser, 2019: 16). In both types of research, the information is gathered from participants and that information forms part of the data analysis. In this research, confidentiality and anonymity were ensured by not using the respondents' real names or any identifying information during the data collection process as well as in the final report. More so the data collected will be kept safe in a secured place only accessed by the researcher and will be destroyed permanently after a period of five years.

3.12 Ethical considerations

Ethical issues are very important in research and to ensure that their research is authentic and acceptable, researchers are obligated to follow these ethical guidelines (Kaiser (2019, 14).

The following are some of the ethical issues to be considered when carrying out research: confirming participants have been given knowledgeable consent, making sure no harm comes to participants, and confirming that permission was obtained.

3.12.1 Ensuring participants have given informed consent

Saunders, Lewis, Thornhill, and Bristow (2019, 89) note that the research participants must always be notified of all the objectives and intent of the investigation before participating in it. In other words, researchers should explain to the participants the reason(s) why the research is being carried out, its benefits to them as well as their role(s) in the research prior to their participation. If the participants agree to the information they are given, they should give consent for their participation by signing an informed consent form (Saunders et al., 2019: 89). In this research, participants were given informed consent by explaining to them in detail the objectives and purpose of the research, its benefits to the community, as well as what was expected of them. The participants were informed of their rights and told that their partaking in this research was intentional, and they could retract from the research process at any stage of the research. After that, they were given informed consent forms to sign as a way of granting their permission as well as consent to participate in the research process.

3.12.2 Ensuring no harm comes to participants

Saunders, Lewis, Thornhill, and Bristow (2019, 90) note that researchers must make sure that research participants are not endangered when carrying out research by ensuring that no harm comes to participants. Kaiser (2019, 15) notes that this harm could be economic, social, emotional, or even psychological in nature. This research avoided asking embarrassing and sensitive questions, as well as forcing respondents to divulge information that could unsettle respondents (Saunders *et al.*, 2019: 90).

3.12.3 Ensuring that permission is obtained

Saunders, Lewis, Thornhill, and Bristow (2019: 90) maintain that researchers must always seek or obtain permission to conduct research from the stakeholders involved prior to conducting that research. In this research, written permission to conduct the

research was obtained from the respondents and this permission was sought out prior to conducting the research. Permission to conduct research on the targeted sample was obtained in the form of a clearance certificate from the University's Ethical Clearance Department.

3.12 Conclusion

This chapter discoursed the research design and methodology that were utilised in this study. A quantitative approach was adopted and data was gathered through questionnaires. The study also used the probability cluster sampling technique to draw a sample from the Trade and Investment KwaZulu-Natal's database. The chapter discussed the research instrument that was used to collect data, the data collection procedure and the ethical considerations that were followed in collecting data from the respondents.

The next chapter will present the findings from the data obtained from the participants during the data collection process and will analyse the data as well as discuss the results of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the previous chapter, the research methodology and the procedures that were selected to design a questionnaire for this research were discussed and explained. This chapter presents the results obtained from the analysis of customers' expectations and perceptions of service quality by Trade and Investment KwaZulu-Natal. The data collected from the responses was analysed with SPSS (version 27®).

In this chapter, the responses from the participants were aimed at establishing the customers' perception of service delivery of TIKZN in the greater Durban Area to ascertain whether the customers' expectations were met or not. A Likert scale was used to understand the level of how each respondent would rate the SERVQUAL questions. The data from questionnaires which were completed by respondents via Google Forms were analysed with SPSS (version 27®) as indicated earlier and were further analysed using Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha, the one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), correlation analysis, Pearson's Correlation analysis and the KMO and Bartlett's test for expectation and perceptions. Scrutinising and testing significant sections of the chapter and relating them to the literature review enabled the author to effectively interpret the study results.

Performance Measurement and Problem Solving

The literature review, a secondary data source, looked at various aspects of the subject of customer perception and provided a reflection and evaluation of what other scholars say about the customers' perceptions of service delivery and how service delivery is perceived as core to developing and improving services that TIKZN are mandated to. It is highly imperative to note that the amount of literature on the issue of service delivery in South Africa is rather very overwhelming. Musaba *et al.* (2014: 56) note that it is important to acknowledge the existence of gaps between customer perceptions of service delivery and the actual service rendered. It is crucial to understand and appreciate general perceptions of customers to bridge the gap between perceptions or expectations of customers and the actual services delivered

by the institutions (Lapaas, 2019: 4). Hence, the perceptions and expectations of customers were analysed and resulted in the following findings.

4.1 Social demographic characteristics

This segment details the social demographic attributes of the respondents.

4.1.1 Gender

The data is made up of a target population of 400. 389 responses were received from the various areas of greater Durban. The data in **Figure 4.1** indicates that the majority (66.6%) of TIKZN's customers are male.

The data in **Figure 4.1** indicates that 66.6% of the respondents were male while females constitute 33.4%. Whilst this information is merely an observation of who the participants are, it plays a vital role in understanding the gender behind the business types and the services and incentives that are offered to females grown businesses. Burger (2022), states that South Africa is one of only 12 economies where women's entrepreneurial activity rates rose, with working-age women focused on early-stage entrepreneurial interests.

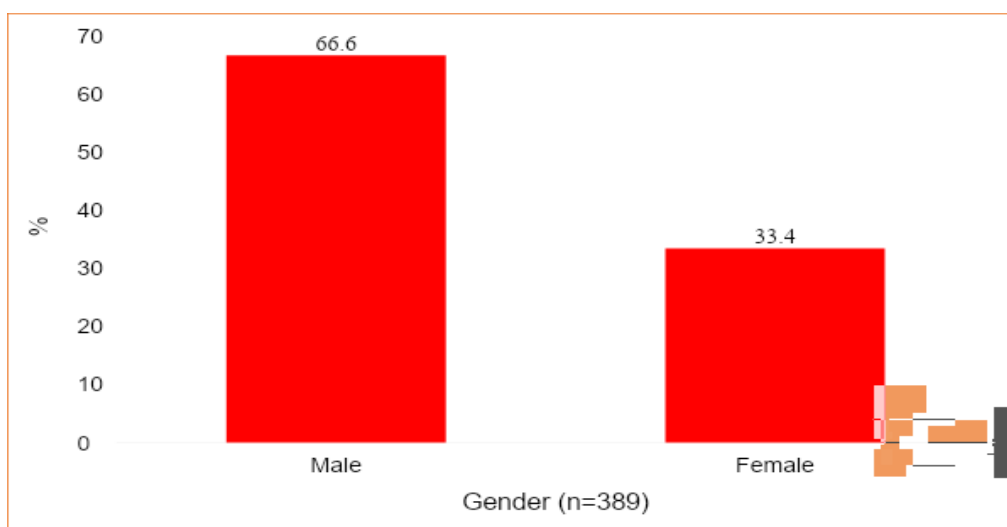


FIGURE 4.1: RESPONDENT'S GENDER

4.1.2 Age group

The pie chart in **Figure 4.2** shows that 31.6% of the respondents were within 35-44 years of age, 25.4% were within 25-34 years of age, 19.23% were 55 years and above, and 11.1% were below 24 years of age. The analysis suggests that more than half (57%) of the respondents were young adults within the age group 25-44 years of age. This reflects the age distribution of consumers in the country, which is characterised by young adults and the future disruptors of the economical changes.

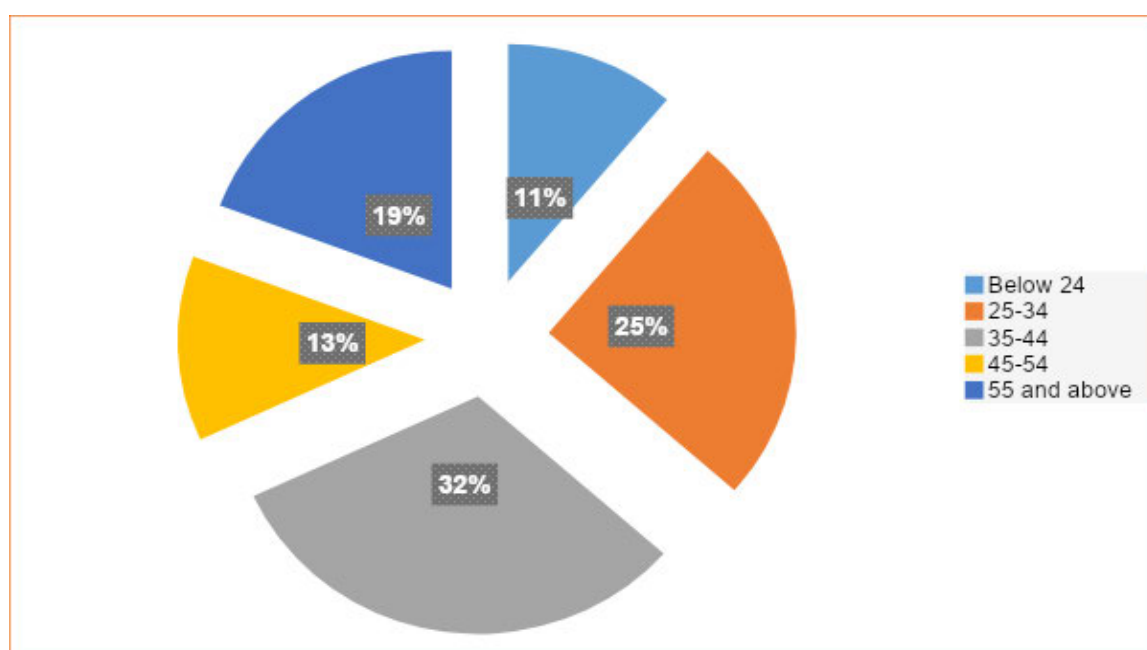


FIGURE 4.2 PIE CHART SHOWING AGE DISTRIBUTION OF THE RESPONDENTS

4.1.3 Racial group

According to the data in **Figure 4.3**, nearly half of the respondents are Black (49.4%), followed by Indian (27.5%), Coloured (13.6%), and White (9.5%). The data reflects the racial distribution of KwaZulu-Natal province which is largely dominated by Blacks (Africans). Whilst the table below reflects the different race groups who responded to the questionnaires, this is indicative of the types of business leadership and the progression of the economy through the upliftment programmes by government.

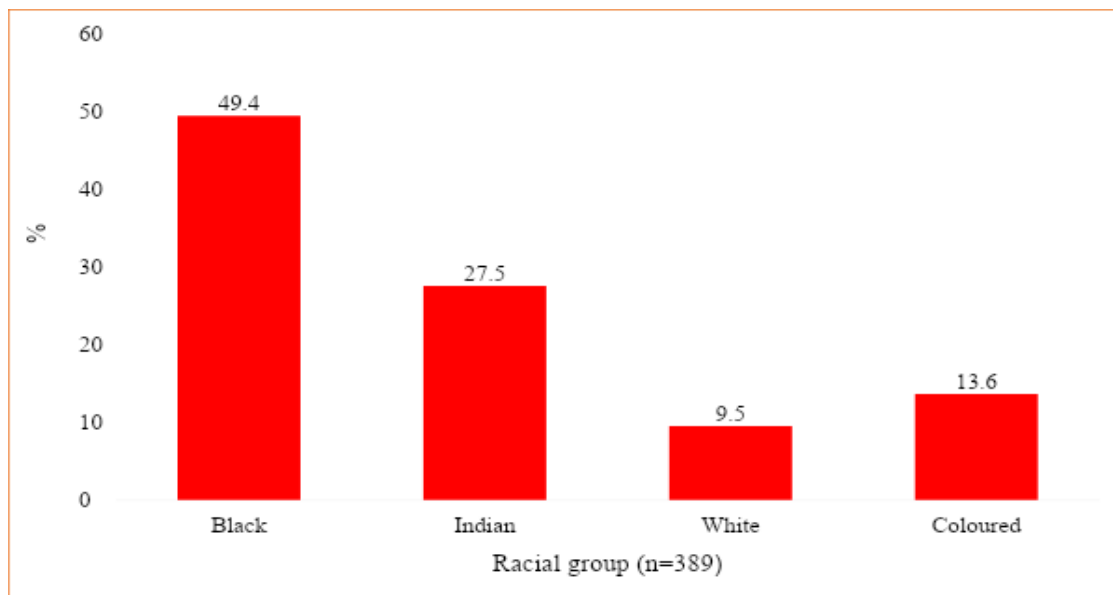


FIGURE 4.3: RACIAL PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS

4.1.4 Level of education

The respondents' levels of education are given in **Figure 4.4**. The data shows that 47.3% of the respondents hold a degree, 44.2% hold national diploma, 4.1% hold a postgraduate qualification, 3.1% national certificate (Grade 12), and 1.3% less than a certificate (Grade 12 Matric). The analysis indicates that a high proportion (91.5%) of the respondents collectively holds national diplomas and degrees. The analysis suggests that a good number of the respondents had the appropriate level of education. This also helps us understand the calibre of business leadership that Kwa-Zulu Natal pays homage to and the future growth of the economy and its sustainability through solid education (Odihambo, 2022).

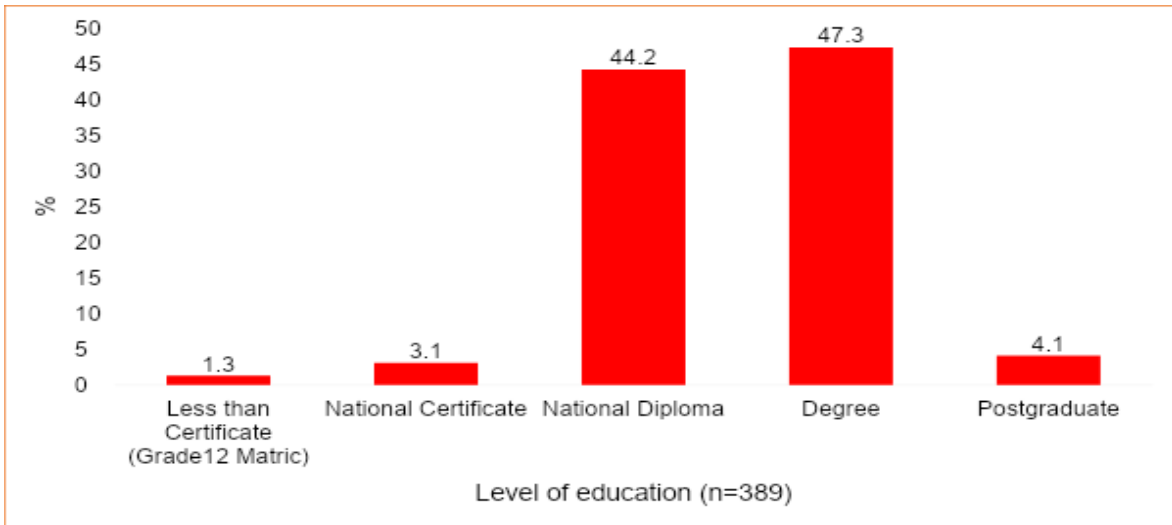


FIGURE 4.4: RESPONDENT’S LEVEL OF EDUCATION

4.1.5 Business area

According to the data in **Figure 4.5**, most of the businesses are situated in the Southern area (36%), 24.7% in the Northern area, 15.4% in the Central area while the least situated area was the Outer West (3.3%). This analysis states that most of TIKZN’s businesses hail from the Southern areas and that is where the concentration should be diverted to enhance a stronger investment infrastructure whilst ensuring the other areas are given opportunities to grow as well.

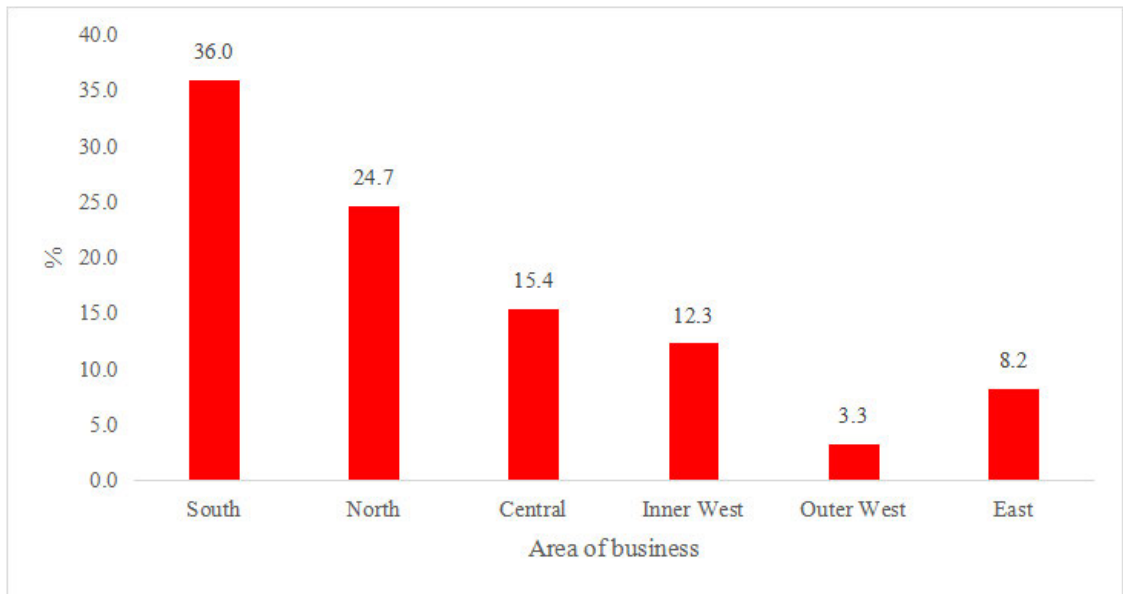


FIGURE 4.5: SHOWING THE BUSINESS AREA AROUND GREATER DURBAN

4.1.6 Business sector

The data in **Table 4.1** indicate that 39.3% of the business is in business services, 28% in manufacturing, 20.3% in health services, 8.2% in other services, and 4.1% in agriculture. This table represents that TIKZN’s focus should be on creating more incentives to help grow the other business sectors in Kwa-Zulu Natal.

Table 4.1: Showing the business sectors

		Frequency	Percent
Sector	Manufacturing	109	28.0
	Health Services	79	20.3
	Agriculture	16	4.1
	Business Services	153	39.3
	Other	32	8.2
	Total	389	100.0

Among the number of respondents (n=32) who indicated other sectors, 50% were in ICT (**Table 4.2**).

Table 4.2: Other sectors of business

		Frequency	Percent
Other	Construction	1	3.1
	Construction renovations tent and toilet hire	1	3.1
	Financial Services	1	3.1
	General Dealer	1	3.1
	Hospitality	1	3.1
	Ict	16	50
	Logistics	1	3.1
	Marketing Consultancy	4	12.5
	Media, PR and marketing	1	3.1
	National government - the dtic	1	3.1
	Network marketing	1	3.1
	Skills Development	1	3.1
	Transporting	1	3.1
	Water	1	3.1
	Total	32	100.0

4.2 Reliability test

Before discussing the findings of this study, this section deliberately focuses on the reliability of the service quality dimensions. The internal reliability of the component variables of the expectation and perception of service quality was tested using Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha. According to Hair, Black, Bablin, Anderson and Tatham (2006), an alpha of 0.70 and above was regarded as acceptable. The Cronbach alpha coefficient for expectation ($\alpha=0.930$) and perception ($\alpha=0.965$) of service quality was above the recommended value of 0.70, indicating that the instrument is sufficiently reliable (**Table 4.3**).

Table 4.3: Reliability test for the service quality instrument

Items	Dimensions	Cronbach alpha score	
		Expectation	Perception
12	Service quality	0.930	0.965

4.3 Service quality

This section details the respondents' agreement and or disagreement in their expectations and perceptions of service quality delivery measured in this study. The mean gap was used to compare the differences in the respondents' expectations and perceptions of service quality.

4.3.1 Expectation and perception of service quality

The mean score of the expectations and perceptions, and mean gap scores are shown in **Table 4.4**. The average expectation score was high, ranging from 3.97 on a scale of 1-5 where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is agree for item 8 (The physical facility at an excellent government agency should be visually appealing and in an excellent government agency material associated with the service such as pamphlets and brochures should be visually appealing) to 4.52 for item 15 (The behaviour of employees in an excellent government agency will instil confidence in customers). The expectations had a total mean score of 4.22. This value is closest to "strongly agree" which suggests that the respondents have a positive agreement in their expectations of service delivery.

On the contrary, the mean score for the perceptions of service quality varied from 2.80 for (item 10: When an excellent government agency promises to do something by a particular time, it certainly will) to 3.59 for (item 18: The employees of an excellent government agency will understand the specific needs of their customers). The overall mean score for the respondents' perception of service quality was 3.19.

This value is closest to “neutral” which suggests the respondents’ perception of service quality was less favourable.

The gap score was calculated by subtracting the expectation score from the perception score for each item (P-E). The findings reveal that there is a negative gap difference between perceptions and expectations for all 12 items measured. The item with the minimum mean gap difference was the statement “In an excellent government agency, material associated with the service such as pamphlets and brochures should be visually appealing” (-0.47). This suggests that the respondents’ expectation (M=3.97) for the statement “In an excellent government agency, material associated with the service such as pamphlets and brochures should be visually appealing” was not far apart from their perception (M=3.50). On the contrary, the item with the maximum mean gap score was the statement “When an excellent government agency promises to do something by a particular time, it certainly will (-1.43). This suggests that the respondent’s expectation (M=4.23) far exceeds the perception (M=2.80) that when an excellent government agency promises to do something by a particular time, it certainly will.

Table 4.4: Showing the respondents’ expectations and perceptions of service quality

	Expectation		Perception		P-E
	Mean	Std	Mean	Std	Mean Gap score
(7) An excellent government agency will have up-to-date and modern technology to assist with my needs)	4.06	0.719	2.86	1.233	-1.2
(8) The physical facility at an excellent government agency should be visually appealing)	3.97	0.653	3.27	1.142	-0.7
(9) In an excellent government	3.97	0.649	3.50	1.088	-0.47

agency material associated with the service such as pamphlets and brochures should be visually appealing)					
(10) When an excellent government agency promises to do something by a particular time, it certainly will)	4.23	0.589	2.80	1.059	-1.43
(11) When a customer has a problem, an excellent government agency will show sincere interest in solving it)	4.10	0.633	3.02	1.039	-1.08
(12) An excellent government agency will perform the service correctly the first time)	4.11	0.541	3.06	1.069	-1.05
(13) The employees from an excellent government agency will advise customers exactly what services will be performed.)	4.16	0.762	3.42	0.975	-0.74
(14) The employees from an excellent government agency will give prompt services to customers)	4.23	0.601	2.94	0.998	-1.29
(15) The behaviour of employees in an excellent government agency will instil confidence in customers)	4.52	0.640	3.26	1.035	-1.26
(16) Customers of excellent government agencies will feel safe in their transactions)	4.36	0.613	3.09	1.057	-1.27
(17) The employees of an excellent government agency will have the knowledge to answer customers' questions.)	4.52	0.632	3.43	0.973	-1.09
18) The employees of an excellent government agency will understand the specific needs of their customers)	4.37	0.799	3.59	1.098	-0.78
Average score	4.22	0.653	3.19	1.064	-1.03

Figure 4.6 illustrates the average expectation, perception, and mean gap score. The graph visibly confirmed that the respondent's overall expectation of service quality exceeds their perception with a negative mean gap score of -1.03.

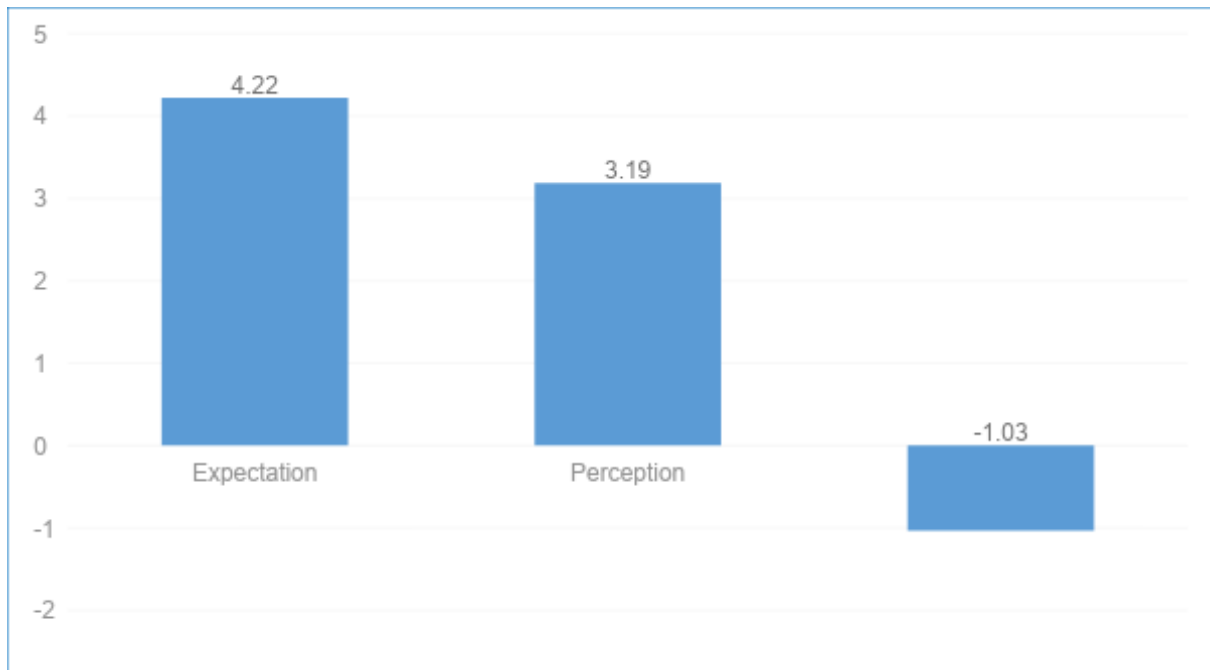


FIGURE 4.6: OVERALL SERVICE QUALITY SCORE SHOWING MEAN GAP DIFFERENCE

4.3.2 Association between the demographic characteristics and expectation and perception of service quality

The variance between the expectations and perceptions based on the respondent's demographic characteristics (gender, age, racial group, level of education, business area, and business sector) was conducted using a one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).

In terms of the respondents' gender, the results of the ANOVA in **Table 4.5** reveal that there is a statistically significant difference measured for the respondent's expectations ($P=0.005$) and perceptions ($p<0.001$) with regard to their age group, home language, and qualifications ($P>0.05$). It was found that the expectations ($M=4.32$) and perceptions ($M=3.71$) for females were higher than those measured for males. This suggests that female respondents have very good expectations and perceptions of service quality when compared to their male counterparts.

In terms of the age group of the respondents, the ANOVA value measured suggests that there were significant differences in both expectations ($p < 0.001$) and perceptions ($p < 0.001$). It was found that the expectations ($M = 4.61$) and perceptions ($M = 3.66$) of service quality were the highest among respondents below 24 years of age. This suggests that respondents below 24 years of age have very good expectations and perceptions of service quality.

In terms of the racial group, the ANOVA value measured suggests that while there are significant differences in the expectations ($p < 0.001$), no differences were measured for the perceptions and the racial group of the respondents ($P = 0.784$). The mean value measured for the expectations of Coloured respondents, for example, was the highest ($M = 4.62$). This suggests that Coloured respondents have more positive expectations of the service quality when compared to other racial groups. On the contrary, no difference was found in the perceptions of the respondents and their racial group.

In terms of respondents' level of education, the ANOVA value measured suggests that while there are no differences in the expectations ($P = 0.191$), there are significant differences in the perceptions of the respondents based on their level of education ($p < 0.001$). The mean value ($M = 3.69$) measured for the perceptions of the respondents with a degree, for example, was the highest. This suggests that respondents with degrees have more favourable perceptions of service quality.

In terms of the area of business, the ANOVA value suggests that there was a statistically significant difference between expectations ($P = 0.001$) and perceptions ($p < 0.001$) of service quality. The mean value measured for a business situated in the Central basin area was higher for expectations ($M = 4.34$) and perceptions ($M = 3.66$) than in any other area. This suggests that businesses situated in the Central basin area had more positive expectations and favourable perceptions of the service quality when compared to other business areas.

In terms of the business sector, the ANOVA value measured suggests that there was a significant difference in the expectations ($p < 0.001$) and perceptions ($p < 0.001$) of service quality. The mean value measured for expectations ($M = 4.37$) was higher among those in business services. This suggests that those in business services have more positive expectations of service quality. In contrast, the perception ($M = 3.63$) of service quality was higher among those in agriculture. This suggests that the perceptions of service quality of those in agriculture were more favourable when compared to other sectors.

Table 4.5: Association between expectation, perception and respondents' socio-demographic variables

Socio-demographic		Expectations	Perceptions
		Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
Gender	Male	4.17 (0.506)	2.93 (0.941)
	Female	4.32 (0.485)	3.71 (0.527)
	Sig.	0.005	0.000
Age group	Below 24	4.61 (0.314)	3.66 (0.489)
	25-34	4.07 (0.498)	2.79 (0.856)
	35-44	4.16 (0.467)	2.99 (0.967)
	45-54	4.07 (0.713)	3.50 (1.139)
	55 and above	4.36 (0.316)	3.57 (0.434)
	Sig.	0.000	0.000
Racial group	Black	4.22 (0.491)	3.20 (0.880)
	Indian	4.01 (0.504)	3.23 (0.952)
	White	4.23 (0.448)	3.16 (0.717)
	Coloured	4.62 (0.303)	3.08 (0.976)
	Sig.	0.000	0.784
Level of education	Less than Certificate (Grade 12 Matric)	3.92 (0.786)	3.03 (1.621)
	National Certificate	4.42 (0.443)	2.78 (1.385)
	National Diploma	4.21 (0.402)	2.69 (0.796)
	Degree	4.23 (0.476)	3.69 (0.603)

	Postgraduate	4.04 (1.234)	3.18 (1.145)
	Sig.	0.191	0.000
Area	Southern Basin	4.32 (0.566)	2.82 (0.903)
	Northern basin	4.11 (0.589)	3.47 (0.730)
	Central Durban	4.34 (0.367)	3.66 (0.797)
	Inner West basin	4.03 (0.316)	2.71 (0.990)
	Outer West basin	4.17 (0.393)	3.53 (0.863)
	Eastern basin	4.15 (0.228)	3.65 (0.228)
	Sig.	0.001	0.000
Business sector	Manufacturing	4.13 (0.451)	2.79 (0.896)
	Health Services	4.07 (0.435)	3.48 (0.631)
	Agriculture	4.16 (0.386)	3.63 (0.970)
	Business Services	4.37 (0.483)	3.24 (0.955)
	Other	4.18 (0.755)	3.38 (0.766)
	Sig	0.000	0.000

4.3.3 Correlation analysis

Pearson correlation was used to analyse the association existing between the respondents' expectations and perceptions of service quality. The results indicate that the respondent's expectations of service quality although positive, correlates weakly with their perceptions of service quality ($r=0.130$; $P=0.011$).

Table 4.6: Correlation between expectation and perception of service quality

		Expectation	Perception
Expectation	Pearson Correlation	1	.130*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.011
	N	387	387
Perception	Pearson Correlation	.130*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.011	
	N	387	389

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

4.4 Validating the service quality

Factor analysis was performed to validate the expectations and perceptions of service quality using exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). This was done to assess if the items measuring expectations and perceptions were loaded into the same defined constructs. It was also used to assess if the respondent's service quality was the same dimension in terms of their expectations and perceptions. Watkins (2018: 220) states that factor analysis can help identify common factors that explain the order and structure among measured variables. EFA analysis makes use of the principal component analysis (PCA) extraction method and Varimax rotation on each of the 12 items measuring expectations and perceptions of service quality. According to Shrestha (2021: 7), the condition for EFA, Kaiser-Meyer value should exceed the value of 0.5 and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity must be statistically significant. The data in Table 4.7 indicates that the Kaiser-Meyer value for both expectations and perception of service quality exceeded the recommended values while Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was statistically significant, thus supporting the suitability of the correlation matrix.

Table 4.7: KMO and Bartlett's Test for expectation and perception of service quality

Section	Service quality	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity		
			Approx. Chi-Square	df	Sig.
1	Expectation	0.830	7080.276	66	0.000
2	Perception	0.803	9120.802	66	0.000

4.4.1 Validation of the expectation of service quality

Using Eigenvalues greater than one, the PCA for the extracted items for respondents' rating of their expectations of service quality reveals three dimensions explaining 86.3% of the total variance. The first dimension has four items (Q15-18)

and can be categorised as “Assurance”. The second dimension has five items (Q10-14) and can be categorised as “Reliability”. The third dimension has three items (Q7-9) and can be categorised as “Tangibles” (Table 4.8).

Table 4.8: Explored service quality dimension for expectations

Items:	Dimension	Component		
		Assurance	Reliability	Tangibles
(7) An excellent government agency will have up-to-date and modern technology to assist with my needs)	Tangibles			.907
(8) The physical facility at an excellent government agency should be visually appealing)				.949
(9) In an excellent government agency material associated with the service such as pamphlets and brochures should be visually appealing)				.936
(10) When an excellent government agency promises to do something by a particular time, it certainly will)	Reliability		.660	
(11) When a customer has a problem, an excellent government agency will show sincere interest in solving it)			.884	
(12) An excellent government agency will perform the service correctly the first time)			.851	
(13) The employees from an excellent government agency will advise customers exactly what services will be performed.)			.651	
(14) The employees from an excellent government agency will give prompt services to customers)			.684	
(15) The behaviour of employees in an excellent government agency will instil confidence in customers)	Assurance	.906		
(16) Customers of excellent government agencies will feel safe in their transactions)		.750		
(17) The employees of an excellent government agency will have the knowledge to answer customers' questions.)		.912		
(18) The employees of an excellent government agency will understand the specific needs of their customers)		.852		

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was computed to validate the EFA analysis of the three elements uncovered for the expectations of service quality. All items load

extensively on their conjectured latent constructs. The reliability of the three dimensions was assessed using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability. The data shows that each of the dimensions has excellent reliability. The validity of the dimensions was assessed using both convergent and discriminant validity. The convergent validity was assessed using the average variance extracted (AVE). Hair *et al.* (2010) reveals that a standardised factor loading with a value of 0.50 or higher provides strong evidence of convergent validity. As shown in **Table 4.9**, the average variance extracted (AVE) for three dimensions had factor loadings above the recommended value, which suggests adequate convergent validity. Discriminant validity, on the other hand, was assessed using maximum shared square variance (MSV). Based on the rule of thumb, the AVE value should be greater than the MSV (Mimouni-Chaabane and Volle, 2010: 34). The AVE values for the three dimensions were greater than the measured MSV values, which suggests discriminant validity.

Table 4.9: Showing the reliability, discriminant and convergent validity

	Cronbach alpha	CR	AVE	MSV	MaxR(H)	Reliability	Assurance	Tangibles
Reliability	0.924	0.923	0.711	0.482	0.990	0.843		
Assurance	0.940	0.943	0.809	0.482	0.997	0.694	0.899	
Tangibles	0.953	0.958	0.883	0.383	1.002	0.619	0.319	0.940

4.4.2 Validation perception of service quality

Using Eigen values greater than one, the PCA for the extracted items for respondents' ratings on their perceptions of service quality revealed two dimensions, explaining 83.9% of the total variance. The factor loading revealed several cross-

loadings for items Qs 23, 24, 26, 27, and 28. This may be attributed to the differences in the respondents' perceptions of the service quality. The first dimension has six items (Q 19-21), which may be categorised as tangibles and other items (Q 25=responsiveness; Q 29=assurance; and Q 30=empathy). The second dimension has only one item without cross-loading (Q 25=reliability). The data reflects inconsistency in the respondent's perception of service quality.

Table 4.10: Explored service quality dimension for expectations

	Dimensions	Component	
		Tangibles	2
(19) An excellent government agency does have up-to-date and modern technology to assist with my needs)	Tangibles	.778	
(20) The physical facility at an excellent government agency is visually appealing)		.919	
(21) In an excellent government agency material associated with the service such as pamphlets and brochures is visually appealing)		.825	
(22) When an excellent government agency promises to do something by a particular time, they do)			.953
(23) When a customer has a problem, an excellent government agency does show sincere interest in solving it)		.608	.732
(24) An excellent government agency does perform the service correctly the first time)		.596	.773
(25) The employees from an excellent government agency do advise customers exactly what services will be performed.)	Responsiveness	.772	
(26) The employees from an excellent government agency do give prompt services to customers)		.667	.649
(27) The behaviour of employees in an excellent government agency does instil confidence in customers)		.761	.537
(28) Customers of excellent government agencies do feel safe in their transactions)		.594	.751
(29) The employees of an excellent government agency do have the knowledge to answer customers' questions.)	Assurance	.767	
(30) The employees of an excellent government agency do understand the specific needs of their customers)	Empathy	.888	

4.5 Conclusion: analysis, interpretation and discussion of results

In summary, the above chapter exhaustively evaluated and measured the respondents' (customers') expectations of service quality and the gaps that may lie between the perceptions and expectations of service quality by Trade and Investment in KwaZulu-Natal. Uzir, Halbusi, Thurasamy, Hock, Aljaberi, Hasan, and Hamid (2021) state that timeous delivery, improved service, creating positive customer perceived value, and trust concerning service providers are influential factors that contribute to customer satisfaction. Previous studies have highlighted that there are gaps which lie between the expectations and perceptions of service quality from government entities. Consistent with this, the analysis indicates that there is a negative gap difference between what the respondents expect and their perceptions of the service quality. It emerged that respondents have positive expectations of service quality, while their perceptions of service quality were not so favourable. The item with the most positive expectations is the statement "the behaviour of employees in an excellent government agency will instil confidence in customers", while the item with the most favourable perception is the statement "The employees of an excellent government agency will understand the specific needs of their customers".

It was uncovered that the statement "In an excellent government agency, material associated with the service such as pamphlets and brochures should be visually appealing" had the lowest mean differences between the expectations and perceptions of service quality, while the statement "When an excellent government agency promises to do something by a particular time, it certainly will" had the highest mean differences.

Furthermore, the ANOVA results revealed that female respondents have significant expectations and perceptions of service quality when compared to males. The analysis also shows that younger adults (below 24) and Coloureds have significant expectations and perceptions of service quality than other age groups and races, respectively. No differences were found in the expectations of service quality based

on the level of education, whilst degree holders have significant perceptions of service quality. Businesses in the Central basin have significant expectations and perceptions of service quality than in other areas. Factor analyses were further used to assess and validate the expectations and perceptions of service. While three dimensions, namely assurance, reliability and tangibles, were uncovered and validated for the respondents' expectations of service quality, and the result for perceptions show cross-loading and inconsistency.

The results are further interpreted and discussed below, with links being identified between the literature review and the outcomes of the research conducted.

The twenty-four statements that were presented in the questionnaire were grouped according to the SERVQUAL dimensions, which depict service quality. The outcome of the statement responses was aligned to address the objectives of the study, which are:

- i. To investigate customers' expectations of the service quality by Trade and Investment KwaZulu-Natal (TIKZN).
- ii. To determine the gaps that lie between the expectations and perceptions of the service quality offered by TIKZN.
- iii. To make appropriate recommendations on improving the service quality of TIKZN.

4.5.1 Expectations and perceptions

Tangibles

Tangibles refer to the appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel, and communication materials. Arlen (2019: 15) and Matiza and Oni (2014) note that many service industries lack physical characteristics and thus customers are not able to clearly assess the worth they would gain from engaging such a service with tangible signs. Based on the results, it was evident that the expectations of the

customers to see a visually appealing facility with pamphlets and brochures as well as modern technology are high.

Reliability

Reliability refers to the ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately. Nguyen (2016: 1) defines reliability as the ability of a service provider to offer committed products and services consistently and truthfully. Based on the results, the customers' expectations of sincerity in solving an issue in a good turnaround time and to perform this efficiently are high.

Responsiveness

Responsiveness is the willingness to help customers and provide prompt service. Izogo and Ogba (2015: 1) observe that responsiveness is the employee's readiness or willingness to provide services to customers. The customers of TIKZN expect prompt and attentive service from the employees.

Assurance

Assurance is the expertise and good manners of employees, and their ability to convey trust and confidence is another dimension of service quality. Alton (2017: 3) describes quality assurance as the processes that are engaged in prior to and during the period of customer encounters to guarantee gratification. The customers of TIKZN expect to receive courtesy, honesty, integrity and information from the employees.

Empathy

Empathy is a critical component of the dimensions of service quality as this has a strong bearing on the business's 'well-being'. According to Izogo and Ogba (2015: 1), empathy is about customer care and giving attention to each problem presented

by the customer. TIKZN customers expect to be given professional treatment and after-care service.

The research findings will be discussed based on current literature in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE - CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The increased competitiveness of the investment promotion agencies (IPAs) within KwaZulu-Natal has increased the need to remain ahead of the pack is crucial. To determine the customers' perceptions of the quality of service provided by the Trade and Investment KwaZulu-Natal Agency in the greater Durban area, this study identified areas that are lacking in the service delivery of TIKZN's offerings. Through a close and fine-grained analysis of the service quality and Gaps Model, this research has shown that the customers (respondents) have positive expectations of service quality while their perceptions of service quality were not so favourable.

This study was undertaken within an organisation where customers' perceptions needed to be established to understand whether the customers understood and agreed with the service quality of the company. The research study undertook to assess the service quality offered by utilising the SERVQUAL questionnaire and further understand the discrepancies through the Gaps Model by engaging with customers through an online questionnaire. It was hoped that the study would enable management to address any concerns and the negative impact that the customers have on TIKZN's service delivery of their offerings.

The following sections indicate the findings of the literature review and primary research relative to the defined objectives of the study. The conclusions obtained from the study are also stated. A further section on recommendations is included.

5.2 Findings from the study

5.2.1 Overview of chapter 1

Chapter 1 introduced the topic, “Customers’ Perceptions of Service Delivery by Trade and Investment KwaZulu-Natal in the greater Durban Area”, the aim of the study and the research objectives. The dissertation structure and research methodology, including the guidelines for the timelines for each section, were discussed. The COVID-19 pandemic was a huge stumbling block to completing this dissertation timeously as well as making contact physically with some of the customers; however, with the use of electronic mail and telephonic contact with most customers, the responses were received, and the analysis was finally concluded. Chapter 1 also briefly introduced the mandates of investment promotion agencies (IPAs) in the South African context and briefly stated the problems identified.

5.2.2 Findings from the literature review

Trade and Investment KwaZulu-Natal is a service organisation, employing people across varying disciplines to create a service delivery through the companies’ offerings. The organisation is a key component in building investment in KwaZulu-Natal as well as creating strategic partnerships and alliances to retain, expand or sustain businesses through funding sought externally, through information building or capacity building, as well as allowing for opportunities to export goods internationally. Considering the vast offerings and free services by the provincial government, it is, therefore, essential to understand how customers and businesses affiliated with TIKZN feel about the service delivery.

The literature reviews the concept of service delivery and customers’ perceptions of service delivery. The ranking of perception-building lies in the confidence of the investor or the local business that the investment choice will contribute to the diminution of search times and provide social acceptance, as well as mental boosting of the investment decision (Mazibuko, 2020). Breakfast, Bradshaw and Bradshaw

(2019) attest that a long-standing relationship between service delivery and authority is substantial in the South African local, municipal and provincial government context. These statements reinforce the significance of perception of service within a government context and will aid in building an argument to showcase the aspects that impact perceptions and how agencies of government can learn to understand and measure the information received. It is evident from the analysis that customer expectations outweigh the perceptions of Trade and Investment KwaZulu-Natal.

Considering TIKZN's perspectives, the organisation's image is related directly to the expectations of customers. The TIKZN brand is expected to have a positive impact on customer expectations of the service offering. Customers will have both explicit and implicit expectations vis-à-vis the merchandise or service that they have acquired. They will have expectations that include a robust component due to anticipated changes to the merchandise or service as time passes. Importantly, customers will also have relational- and service-level expectations that connect directly to the customer relationship and interaction with a business or organisation (Smith, 2020: 1). Based on the above, the analysis depicts that when customers were asked their perceptions of the item: "When an excellent government agency promises to do something by a particular time, it certainly will" and for the item: "The employees of an excellent government agency will understand the specific needs of their customers", it was noted that customer's perception of service quality was less favourable.

In South Africa, there is a framework which enables the assessment and improvement of service and the customer service assessment is very essential to continuous improvement based on perception assessments (Meshalkin *et al.*, 2020: 56). These frameworks ensure that organisations integrate both soft and hard customer service through customer perceptions. According to Wren (2020: 4), institutions are mandated to perform these service quality assessments, especially using feedback and perceptions from customers which will then result in the determination of factors that may hinder the efficient and effective delivery of quality

services. This was further reinforced by Nguyen (2016: 3) who notes that service quality assessments help in providing direction for managers who may need to improve service quality for their customers. Therefore, it is imperative to note that the frameworks are generally supported by implementation strategies to ensure that they are enforced. Addressing customer service quality gaps should be a pre-requisite for progressive institutions whether private or public as this helps in creating quality dimensions which are suitable for public and private sector institutions (Ahmad and Papastathopoulos, 2019:350).

5.2.3 Findings from the primary research

Several research studies on service quality have resulted in positive outcomes for organisations. As evidenced in a study by Danaher and Rust (2018: 63), they reiterate that cultivating service quality can intensify revenues through:

- (1) keeping a greater fraction of existing customers,
- (2) bringing in new customers via positive feedback through communication like word of mouth, and
- (3) increasing the usage rates of current customers.

Hence, this research sought to unravel the level of awareness that is perceived of the services that Trade and Investment KwaZulu-Natal (TIKZN) offers as identified by the Corporate Strategy Plan compiled by Sigma International 2019. Further, the gaps that lie within the perceptions and expectations created have been identified.

In reviewing the findings of the study, the study's aim was achieved. The analysis indicates that there is a negative gap variance in the middle of what the respondents expect and their perceptions of the service quality. It emerged that respondents have positive expectations of service quality, while their perceptions of service quality were not so favourable.

One of the imperative performance dimensions is to permit action to be taken to close the gaps that exist in service delivery. The vital point for the organisation is to identify the service dilemma faced by the customers. This exploration may present management with significant insights into the lack of interpretation of the service delivery process from the customers' viewpoint.

5.3 Conclusions gained from the study

5.3.1 Objective one: to investigate customers' expectations of the service quality by Trade and Investment KwaZulu-Natal (TIKZN)

The outcomes prove that respondents' (customers') expectations of the service delivery they have received from TIKZN surpass their opinions, thus enhancements are imperative and required across all five elements. The gaps in all the dimensions present a challenge for the organisation as they are mandated to ensure a satisfactory and hassle-free service as TIKZN is a provincial government agency. If the expectations are greater than the perceptions, then the perceived quality is less than satisfactory and therefore, customer dissatisfaction occurs.

5.3.2 Objective two: to determine the gaps that lie between the expectations and perceptions of the service quality offered by TIKZN

The essence of this research was to gauge if a gap exists between consumers' expectations of service delivery and the service provided by TIKZN. Chapter 2 showcased an overview of the investigation by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1985) on the gaps model of service quality which uses the SERVQUAL instrument as the preferred instrument in measuring the gap between customers' expectations and services received. In Table 4.4, the average expectation score was high, ranging from 3.97 on a scale of 1-5 where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is agree for the statement: The physical facility at an excellent government agency should be visually appealing and in an excellent government agency, material associated with the service such as pamphlets and brochures should be visually appealing, to 4.52 for

the statement: The behaviour of employees in an excellent government agency will instil confidence in customers. The expectations had a total mean score of 4.22. This value is closest to “**strongly agree**”, which suggests that the respondents have a positive agreement in their expectations of service delivery.

However, the mean score for the perceptions of service quality varied from 2.80 for the statement: When an excellent government agency promises to do something by a particular time, it certainly will, to 3.59 for the statement: The employees of an excellent government agency will understand the specific needs of their customers. The overall mean score for the respondents’ perception of service quality was 3.19. This value is closest to “**neutral**”, which suggests the respondents’ perceptions of service quality were less favourable.

The statement with the maximum mean gap score was: “***When an excellent government agency promises to do something by a particular time, it certainly will*** (-1.43). This suggests that the respondents’ expectation’s (M=4.23) far exceed the perception (M=2.80) that ***when an excellent government agency promises to do something by a particular time, it certainly will***.

5.3.3 Objective three: to make appropriate recommendations on improving the service quality of TIKZN

TIKZN should implement the following recommendations to improve the quality of their service delivery:

There should be measures of performance based on rigorous measures of the customers’ satisfaction. The measures should be regularly monitored by an external service or an independent auditor such as a market research company, who would monitor clients as well as internal staff to close the gaps that exist between actual performance and expectations.

Service delivery quality begins with education. TIKZN should invest in training the employees at all levels to improve skills in order to facilitate changes in behaviour and attitude and to ensure there is a smooth delivery process of the customer's expectations. A customer service course must be conducted within TIKZN, particularly for those who deal directly with customers.

It is further recommended that TIKZN develop more social support, focusing on team building and recognition awards/programmes with incentives. In this way, internal staff are motivated to achieve better results. Senior management should publicly recognise employees for their accomplishments in customer service. TIKZN should dedicate a section in the newsletter or brochure to recognise employees' excellence in service delivery. Employees at TIKZN need to be developed and made to feel valued. This would require ensuring a long-term commitment with the employee, which in turn will create a commitment to customer service.

To enhance employees' capability and understanding of client service, TIKZN should develop guidelines focusing on erudition and progress, goal setting and performance management, which would enable the organization to create an environment conducive to the advancement of personnel. More engagement and communication with the TIKZN staff should bring about more reliability. Internal communication methods should be explored to share more ideas and outline problems relating to service delivery.

Ultimately, the organisation must build a new unit called "client care units", which could be a division of the One-Stop-Shop department. This division will deal solely with customer complaints and ensure they are channelled to the correct department and unit head. Reports must be submitted every week or end of the month to find out

the most common problems, how and when they occur, the rate at which they are resolved, and how to mitigate them.

5.4 Limitations

As with all studies, this research study also has certain limitations summarised below:

This study fixated on respondents in the greater Durban area. However, the results of the study may not have been representative of the entire population, since a probability sampling method was employed to gather the data, and consumers from outer-lying areas were inaccessible to the researcher due to Covid-19 and the limitations of face-to-face contact.

As a result of the probability sampling method, the section contained respondents who were available and willing to participate. Consequently, the study may not have been truly expressive of consumers which comprised of all age groups.

Publications on the customer perceptions of service delivery on an investment promotion agency in South Africa is very limited.

In order to fully assess the provisions of TIKZN and IPAs in relation to the levels of service delivery, all stakeholders must be included in the study, that is, government agencies, consumer bodies and consumers from the entire Kwa-Zulu Natal regions.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter focused on the findings of the literature review as well as that of the primary research. An overview of the results of the study was also presented. Conclusions were drawn based on these results and further recommendations were made to Trade and Investment KwaZulu-Natal on how the process of strategy to outline and eradicate the gaps could be improved to their benefit.

It is recommended that an additional study be directed towards service delivery and its bearing on customers at TIKZN. The study's outcome was of interest to some customers, and further studies could confirm this information, which would benefit TIKZN.

The SERVQUAL instrument should be regulated accordingly towards a qualitative study which could better understand the customers' views. TIKZN would need to continually re-evaluate the worth of their service delivery which could assist in outlining issues with the service delivery received and allocating resources to provide a better service overall.

This study complements the present information on the service delivery improvement process in public service businesses. With regards to the constraints, this analysis was conducted in one region rather than including the Gauteng Province where the department has an office. This geographic drawback implies that the study was constrained to a single geographic framework. Forthcoming studies could examine perceptions of organisational impartiality across the different government investment promotion agencies in all provinces. The outcomes of this study have several implications for management in the public or government departments.

5.6 Recommendations

The purpose of the study was to investigate customers' perceptions of service delivery by trade and investment in the greater Durban Area in KwaZulu-Natal. In addition, the study sought to identify the factors that resulted in service quality gaps by using customers' perceptions of service delivery.

The principal focus of the study was to assemble data about customers' perceptions and expectations for service delivery enhancement initiative. Another field of focus was to establish whether any service quality gaps may well be contributing to customers' adverse perceptions of TIKZN and, if so, what could be done to resolve

the situation. The result of the evaluation could then be used to pinpoint areas of concern for management assessment.

It has been displayed in the literature review that, in order to develop service quality, gaps need to be detected. The quality of services is generally considered a key driver, especially when developing frameworks for conducting community audits and surveys (Leach, 2018: 24). Understanding the gaps will pave the way to ensure that the service quality is delivered effectively and efficiently.

When gauging the quality of service, a modification that exists between the point of quality, which the customer accepted and the quality that they felt they received (Clow and Baack, 2018). It is their perceptions that make a difference, not what the service provider assumes. If the customer perceives that they accepted poor service, the decision about future business will be centred on that opinion. Service corporations must grasp the notion of service delivery from the perspective of the client, not from the standpoint of the service organisation or service provider.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A



LETTER OF INFORMATION

Title of the Research Study: Customers' perceptions of service quality by Trade and Investment KwaZulu-Natal in the greater Durban area.

Principal Investigator/s/researcher: Anamika Somera: BTECH Marketing and Retail Management

Co-Investigator/s/supervisor/s: Dr. Raymond Hilary Hawkins-Mofokeng:

Brief Introduction and Purpose of the Study: This study aims to evaluate and measure the customers' expectations of service quality and the gaps that may lie between the perception and expectation of the service quality by Trade and Investment KwaZulu-Natal. Previous studies have highlighted that there are gaps which lie between the expectations and perceptions of service quality from government entities. Particularly in Investment Promotion Agencies, the studies are limited, and a broader context encapsulates comparisons rather than the customers' requirements from a service entity like Trade and Investment KwaZulu-Natal.

Outline of the Procedures: A Servqual questionnaire has been developed to collect data. All questions use the Servqual model to help understand the expectations and perceptions of the customers. A total of 400 participants will be approached, from businesses locally within Central Durban, Amanzimtoti, Umhlanga, Westville, Morningside as well as some of the business that lie on the outskirts of the greater Durban Area. The 400 completed questionnaires will be used for the data analysis. Participants will be informed that participation is voluntary, with a copy of the Letter of Information to be issued to each participant in Isizulu and/or English. Research is conducted in a specific location, and participants will be approached at random. Data will be collected and used for data analysis. Once the data analysis is completed, the questionnaires will be shredded and disposed of.

Risks or Discomforts to the Participant: There are no risks or discomforts to participants.

Benefits: A journal article will be published from the study.

Reason/s why the Participant May Be Withdrawn from the Study: There will be no adverse consequences for the participant should they choose to withdraw.

Remuneration: N/A

Costs of the Study: N/A

Confidentiality: Collected questionnaires to be stored safely in a locked safe and shredded once data analysis is completed.

Research-related Injury: N/A

Persons to Contact in the Event of Any Problems or Queries:

Dr. Raymond Hilary Hawkins-Mofokeng is the Supervisor and is contactable on 031-373-5389. Please contact the researcher Ms Anamika Somera on 0823778890. Institutional Research Ethics administrator is contactable on 031 373 2900. Complaints can be reported to the DVC: TIP, Prof S Moyo on 031 373 2577 or moyos@dut.ac.za

General: Potential participants must be assured that participation is voluntary and the approximate number of participants to be included should be disclosed. A copy of the information letter should be issued to participants. The information letter and consent form must be translated and provided in the primary spoken language of the research population e.g. isiZulu



CONSENT

Statement of Agreement to Participate in the Research Study:

- I hereby confirm that I have been informed by the researcher, **Ms Anamika Somera**, about the nature, conduct, benefits and risks of this study - Research Ethics Clearance Number: IREC 147/21,
- I have also received, read, and understood the above written information (Participant Letter of Information) regarding the study.
- I am aware that the results of the study, including personal details regarding my sex, age, date of birth, initials and diagnosis will be anonymously processed into a study report.
- In view of the requirements of research, I agree that the data collected during this study can be processed in a computerised system by the researcher.
- I may, at any stage, without prejudice, withdraw my consent and participation in the study.
- I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and (of my own free will) declare myself prepared to participate in the study.
- I understand that significant new findings developed during the course of this research which may relate to my participation will be made available to me.

Full Name of Participant
Thumbprint

Date

Time

Signature / Right

I, **Ms. Anamika Somera** herewith confirm that the above participant has been fully informed about the nature, conduct and risks of the above study.

Ms. Anamika Somera
Full Name of Researcher

01/11/2021
Date

Signature

Full Name of Witness (If applicable)

Date

Signature

Full Name of Legal Guardian (If applicable) Date

Signature

APPENDIX B

Customers' perceptions of service delivery by Trade and Investment KwaZulu-Natal in the greater Durban area.						
	SECTION ONE	Please indicate your choice with an X in the orange highlighted section.				
1	Please indicate your gender.	MALE		FEMALE		
2	Please indicate which racial group you belong to (this is purely for statistical analysis purposes).	Black	Indian	White	Mixed Race/Coloured	
3	Please indicate level of education.	Less than Certificate	National certificate	National Diploma	Bachelor's Degree	Post-graduate
4	Please indicate which area your business is situated in.	Southern Basin	Northern Basin	Central Durban	Eastern Basin	Western Basin
5	Please indicate which sector your business/company belongs to.	Manufacturing	Health Services	Agriculture	Business Services	Other (please state which sector)
		strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
Section TWO: EXPECTATIONS: what the customer/client needs to receive						
		1	2	3	4	5
1	An excellent government agency will have up to date and modern technology to assist with my needs					
2	The physical facility at an excellent government agency should be visually appealing					

3	The employees at an excellent government institution should be neatly attired					
4	In an excellent government agency material associated with the service such as pamphlets and brochures should be visually appealing					
5	When an excellent government agency promises to do something by a particular time, it certainly will					
6	When a customer has a problem, an excellent government agency will show sincere interest in solving it					
7	An excellent government agency will perform the service correctly the first time					
8	An excellent government agency will insist on error free records					
9	The employees from an excellent government agency will advise customers exactly what services will be performed.					
10	The employees from and excellent government agency will give prompt services to customers					
11	The employees from and excellent government agency will always be willing to assist customers					
12	The employees from and excellent government agency will never be so busy that they cannot respond to customers' requests					
13	The behaviour of employees in an excellent government agency will instil confidence in					

	customers					
14	Customers of excellent government agencies will feel safe in their transactions					
15	The employees in an excellent government agency will be consistently courteous with customers					
16	The employees of an excellent government agency will have the knowledge to answer customers questions.					
17	An excellent government agency will have operating hours convenient for all their customers					
18	An excellent government agency will have employees that give customers personal attention					
19	An excellent government agency will have customers best interests at heart					
20	The employees of an excellent government agency will understand the specific needs of their customers					
	Section THREE: PERCEPTIONS: PERCEPTION: what the customer/client received	strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
23	An excellent government agency does have up to date and modern technology to assist with my needs	1	2	3	4	5
24	The physical facility at an excellent government agency is visually appealing					
25	The employees at an excellent government institution are neatly attired					
26	In an excellent government agency material associated with the service such as					

	pamphlets and brochures is visually appealing					
27	When an excellent government agency promises to do something by a particular time, they do					
28	When a customer has a problem, an excellent government agency does show sincere interest in solving it					
29	An excellent government agency does perform the service correctly the first time					
30	An excellent government agency does insist on error free records					
31	The employees from an excellent government agency does advise customers exactly what services will be performed.					
32	The employees from and excellent government agency does give prompt services to customers					
33	The employees from and excellent government agency is always willing to assist customers					
34	The employees from and excellent government agency is not so busy that they cannot respond to customers' requests					
35	The behaviour of employees in an excellent government agency does instil confidence in customers					
36	Customers of excellent government agencies will feel safe in their transactions					
37	The employees in an excellent government agency is consistently					

	courteous customers with					
38	The employees of an excellent government agency do have the knowledge to answer customers questions.					
39	An excellent government agency does have operating hours convenient for all their customers					
40	An excellent government agency does have employees that give customers personal attention					
41	An excellent government agency does have customers best interests at heart					
42	The employees of an excellent government agency do understand the specific needs of their customers					

APPENDIX C

Excel Spreadsheet for Analysis -

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1gynl19qcXKsOfu72gAvNfvlWoZxmym7h/edit?usp=sharing&ndouid=117174073162812362487&drtpof=true&sd=true>

Faculty research ethics committee clearance - Signed Ms A. Somera

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1HB4g2tkye8hRcuutle8do3vulPageRI7EJ/view?usp=sharing>

Frequency tables (Raw Data):

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1dqZDg7SJZm9GASR7-HzWg9Dtgrq_CcDH/edit?usp=sharing&ndouid=117174073162812362487&drtpof=true&sd=true

APPENDIX D

Sury Bisetty Academic Editing Services



The pen is mightier than the sword

To whom it may concern

I edited a Master's thesis entitled **Customers' Perceptions of Service Delivery by Trade and Investment KwaZulu-Natal in the Greater Durban Area** by Anamika Somera, student number 19601713. submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of Masters in Management Sciences (Marketing) Faculty of Management Sciences at the Durban University of Technology.

Sury Bisetty

Professional Language and Technical Editor 9

September 2022

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Disclaimer: Please note, I provided language and technical editing as per discussion with the client. The **content and structure** of the paper were not amended in any way. The edited work described here may not be identical to that submitted. The author, at his/her sole discretion, has the prerogative to accept, delete, or change amendments/suggestions made by the editor before submission.

NB – in keeping with POPIA regulations all work related to this thesis will be deleted 3 months after completion.

APPENDIX E

Dr. SC Onwubu

46 Thornon Avenue, Seaview, Durban, 4091
0717930852
Profstan4christ@yahoo.com

STATISTICIAN CERTIFICATE

Date: 11 September 2022

Re: Anamika Somera

Faculty of Management Sciences, Durban University of Technology

Master's Dissertation: **Customers' perceptions of service delivery by Trade and Investment KwaZulu-Natal in the Greater Durban area**

I confirm that Ms Anamika Somera consulted me regarding her data analysis. I did her statistical work using both descriptive and inferential statistics. I attest that the statistical analysis conducted meets the post-graduate guidelines and addresses her research objectives.

Dr. SC Onwubu

11 September 2022

Per email

APPENDIX F



6th October 2021

Mrs Anamika Somera
Durban University of Technology
Department of Marketing and Retail Management
ML Sultan Campus Durban
Dear Mrs Somera

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH


Gatekeeper's permission is hereby granted for you to conduct research at the Trade and Investment KwaZulu Natal, towards your postgraduate studies. We note that the title of your research project is: " Customers' Perceptions of Service Quality by Trade and Investment KwaZulu-Natal (TIKZN) in The Greater Durban Area."

It is noted that you will be constituting your sample as follows:

- a. Researching the internet.
- b. Researching the intranet for service offerings and the criteria and mandates
- c. Email questionnaires to various businesses within the greater Durban area regarding SERVQUAL questions about the expectations and perceptions of TIKZN's service quality.

Please note that all data collected must be treated with due confidentiality and anonymity.

Yours sincerely



Mr Neville Matjie
Chief Executive Officer

KwaZulu-Natal Office
Trade & Investment House, 1 Arundel Close,
Kingsmead Office Park, Durban, 4001,
South Africa
PO Box 4245, Durban, 4000, South Africa
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DIRECTORS: C M Cronjé (Chairperson), L C Z Cele (Deputy Chairperson), G W Bell, U Maharaj, E B Mkhize, S K Mpungose, D Naidoo, E M Nkosi, K S Shandu, N S T Matjie (CEO), Z M Msomi (CFO)

ISO 9001 Certified



APPENDIX G



6th October 2021

Trade and Investment Kwa-Zulu Natal 1
Arundel Close
Kingsmead Office Park
Durban
4000

RE: Request for Permission to Conduct Research

Dear Mr. Neville Matjie

My name is Anamika Somera, a master's in marketing (MMSC) student at the Durban University of Technology.

The research I wish to conduct for my dissertation through this MMSC degree involves the topic: "Customers' Perceptions of Service Quality by Trade and Investment KwaZulu-Natal (TIKZN) in The Greater Durban Area."

I am hereby seeking your consent to utilise TIKZN information via the Internet and Intranet which will aid in supporting my research. The outcomes and recommendations will be shared with TIKZN.

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me on 0823778890, and email anasomera@gmail.com.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anamika Somera'.

Anamika Somera: Durban University of Technology

APPENDIX H



Institutional Research Ethics Committee

Research and Postgraduate Support Directorate 2nd
Floor, Berwyn Court

Gate 1, Steve Biko Campus

Durban University of Technology

P O Box 1334, Durban, South Africa, 4001

Tel: 031 373 2375

Email: lavishad@dut.ac.za

http://www.dut.ac.za/research/institutional_research_ethics

www.dut.ac.za

8 October 2021

Mrs A Somera
55 Skipdale Road
Briardale, Marbelray
Newlands West 4037

Dear Mrs Somera

Customers' Perceptions of Service Quality by Trade and Investment KwaZulu-Natal (TIKZN) in The Greater Durban Area.

Ethical Clearance number IREC 147/21

The Institutional Research Ethics Committee acknowledges receipt of your gatekeeper permission letters.

Please note that FULL APPROVAL is granted to your research proposal. You may proceed with data collection.

Any adverse events (serious or minor) which occur in connection with this study and/or which may alter its ethical consideration must be reported to the IREC according to the IREC Standard Operating Procedures (SOP's).

Please note that any deviations from the approved proposal require the approval of the IREC as outlined in the IREC SOP's.

Yours Sincerely

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APPENDIX I



Digital Receipt

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CHAPTER 1

1.1 INTRODUCTION

According to Peters (2002), over the past thirty years, the public division's conventional purpose has moved away from being a finance, crime and project manager to allocating aspects of their services and delivered using "alternative service delivery" (ASD) procedures. These types of procedures (ASDs) differ in their use from "public-private partnerships" (PPPs) of organisations. Peters (2002) states that this is not a new concept in South Africa as many government divisions have a selection of actions and obligations. A crucial distinguishing aspect of agencies is their narrower, specific purposes. In principle, this distinctive attribute, coupled with substantial working independence, allows organisations to document many of the disputes that their governmental equivalents experience, thus providing the possibility for advancement.

Petersen and Beaudetout (2010) state that to attract foreign direct investment, nine provincial investment promotion agencies were created to focus on the advancement of trade and investment to and from corresponding provinces. It is the role of investment promotion organisations to collect and disseminate information to investors to encourage them to invest in South Africa, as stated by Petersen and Beaudetout (2010).

Worldwide, "service delivery" is a common phrase that is used to signify the movement of basic communal requirements and services, particularly housing, water and public health, property, energy and structures, which resident communities are dependent on and have taken for granted. Nevertheless, in the South African context, the distribution and consistent upkeep of these basic services have demonstrated that occasionally they are unobtainable, greatly disrupting and jeopardising local communities (Radey 2016).