

**A STUDY OF THE PRODUCT, SERVICE, PLANNED AND UNPLANNED
MESSAGES THAT RELATE TO CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AT THE
TRANSVAAL MUSEUM**

by

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B. SUMMARY

The study examines the impact of communication on customer satisfaction at the Transvaal Museum. Customer satisfaction refers to customer's overall satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the organisation based on all encounters and experience with that particular organisation. Communication has an impact on both customer satisfaction and future behavioural actions of consumers. There are four sources of brand messages namely, planned, unplanned, product and service messages. In the quest for increased customer satisfaction, companies are moving away from the traditional 4Ps (product, price, place and promotion) of the marketing mix to the 8Ps. The other four Ps include physical assets, procedures, personnel and personalisation. Integration of all marketing communications to customers is seen as a key activity in companies' attempts to build long term-relationships. On the whole, the study has indicated that customers of the museum are satisfied with its products, services and messages. However, the research has also shown that customers are not happy with the way the museum handles its planned communication activities.

C. DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to my late great grand mother, Vho-Makhadzi Mavhungu Nemutanzhela for her unconditional love. I wish you were still alive to see some of your first-born great grand son's achievements.

D. DECLARATION

I declare that "A study of the product, service, planned and unplanned messages that relate to customer satisfaction at the Transvaal Museum" is my own work and that all the resources that I have used or quoted have been identified and acknowledged by means of complete references .

T E MUDZANANI

DATE

E. KEY TERMS

Customer satisfaction

Service quality

Sources of brand messages

Integrated communication

Marketing mix

Integrated marketing communication

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SUMMARY

The study examines the impact of communication on customer satisfaction at the Transvaal Museum. Customer satisfaction refers to customer's overall satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the organisation based on all encounters and experience with that particular organisation. Communication has an impact on both customer satisfaction and future behavioural actions of consumers. There are four sources of brand messages namely, planned, unplanned, product and service messages. In the quest for increased customer satisfaction, companies are moving away from the traditional 4Ps (product, price, place and promotion) of the marketing mix to the 8Ps. The other four Ps include physical assets, procedures, personnel and personalisation. Integration of all marketing communications to customers is seen as a key activity in companies' attempts to build long term-relationships. On the whole, the study has indicated that customers of the museum are satisfied with its products, services and messages. However, the research has also shown that customers are not happy with the way the museum handles its planned communication activities.

1. INTRODUCTION

Customer satisfaction is one of the most prominent marketing constructs. Customer satisfaction has become the buzz word in the business world. Arts and culture institutions are also fast becoming business orientated in the light of fierce competition from technologies such as television and video. The problem statement in this research was: *There is no evidence that the customers of the Transvaal Museum are satisfied with its products, services and messages.* In essence, the research objective was to determine the impact of communication on customer satisfaction at the museum. The secondary objectives of the study were as follows:

- to determine the impact of planned messages of the museum on customer satisfaction;
- to determine the impact of product messages of the museum on customer satisfaction;
- to determine the impact of unplanned messages of the museum on customer satisfaction; and,
- to determine the impact of service messages of the museum on customer satisfaction.

Museums are an integral part of the arts, culture and heritage sector. According to Corsane (2004:5), in the post-apartheid South Africa “the traditional understandings of museums and heritage have been challenged in terms of how meaning making, heritage construction and knowledge production were conducted in the past”. Between the 1980s and the early 1990s, a number of significant conferences, meetings and commissions were held as a prelude to the passing of a number of progressive pieces of legislation in arts, culture and heritage. One of the highlights of the transformation of the sector was the creation of a new Ministry and Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology (DACST) in 1994. In 2002, the DACST was split into the Department of Arts and Culture (DAC) and the Department of Science and Technology (DST). The Ministry brought museums, archives and other heritage bodies together into a single dedicated ministry. In an attempt to promote both tangible and intangible heritage resources, the National

Heritage Council and the South African Heritage Resources Agency were established (Corsane 2004).

In 2001 the International Council of Museums (ICOM) broadened the definition of museums to include “cultural centres and other entities that facilitate the preservation, continuation and management of tangible or intangible heritage resources” (Corsane 2004:13). The legislation, policies and structures established by the new democratic government created a conducive environment for integrated heritage management (Corsane 2004). Thackeray (2007) asserts that as part of the broader transformation of the arts, culture and heritage sector, the Transvaal Museum was merged with seven other museums into a national museum known as Northern Flagship Institution. The other museums include the Kruger Museum, the National Cultural History Museum, the Pioneer Museum, the Sammy Marks Museum, the South African Military Museum, the Tswaing Crater Museum and the Willem Prinsloo Agricultural Museum.

The *Staatmuseum* as it was formally called was established in December 1892. It is a natural history museum, which boasts over 2 million objects in its collection (Thackeray 2007). The museum has good collections in mammals, herpetology, palaeontology and it also has a good science library. The mammal collection comprises of species from Southern Africa. The collection includes a small mammal component which incorporates the entire rodent population at species and subspecies level namely, bat, primate, small carnivores, mustelidae and small insectivores. The herpetology collection includes reptiles and amphibians. The collections consist of complete specimens in alcohol, skeletal material, skins, and photographic slides of mainly Southern African species. In total there are about 83 300 specimens from Southern Africa, Madagascar, Australia and Europe (Thackeray 2007).

The palaeontological collections include Plio-pleistocene hominid from the Cradle of Humankind, a United Nations Education and Scientific Education Council (UNESCO) World Heritage site. The fossils include the specimen of *Paranthropus Robustus* from Kromdraai, early *Homo sapiens* from Swartkrans and the most

complete cranium of *Australopithecus Africanus* from Sterkfontein (Thackeray 2007).

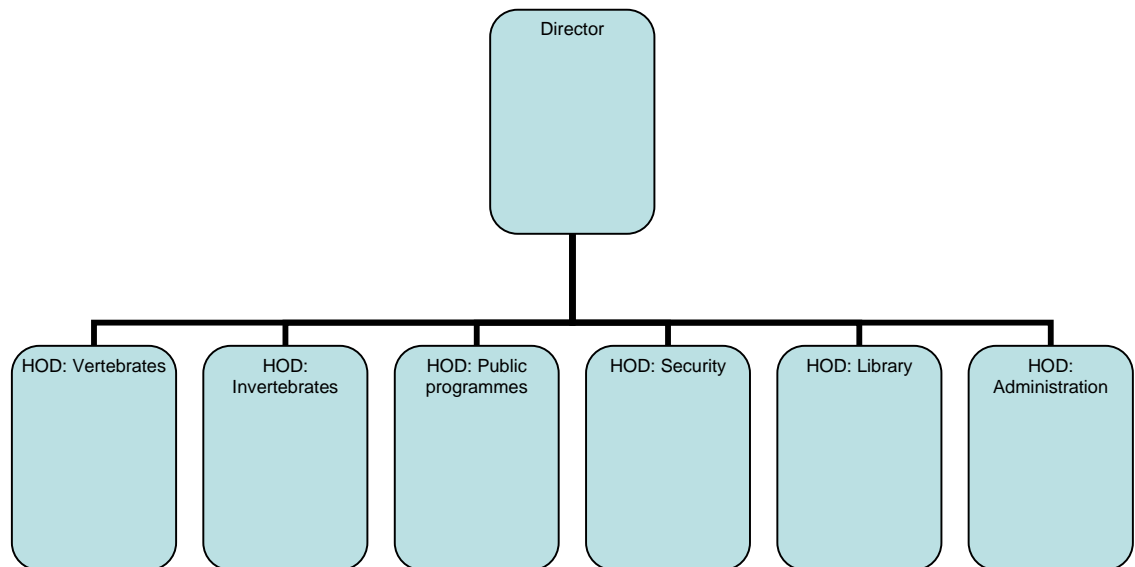
The library at the museum is a science reference library specialising in zoology, palaeontology and the faunal history of Southern Africa. The collection is paper-based and provides documentary support for the various functions at the museum. The library has approximately 10 000 monographs, 1800 periodical titles of which 690 are still running, 90 000 reprints, and several volumes of newspaper clippings about the museum and other scientific events. The library is used by the museum's staff, scientists, students and the general public. The department of invertebrates has collections which include arachnida, coleopteran, hymenopter, lepidoptera, othoptera and neuroptera (Transvaal Museum 2007).

The museum has permanent natural history exhibitions namely, the genesis of life hall, the bird hall, the geosciences museum and the discovery centre. With the genesis of life, the origin of life is told in a narrative form. The narration covers the development of the animal kingdom from single-celled organisms to the appearance of early man. In the bird hall, Southern African birds are arranged numerically according to Robert's *Birds of Southern Africa*. There is also information on the feeding, reproduction, behaviour and migration of these birds. The geoscience museum exhibits a comprehensive collection of minerals, crystals and gemstones. The discovery centre is a hands-on activity centre where visitors discover the wonders of nature through their five senses (Transvaal Museum 2007:2-4).

According to Thackeray (2007) the museum has a staff complement of 45 members. It is headed by a director. It has six units: vertebrates, invertebrates, public programmes, security, administration and library. The vertebrates unit is responsible for the curation and conservation of mammals, birds, fossils and reptiles. The department is divided into wet and dry collections. The invertebrates unit deals with insects. The unit is responsible for research and curation of all the invertebrate collections at the museum. The public programmes unit is responsible for educational programmes, the discovery centre and night tours.

The administration unit deals with office-related administration issues. The library unit manages the library and information services.

Figure 1.1: Organogram of the museum



Adapted from Thackeray (2007)

This section has described the Transvaal Museum as the subject organisation. In the following section, customer satisfaction will be discussed.

2. CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

2.1 Customer satisfaction

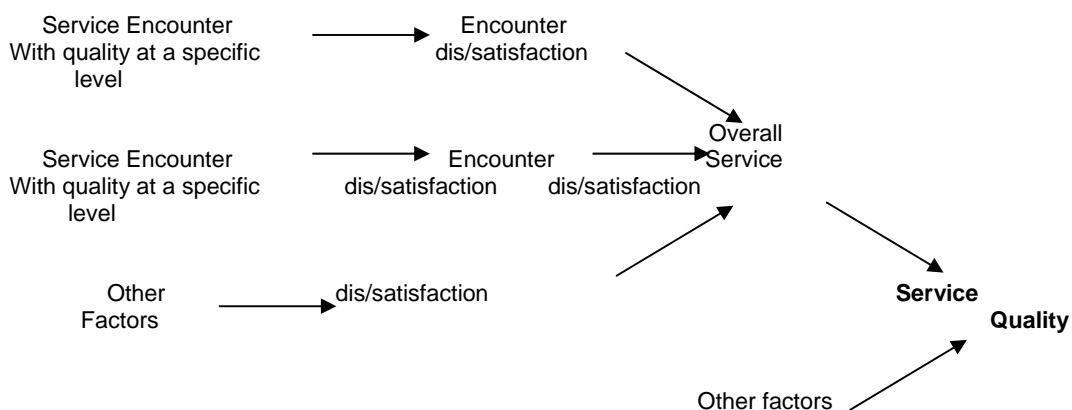
According to Maloney (2002), customer satisfaction, quality and perceived value are three prominent marketing constructs. In the modern business world, competition among service providers is fierce and organisations constantly struggle to build and manage high-quality customer relationships (Shapiro & Nieman-Gonder 2006). Customers are the lifeblood of any organisation, be it private or public sector because consumer satisfaction is key to continued organisational survival. With goods, satisfaction has to do with whether the product can do what it is supposed to do; whereas with services, satisfaction is perception of performance

(Nicholls, Gilbert & Roslow 1998). According to Kornik (2006) companies are established to serve customers. If a company neglects its customers, it loses its purpose of existence. As a result, customer satisfaction has undeniably become an important cornerstone of customer-oriented business practices for firms that operate in diverse industries and global markets (Laroche, Ueltschy, Abe, Cleveland & Yannopoulos 2004). In support of Laroche *et al.* (2004), Shapiro and Nieman-Gonder (2006) argue that customer satisfaction has a critical impact on customer retention and profitability, especially in competitive markets. Bendall-Lyon & Powers (2003); Nicholls *et al.* (1998); Maloney (2002) and Tam (2004) define customer satisfaction as the customer's overall satisfaction or dissatisfaction, based on all encounters and experiences, with the particular organisation.

2.2 Service quality

Quality can be defined as the difference between perceptions of the service received compared with their expectations based on previous service experience (Nicholls *et al.* (1998). Service quality differs from service satisfaction in that satisfaction is about the service encounter while quality is the difference between service expectations and the actual service performance (Nicholls *et al.* (1998). Bendall-Lyon and Powers (2003) argue that communication influences both customer satisfaction and the future behavioural intentions of consumers. The following figure shows the relationship between satisfaction and service quality:

Figure 2.1: Satisfaction and service quality



Adapted from Maloney (2002:523)

Figure 2.1 shows that a customer has a service encounter with a service provider, which is at a particular level of quality. Based upon the customer's expectations and whether the encounter confirms or disconfirms those expectations, the customer is satisfied or dissatisfied with the encounter. Multiple service encounters as well as other factors determine the customer's overall satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the service.

2.3 Perceived value

Tam (2004:900) defines perceived value as "a trade-off between what customers receive and what they give up to acquire the service". Marketers can increase the perceived value by adding benefits to the service. Tam (2004) further argues that time, physical and psychic efforts are as important as price in obtaining a service.

2.4 Social and technical constraints to customer satisfaction

Situational constraints to customer satisfaction are generally defined as circumstances beyond the worker's control that limit performance to levels below perfection. Situational constraints can be divided into social and technical constraints. Social constraints to customer satisfaction refer to interpersonal obstacles in the work environment that have capacity to restrict performance. Technical constraints describe tangible or physical organisational obstacles that also limit performance. Social constraints include problems related to interactions with others (e.g. training problems or cramped workspaces shared with co-workers) while malfunctions in technology and lack of material resources (e.g. work materials, tools and equipment) are technical constraints (Martinez-Tur, Peiro & Ramos 2005).

2.5 Managing service quality

Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry as quoted by Gronroos (2001), identify five quality gaps, namely management perception, quality specification, service delivery,

market communication, and the perceived quality gap. The management perception gap means that management perceives the quality expectations inaccurately. The quality specification gap entails that specifications are not consistent with management's perceptions and expectations of quality. The service delivery gap means that quality specifications are not met by performance in production and delivery processes. The market communication gap means that promises given by the market communication activities are not consistent with service delivered, while the perceived service quality gap means that the perceived or experienced service is not consistent with the expected service.

2.6 A service quality management programme

Gronroos (2001) asserts that a marketer should develop a service quality management programme consisting of the following subprogrammes:

- service concept development;
- customer service expectations management;
- service outcome management;
- internal marketing;
- physical environment and physical resources management;
- information and technology; and,
- customer perception management.

2.7 Service failure and recovery

According to Gronroos, (2001:11) service recovery "is a concept that was introduced in the service management literature to help firms to manage service failures and complaints in a service-oriented way". Shapiro and Nieman-Gonder (2006:124) agree with Gronroos's view that service recovery is needed when a product or a service fails to meet the customer's expectations. Gronroos (2001) and Shapiro and Nieman-Gonder (2006) define service recovery as actions an organisation takes in response to a service failure to offset the negative impact of the breakdown.

In an attempt to deal with the challenges of service failures, a theoretical framework was developed known as organisational justice theory. In terms of the organisational justice theory there are three dimensions, namely distributive justice, interactional justice and procedural justice. Distributive justice focuses on perceived fairness and is often defined as refunds, exchanges, and a discount on future purchases. Interactional justice includes truthfulness, a reasonable explanation, politeness, empathy and apology. A procedural justice means the use of consistent, unbiased and impartial customer policies (Duffy, Miller & Bexley, 2006, Shapiro & Nieman-Gonder 2006). Gronroos (2001) identifies the following guidelines for service recovery processes:

- calculate costs of failures and mistakes;
- solicit complaints;
- identify recovery needs;
- recover quickly;
- train employees;
- empower and enable customer contact employees;
- keep the customer informed; and to
- learn from mistakes.

In this section of the study, the three marketing constructs namely, customer satisfaction, quality and perceived value were discussed. Service failure and recovery were also discussed. In the following section, the sources of brand messages will be briefly discussed in an attempt to understand the impact of communication on customer satisfaction.

3. SOURCES OF BRAND MESSAGES AND MARKETING MIX

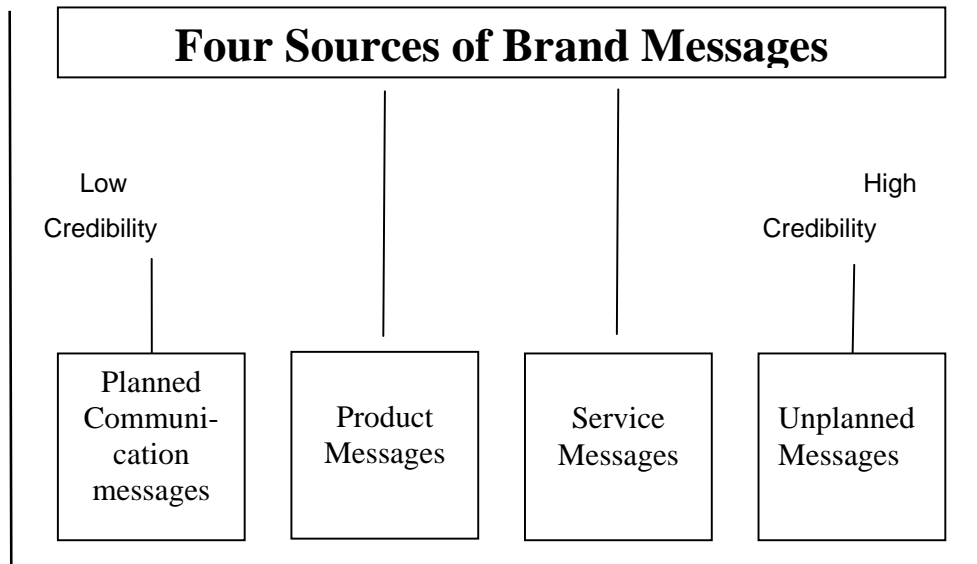
3.1 Sources of brand messages

Swartz (1983) argues that companies should use messages as the basis of differentiation. Brands can be similar in physical and functional ways but dissimilar in terms of messaging. Message differentiation involves distinguishing one brand from others on the basis of the message being communicated.

Message differentiation centres on the effective use of advertising, to assist the target market in making the desired interpretations of the brand. It includes the management of the elements of the marketing mix to ensure that consistent messages about the brand are being communicated (Swartz 1983). Duncan and Moriarty (1997) identify four sources of brand messages: these are planned, unplanned, product, and service messages.

The following figure shows the different sources of brand messages:

Figure 3.1: Sources of brand messages



Adapted from Gronroos & Lindberg-Repo(1998: 5)

The diagram above shows that planned messages have low credibility while unplanned messages have high credibility.

3.1.1 Planned messages

According to Gronroos (2001) planned messages are what a marketer communicates to the target market about its market offering. Duncan and Moriarty (1997) state that planned messages are the traditional elements of the

marketing communication mix, namely advertising, personal selling, public relations, sales promotion and sponsorships.

Advertising is a paid, ongoing, non-personal communication from a commercial source such as a producer or a retailer. Advertising communicates messages about a product, service or company. Public relations involve a variety of programmes designed to promote or protect a company's image or its individual products. Most companies have a public relations department that monitors the attitudes of the organisation's public with a view of building goodwill. Sales promotion consists of a collection of incentive tools, mostly short-term, that are designed to stimulate quicker or greater purchase of particular products or services. There are two types of sales promotion: trade promotions and consumer promotions. Consumer promotions are short-term inducements of value to consumers to encourage them to buy a product or a service. Trade promotions are inducements to retailers and wholesalers to get them to stock the brand. Personal selling refers to face-to-face communication between a company sales representative and a customer. Such communication is intended and designed to influence the customer to buy the company's products or services. Sponsorships are a popular means of generating publicity (Assael 1993, Kotler & Keller 2006).

3.1.2 *Unplanned messages*

A company should not only plan its communication activities but also deal with unplanned communication. Unplanned messages are major determinants of the consumer's attitude and behaviour. Unplanned messages include word-of-mouth or interpersonal communication, intrapersonal communication, and intermediary communication (Karaosmanoglu & Melewar 2006). The impact of word-of-mouth is huge because a person who has had a personal experience with the service provider is an objective source of information. References and testimonials represent an active way for the firm to use positive word-of-mouth in its marketing.

Intrapersonal communication involves psychological experiences and images stored in the mind. The more consumers find a company's identity emotionally

appealing, the more favourable the image consumers have about the company. Positive or negative news disseminated by mass media, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), employees and others can influence consumers' perceptions of companies (Gronroos 2001, Karaosmanoglu & Melewar 2006).

3.1.3 Product messages

According to Van der Walt, Strydom, Marx and Jooste (1996), a product is the first element of a marketing mix. Hence it should form the basis of any communication decisions. Assael (1993) and Kotler and Keller (2006) define a product as a bundle of attributes and benefits designed to satisfy the customer. Examples of products include physical goods, services, experiences, events, persons, places, properties, organisations, information and ideas. Product messages focus on the attributes of a product such as pricing, durability, distribution networks, form, features, performance and conformance quality, reliability, reparability, and style (Aaker, 1995, Duncan & Moriarty 1997, Kotler & Keller 2006).

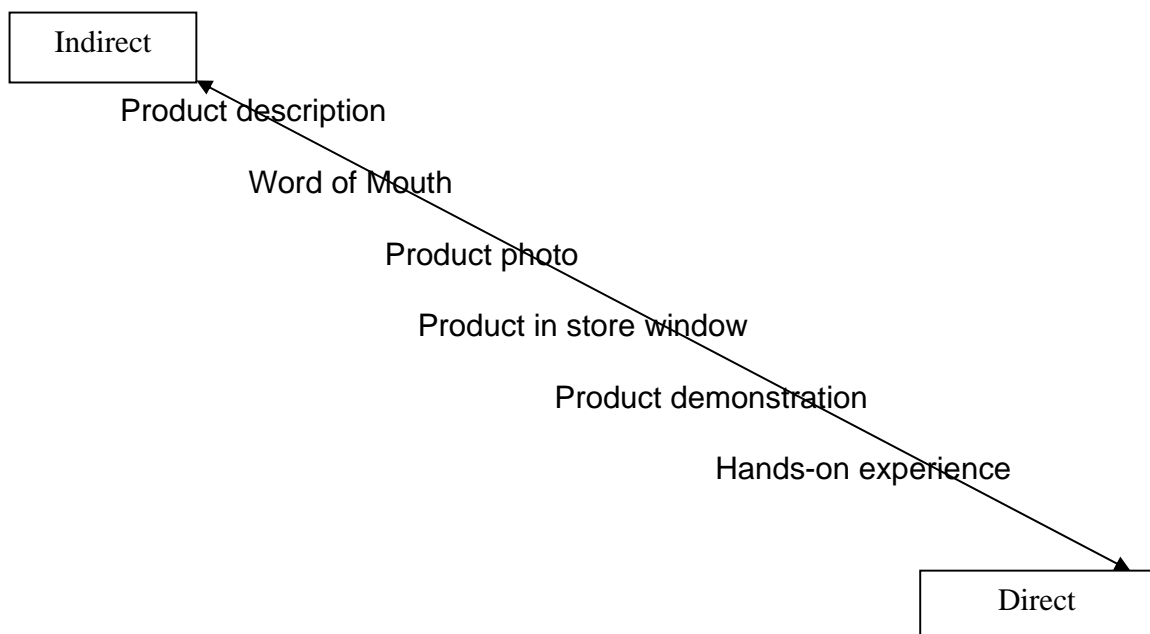
Form refers to the size, shape, or physical structure of a product, whereas features denote aspects that supplement the product or service's basic function. Performance quality is the level at which the product's primary characteristics operate. Conformance quality is the degree to which all the produced units are identical and meet the promised specifications. Durability is a measure of the product's expected operating life under natural or stressful conditions. Reliability is a measure of the probability that a product will not malfunction or fail within a specified time period, while reparability is a measure of ease of fixing a product when it malfunctions or fails (Kotler & Keller 2006).

There are five product levels. These are core benefit, basic product, expected product, augmented product, and the user's total consumption system. Core benefit refers to the service or benefit the customer is really buying. Basic product is simply the physical object or service offered to the target market. Expected product is a set of attributes and conditions buyers normally expect when they

purchase a product and augmented product encompasses all the benefits that consumers receive or experience in perceiving, utilising, obtaining and supplying the formal product. User's consumption system refers to the way the user performs the tasks of getting and using products and related services (Kotler & Keller 2006, Van der Walt *et al.* 1996).

According to Mooy and Robben (2002), a product is a decisive communication tool. Marketers pay little or no attention to the communication abilities of a product as an element of the marketing mix. Mooy and Robben (2002:432) further argue that a physical product "is an important carrier of product information". The traditional marketing communication tools such as advertising, sales promotion, and public relations may have difficulty in reaching the targeted segments of the market due to clutter in the communication environment. Direct contact with the product may provide consumers with product-related information so that they can make a better product choice. Product characteristics may enhance consumer's motivation, opportunity or ability to process product-related information. Product characteristics such as colour and touch may act as peripheral cues and induce positive or negative attitude toward a product.

Figure 3.2 : The direct experience spectrum



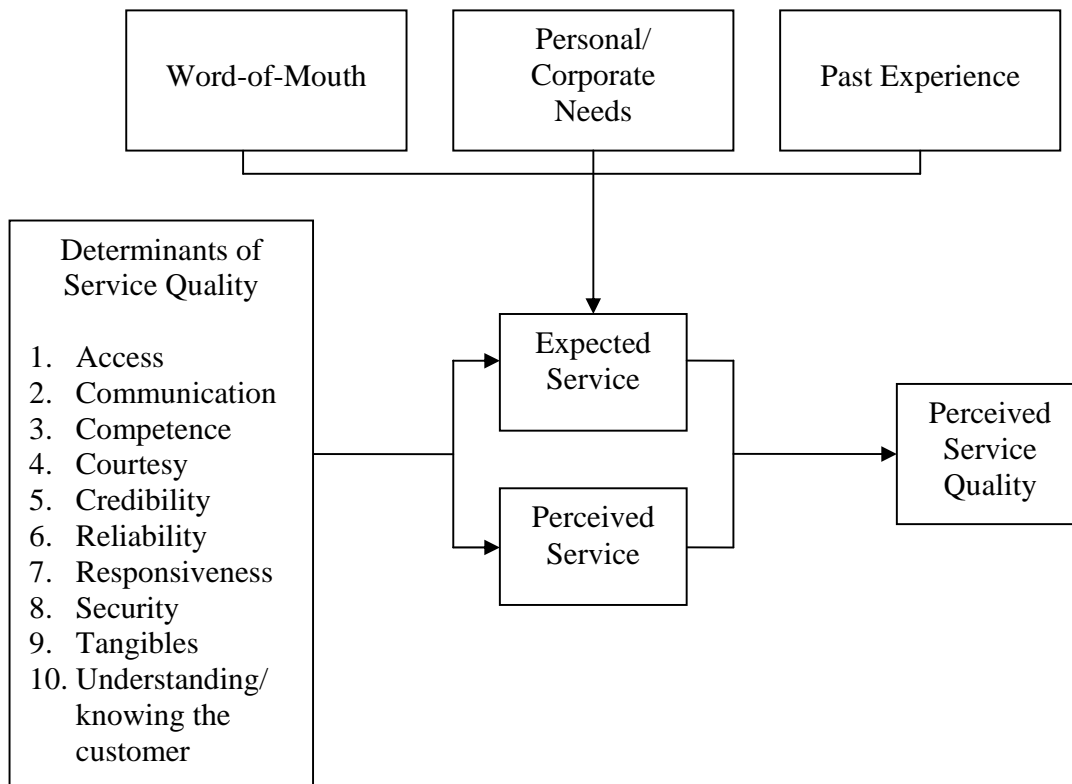
Adapted from Mooy and Robben (2002:433)

Figure 3.2 shows consumers' experience with a product as a spectrum from indirect to direct. At the indirect anchor of the spectrum, consumers use single senses in processing product information, for example, when reading advertisements. At the direct end, the consumer has sensory contact and fully interacts with the product information and fully interacts with the product, for instance, when trying or using the product.

3.1.4 Service messages

According to Duncan and Moriarty (1997:84), service messages “originate from interactions with the organisation’s employees”. Maloney (2002) and Gronroos (2001) identify ten determinants of service quality. These comprise access, communication, competence, courtesy, credibility, responsiveness, security, tangibles, reliability and understanding customers.

Figure 3.3: Determinants of perceived quality



Adapted from Maloney (2002:524)

The figure above focuses on the factors influencing customer's perception of service quality. Perceived service quality is a function of the relationship between expected service – the expectations the customer has for the service to be provided and the perceived service – the customer's perceptions of the actual service that has been provided. In the next section, each of the determinants will be briefly discussed.

3.1.4.1 Access

Maloney (2002) defines access as follows:

- the service is easily accessible by telephone;
- waiting time to receive service is not extensive; and,
- convenient hours of operation.

3.1.4.2 Communication

Communication means keeping customers informed in a language they can understand and listening to them. It also involves explaining the service itself, explaining how much the service will cost and assuring customers that their problems will be handled. Historically, all service encounters occurred in person between a service representative and the customer. But, the frequency of these personal interactions is decreasing. In today's competitive and fast-paced market, there is an increase in technology-based service encounters (Shapiro & Nieman-Gonder 2006).

3.1.4.3 Competence

According to Maloney (2002) competence means the possession of required skills and knowledge. These would incorporate the:

- knowledge and skills of contact employees;
- knowledge and skills of operational support personnel; and,
- the research capability of the organisation.

3.1.4.4 *Courtesy*

Courtesy involves politeness, respect, consideration and friendliness of contact personnel as well as other factors such as consideration for the consumer's property (Maloney 2002).

3.1.4.5 *Credibility*

Maloney (2002) states that credibility involves trustworthiness, believability, honesty, and having the customer's best interests at heart. It also involves the company name and reputation.

3.1.4.6 *Reliability*

Shapiro and Niemand-Gonder (2006) state that reliability involves consistency of performance and dependability in the following respects:

- the firm performs the right service the first time;
- accuracy in billing;
- keeping records correctly; and,
- performing the service at the designated time.

3.1.4.7 *Responsiveness*

Maloney (2002) defines responsiveness as the willingness or readiness of employees to provide service in terms of:

- timelines of service;
- calling the customer back quickly; and,
- giving prompt service.

3.1.4.8 *Servicscape or tangibles*

According to Bonnin, (2006:45) servicscape can be defined as "the environment in which a service is delivered and where the firm and the customer interact". Servicscape can directly influence the service experience itself, the satisfaction

level and the perceived service quality. Servicescape consists of three components. These are facility exterior, facility interior and other tangibles. Facility exterior includes exterior design, signage, parking, landscaping and the surrounding environment. Facility interior means interior design, equipment used to serve the customer directly or to run the business, signage, layout, air quality and temperature. The other tangibles include such items as business cards, stationery, billing statements, reports, uniforms and brochures.

3.1.4.9 *Understanding and knowing the customer*

Understanding and knowing the customer involves making the effort to understand the customer's needs by learning the customer's specific requirements, providing individualized attention and recognizing the regular customer (Maloney 2002).

3.1.4.10 *Security*

According to Shapiro and Niemand-Gonder (2006) security is the freedom from danger, risk or doubt. It is inextricable from:

- physical security;
- financial security; and,
- confidentiality.

3.2 The impact of communication on customer satisfaction

3.2.1 *Planned messages and customer satisfaction*

As indicated in the previous sections, planned communication or marketing communication comprises different modes of communication, namely advertising, sales promotion, public relations, sponsorships, and personal selling. Marketing communication performs many functions for consumers. According to Assael (1993) and Kotler and Keller (2006) marketing communication or planned communication is aimed at informing, persuading and reminding consumers directly or indirectly about products or services. Marketing communication is an important tool for building relationships with customers.

In support of Assael (1993) and Kotler and Keller's view (2006) , Spreng, Mackenzie and Olshavsky (1996:15) state that marketers use planned communication or marketing communication to provide consumers with a "wealth of information about their products or services". Spreng *et al.* (1996) further argue that overall customer satisfaction is made up of two elements: attribute satisfaction and information satisfaction. Attribute satisfaction refers to the satisfaction with the product itself, while information satisfaction is a subjective satisfaction judgement of the information used in choosing a product. The overall feelings of satisfaction or dissatisfaction consumers experience depends as much on their dissatisfaction with information they received about the product as on their satisfaction with the product itself.

According to Aron (2006) and Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1988) marketing communication influences customer expectations. For example, if an advertisement or salesperson falsely leads consumers to expect performance above the desired level of performance and the product subsequently performs at the desired level but does not meet their inflated expectations, it is likely that consumers will be less satisfied with their overall experiences with the product than if they had not been misled. Aron (2006) asserts that some marketers use counter-experiential marketing communication to counteract customer dissatisfaction. Counter-experiential marketing communication refers to a marketing message that runs contrary to what a customer has actually experienced through a product or a service.

3.2.2 Unplanned messages and customer satisfaction

As indicated by Karaosmanoglu and Melewar (2006), unplanned communication mechanisms include interpersonal (word-of-mouth communication), intermediary (word-of-mouth disseminated by mass media, NGOs, governmental institutions) and intrapersonal (psychological consequences of previous experiences and images stored in the mind) communications. Unplanned communication mechanisms have an impact on the way customers perceive a company. Informal person-to-person information exchange about an organisation or a product is one

of the major determinants of consumer attitude and behaviour. The more positive word of mouth consumers receive from intermediary sources such as media, NGOs, opinion leader etc, the more favourable the image the consumers have about the company. The more consumers find a company's identity emotionally appealing, the more favourable image the consumers have about the company (Karaosmanoglu & Melewar 2006).

3.2.3 Service messages and customer satisfaction

In the previous sections, the determinants of service quality were identified and discussed. These determinants are tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, communication, credibility, security, competence, courtesy, understanding customers and access. Customers form service expectations from many sources such as past experiences, word -of -mouth and advertising. In other words, both planned and unplanned communication influence service expectations. According to Kotler and Keller (2006), Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988) there are five main factors which affect customer satisfaction. These factors include reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles. Reliability is the ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately. Responsiveness refers to the willingness to help customers and to provide prompt service. Assurance is the knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence. Empathy entails the provision of caring, individualised attention to customers, while tangibles mean the appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel and communication materials.

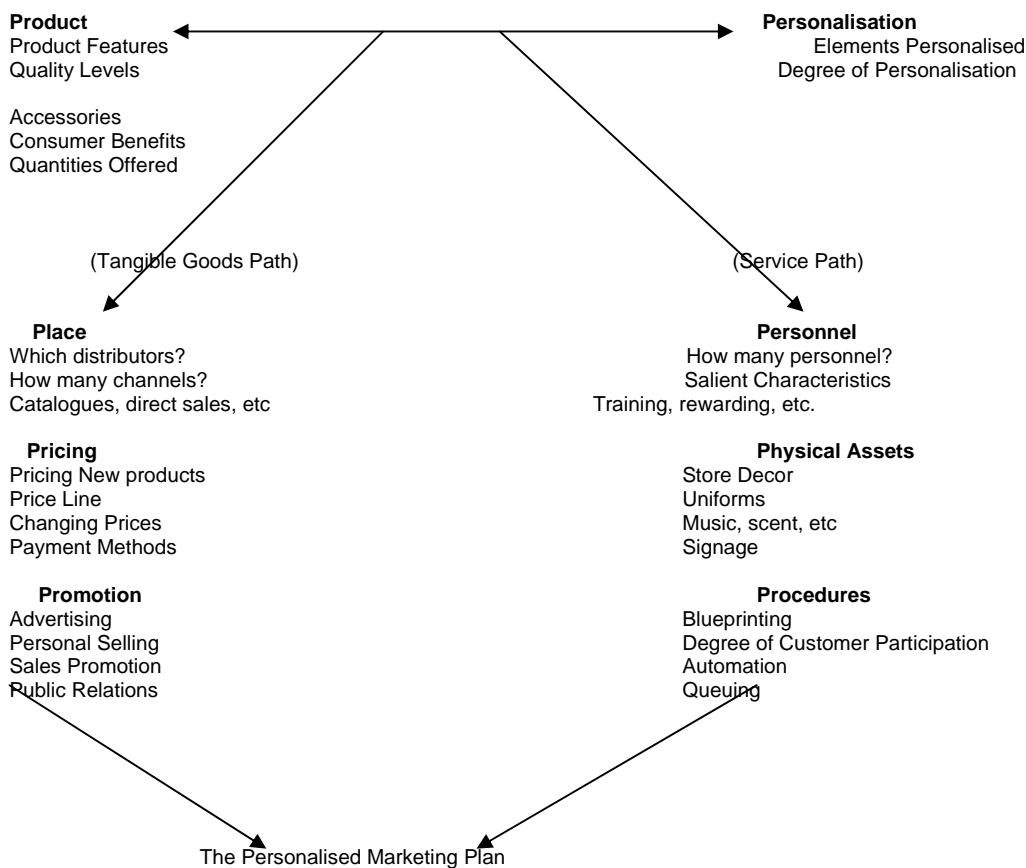
3.2.4 Product messages and customer satisfaction

Consumers infer product messages from product attributes. These attributes include amongst others form, performance quality, durability, reliability and reparability. According to Kotler and Keller (2006) product attributes can be used as the basis of differentiation to create a sustainable competitive advantage. A marketer can use product attributes to enhance customer satisfaction. For example, an improvement in performance quality will result in increased customer satisfaction.

3.3 Marketing Mix

The concept of the marketing mix was first introduced by Neil Borden in the 1950s to underscore the notion that the marketer is “the mixer of ingredients” (Gronroos 1997:323). Vignali (2001: 98) asserts that the four Ps — product, price, and promotion — are the “the principal foundation on which a marketing plan is based”. However, recently theorists like Goldsmith (1999) have identified additional variables of the marketing mix such as procedures, physical assets, people, and personalisation. Goldsmith (1999:178) sees “the marketing mix as the heart of marketing management”. The American Marketing Association defines marketing as “a process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion and distribution of ideas, goods and services” (Gronroos 1997:322). On the basis of the needs and preferences of the target market, the right marketing mix should be developed.

Figure 3.4: Marketing mix



Adapted from Goldsmith (1999:180)

The above figure shows the eight elements of the marketing mix: product, price, place, promotion, personalisation, personnel, physical assets and procedures. Each of these elements will be discussed briefly below.

3.3.1 Product

According to Assael (1993) a product is the most basic component of the marketing mix. It represents the product features, the package, and the brand name, and post-sales services support. The product is a key variable of the marketing strategy in the sense that all the other marketing decisions concerning methods of distribution, marketing communication and prices are based on and coordinated with product decisions. Products are not necessarily physical objects (Van der Walt *et al.* 1996).

There are different types of products, namely, industrial goods, commercial services and consumer products. Industrial goods are products destined for use in a production process in order to generate other goods and services. Commercial services are independent, separate, identifiable, intangible, need-satisfying activities destined for ultimate consumers and industrial users. Consumer services include accommodation, household services, recreation services, professional services and communication services. Consumer products are intended for direct consumption by households or end users (Van der Walt *et al.* 1996).

3.3.2 Price

Historically, price acted as the major influence on buyer choice, especially among poorer nations and groups, and with commodity products. Recently, non-price factors like product features, brand name, product and service quality, and marketing communication have become more important in buyer-choice behaviour. Price can be defined as the value that is attached on the utility one receives from products and services (Van der Walt *et al.* 1996). There are different pricing methods. Cost-plus pricing involves adding a standard mark-up to the cost

of the product. Variable cost per product entails using a variable cost per product unit as a basis for pricing and the total fixed costs are not taken into account.

In rate-of-return pricing or target pricing, the objective is to set a price yielding a target rate-of-return on investment. Break-even analysis evaluates whether the costs the enterprise will be able to break even or cover all its costs with a particular price. Prestige prices means setting a premium price in the belief that consumers associate a high price of a product with high quality. Odd-number prices are prices ending with an odd number. Skimming is when a high price is charged, while market penetration is when a low price is charged (Van der Walt *et al.* 1996).

3.3.3 Distribution

Place represents the actions the company takes to make sure the product gets to the right target group at the right location and the right time. Distribution involves the selection of the most suitable outlets to present the enterprise's products to its target market. There are three types of distribution. They are intensive distribution, selective distribution, and exclusive distribution. In intensive distribution the producer strives to achieve maximum exposure of his product by making it available at all possible outlets. In selective distribution fewer but more rigorously selected intermediaries are attracted to join the channel. Exclusive distribution occurs when the producer purposely limits the number of intermediaries for his product (Van der Walt *et al.*1996).

3.3.4 Marketing communication

As indicated by Duncan and Moriarty (1997), the traditional elements of the marketing communication mix are advertising, personal selling, public relations, sales promotion and sponsorships. In the sections which follow, aspects of marketing communication are described in more detail.

3.3.4.1 Public relations

The Institute of Public Relations and Communication of South Africa (PRISA) defines public relations as "the management through communication of perceptions

and strategic relationships between an organisation and its internal and external stakeholders” (Skinner, Essen & Mersham 2004:4). To endorse the PRISA definition, Fill (2002:619) states that “public relations is a management activity that attempts to shape the attitudes and opinions held by an organisation’s stakeholders”. Cutlip, Center and Broom (2000:1) also define public relations as a function responsible for building what they call “mutually beneficial relationships between an organisation and its publics”. Organisations use various methods and techniques to build sound relations with their publics. According to Fill (2002), some of the techniques are publicity, issues management, public affairs, lobbying, investor relations and corporate advertising.

3.3.4.2 Sales promotion

Sales promotion can be defined as inducements given to customers to encourage them to a company’s products. There are two types of sales promotion, namely consumer promotions and trade promotions. Consumer promotions are short-term inducements of value to consumers to encourage them to buy a product or a service. Sales promotional tools directed to consumers include coupons that can be redeemed for cash, sweepstakes and contests that involve prizes, and rebates on a purchase. Trade promotions are inducements to retailers and wholesalers to get them to stock a brand. They include cash allowances and discounts. Occasionally contests and sweepstakes are also directed to intermediaries to generate interest in the company’s product (Assael 1993).

3.3.4.3 Advertising

Assael (1993:552) defines advertising as “a paid, ongoing, non-personal communication from a commercial source such as a manufacturer or a retailer”. The same sentiment is shared by Cutlip *et al.* (1999). They define advertising as information placed in the media by an identified sponsor that pays for the time or space. Advertising is aimed at informing, reminding, and persuading consumers to buy the market offering of the enterprise. According to Fill (2002:487) “the role of

advertising is to build awareness including dialogue and to reposition brands by changing either perceptions or attitudes”.

3.3.5 People

According to Goldsmith (1999) the personnel dimension of the marketing mix refers to employees who provide the service for customers. Goldsmith (1999:182) further asserts that the services marketing theory “places emphasis on hiring, training, supporting, evaluating and rewarding employees”. Therefore, it can be said that the quality of a service is determined by the quality of employees.

3.3.6 Physical assets

According to Vignali (2001), physical assets refer to cleanliness, décor and ambience of service. For example McDonald’s, like other branded chains, tries to maintain consistent standards in terms of cleanliness and service in all its outlets.

3.3.7 Procedure

Vignali (2001:2) defines procedure as blueprinting, automation and control procedures. For instance, McDonald’s has over 24 500 restaurants in 116 countries across the world. Nevertheless, the procedure for making the food remains the same in all the restaurants.

3.3.8 Personalisation

Personalisation is a business philosophy whereby each customer is treated as an individual and not as a member of a target audience. Marketers should understand the needs and preferences of the individual customer and deliver a customised product (Goldsmith 1999). In the following section, integrated communication and integrated marketing communication will be briefly discussed.

3.4 Integrated communication and integrated marketing communication

According to Gronroos and Lindberg-Repo (1998), the business environment is so competitive that companies need strong relationships with customers. Gronroos and Lindberg-Repo (1998) further argue that the integration of all marketing communications to customers is seen as a key activity in companies' attempts to build long-term relationships.

Christensen and Cheney (2005:7) define integrated communication "as promoting a vision of a company where all communication is coordinated into consistent, coherent and seamless expression-sometimes described as a one-voice company". Barker and Angelopulo (2006) emphasise the need, in any organisation, for the coordination, harmonization and integration of all forms of external and internal communication.

Checkland (1995) sees integrated communication from the point of view of the systems approach. In this approach an integration of all aspects of a system is important for its success. Gayeski and Woodward (1996:3) define integrated communication as "the application and evaluation techniques to create and manage integrated, multifaceted interventions combining information, instruction, collaboration, business process design, feedback and incentive systems to improve human performance in the workplace in order to achieve organisation's desired missions and visions". Gayeski and Woodward's definition (1996) emphasises the importance of a holistic approach towards organisational communication in order to realize the mission and vision of an organisation.

Khan and Mentzer (1998) identify only three perspectives on communication integration. In the first perspective, integration of communication can be seen as being focused on interaction between different sections of the organisation and therefore on increased information flow between units. The second perspective sees integration of communication as being focused on collaboration, with the emphasis on instilling collective goals, mutual respect, and teamwork amongst units. The third and final perspective, which is described as a composite, sees

integration as a combination of interaction and collaboration, which focuses on balancing the two aspects.

Integrated marketing communication is another important concept in relationship marketing. Duncan (2001:7) defines integrated marketing communication as “a cross-functional process for creating and nourishing profitable relationships with customers and other stakeholders or influencing all messages and encouraging data-driven, purposeful dialogue with them”. The crux of this assertion by Duncan (2001) is that similar messages should be communicated to an organisation’s target audience to ensure consistency and impact. Kaye (1999) argues that the generally accepted definition of integrated marketing communication by Duncan (2001) is self-limiting because it focuses on external, non-personal communication. There are various driving forces for the growth of integrated marketing communication, namely increasing pressure on organisations’ bottom lines, increasing client erudition, a dissatisfaction with advertising, media channel fragmentation, high expenses of traditional advertising, increasing price competition, environmental factors, and an increased global competition (Barker & Angelopulo 2006). These driving forces have forced organisations to adopt integrated marketing communication so that they can develop consistent and cohesive communication programmes aimed at building long-term relationships with all stakeholders.

According to McGoan (1998) there are four stages of integrated marketing communication development: tactical coordination of marketing communication which focuses on the promotion mix; redefining the scope of marketing communication, which includes both internal and external audiences; application of information technology; and financial and strategic integration. The four stages are used to introduce integrated marketing communication in an organisation.

In the section above, the four sources of brand messages — product messages, service messages, planned messages and unplanned messages — were outlined. The eight elements of the marketing mix as well as integrated marketing communication and integrated communication were discussed. In the following section, the research methodology used in the study will be explored.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research design

As previously pointed out, the researcher sought to determine whether customers of the museum are satisfied with its products, services and messages. The research design in this study was qualitative. According to Du Plooy (2001) and Neuman (2006) qualitative design entails the collection of data in the form of words, pictures or objects. Taylor and Bogdan (1984) argue that qualitative research is inductive in the sense that researchers develop concepts, insights and understanding from patterns in the data and vice versa. Researchers use descriptive data, that is people's own written and observable behaviour. People or units of analysis are studied in the context of their past and the situations in which they find themselves. The qualitative researcher sets aside his or her own beliefs, perspectives and predispositions (Taylor & Bogdan 1984). Qualitative studies are designed to ensure a close fit between the data and what people actually say and do. For the qualitative researcher all settings and people are worthy of study. No aspect of social life is too mundane or trivial to be studied (ibid). There are different methods of data collection in qualitative research, including focus groups, in-depth interviews and participant observation.

4.2 The data collection method

As per Taylor and Bogdan's view (1984), the researcher used in-depth interviews to understand the perspectives of learners, management, staff, teachers, scientists, and members of the public on their experiences at the museum. In-depth interviews are appropriate in this context for data collection because:

- the research interests are relatively clear and well-defined;
- settings and/or people are not otherwise accessible;
- the researcher has time constraints ;
- it enables a researcher to know people well enough to understand what they mean; and,
- a researcher can learn how participants view themselves and the world.

Nevertheless, this study took cognisance of a number of limitations of in-depth interviews. According to Taylor and Bogdan (1984) interview data consists solely of verbal statements or talk. Interviews are subject to the same fabrications, deceptions, exaggerations and distortions that characterise talk between persons. There can be a great discrepancy between what people say and what they actually do. Interviews do not directly observe people in their every day lives. They are deprived of the context necessary to understand many of the perspectives in which they are interested (Taylor & Bogdan 1984). Moreover, as Du Plooy (2001) argues, the volume of data that is collected is often very large and difficult to analyse. Consequently, it is difficult to quantify and standardise responses.

4.3 The participants

In line with Terre Blanche and Durrheim's view (1999) the researcher used a flexible design. According to Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999) neither the number nor the type of participant is specified beforehand. The researcher starts out with a general idea of what people to interview and how to find them, but is willing to change course after initial interviews. It is difficult to determine how many people to interview in a qualitative study. Some researchers try to interview as many people familiar with a topic or event as possible. A common and easy way to build a pool of participants is snowballing, that is getting to know some participants and having them introduce you to others. With regard to quantity of material required, Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999) advise that saturation occurs when new information no longer challenges or adds to the emerging interpretative accounts.

The units of analysis in this study included learners, staff, teachers, scientists and members of the public who had visited the museum as well as management and staff at the museum. As per Wimmer and Dominick's advice (1994), the researcher used units of analysis that were readily available or convenience sampling. The researcher conducted a total of twenty-two interviews across the categories of participants.

The following table illustrates the number of participants per category:

Table 4.1: Categories of participants

	Category	Number of participants
1	Learner	6
2	Members of the public	8
3	Teacher	3
4	Scientist	2
5	Management and staff	3
Total		22

The participants were mainly from the inland provinces. Only one of the participants was from outside the borders of South Africa. The learners included primary school, high school and tertiary students. The eight members of the public were from Gauteng, North West and Limpopo provinces. The management and staff included the director of the museum, an educational officer and a librarian.

4.4 The interview guide

Taylor and Bogdan (1984) and Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999) advise a qualitative researcher to develop an interview guide. These researchers further argue that an interview guide makes sure that the key topics are explored with a number of participants. It is a list of general areas to cover with each participant. The key areas in this study included product, service, planned and unplanned messages, as they relate to customer satisfaction at the museum. The following questions constituted the guide for interviews with learners, teachers, members of the public and scientists:

- what is your view on the physical environment of the museum ?
- how did you find out about the museum?
- before your visit what had you heard about the museum?
- what is your opinion on the quality of service at the museum?

- what is your opinion on the quality of the material and content of the museum?

The following questions were used as a guide for interviews with management and staff:

- how do you promote the museum?
- what is your opinion on the quality of service at the museum?
- what is your opinion on the quality of the material and content of the museum?
- what is your opinion on the physical environment of the museum ?

4.5 The interviews

There are many ways of getting people to start to talk about their experiences. Firstly, a researcher can ask participants to describe, list, outline key events, experiences, places or people in their lives. Secondly, participants can write narratives on their experiences. Thirdly, they can keep a running record of their activities for a specified period of time. This can be used to provide a basis for in-depth interviews. Fourthly, personal documents such as people's own diaries, letters, pictures, records, calendars and memorabilia can guide interviews without imposing a structure on participants (Taylor & Bogdan 1984). In this study, the researcher started by explaining the purpose of the research and assuring participants of anonymity, as per Terre Blanche and Durham's advice (1999). All interviews were conducted during the day at the museum. The language of communication was English. Probing questions and follow-up questions were used to get more information from the participants. The duration of interviews ranged from 10-15 minutes.

4.6 Data recording

According to Ghauri and Gronhaug (2002), tape recording is a useful method for recording data. The disadvantages with tape-recording are that the participants might hesitate or even not answer some questions which are sensitive. There is also a risk that while tape recording the interviewer might cease to listen carefully,

believing that all information is going onto the tape which is going to be listened to later in a more relaxed environment. Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999) advise researchers to complement tape recording with note taking. In this study, the researcher tape recorded and took notes during the interviews to minimise the risk of losing the data.

4.7 Data analysis

Data collection and analysis are inseparable in qualitative research. During data collection, following recommendations by Taylor and Bogdan (1984), the researcher kept track of emerging themes, read through field notes and transcripts, and developed concepts and propositions to make sense of the data.

As Terre Blanche and Durrheim advise (1999), the researcher analysed data by looking for themes when reading and rereading field notes and transcripts. The key areas of product, service, planned and unplanned messages (as outlined in the interview guide) were used to determine pertinent thematic concerns. In the following section the findings are discussed.

5. FINDINGS

As it was stated in the introduction, the research objective of the study was to determine the impact of communication on customer satisfaction at the Transvaal Museum. In this section, the responses of the participants are discussed in line with the four secondary research objectives as described earlier.

5.1 Planned messages

The first secondary research objective was to determine the impact of planned messages of the museum on customer satisfaction. According to Duncan and Moriarty (1997) planned messages are messages which are communicated via the traditional elements of the marketing communication mix. In the study, learners, teachers, members of the public and scientists conceded that the museum does not use the traditional elements of the marketing communication mix effectively.

One of the participants remarked: "I have heard nothing about the museum in the media and I think the museum should advertise itself aggressively". Contrary to the view of the other participants, management and staff thought that the museum's planned communication efforts have been effective. According to management and staff, the museum does not have a trained marketing officer. As a result, staff members market their own programmes. The museum uses word-of-mouth to promote its services. "The museum does not have resources for marketing, instead uses teachers and lecturers to promote its services to students", a participant said. The museum occasionally contributes articles to a magazine called *Out and About* which is distributed in hotels and guesthouses. When there is a new exhibition, the museum invites both print and electronic media. Some media organisations donate advertising space to the museum. Events such as public lectures are mainly promoted via posters which are distributed in all the target areas. Learners, teachers and scientists were happy with the content of the museum's brochures while some members of the public thought that the brochures were not user friendly. On the whole, it can be said that the absence of a clear marketing strategy must be seen as a deficiency, particularly as tourism is an important component of the South African economy.

5.2. Product messages

The second secondary research objective was to determine the impact of product messages of the museum on customer satisfaction. Duncan and Moriarty (1997) define product messages as messages about the attributes of a product such as pricing, durability, distribution networks, form, features, performance, quality, durability and reparability.

All participants concurred that the museum is one of the best natural history museums in the country. As one of the participants puts it: "the museum has the best natural history collections of different species". Another participant remarked that "the museum boasts over 2 million objects in different species". The general view of the participants was that the museum has a wealth of collections of mammals, insects, reptiles and minerals. The participants were of the view that the museum has good collections which meet the educational needs of learners.

Clearly, to a great extent, the displays of collections have been designed for high school learners. Teachers and learners alike stated that the content and material of the museum help learners to integrate theory with practice. In the view of one of the participants: “the museum houses real-life collections”. Participants pointed out that visitors get an opportunity to see and touch “real life objects”. However, some participants expressed dissatisfaction at the presentation of the content and material. In the words of one of the participants: “the display of the content is boring”. On the whole, participants argued that displays are rich in content but that they needed more colourful and stimulating designs because “the museum is in direct competition with videos and television”.

According to the scientists, the museum is a resource centre for researchers in the fields of palaeontology and herpetology. The museum has good collections of books in zoology and palaeontology collected over a period of 100 years. Moreover, the museum’s fossil collection marking the evolutionary process from ape into man is extremely rich. This notwithstanding, scientists expressed a strong view that the museum should obtain additional collections.

5.3 Unplanned messages

The third secondary research objective was to determine the impact of planned messages of the museum on customer satisfaction. As Karaosmanoglu and Melewar (2006) put it, unplanned messages are messages that include word-of-mouth or interpersonal communication, intrapersonal communication and intermediary communication. All participants except one stated that they heard about the museum through intermediary sources such as parents, teachers and relatives. The participants asserted that their parents, teachers and relatives spoke highly of the museum and its market offering.

There were few participants who came to know about the museum out of curiosity. One of the participants remarked “I was driving past the museum and I saw skeletons of a whale and a dinosaur”. Only one of the participants read about the museum in a newspaper. The other participants had not seen or heard anything about the museum in the mass media. The participants reckoned that there was little or no publicity in the mass media.

5.4 Service messages

The fourth secondary research objective was to determine the impact of service messages of the museum on customer satisfaction. Service messages involve the interaction between customers and employees of an organisation (Duncan and Moriarty 1997). According to Gronroos (2001) the determinants of service quality include access, communication, competence, courtesy, credibility, responsiveness, security, tangibles, and understanding the customer. All the participants agreed that the quality of service at the museum is good. The participants pointed out that the buildings of the museum are old but well-maintained. One of the participants summed up the perspectives of all the participants on the buildings when he said: “the buildings have a look fit for a museum”.

With regard to location, the overwhelming majority of the participants were of the view that the museum is centrally and conveniently located in the inner city of the capital city of South Africa. A few participants stated a different view by pointing out that the museum is far from the townships and rural areas. Hence it is not accessible to the poor. Other participants expressed dissatisfaction with the fact that the museum is located next to a busy street. As a result, the participants thought that it was not safe for learners to visit the museum. Not surprisingly given the general concerns of South African society, a few participants cited crime as a threat to the museum. In one of the participants' own words “there is social decay in the inner city”. Another participant echoed the same sentiment when she said “the location of the museum is a crime infested area”. Significantly most participants were of the view that the museum is inaccessible to disabled visitors. In terms of the public's right to access facilities of the state, this is a serious deficiency.

All participants agreed that the museum has highly trained and customer orientated staff members in research, conservation and education. The consensus is summarised by variations on the comment that: “The staff at the museum are friendly and helpful”. This is reinforced by another participant's statement that the museum staff are “well-trained and experienced to deal with all categories of visitor”.

According to the scientists the research output of scientists at the museum has been very good. These are mostly published in the museum's world-renowned scientific publication known as the *Annals of the Transvaal Museum* which has attracted articles from world-renowned scientists.

6. CONCLUSIONS

As pointed out previously, the overall customer satisfaction depends on, *inter alia*, the information provided about the product. Aron (2006) states that marketing communication or planned messages have an impact on customer satisfaction. The study reveals that customers of the museum are not happy with the way the museum handles its planned communication activities. Only one of the twenty-two interviewees heard about the museum in the media. The museum's communication activities are events-driven. Duncan and Moriarty (1997) define integrated marketing communication as the integration of all the communication disciplines to ensure message consistency and impact. The researcher discovered that the museum does not have an integrated communication strategy to promote its services. Communication is done on an ad hoc basis.

As Assael (1993) puts it, advertising is important to inform, remind and persuade consumers to buy the enterprise's market offering. The research results indicate that the museum mainly uses below-the-line advertising products such as posters, and pamphlets to market itself. There is little advertising in the mass media. Goldsmith (1999) argues that the personnel dimension of the marketing mix is important in the success of an organisation. In this study, the researcher discovered that the museum does not have qualified marketing officers.

As far as product messages are concerned, the study reveals that the customers are satisfied with the content and material of the museum. The participants agreed that material and content at the museum meets the educational needs of learners. However, the presentation of the content does not match the intellectual development of primary school learners. The participants underscored that the display of the content is not as stimulating as videos and television.

According to Karaosmanoglu and Melewar (2006) positive word-of-mouth received from close environment is a significant factor in attracting consumers to a company or a product. Companies should make sure that their product and company information is available in the media and that they should achieve positive coverage in newspapers, nonprofit organisations or general government institution reports (ibid). With regard to the media coverage of the museum, the study reveals that there was very little organised media coverage. In terms of intermediary sources, the study indicates customers are positive towards the museum and its services. There was a consensus that the museum was an important resource centre to learners, teachers, scientists, and members of the public.

Duncan and Moriarty (1997:84) state that service messages “originate from interactions with an organisation’s customer service”. In the study, the researcher discovered that the museum provides quality service. The customers are satisfied with the physical environment and the competence of the staff.

On the whole, the study has generated evidence to confirm that customers of the museum are satisfied with its products, services and messages. However, the research has also shown that customers are not happy with the way the museum handles its planned communication activities.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

As per Grootroos and Lindberg-Repo’s perspective (1998), the museum should establish long-term relationships with its customers through the integration of all marketing communications. To this end, the museum should, *inter alia*, establish a database of all visitors. As Duncan and Moriarty (1997) recommend, the museum should strive to ensure that the “say” messages (planned messages) delivered by marketing communication are consistent with the “do” messages (product messages) of how products and services perform. At the same time, these need to be consistent with what others confirm about the brand through word-of-mouth communication (unplanned messages). In order to ensure message consistency and maximum impact, the museum should establish one marketing and

communication department under one head assisted by divisional heads of public relations, media relations and marketing.

The study reveals that communication at the museum is done on an ad hoc basis. Therefore, it is recommended that the museum should have an integrated communication strategy with elements of marketing, public relations and media relations. The museum should budget for marketing and communication.

The museum has mainly used below-the-line advertising to promote its services. Therefore, it is advisable that the museum should be more visible in the mass media by shifting its focus from below-the-line advertising to above-the-line advertising. National and community print and electronic media should be used to promote the museum nationally. Media interviews should be used to augment its multimedia advertising campaigns. Currently, the communication at the museum is events-driven. Therefore, it is recommended that the communication campaigns should “sell” the museum as an organisation through institutional marketing. The museum should use teachers, learners and parents as third party endorsers in its communication campaigns.

In line with Gronroos’s view (1997) the museum should continue to use the traditional non-marketing people to promote its services. To this end, the museum should use such communication tools as staff meetings and intranet to turn all staff members into “marketers”. All communication campaigns should start internally to ensure that all staff members help to communicate the marketing message.

The study revealed that there was no negative publicity and that the museum has limited publicity in the mass media. In order to generate more media coverage, the museum should regularly send out media releases as per Karaosmanoglu and Melewar’s advice (2006). While there is no negative publicity in the media, the museum should proactively develop a crisis communication plan to counteract negative publicity when it arises. The crisis communication plan should, amongst other things, indicate the spokespersons of the museum during a crisis.

In terms of service failure and recovery, the museum should have multiple modes or channels for customers to communicate concerns and comments. The modes may include in-person liaison, a toll-free number or an internet-driven service as per Shapiro and Nieman-Gonder's advice (2006).

The museum should also develop consistent, unbiased and impartial customer policies. Furthermore, the museum should regularly conduct customer satisfaction surveys to determine the level of satisfaction of its customers. While the study has revealed that the staff at the museum are highly trained and customer orientated, it is necessary for staff members to do refresher courses in customer relationship management and in their respective fields of specialisation. With regard to tangibles, there is a need to make the buildings more accessible to disabled visitors.

As far as product messages are concerned, the research results indicate that the museum has rich natural history collections. However, there was a strong view that the museum should get additional collections from other countries. The study also revealed that display of the content is not exciting. Therefore, the displays of the content and material should be redesigned.

8. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The qualitative study was undertaken to understand the impact of communication on customer satisfaction at the museum. Therefore, the participants were not randomly selected. In the nature of qualitative research, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with readily available visitors at the museum. Lack of randomness in the selection of participants, makes it impossible to infer scientifically that the responses of the participants in the study represent the opinions of all the visitors at the museum. In terms of future research, there is a need for a quantitative study into the marketing mix of museums in South Africa to determine whether it matches the characteristics and needs of the target market. The study will enable South African museums to identify gaps if any in their market offering.

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