

**THE PERCEPTION OF CUSTOMER SERVICE IN THE HOTEL
INDUSTRY IN PRETORIA**

by

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Declaration

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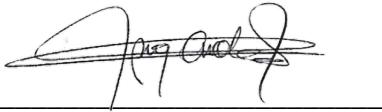
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I declare that this dissertation, **the perception of customer service in the hotel industry in Pretoria** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

I further declare that I submitted the dissertation to originality checking software and that it falls within the accepted requirements for originality.

I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at Unisa for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.



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Abstract

The primary objective of the study was to explore customers' perceptions of the service quality provided in the hotel industry, in Pretoria. Considering the growth of the hotel industry in Pretoria, this study revealed that customers expect to receive a high level of service quality, which will lead to customer satisfaction and produce a positive perception of hotel service. An exploratory research design was adopted in this study and qualitative data were collected through interviewing customers of a hotel. In terms of limitations, this study was conducted at one selected hotel in Pretoria. Atlas.ti software was used to analyse collected data. The analysis of the data identified a number of specific themes that were relevant to shaping the perceptions of the respondents, in terms of service quality and their satisfaction with the service quality received. The themes supported existing literature in terms of the factors influencing perceptions of service and the specific influences within those themes were elaborated on, leading to recommendations for managing service quality perceptions in the hotel industry.

Key terms: Customer expectations, service delivery, customer service, service quality, customer satisfaction, service complaints, service recovery, customer service perceptions

Setsopolwa

Maikemišetšomagolo a dinyakišišo e bile go utolla maikutlo a badiriši mabapi le boleng bja ditirelo tše di abiwago ka intastering ya dihotele ka Pretoria. Ka ge di hlokometše kgolo ya intasteri ya dihotele ka Pretoria, dinyakišišo tše di utollotše gore ba emetše go hwetša ditirelo tša boleng, tseo di tlogo feletša ka go kgotsofala ga badiriši le go tšweletša maikutlo a makaone a tirelo ya dihotele. Tlhamo ya dinyakišišo tša go utolla e dirišitšwe ka mo dinyakišišong tše gomme tshedimošo ya boleng e kgobokeditšwe ka go botšiša badiriši ba dihotele dipotšišo. Mabapi le mellwane, dinyakišišo tše di dirilwe ka hoteleng e tee yeo e kgethilwego ka Pretoria. Softewere ya Atlas.ti e šomišitšwe go sekaseka tshedimošo ye e kgobokeditšwego. Tshekatsheko ya tshedimošo e utollotše merero ye mmalwa ye itšego yeo e bego e le maleba mabapi le go beakanya maikutlo a baarabi, mabapi le boleng bja ditirelo le go kgotsofala ga bona mabapi le boleng bja ditirelo tseo di hweditšwego. Merero e thekgile dingwalwa tše di lego gona mabapi le mabaka ao a huetšago maikutlo ka ga ditirelo gomme dikhuetšo tše itšego ka gare ga merero yeo di hlathollotšwe, gomme se sa feletša ka ditšhišinyo tša go laola maikutlo ka ga boleng bja ditirelo ka intastering ya dihotele.

Mareo a bohlokwa: Dikemelo tša badiriši, kabo ya ditirelo, tirelo ya badiriši, boleng bja ditirelo, go kgotsofala ga badiriši, dingongorego ka ga ditirelo, kutollo ka ga ditirelo, maikutlo a badiriši ka ga ditirelo

Isifinqo

Inhloso enkulu yalolu cwaningo kwakuwukuhlola imibono yamakhasimende ngekhwalithi yesevisi enikezwa embonini yamahhotela, ePitoli. Uma kubhekwa ukukhula komkhakha wamahhotela ePitoli, lolu cwaningo luveze ukuthi amakhasimende alindele ukuthola izinga eliphakeme lezinsizakalo, okuzoholela ekwanelisekeni kwamakhasimende futhi kuveze umbono omuhle wensizakalo yamahhotela. Lolu cwaningo oluchazayo lwamukelwe kanti lakhelwe phezulu kwemininingwane ebhekelele ubunjalo besimo yaqoqwa ngokuxoxisana namakhasimende asehotela. Ngokwemikhawulo, lolu cwaningo lwenziwe ehotela elilodwa elikhethiwe ePitoli. Kusetshenziswe isofthiweye noma uhlelo lokusebenza elibizwa nge-Atlas.ti ukuhlaziya imininingwane eqoqiwe. Ukuhlaziywa kwedatha kukhombisa izingqikithi ezithile ebezifanele ukwakhela imibono yabaphenduli, ngokuya ngekhwalithi yesevisi nokwaneliseka kwazo ngekhwalithi yesevisi etholakele. Izindikimba zisekele imibhalo ekhona ngokwezinto ezinomthelela emibonweni yesevisi kanye nemithelela ethize kulezo zingqikithi yachazwa kabanzi, okuholela ezincomweni zokuphatha imibono yekhwalthi yesevisi embonini yamahhotela.

Amagama abalulekile: Okulindelwe ngamakhasimende, ukulethwa kwezinsizakalo, ukuphathwa kwamakhasimende, ikhwalthi yesevisi, ukwaneliseka kwamakhasimende, izikhalazo zensizakalo, ukubuyiswa kwensizakalo, imibono yesevisi yamakhasimende

Dedication

This study is dedicated to my late father Robert and my late grandmother Cecile. Thank you for loving, caring and educating me since my childhood to be a good and polite girl and to become a hardworking woman.

May you forever rest in peace.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This study seeks to investigate the perceptions of customers on service quality in the hotel industry in Pretoria, Republic of South Africa. In the hospitality industry, the service quality provided to the customers establishes the success of the business (*Inderscience*, 2019). Ntimane and Tichaawa (2017:17-18) declared that currently, marketers are focused on gaining a better understanding of how customers view services and products that are suited to their needs and situations. The service industry is very important to the world economy and customer satisfaction is required for companies that want to be successful in the competition. In addition, Kariru and Aloo (2014:1) stated that most businesses nowadays put emphasis on quality, as witnessed by the rise in the number of businesses applying for quality awards such as the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) awards. In this sense, customers are satisfied if the performance of the product matches their expectation, and they are dissatisfied if it falls below their expectations (Armstrong and Kotler, 2015:42). This chapter outlines the hotel industry, discusses on customer service and customer satisfaction, determines the problem statement, research purpose and objective. It explains the methodology used and will provide a summary of the research method for the study as well as a summary of the chapters of the dissertation.

1.2 Hotel Industry

According to Cheng et al. (2019:188) the hotel industry has been exponentially growing and is one of the most significant contributors to the advancement of the tourism industry. It is important for hotel operators to continue incorporating new service elements into their service delivery (Cheng et al., 2019:187). Hotel operators should know that different guests always have different expectation in terms of services (Cheng et al., 2019:188). Perceived value in the hospitality industry is the perception that customers have before going in the service provider's facility (Tichaawa and Ntimane, 2017:18). In addition, Tichaawa and Ntimane (2017) argued that value is derived from different elements like the quality of the room, atmosphere of the hotel, quality of the food, available entertainment and sports facilities. Therefore, value is a combination of tangibles and intangibles that differ from place to place (Tichaawa and Ntimane, 2017:18). However, it is important that hotels should first satisfy the basic needs of customers instead of placing too much emphasis on supplementary services (Cheng et al., 2019:188). Kimanuka (2014) claims, that excellent customer

service is vitally important in all businesses. This means that customer service establishes the connection between the client and service provider or the hotel.

This section discusses the hotel industry's regional trends in South Africa as well as Star graded hotel trends.

1.2.1 Star Graded Hotel Trends in South Africa

Johannesburg's four- and five-star hotels did relatively well in 2016. Guest nights rose by 5% and room revenue increased by more than 13% (*Hotel outlook, 2017:17*). 36% of all available rooms have been counted in the three-star hotel in South Africa and 31% of total hotel room revenue. Guest nights for three-star hotels have increased to 2.0% and room revenue increased to 7.6% (*Hotel outlook, 2017:12*). Room revenue in three-star hotels will expand at a projected 6.9% compound annual rate to R6.9 billion in 2021 from R4.9 billion in 2016 (*Hotel outlook, 2017:12*).

The three-star sector segment fared less well during the same period, with stay unit nights down nearly 6% and room revenue up by only 1%. Hotels in Johannesburg are not off to a good start in 2017, with guest nights down by 10% and revenue down by 6%. If this pattern continues, Johannesburg is likely to experience a decline in hotel room revenue for 2017 (*Hotel outlook, 2017:17*).

Available rooms were flat for four-star hotels, over the past three years, but guest nights rose by 5.1% in 2016. More moderate increases in guest nights are expected as the growth in tourism slows down, with increases averaging 2.8% compounded annually. Most of the new hotels expected to open in the next few years will be four-star hotels; they will account for 85% of the total increase in available rooms over the next five years. Room availability will increase at a 2.6% compound annual rate. The occupancy rate will increase from 65.5% in 2016 to a projected 66.4% in 2021 (*Hotel outlook, 2017:14*).

The average rate for a four-star hotel room will rise from R1 400 in 2016 to an estimated R1 850 in 2021, a 5.7% compound annual increase. Room revenue will increase to R8.7 billion in 2021, growing at an 8.7% compound annual rate from R5.7 billion in 2016 (*Hotel outlook, 2017:14*).

Five-star hotels have the highest occupancy rates in the market at 79.3% in 2016. Available rooms have been flat during the past two years and are expected to remain so during the next five years as

no new five-star hotels are expected to be built during this period. Guest nights were also flat in 2016, but a strong festive season suggests an increase in 2017 (*Hotel outlook, 2017:15*).

The high occupancy rate for five-star hotels is putting upward pressure on pricing. The average daily rate (ADR) rose by 14.8% in 2016 (*Hotel outlook, 2017:15*).

The average five-star room rate will be R4 200 in 2021, up by 9.1%, on a compound annual basis, from R2 270 in 2016; nearly twice the average for all hotels. Five-star hotels in South Africa accounted for 15% of the total hotel room revenue in 2016, three times their 5% share of available rooms. Room revenue will increase at an 11.4% compound annual rate to R4.2 billion in 2021 up from R2.4 billion in 2016. 17% of all hotel room revenue will be accounted for by five-star hotels in 2021 (*Hotel outlook, 2017:15*).

After years of decrease, guest nights had decreased by almost 4% from 2015 to 2016 at Johannesburg hotels. This was mostly caused by the weakness at three-star hotels and the state of the economic market (*Hotel outlook, 2017:17*). Increasing room rates had balanced the decline in stay unit nights increasing the overall room revenue by 5% (*Hotel Outlook, 2017:17*). Guest nights for three-star hotels matched the projection, while five-star hotels performed slightly below our forecast and four-star hotels slightly above (*Hotel outlook, 2017:19*).

Occupancy rates for five- and three-star hotels were both lower than forecast, but four-star hotels were higher than expected. While the mix was different, the overall projection was on target (*Hotel outlook, 2017:18*).

Average room rates rose more slowly than projected for five- and four-star hotels but matched the projection for three-star hotels (*Hotel outlook, 2017:19*). Revenue growth fell short of expectations for five-star hotels, exceeded projections for four-star hotels and was on target for three-star hotels (*Hotel outlook, 2017:19*).

The next section discusses regional hotel trends.

1.2.2 Regional Hotel Trends

Over the last six decades, tourism has continued to expand and diversify, becoming one of the fastest growing and largest economic sectors in the world (Cheng et al., 2019:187). In the run-up to the

FIFA World Cup in 2010, there was a large increase in available rooms that leads to a decline in occupancy rates, dampening investment following the event (*Hotel outlook*, 2017:9).

As stated in *South Africa - the Good News* (2013), the number of travellers to South Africa is increasing. Visitors coming from Europe rose by 9.7%, while visitors coming from North America rose by 13.9%. Visitors from other countries in Africa rose by 8.5% in 2012 and more than 200,000 were guests from China (132,327) and India (106,774) cumulatively. Most of these visitor's demand hotel services, according to *South Africa – the Good News* (2013), and the overall payment received for these rooms increased by 13.4% to R15.2 billion in 2012. This reflected a rise in stay unit nights and a 5.3% rise in the average room rate. Stay unit nights were up by 7.7% in 2012, the largest increase seen during the past five years.

Guest nights increased by 3.0% in 2015, benefiting from the growth of international tourism. With a more moderate growth in tourism, a slower average growth of 1.8% compounded annually through 2021 is expected (*Hotel outlook*, 2017:10). A guest unit night is one stay unit multiplied by one night. For example: 30 available units in a hotel for guest use, whether occupied or not for the full 31 days of May, were a total of 600 guest nights.

The occupancy rate in the hotel is the ratio between occupied rooms and the total number of rooms in the hotel. For example, there are 150 occupied rooms and there is a total of 200 rooms, making the occupancy rate $150/200$ 75%. With room availability up by only 1.5%, the average occupancy rate of 50.2% was the highest average since 2008 (*South Africa – the Good News*, 2013). It is expected that guest nights will increase at a 1.5% compound annual rate, faster than the 0.2% compound annual gain in available rooms. The occupancy rate will increase to a projected 69.1% in 2021, up from 64.6% in 2016 (*Hotel outlook*, 2017:12).

Even with the expected slowdown, it is projected that guest nights will grow faster than room supply and the occupancy rate for hotels will rise to a projected 64.3% in 2021 (*Hotel outlook*, 2017:10). Over the past five years, the occupancy rate has edged up, surpassing the 60% level and reaching 61.2% in 2016. This gain has stimulated interest and several new hotels that are expected to open in the next five years (*Hotel outlook*, 2017:9).

Cape Town, by contrast, flourished in 2016, as it is the dominant tourist destination in South Africa, and the jump in visitor numbers benefited the hotels. Guest nights rose by 7% in 2016, rebounding

from the 1% decline in 2015, mirroring the rebound in foreign tourism, and room revenues soared by 20%.

Four-star hotels, which fared the worst in 2015 with a 4% drop in guest nights, recorded the largest rebound in 2016 as guest nights increased by 8%. Five-star hotels posted the largest room revenue increase in 2016, with a 24% rise, reflecting a 20% increase in the average room rate as Cape Town became a prized destination for luxury travellers. Room rates for three-star hotels rose by a more modest 8% and guest nights were up by 5% (*Hotel outlook*, 2017:17).

Over the next five years 55% of all the rooms expected to be added in South Africa will be in Cape Town. Radisson Blu Hotel & Residences, Cape Town; Radisson Blu Blaauwberg, Cape Town; Radisson Red V&A Waterfront, Cape Town; Marriott, Cape Town Foreshore; AC Hotel by Marriott; Residence Inn, Cape Town Foreshore; Tsogo Sun Stayeasy; Tsogo Sun Sunsquare, Cape Town; and The Silo, which opened in early 2017, will collectively add nearly 1 500 rooms over the next five years (*Hotel outlook*, 2017:17).

Durban's hotel market attracts more tourists than Johannesburg, but fewer than Cape Town. Durban benefited from the pick-up in tourism in 2016, but a weak business market held down overall growth. Guest nights rose by 4% and room revenue increased by 12%. These gains were less robust than in 2015, and less robust than Cape Town in 2016, but stronger than Johannesburg (*Hotel outlook*, 2017:17). Durban, in early 2017, appears to be doing better than Johannesburg but not as well as Cape Town, with guest nights up by 3% and room revenue up by 7%. Thereby benefiting from the ongoing strength in tourism but dampened by a struggling business market (*Hotel outlook*, 2017:17).

Hotels opening in 2017 include Radisson Blu Hotel & Residences and Radisson Red V&A Waterfront, both four-star hotels; the four-star Maslow Time Square Hotel in Pretoria; the three-star Tsogo Sun Stayeasy in Cape Town; the Tsogo Sun Sunsquare Hotel in Cape Town and the Silo Hotel, also in Cape Town (*Hotel outlook*, 2017:9).

Marriott Executive Apartments and Marriott Melrose Arch, both four-star hotels in Johannesburg, are expected in 2019 along with the Radisson Blu Hotel Umhlanga in Durban and the four-star AC Hotel by Marriott in Cape Town (*Hotel outlook*, 2017:9). Marriott Cape Town Foreshore, Hilton Garden Inn, and Residence Inn Cape Town Foreshore are four-star hotels with planned openings in

2020. It is expected that the overall number of available rooms will increase at a 0.9% compound annual rate to 63 900 in 2021, up from 61 200 in 2016 (*Hotel outlook*, 2017:9).

Hotel room revenue is expected to increase to R24.8 billion in 2021, up by 9.3% compounded annually from R15.9 billion in 2016 (*Hotel outlook*, 2017:11).

The number of available hotel rooms will rise at a 0.9% compound annual rate to 63 900 in 2021, up from 61 200 in 2016. It is projected that guest nights will increase at a 1.8% compound annual rate to 15.0 million in 2021, up from 13.7 million in 2016; with occupancy increasing to 64.3% in 2021, up from 61.2% in 2016. Overall hotel room revenue is expected to grow at a 9.3% compound annual rate to R24.8 billion in 2021, up from R15.9 billion in 2016 (*Hotel outlook*, 2017:20).

The next section discusses customer service.

1.3 Customer Service

According to Kimanuka (2014), customer service is a series of activities designed to enhance the level of customer satisfaction, therefore it provides the feeling that a product or service has met the customer's expectation. In addition, Zeithaml et al. (2013:5) defined customer service as critical to what "service" means. Service may, and should, be defined as every interaction between the hotel guest and the service provider (Ramphal and Nicolaidis, 2014:7).

Machado (2014:2) defined customer service in the following way:

- Customer service is the ability of knowledgeable, capable and enthusiastic employees to deliver products and services to their internal and external customers in such way that it satisfies both the identified and unidentified needs of these customers; ultimately resulting in positive word of mouth advertising and repeat business.
- Customer service is the interaction that takes place between somebody from the company and the customer, and that is not limited to sales.

In addition, Machado (2014:3) stated that providing excellent customer service must be a focal point for any business and must form an integral part of the business's total product offering, behaviour and business culture. Jasinskas et al. (2016:560) cited Vitkienė (2004) who asserted that, in order to provide hotel service two elements are necessary: material base and service.

Due to these different elements, hotel owners are having an uncertain problem of quality. In this view, two different quality aspects are as follows: technical quality, which reflects a material basis, and functional or process quality (service). In other words, the customer's expectations will keep developing and evolving over time, therefore service delivery will have to keep pace with those expectations (Machado, 2014:3). The above-mentioned customer service, as defined by Machado (2014), was useful in this study.

This section discusses service quality and customer expectation of service quality.

1.3.1 Service Quality

Quality is defined as a high level of customer satisfaction and refers to factors that characterise a product or service (Stefano et al., 2015:433). Service quality is defined by hotel standards like the stars of hotel, whereas customer service quality is reflected by guest satisfaction (Luo and Qu, 2016:313). Therefore, service quality is very difficult to evaluate (Stefano et al., 2015:433). Quality of services provided should therefore be a common concern for both guests and service providers in a hotel (Ramphal and Nicolaides, 2014:2). It is not only composed of tangible attributes, but also of intangible and subjective attributes such as safety, comfort, and satisfaction, which are difficult to measure accurately (Stefano et al., 2015:433). Therefore, it is important to firstly identify what guests need and then measure the service quality by accessing the guest's perception of the service (Luo and Qu, 2016:313). Considering the characteristics of service: intangibility, inseparability, heterogeneity and perishability, it becomes difficult to measure its quality (Stefano et al., 2015:433). These characteristics are explained in more detail in chapter 2. Service quality is measured based on the specific attributes or dimensions of quality at the encounter level, while satisfaction is measured using overall judgment of quality at a global level (Luo and Qu, 2016:317). Service quality is of relevance to the hotel industry, as customers firstly look for the value, they get for the price they paid (Malik et al., 2018:3). The customers often evaluate the functional attributes of service quality both "during" and "after" the delivery of the service performance (Rather and Camillerie, 2019:2).

Furthermore, Butnaru and Licău (2017:86) suggested that a hotel should be concerned with delivering a high service quality and with understanding the customer's needs, thus offering as high a degree of satisfaction as possible. According to Ramphal and Nicolaides (2014:5), service is an intangible and highly individualised thing that should correspond to the guests' expectations and should satisfy, or if possible, exceed their needs and requirements. Kalotra and Sharma (2017), who

investigated the quality of services in the hospitality industry, concluded their study by claiming that the service quality provided must be reviewed as customers' expectations are always increasing.

1.3.2 Customer Expectation of Service Quality

Meeting the expectations of customers is critical to the growth and sustainability of businesses in today's competitive business environment (Malik et al., 2018:1). Hotel operators should anticipate that different guests always come with various levels of service expectations (Cheng et al., 2019:188). The expectations of the customer contribute to their evaluation of the quality of the provided service (Stefano et al., 2015: 437)

Stefano et al. (2015:437) suggested that, when there is a discrepancy between customers' expectations and management's understanding of customer expectations, perceived service quality will be affected. Habel et al. (2016:364) argued that, if customers perceive performance as lower than their expectations, they experience a sense of dissatisfaction. However, if they feel that the performance has exceeded their expectations they are satisfied. Businesses reach the acceptable level of satisfaction when the service provided does not only meet the customer's expectations but exceed them (Sandada and Matibiri, 2016:43). It is especially important for service companies to monitor the quality of their services when meeting the needs and expectations of its customers, thereby creating a competitive advantage (Stefano et al., 2015:437). Therefore, it is important to firstly identify what guests need, and then to measure the service quality by accessing the guests' perceptions of the actual hotel services delivered (Luo and Qu, 2016:313).

Pacheco and Reddy (2016:56) asserted that customer expectation was the level at which customers felt that a high-level service should perform. While customer perception was the level at which they experienced that same service. Therefore, if expectations were higher than the actual experience then the quality was inferior and vice versa.

Regarding this study, delivering service quality is very important as customers expect to receive a high service quality.

The next section discusses customer satisfaction.

1.4 Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction plays an important role in the hospitality industry (Mohamadi et al., 2017:6). Naderian and Baharun (2015:14) asserted that there are two key definitions of satisfaction that differ mainly in the temporal sense. Firstly, satisfaction is defined as a customer's evaluation of a specific service encounter. Secondly satisfaction is defined as a customer's overall judgement of a service through all experiences she/he has had with the service received. It is important that hotels should first satisfy the basic needs of their customers instead of placing too much emphasis on supplementary services (Cheng et al., 2019:188). A customer's level of satisfaction is formed by their comparison of the product's perceived performance and their expectations (Malik et al., 2018:3).

As it was discussed above, customers expect to receive a quality service and they are satisfied when their expectations are met. The next section discusses service complaints and service recovery as well as customer perception of service.

1.4.1 Service Complaints and Service Recovery

Researchers Jeong and Lee (2017:6) proclaimed that service failure is inevitable in the hotel industry; therefore, hotels should react to the service failure and take appropriate measures to recover the failed service. Jeong and Lee (2017:6) suggested that, when applying service recovery, a component of authenticity should be included to show a sincere apology from management. Liat et al. (2017:44) asserted that hotel managers frequently evaluate the service quality delivered to the customers in order to quickly identify service failures that could lead to dissatisfaction. According to Cheng et al. (2019:190) customers expect to be treated justly during the process of service recovery however, if they are treated unjustly, they become dissatisfied, and this leads to negative perceptions of their future experiences. Service recovery is important for restoring customer satisfaction and positively influences the customer's perception of the hotel (Cheng et al., 2019: 199).

It should be noted that, when a customer complains about the failed service, the hotel should ensure that the failed service is recovered, and that the customer is satisfied. This leads to a positive perception of the customer.

1.4.2 Customer Perception of Service

Tichaawa and Ntimane (2017:27) maintained that customers are deeply concerned about hotel service and Butnaru and Licau (2017:84) asserted that customer satisfaction is the main element of the perception of service quality. Satisfied customers form positive perceptions and recommend the service to others (Mohamadi et al., 2017:5). Customers tend to be dissatisfied if the perceived service quality is not up to their expectations (Cheng et al., 2019:188).

According to Lamb, Hair and McDaniel (2011:5), customers experience a feeling of satisfaction when a product has met or exceeded their expectations and can be explained in terms of the Disconfirmation Paradigm as displayed in the below figure.

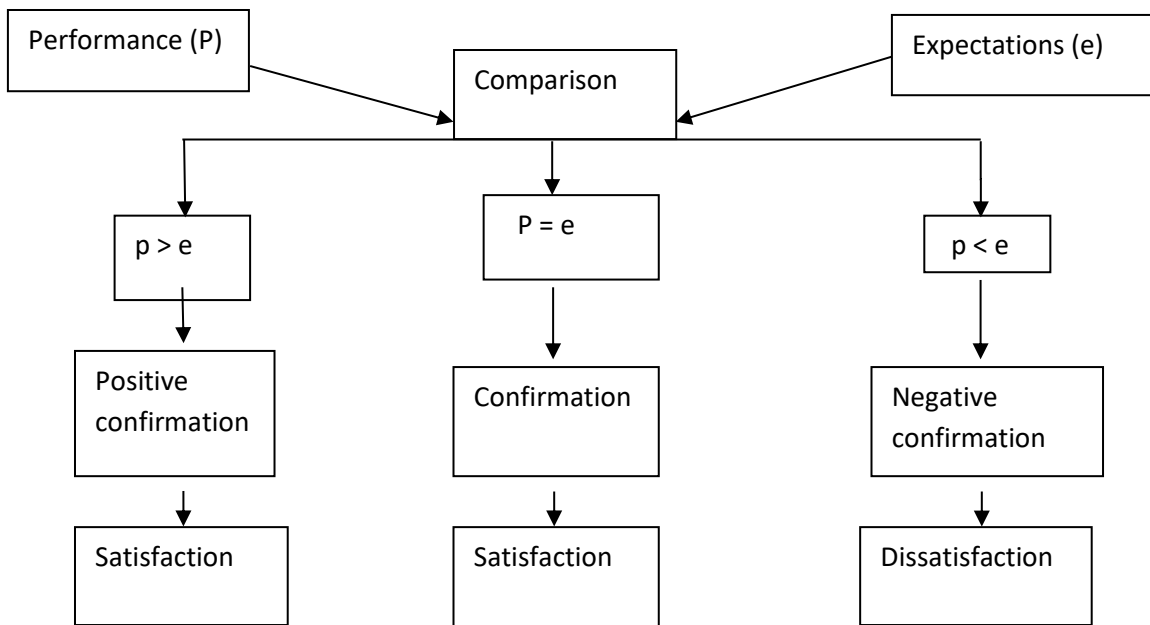


Figure 1.1 Disconfirmation Paradigm

Source: Lamb, Hair and McDaniel (2011:5)

Positive confirmation is defined as the gap between the service quality the guest expects (e) and the performance (p) of the hotel regarding service quality. This is presented in the above figure 1.1 as a disconfirmation paradigm. In the case where the two are equal (p = e) it means that the customers have received the service quality that they were expecting and are therefore satisfied. When the customers are offered more than they are expecting (p > e) the service quality highly confirms their expectations and increases their level of satisfaction. These customers will then positively

communicate about the hotel service by word-of-mouth. Lastly, if customers perceived the performance of the business as lower than expected ($p < e$) it leads to their dissatisfaction about the quality and other service delivered in the hotel. In this study the Disconfirmation Paradigm was used as the method of methodology on the perception of service quality in the hotel industry. It has been shown in this chapter that delivering service quality and considering the customer's needs and expectations establish customer satisfaction; while the lack of service quality results on customer dissatisfaction and leads to a negative perception of service. Therefore, customer satisfaction leads to a positive perception of service. This is explained in more detail in chapter 3.

The research problem and research objectives are outlines in the next section.

1.5 Research Problem and Research Objectives

This section highlights the research problem and research objectives and the significance of the study is provided.

1.5.1 Research Problem

Nowadays, in the hotel industry, customers are more concerned about the service quality that they are expected to receive from the service provider. In addition, Ramphal and Nicolaides (2014:2) posited that customers generally always try to select and buy products and services of high quality. In this view, quality should therefore be a common concern for both customers and service providers in the hotel (Ramphal and Nicolaides, 2014:2).

Table 1.1 Studies done on quality service and perception in the hotel industry

Author	Date	Main theme of the study	Methodology	Results
Ntimane and Tichaawa	2017	Customers' Perceptions of Value in Relation to Hotels in Gauteng, South Africa	Quantitative approach	Customers are deeply concerned about the value that they receive when deciding to purchase, or to use, hotel services.
Tefera and Govender	2017	Service, quality, customer satisfaction and loyalty: The perceptions of Ethiopian hotel guests	Quantitative approach	Service quality is significant to customer satisfaction; hotels should

				know their customer satisfaction level.
Malik et al.	2012	Customer Satisfaction and Perceived Service Quality	Quantitative approach	There is a relationship between customer satisfaction and perceived service quality.
Nomnga and Mhlanga	2015	An assessment of customer satisfaction and service quality: The case of hotels in East London	Qualitative approach	Guests should be additionally motivated and, GCCs should be designed by following a scientific approach with a greater impact.
Kleynhans and Zhou	2012	Service quality at selected hotels in Pretoria	Quantitative approach	It has been noticed that hotels only put in effort when serving international guest, therefore hotels should put in more effort while serving local guest as well. South African guests had higher perceptions on aspects in the tangible dimension.
Ramphal and Nicolaides	2014	Service and quality and quality service: satisfying customers in the hospitality industry	Qualitative approach	Quality should be strategically based with a customer focus, an obsession with quality, using a scientific approach to decision-making, be long term, have teamwork and be regarded as a

				continual process of improvement.
Naidoo	2012	Tourist service quality management in the ecotourism accommodation sector of Kwazulu- Natal	Qualitative approach	This provides to marketers and researchers a tool with which to assess service quality from the perspective of customers and identify areas that need improvement during service delivery.
Amin et al.	2013	Service Quality Dimension and Customer satisfaction in the Malaysian Hotel Industry	Quantitative approach	Hotel employees play an important role in delivering services to hotel guests. Therefore, hotel managers should put an emphasis on enhancing hotel guests' emotions and must be committed to maintaining their relationships with their guests by training and upgrading employee skills.
Poku et al.	2013	Service Quality on Customer Loyalty in the Hotel Industry Ghana	Quantitative approach	Service quality has an impact on customer loyalty. Customers perceive the staff of the hotel as being able to perform the promised service dependably and accurately.
Wu and Ko	2013	Assessment of Service Quality in the Hotel Industry, Taiwan	Quantitative approach	The service quality measurement scale developed in this study can

				also be used to monitor and improve the quality of services delivered to customers.
Sukwadi et al.	2012	Service quality attributes	Quantitative approach	This indicated that there is a link between service quality attributes and customer value.
AbuKhalifeh and Som	2012	Service Quality Management in Hotel Industry	SERVQUAL approach	The application of Parasuraman's model: the guests directly gain loyalty from the service quality dimensions and when they perceive a higher service quality, they will ultimately turn into loyal guests.
Prinsloo	2014	The efficacy dimensions of TQM and their relationship to the 4- to 5-star grading of guest house in the Western Cape.	Qualitative approach	To provide high service quality is significant in retaining customers and therefore, guesthouses must constantly improve their service quality levels and ultimately develop a strategy for sustained customer retention.

In the previous studies, related to the service quality and customer perception in the hotel industry as shown in table 1.1, scholars focused more on customer service, customer satisfaction, service quality, as well as SERVQUAL as a model to measure service quality. It should be noted as well that majority of studies focused on quantitative approach. However, there is paucity on research investigating the perceptions of customer service in the hotel industry, in general and in Pretoria

specifically. It is worth noting that the lack in offering service quality in the hotel industry in Pretoria can negatively affect customers' perceptions in terms of customer service. In the same vein, this situation results on customers' dissatisfaction. The problem is that there is a paucity of knowledge and information gained from studies related to the perceptions of customer service in the hotel industry in Pretoria. The research problem therefore is the lack of information on the perception of customer service in the hotel industry in Pretoria.

The research question can therefore be presented through the following questions:

Primary research question:

- What are the perceptions of customers in terms of service provided in the hotel industry in Pretoria?

Secondary research questions:

- Does service quality influence customer expectation in hotel industry in Pretoria?
- What are the factors that contribute to form the perception of service in the hotel industry in Pretoria?

1.5.2 Research Objectives

The primary objective of the study is to explore customers' perceptions on service provided in the hotel industry in Pretoria.

The secondary research objectives are to:

- Understand the effect of service quality on customer expectation in the hotel industry in Pretoria.
- Identify factors that form customers' perceptions in hotels industry in Pretoria.

1.5.3 Significance of the Study

It has been shown in the background of the study that service quality is related to the customer's expectation in the hotel industry. Therefore, delivery of service quality is important in influencing the perception of customer service in any business, particularly in the hotel industry (Liat et al., 2014:323).

With respect to the current study, when customers are not satisfied with the service, they unfortunately have an opportunity to spread their negative perceptions of the hotel's service via word of mouth. One may argue that service quality in the hotel industry can contribute to the creation of a positive or negative customer perception, in relation to the service quality provided by the hotel, based on what happens before, during, and after the customer service. It has been indicated that meeting, or even exceeding, the customer's expectation of service improves the likelihood of achieving customer satisfaction; while the lack of service quality in the hotel leads to a negative customer perception of the service provided. Therefore, the researcher explores customers' perceptions on service provided in the hotel industry in Pretoria. This study contributes to the criteria used for providing service quality, which then leads to customer satisfaction and plays an important role in enhancing the perceptions of customer service in the hotel industry.

This research contributes to existing literature in this area.

The next section discusses methodology.

1.6 Methodology

This section provides the methodology used in this study. To attain the objectives of the study, this section explains research design, collecting secondary and primary data, design sample plan, data analysis and data capturing that was used in this study.

1.6.1 Research Design

According to Babbie (2010:74), a research design is a plan of how a researcher is going to conduct the research. Wiid and Diggins (2015:65-67) proposed two types of research design:

- Exploratory research design is when the researcher is exploring a relatively unknown area.
- Conclusive research design is descriptive and causal. Descriptive studies are used to identify patterns or trends in a situation. Descriptive research often reveals possible links between variables, while the research either confirms and describes the relationship or shows it to be false.

The two types of research design are explained in more detail in chapter 4. Exploratory research design was used in this study in order to explore the perceptions of hotel customers in terms of service in the hotel industry in Pretoria.

1.6.2 Methods of Data Collection

In the process of data gathering, the researcher may decide on the type of data to use based on the nature of the study (qualitative or quantitative). In this view, Wiid and Diggines (2015:94) declared that primary data can be collected through either qualitative, quantitative or mix method research. Tumba (2014) declared that in social science there are two varieties of data to be collected: primary and secondary data. In addition, primary or secondary data that are qualitative in nature are represented in the form of words, while those which are quantitative in nature are represented in the form of numbers (Tumba 2014). Secondary data are pieces of information that have been collected prior to the start of the study from data sources (Levy and Grewal, 301:2014). Primary data are those data collected to address specific research needs (Levy and Grewal, 301:2014). Some common primary data collection methods include focus groups, in depth interviews, and surveys (Levy and Grewal, 301:2014).

In this study, the researcher relies more on primary data as this is an exploratory study that follows the qualitative approach. However, the secondary data was used to support the evidence of the study and in the literature review.

1.6.2.1 Collection of Qualitative Research

Creswell (2014:185) defined qualitative data as data collected in the field where the participants are experiencing the issue or the problem that pertains to the study. Qualitative research is used to understand the participants through broad open-ended responses (Levy and Grewal, 2014:309). It provides initial information that helps the researcher to more clearly formulate the research objective (Levy and Grewal, 2014:309). Qualitative research includes following social media sites, in depth interviews, focus groups, and projective techniques (Levy and Grewal, 2014:309). According to Creswell (2014:185), in qualitative research, researchers collect data through examining documents, observing behaviour, or interviewing participants.

1.6.2.2 Collection of Quantitative Research

A quantitative research approach aims to establish a relationship between variables in the population (universe), or a representative sample of the population, by means of statistical, mathematical or computational techniques (Wiid and Diggines, 2015:64).

Wiid and Diggines (2015:64) proposed three ways of collecting quantitative data: observation, experimentation and survey (this method is explained in more detail in chapter 4).

1.6.2.3 Mixed method research

According to Wiid and Diggines (2015:65), mixed method research is the use of more than one method of the collection, analysis, interpretation and reporting of data; it is a mix between qualitative and quantitative research.

In this study, in order to collect data, the researcher followed the qualitative approach by conducting face-to-face interviews with the hotel's customers (see chapter 4).

1.6.3 Designing a Sample Plan

Sampling is a process of selecting observations (Babbie, 2010:166). In mass consumer markets, time and cost constraints mean that it is impractical to include every single target customer in whatever data gathering method has been chosen (Brassington and Pettit, 2012:188-190).

The five main stages in the sampling process, as stated by Brassington and Pettit (2012:188-190), are the following:

- **Population** to be surveyed is derived from the overall research objectives. Often this is based on a target market or segment, but even then, further definition based on markets, products or behaviour is unlikely to be necessary to create a tightly defined population.
- **Sampling frame** is the means of access to the population to be surveyed. It is basically a list from which individual names are drawn.
- **Sampling unit** is the actual individual from whom researchers want a response. It is very important to identify the right individuals.
- **Sampling method selection means that** individual sample units and elements are selected from the larger sampling frame. The main and early decision is whether to use probability or non-probability sampling methods. Random or probability sampling means that each member of the population has an equal or known chance of being selected for the sample and non-probability random sampling allows the researcher a little more flexibility and therefore the population will be easier identified.
- **Sample size** is meant to represent the population of interest; there is no point in spending more time and money pursuing a bigger sample than the researcher must.

This study used the non-probability sampling method; therefore, convenience sampling technique was used. According to Bradley (2010:166), the convenience technique is the process in which the researcher does interviews with participants depending on their availability. Therefore, the convenience method helped the researcher to select participants according to their knowledge of the research problem under investigation within this study and their availability. The population of the study was the hotel industry in Pretoria. In the case of this study, the size of the sample was determined by the saturation principle. According to Creswell (2013:189), saturation comes when the gathering of new data no longer sparks new insights or reveal new properties. A sample unit of 25 participants (hotel customers) were chosen from customers of one selected hotel in Pretoria, according to their convenience and depending on data saturation.

1.6.4 Data Analysis

This section discusses qualitative data analysis and qualitative computer data analysis.

1.6.4.1 Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis is a process that goes hand in hand with other parts in developing the qualitative study, specifically data collection and the write up of the findings (Creswell, 2014:195). Babbie (2014:403) defined qualitative data analysis as a method of analysing data without converting them into a numeric format. Moreover, Creswell (2014:195) argued that the researcher may analyse the interview conducted, writing memos that may ultimately be included as a narrative in the final report.

1.6.4.2 Types of Qualitative Analysis

The following types of data analysis were proposed by Nigatu (2009:39-45):

- Content analysis is defined as the process of categorising verbal or behavioural data for the purpose of classification, summarization and tabulation. This type of analysis can be done at two levels:
- Descriptive: when the researcher tries to highlight the patterns and characteristics of the data.
- Interpretative: when the researcher tries to investigate, in depth, the meaning and implication of the data.

- Narrative analysis is when the researcher transcribes and reformulates the data from different experiences, interviews and observations, in order to analyse and reflect upon them.
- Discourse analysis is a method of analysing naturally occurring speech (spoken interaction) and all types of written text.
- Framework analysis.
- Grounded theory.

This above type of data analysis is explained in more details in chapter 4.

1.6.4.3 Qualitative Computer Data Analysis

The process of coding using software encourages to pay attention to details and constant review, to create an unusual degree of closeness to data (Bazeley, 2013:17). Creswell (2014:195) asserted that hand coding is a difficult and time-consuming process, even for data collected from only a few individuals. The availability of software and advances in technology has impacted on how research is done (Bazeley, 2013:17). A qualitative computer program is important for its efficiency at storing and locating qualitative data (Creswell, 2014:195). In addition, software designed for the analysis of qualitative data has the increased capacity to retrieve, sort and analyse unstructured data in ways that was not possible with pencil and paper (Bazeley, 2013:17).

In this study, the researcher analysed data using the Atlas software program. (See Chapter 4 and 5).

1.7 Conceptual Analysis

This section provides clarification of the key concepts used in the research, which are:

- **Customer service** is the ability of knowledgeable, capable and enthusiastic employees to deliver products and services to their internal and external customers in such way that it satisfies identified and unidentified needs of customers and ultimately results in positive word of mouth advertising and repeat business (Machado, 2014:2).
- **Service quality** is defined by hotel standards like the stars of a hotel, whereas customer service quality is reflected by guest satisfaction (Luo and Qu, 2016:313).
- **Customer satisfaction** is derived from the comparison of the product's perceived performance and their expectations (Malik et al., 2018:3).

- **Customer expectation** is the prediction of the outcome of a service encounter at some time in the future, and is used as a benchmark or standard by the customer to evaluate the performance of the service (Chitty et al., 2012:255).
- **Customer perception** is the customer's beliefs about the performance of a service encounter, it changes over time and vary from person to person and for each encounter (Chitty et al., 2012:255).

1.8 Layout of the Study

The layout of the study outlines the contents of each chapter.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter provides a general introduction to the entire study, discusses on the hotel industry, customer service and customer satisfaction, the statement of the problem and research objectives, methodology used as well as the layout of the study.

Chapter 2: Customer Service and Service Quality in the Hotel Industry

In this chapter the researcher discusses, in greater detail on customer service and customer satisfaction in the hotel industry as well as customer perception, customer complaints, and service recovery.

Chapter 3: Customer Perception of Service

This chapter discusses the consumer behaviour model as well as customer perception and its impact on the decision-making process.

Chapter 4: Methodology

This chapter presents the detailed plan of how the study was conducted. The research problem is defined, primary and secondary research objectives are identified, and it describes the research design. In addition, the chapter discusses the data collection techniques that were used, designing the questionnaire and sample plan. The fieldwork is discussed, the preparation and processing of the primary data are determined, and the data analysis approach is discussed. Limitations of the study is presented as well as the ethical considerations.

Chapter 5: Research Findings and Data Analysis

This chapter presents findings, data analysis and interpretation of the findings.

Chapter 6: Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter discusses the achievement of the objectives, draw conclusions and make recommendations. It discusses the areas of concern of the participants and identify areas of further study as well as the limitations of the study.

1.9 Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study focuses on the perceptions of customer service in the hotel industry in Pretoria. Due to the time and financial constraints the data collection is limited to one selected hotel in Pretoria.

1.10 Summary

In this chapter, the researcher firstly provided the introduction, the background of the study, the research problem and objectives, the significance of the study as well as the methodology used. Secondly, this chapter explained the outlines of the chapters of the study, the scope and limitation as well as the definitions of major concepts.

The next chapter focuses on customer service and customer satisfaction in the hotel industry.

Chapter 2: Customer Service and Customer Satisfaction in the Hotel Industry

2.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on customer service and customer satisfaction in the hotel industry. First, the four elements of marketing mix are identified, namely: product and value creation products, price and value capture, place and value delivery, promotion and value communication. Marketing mix element determines how to deliver value to the customer. The second focus of this chapter is on customer service. It defines the characteristics of service and service quality. The third focus is on customer satisfaction. It determines the basic principles of customer satisfaction and how to improve customer service and customer satisfaction. It also identifies service failure, customer complaint and service recovery. This chapter shows that the hotel industry needs to focus on how to deliver a service quality that leads to customer satisfaction. Finally, the hotel industry needs to encourage their customers to complain if the service is not satisfactory. A well-handled customer complaint leads to successful service recovery which ensures that the customer is satisfied; even more so than they have been with previous services. Therefore, this chapter plays an important role on the perception of customer service in the hotel industry.

2.2 Hotel Marketing Mix

This section discusses marketing mix elements. The service marketing mix handles the service as if it were a product itself. The elements of service marketing mix are necessary for delivering service quality to customers. Because they experience the service through the marketing mix elements, those elements influence the customer's perception of the service. Armstrong and Kotler (2015:80) defined marketing mix as a set of elements that businesses use during the marketing process in order to get the reactions of a target market. Ebert and Griffin (2015:384) determined the elements of marketing mix (often called the "Four Ps"): product, price, place and promotion. These are determined for each product and service, based on what they believe their target markets will value (Levy and Grewal, 2014:43). The hotel marketing mix adopted in this text is based on four marketing mix elements discussed below:

2.2.1 Product and Value Creation Products

Products and value creation, in which services are also included, constitute the first of the four Ps (Levy and Grewal, 2014:43). A product is defined as an article, service or idea used to satisfy a customer's need or want (Ebert and Griffin, 2015:384). Armstrong and Kotler (2015:80) defined a

product as an article and service that businesses offer to the marketplace. There is a constant challenge for businesses when they are creating and developing a new product for the market, therefore they should always consider the change factor – changing technology, changing wants and needs of customers, and changing economic conditions (Ebert and Griffin, 2015:384). To meet these changing conditions often mean changing the existing product (Ebert and Griffin, 2015:384). Meanwhile, the key to marketing is the creation of value; businesses are challenged to develop products and services that customers perceive as valuable enough to buy (Levy and Grewal, 2014:43). Regularly, producers upgrade the appearance of their products in order to make them stand out in the marketplace (Ebert and Griffin, 2015:384).

Bowie and Buttle (2016:26) stated examples of products/services offered by the hospitality marketing mix to both business and leisure travellers. Those examples are the following:

- Accommodation: a bed, bedroom, cabin or suite in a hotel, Inn, chalet, apartment, timeshare, cruise ship, or other hospitality;
- Food and beverage: a drink, sandwich, fast food, family meal or gourmet dinner served in a café, cafeteria, restaurant, bar, aeroplane, motorway service station, ship, or at an attraction or leisure centre;
- Business services: a meeting, conference, communication bureau in a hotel or conference centre; and
- Leisure: a short break, domestic holiday or international holiday, in a hotel, resort, self-catering accommodation, camping and caravan site or a cruise.

Products are different from their creation of an appearance or image that make them differ from their current products in order to attract customers (Ebert and Griffin, 2015:384).

2.2.2 Price and Value Capture

The second element of the marketing mix is price (Levy and Grewal, 2014:43). The price is money that customers must pay to receive a product (Armstrong and Kotler, 2014:80). During this exchange businesses provide products and services to their customers and in return it receives money from them (Levy and Grewal, 2014:44). Price is calculated to support different costs, these include operating, administrative, research, and marketing costs (Armstrong and Kotler, 2014:80). Therefore, value-based marketing requires that businesses charge a price that customers perceive as

good value for money for the products they received (Levy and Grewal, 2014:44). Thus, price should not be too high otherwise customers may return to the competitor (Armstrong and Kotler, 2014:80).

2.2.3 Place and Value Delivery

This is the third of the Ps of marketing mix. Ebert and Griffin (2015:384) defined a place as where and how customers can get access to the products. After creating value through a product or service, businesses must ensure that the products or services are accessible to their customers. (Levy and Grewal, 2014:44).

2.2.4 Promotion and Value Communication

This is the fourth and last of the Ps of the marketing mix. Promotion is defined as a set of techniques that communicate information about the products (Ebert and Griffin, 2015:385). Promotion is a way the marketer uses to communicate the value of their offering, or the value proposition, to their customers through a variety of media including television, radio, magazines, sales forces and the internet (Levy and Grewal, 2014:44).

The next section discusses customer service.

2.3 Customer Service

Service has grown in recent years (Armstrong and Kotler, 2015:242). Marketers should maintain a competitive advantage by providing excellent customer service; however, it is hard to prove (Levy and Grewal, 2015:33). Zeithaml et al. (2013:4) defined a service as activities, processes and performances delivered or co-produced by one entity or person for another entity or person. If customer service is defined as a critical aspect of the meaning of “service”; then customer service means the service delivered in support of a company’s core products. In addition, customer service is provided by the employees who are always less dependable than the machine (Levy and Grewal, 2014:33). Thus, it can happen on site (when a company’s employee assists a customer to find a desired item or reply to a question), or it can happen over the phone or via the internet in real time (Zeithaml et al., 2013:5).

Businesses that deliver customer service must always motivate their employees and this should become the business culture (Levy and Grewal, 2014:33). However, it may take time to establish a reputation for good customer service therefore, as soon as the marketer has a good service reputation,

this will last for a long time, as the competitor may still be busy developing the same reputation (Levy and Grewal, 2014:33).

2.3.1 Characteristics of Service

Armstrong and Kotler (2015:243) suggest four important characteristics of service: intangibility, variability, inseparability and perishability. They are all explained below:

- **Service intangibility** means that services cannot be seen, tasted, felt, heard, or smelled before they are bought (Kotler, 2015:243). Hospitality customers cannot really examine a competing hotel or restaurant without entering a purchase contract and buying the product (Bowie and Buttle, 2016:23). Services are first sold and then produced and consumed at the same time (Kotler, 2015:243). For example, they cannot stay overnight in a hotel and test out the rooms without being expected to pay first (Bowie and Buttle, 2016:23).
- **Service inseparability** means that service is not separate from the service provider even if they are produced by people or machines (Kotler, 2015:243). Customers must be present to consume the product in the hospitality industry (Bowie and Buttle, 2016:23). The simultaneous production and consumption of services means that hospitality employees are an important part of the hospitality product (Bowie and Buttle, 2016:23). If a service employee provides the service, then the employee becomes a part of the service (Kotler, 2015:243) and customers do not just buy and use a service, they play an active role in its delivery. Therefore, both provider and customer affect the service outcome (Kotler, 2015:243). The interaction between the customer and employees of the hospitality has an influence on customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Bowie and Buttle, 2016:23).

Bowie and Buttle (2016:23) determined 5 ways to manage the problems of inseparability, they include:

- Ensuring that customer segments are compatible.
 - Ensuring that the operations system is suitable for the projected market demand.
 - Adopting appropriate booking policies.
 - Organising effective queuing systems.
 - Training staff effectively.
- **Service variables** mean that the quality of the service depends on who provides them as well as when, where, and how they are provided (Kotler, 2015:243). Services comprise a

high element of interaction between customers and staff; indeed, every service performance is a unique event (Bowie and Buttle, 2016:23). For example, determining the value of the service quality of the hotel, depends on the employee who is providing the service, and if the employee is friendly and responsiveness toward the customer; therefore, the customer may determine that the hotel provide service quality. In the same way, a rude employee may make a customer feel that the service of the hotel is a low quality.

- **Service perishability** means that service cannot be stored to be sold or used later (Kotler, 2015:243). Everyone working in hospitality knows that you cannot sell last night's bedroom tonight (Bowie and Buttle, 2016:23).

2.3.2 Service Quality

Businesses' services differentiate themselves from their competitors by delivering higher quality (Armstrong and Kotler, 2015:247). Service quality is defined as a comparison of perceived expectations (E) of a service with perceived performance (P).

Therefore, there is a service quality when a perceived service exceeds the customer's expectation (Dubey and Sahu, 2019:55). Service providers need to identify what target customers expect regarding service quality (Armstrong and Kotler, 2015:247).

2.3.2.1 Criteria of Service Quality

Jasinskas et al. (2016:564) cited SERVQUAL quality criteria (Parasuraman, Zeithalm and Berry, 1988). The nine criteria for service quality are explained below:

1. **Tangible evidence** refers to the attractiveness of the environment, staff clothing, clarity of written material and the use of up-to-date technology.
2. **Reliability** is when customer needs are considered, the correct information is regularly available, and the quality of service delivered to the customer does not change regardless of the time of day or person.
3. **Responsibility** is the quick reaction to the customer's request and employee's willingness to answer the customer inquiries.
4. **Competence** refers to employees who are competent at their work; who can provide the exact and correct information to customers in a friendly, polite, helpful and respectful way.
5. **Confidence** relates to the suitable image of the hotel and the delivery of service quality in the hotel.

6. **Safety** relates to the safety in hotel buildings, the protection of customers when using technology and the protection of customers' data as well as hotel management's promises to deliver a proper service to the customers.

7. **Accessibility** means that employees have no difficulties and can interact with customers via telephone, email or face to face; a suitable workplace for convenient communication.

8. **Communication** means that employees of the hotel should have good communication skills; they should be polite and professional, have good manners, understand customers' problems and express their concern. They should be able to give a possible solution to the problem.

9. **Understanding** means determines the worth of service quality, consideration of the customer's request (e.g. when dinner should be served).

The above criteria were relevant to the understanding of service quality.

2.3.2.2 The Gap Model of Service Quality

Gap model is used to comprehend the service quality of a company; by demonstrating that the customer gap is the most critical service quality gap to close. This gap is the difference between the customer's expectation and perception. The provider gap, which includes four gaps that happen in a company, is responsible for the customer gap (Zeithaml et al., 2013:33)

The Gaps models of service quality are the following:

2.3.2.2.1 The Customer Gap

Zeithaml et al. (2013:35) explained in more detail the customer gap:

The customer gap is the difference between the customer's expectation and their perception (see figure 2.1). Customer expectations are standard or reference opinions that customers get from the service experience, while customer perceptions are personal valuations of real service experiences. Customer perceptions regularly involve what a customer accepts as true of what should or will happen. To close the gap between customer expectation and customer perception is to deliver quality service. This forms the base of gap model.

The base of customer expectations is based on factors controlled by the marketer such as pricing, advertising, and sales promises; as well as influencing factors that the marketer has only a restricted ability to affect. These factors include inborn personal needs, word of mouth communications, and

other competitive offerings. In a perfect world, expectations and perceptions must be match; customers would perceive that they have received what they thought they would and should.

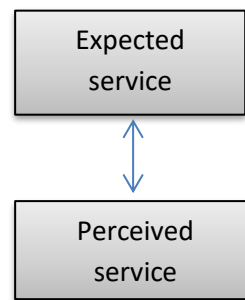


Figure 2.1 The customer gap

Source: (Zeithaml et al., 2013:35)

2.3.2.2.2 The Provider Gap

To close the important customer gap, the gap model recommends that four provider gaps have to be closed (Zeithaml et al., 2013:36). These gaps happen while the company is delivering the service and include:

Provider gap 1: The Listening Gap

It is the difference between the customer's expectations of service and the company's perception of the customer's expectations (Zeithaml et al., 2013:36). The managers in the hospitality industry often think that they know what their customers want and develop their marketing offer based on their own understanding of customer service and expectations (Bowie and Buttle, 2011:309). According to Zeithaml et al. (2013:36), many companies do not meet the customers' expectations and do not understand the customers' expectations. Bowie and Buttle (2011:309) stated, as an example, that some hoteliers aspire to the goal that their restaurant operations are much greater than their customers' needs and wants. One of the various reasons why managers are not conscious of their customers' expectations is because they do not interact with customers; they may not be disposed to ask them about the service (Zeithaml et al., 2013:36). The lack of market research on customers can be the cause of misunderstanding what the customer is expecting (Bowie and Buttle, 2011:309). When people with the power to establish priority and responsibility do not comprehend what customers are expecting, they can cause a chain of bad decisions and blow away resources that may influence the perception of poor service quality (Zeithaml et al., 2013:36-47). According to Bowie and Buttle (2016:250), once the managers have identified the customer's expectations, they can deliver a proper service which meets that expectation. For example, a hotel starts a system of after service survey and find out after the first survey that 40% of customers complained about the unprofessional room service; 10 % complained about the waiters in dining room, 40% complained

about slow service at reception and 10% were customers who were satisfied with the service. After the survey the hotel managers were aware of what their customers expected from their service, and they started to improve their service by hiring another receptionist who is faster than the previous one. They had to train the room service staff on how to be professional and deliver a quality service to the customers and they improved their service in the dining room by training the waiters to treat the customer like a king and to know that the customer is always right.

Provider gap 2: The Service Design and Standards Gap

The perceptions of the customers' expectations are essential, but inadequate for delivering greater service quality (Zeithaml et al., 2013:36-47). Another requirement is the presence of service designs and performance standards that reflect those precise perceptions (Zeithaml et al., 2013:36-47). The design of a service quality standard should match the customers' expectations. Less professional hospitality institutions do not establish formal service standards. More professional hospitality companies can establish formal service specifications that have been established from an operations perspective, to consider the customer's perception (Bowie and Buttle, 2016:250). A frequent subject in service companies is the difficulty of translating customer expectations into service quality specifications that employees can comprehend and perform (Zeithaml et al., 2013:36-47). Management must think creatively to overcome these service design problems and make sure that service standards match customer expectations (Bowie and Buttle, 2016:250). Customer-driven standards are dissimilar from the conventional performance standards that companies establish for services, they are based on essential customer requests that are measured by customers (Zeithaml et al., 2013:36-47). They are operations standards set to meet customer expectations and priorities rather than to company concerns such as productivity or efficiency (Zeithaml et al., 2013:36-47). For example, a hotel has designed its customer service standard for receptionists as follows: Treat the customer like a king by:

- Wearing a clean uniform and suitable safe footwear
- Wearing a name tag
- Obeying the service standards
- Greeting customers with good manners
- Making the customer feel welcome
- Always smiling at the customer
- Treating the customer courteously
- Listening to the customer with attentiveness when he's talking

- Assisting the customer with respect
- Informing the manager if there is a problem
- Using a proper manner on the telephone
- Asking the caller “May I please place you on hold?”
- Not ignoring calls
- Reducing call transfers, if possible.

Provider gap 3: The Service Performance Gap

According to Zeithaml et al. (2013:40), as soon as service designs and standards are in place, the company is well on its way to provide high-quality service. However, this statement is not enough to provide quality service. The company needs to have systems, processes, and people in place to make sure that the service provided meet, or is even better than, the designs and standards in place (Zeithaml et al., 2013:40).

Zeithaml et al. (2013:40) state that high quality service performance is uncertain when there are guidelines on how to perform a service. To deliver a successful service you have to consider the customers. Standards must be required to be effective – that is, employees need to be evaluated and rewarded based on their performance and how well those standards are met. The authors explain that therefore, even once standards precisely reflect the customer’s expectations, if the company fails to deliver support for those standards – if it does not facilitate, encourage, and require their achievement – standards are not good. When the level of service delivery fails to meet the standards, it fails to meet customers’ expectations as well. The authors conclude that, to close the performance gap they need to ensure that all the resources necessary to achieve the standards are in place; this reduces the customer gap. For example, continue with the example of the designed service standard for a hotel receptionist. When hiring a receptionist, the recruitment manager should consider the hotel’s designed service and employ the person who meet the designed service standard. The hotel also should organise a training program for their staff to ensure that they are up to date on the service design in order to deliver a quality service.

Provider gap 4: The Communication Gap

This is the gap between the service system (both people and technology) that delivers the promises and the advertising, public relations and sales communications delivered to the customers (Bowie and Buttle, 2011:309). Customer expectations and standards against which they evaluate the quality

of service are raised by promises made by a service company through its media advertising sales force, and other communications (Zeithaml et al., 2013:40). Therefore, the customer gap can widen by the difference between actual and promised services (Zeithaml et al., 2013:40). Broken promises can happen for many reasons: overpromising in advertising or personal selling, inadequate coordination between operations and marketing, and differences in policies and procedures across service outlets (Zeithaml et al., 2013:40).

Service companies may often be unsuccessful in exploiting their chances of informing customers about the use of suitable services (Zeithaml et al., 2013:40). They can be careless when managing customer expectations of what will be provided in service transactions and relationships (Zeithaml et al., 2013:40). For example, a hotel’s television advertisement showed that there is wireless internet in each room, a student who was looking for a room to stay in during his holidays saw the advertisement and, because he needed that service, he chose that specific hotel, when he arrived in his room he saw that there was not internet access. He called the receptionist to find out and was surprised when he heard that hotel doesn’t provide wireless and that he would have to go outside and look for internet café. The customer was dissatisfied because hotel overpromised on their TV advertisement; the next morning he had to leave the hotel as he couldn’t stay there without wireless.

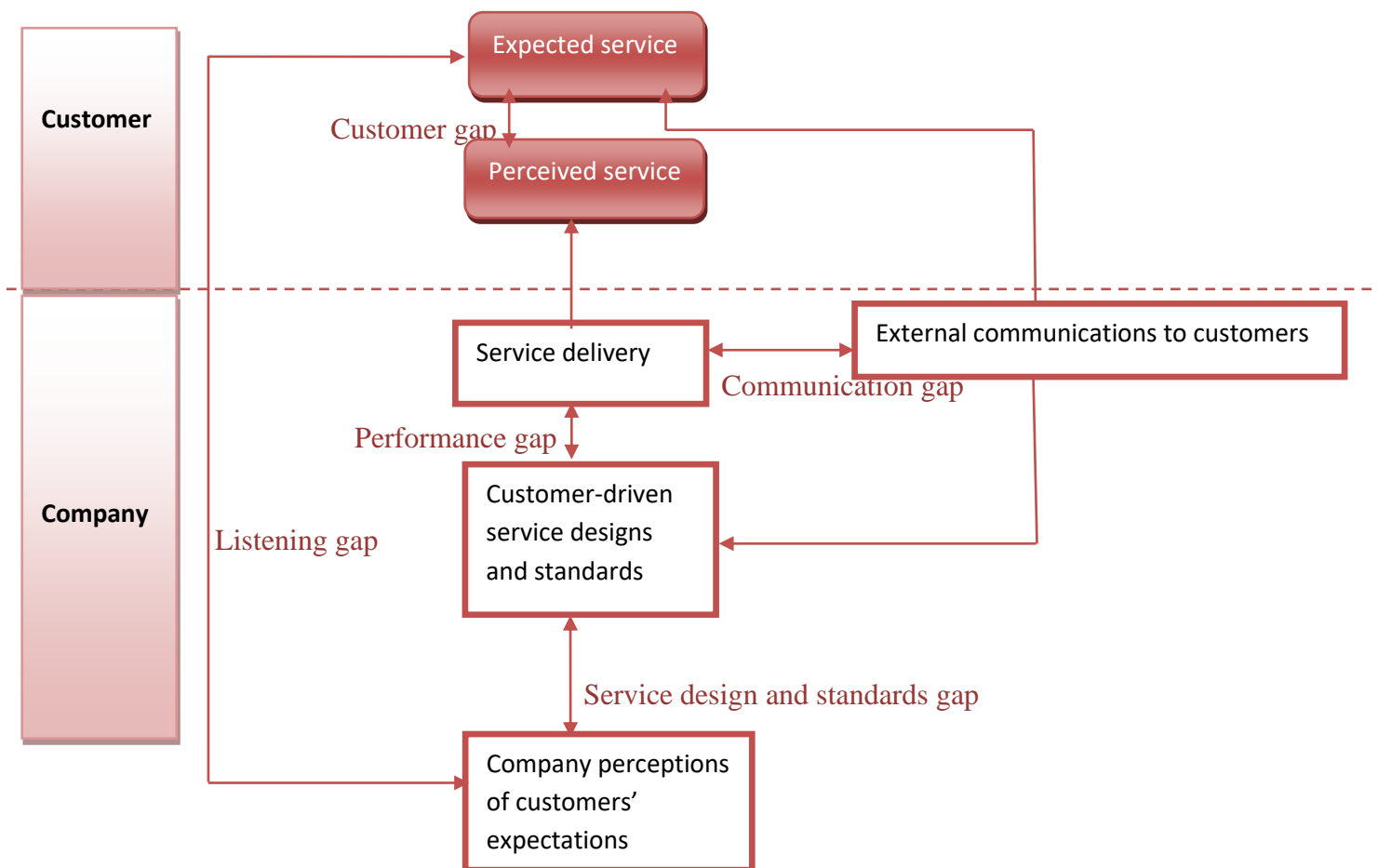


Figure 2.2 Gap model of service quality

Source: Zeithaml et al., (2013:45)

Figure 2.2 show that to deliver quality a service company must close the two gaps: the customer gap and the provider gap. Firstly, the customer gap is closed when the customer's expectation of the service meets the customer's perception. Secondly there are four provider gaps that need to be closed the first one is listening, which happens between the customer's expectation of the service and company's perception of customer's expectation. The company thinks that they know what their customer expects, without doing any research on the customer's expectation. This gap is closed when the company identifies their customer's expectation and deliver a quality service that meets the customer's expectation. Thus, the customer's expectation matches the company's perception of the customer's expectation. The second provider gap is the service design and standards Gap, which is the discrepancy between the company's perception of the customer's expectation and their service designs and standards. To close this gap, the company must design the service quality standards to meet the customer's expectation. The third provider gap is the performance gap, which is the difference between the customer driven service design and standards and the actual service delivery. This service design and standards helps the company deliver a quality service. To close this gap, service delivery must meet the service design and standards enabling the company to meet the customer's expectation. The last gap is the communication gap, which takes place between the service delivery and external communications to customers. This gap happens when the company makes promises to its customers and fails to deliver on the promises made. This gap is closed when the company makes successful promises that can be delivered to customers, resulting in the customer's expectation of the company's promises matching their perception of service delivery.

This Gap Quality Model is explained in more detail by Zeithaml et al. (2013:45). The gap model of quality service in figure 2.2 illustrates a strong message to managers who wish to develop their quality service: The key to closing the gap is to close provider gaps 1 through 4 and keep them closed. If one or more of the provider gaps are present, customers perceive service quality underperformances. The gap model of service quality assists as a basis for service companies to develop quality service and service marketing. The strategy insight provides a service quality gap audit, founded on the model. The model is created with the purpose of improving service quality. This assists in the comprehension of the nature and extent of the customer gap. The gap model of service quality was relevant to the interview questions (see chapter 5).

2.3.2.3 Managing Service Quality

According to Reid and Bojanic (2006:59), the delivery of high-quality service by all the employees, from the highest to the lowest level on the organisational chart, necessitates that they understand that the guest is the priority. The authors state that delivering high quality service is established on an attitude of serving customers. For example, the mission of The Greenbrier, a well-known resort, states, “We are ladies and gentlemen, serving ladies and gentlemen”. Reid and Bojanic (2009:59) express that it is essential for the company to develop an attitude that puts the customer as the priority. The authors stated that the lack of satisfying customers, results in the company being unsuccessful in the long term. They concluded that, to develop a service quality orientation, customers must be perceived in the following way:

- Each one of the customers is the most important person in any company.
- Customers do not depend on the company; the company depends on them.
- Customers do not disturb the staffs’ work; they are the purpose for it.
- Customers do a favour when they call about the business. The company is not doing them any favours by delivering services.
- Customers are a part of the company’s business, not strangers.
- Customers are human beings like us, with the same feelings and emotions.
- Customers are worthy of the most courteous and attentive service a company can deliver.
- Customers are the lifeblood of every single business.

The next section discusses on customer perception

2.4 Customer Perception

Customer perception has an influence on service quality (Machado 2014:142). Perception is defined as a procedure of selection, organisation, and interpretation of information inputs that create significance – information inputs are sensations received through sight, taste, hearing, smell, and touch (Pride and Ferrell, 2012:197). Zeithaml et al. (2013:45) define customer perception as the way that the customer evaluates his experience with quality service. Customer perception is explained in more detail in chapter 3.

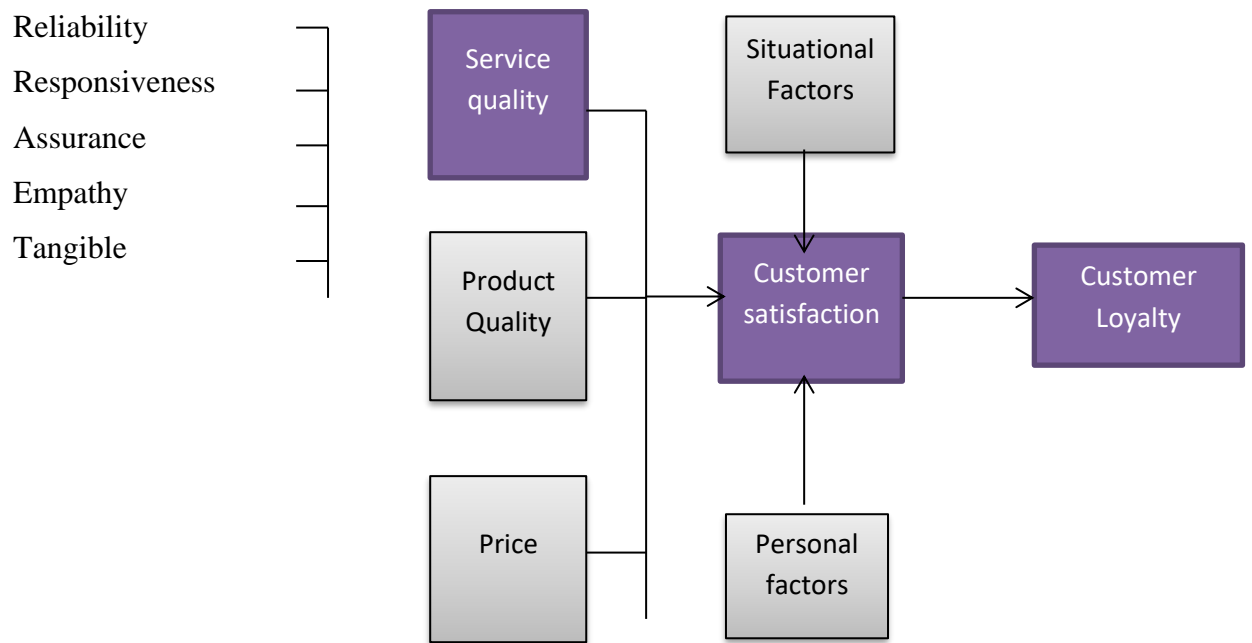


Figure 2.3 Customer perceptions of quality and customer satisfaction

Source: Zeithaml et al., (2013:79)

Figure 2.3 shows that firstly, the service quality is evaluated on the customer’s perceptions of reliability, assurance, responsiveness, empathy and tangibles. Secondly, customer satisfaction is influenced by the customer’s perception of service quality, product quality and price, and by the personal and situational factors. Thirdly a satisfied customer may become a loyal customer.

2.4.1 Satisfaction Versus Service Quality

Practitioners and writers in the popular press tend to use the terms satisfaction and quality interchangeably. However, researchers have tried to be more detailed about the meanings and measurement of the two concepts, resulting in considerable debate. The consensus is that the two concepts are basically dissimilar in terms of their underlying causes and consequences. However, they do have things in common; satisfaction is generally used as a wider concept, while service quality is focused precisely on the dimensions of service. Based on this opinion, perceived service quality is an element of customer satisfaction. Figure 2.3 graphically shows the relationships between the two concepts.

As illustrated in figure 2.3, service quality is focused on that which reflects the customer’s perception of reliability, assurance, responsiveness, empathy and tangibles. Satisfaction, on the other hand, is more comprehensive, it is impacted by the perceptions of service quality and price, as well

as situational factors (e.g. weather condition) and personal factors (e.g. the consumer's emotional state). These factors are discussed in chapter 3.

2.4.2 Transaction Versus Cumulative Perceptions

Zeithaml et al. (2013:79-80) explain the transaction versus cumulative perception:

It is important to note that the customer forms his perception of the hotel from every single service received. For example, a customer may form a positive perception from a friendly receptionist and then thinks that all the hotel's employees are friendly and deliver a service quality. A considerate perception, specifically at the service level, is important for identifying service issues and making instant solutions. These isolated encounters are also the building blocks for overall, cumulative experience evaluations. On the other hand, cumulative experience evaluations are possible predictors of total loyalty to a company. That is, customer loyalty is often the result of the customer's evaluation of all his experiences, not just one encounter. For example, a gentleman arrived at a hotel looking for a room to stay in, but he didn't have a booking. The receptionist told him that there were no available rooms for the night and the gentleman became desperate because he had a meeting the next morning just next to the hotel and was expecting to stay there. In a polite manner the receptionist told him that she was trying her best to get him a room and after a few minutes she informed him that, if he didn't mind waiting, a room would be available in two hours. The gentlemen were happy to receive the news and asked to be escorted to the dining room, so he could have dinner while waiting. After two hours, as promised, his room was available. The gentleman was satisfied because of his experience at the reception and in the dining room. The next morning, before leaving the hotel, he complimented the manager and said that he would come back again, because he received a quality service in that hotel. The next section discusses customer satisfaction.

2.5 Customer Satisfaction

Satisfaction has a significant influence on the customer's attitude and behavioural intention (Bowie and Buttle, 2016:282). Customers are usually faced with a broad array of products and services that might satisfy their needs (Armstrong and Kotler, 2015:35). Customers generally have pre-conceived expectations of hospitality experiences and after the encounter they evaluate the experience against those expectations, effectively asking: "Did that experience meet my expectations?". If the experience underperformed, dissatisfaction is likely to occur. Dissatisfied customers are at risk of defecting to competitors (Bowie and Buttle, 2016:282). Satisfied customers will buy again and tell

other about their good experience. However, dissatisfied customers often switch to competitors and disparage the product to others (Armstrong and Kotler, 2015:35).

According to Bowie and Buttle (2016:283), customers can enjoy a range of different types of satisfaction, including the following:

- Contentment means a routine of hospitality service is delivered satisfactorily.
- Pleasure means a hospitality experience makes the customer feel happy.
- Delight is when the experience surprises the customer and exceeds expectations.
- Relief is when a service overcomes a potentially difficult situation and delivers satisfaction.

2.5.1. Basic Principles of Customer Satisfaction

Effective management of customer satisfaction is based on the following principles (Bowie and Buttle, 2016:285):

- To identify which customers to satisfy. Not all customers are equally important.
- To identify what is important to those selected customers. Not all customers value the same components of the hospitality offer, and not all elements are similarly essential. For example, some customers value food quantity whereas others value food quality. The same customers' expectation may change over time; customers usually want faster service at lunch but more leisurely service in the evenings.
- To get it right the first time. Customers' expectations, once established, should be satisfied at the first opportunity. Companies must try to exclude the reasons for customer dissatisfaction, such as slow service, ill-informed contact staff and out of order equipment.
- To provide excellent recovery policies and systems. Accepting that sometimes even the best hospitality company does not meet customer expectations, companies must have in place recovery processes to mitigate customer dissatisfaction in order to pre-empt negative word of mouth.

This section was relevant to the interview questions regarding the customer satisfaction at the hotel.

2.5.2 Measuring Customer Satisfaction

Hospitality companies use a combination of direct and indirect methods to measure and monitor customer satisfaction (Bowie and Buttle, 2016:290). Bowie and Buttle (2016:290) determined and explained below different methods of measuring customer satisfaction:

- Analyse the customer's complaint and change the service policy and procedures in order to reduce the source of the complaint.
- Post-transaction surveys can be emailed to the customers after the service. These questionnaires can be completed and returned and will represent the post experience of the customer's satisfaction.
- Key account customers, frequent guests and members of loyalty clubs better understand the level of regularity in the hotel than employees. Therefore, surveys can be done on expert customers who understand the performance and underperformance of the service.
- Employee surveys can be conducted, encouraging employees to assist their managers where the service performance is not up to standard or where there is a problem about the service performance.
- Focus groups of customers and employees allow the coordinator to explore customer satisfaction issues in depth.
- Mystery shopping is a key tool in auditing the service process in hotels and restaurants. Measuring individual employees' service behaviour during an actual service encounter, without them knowing.
- Internal brand audits are when the hospitality businesses use their own staff or employ an external inspector company to ensure that the unit is delivering customer satisfaction. The inspection is not a secret as the manager and employees know when it will happen and prepare for it. Inspectors have all the details of the brand performance standards that cover all aspects of the operation; they check the unit's performance against the company's benchmarks. For franchise operations and hotels in consortiums, the brand audit provides the brand owner with evidence to force units performing below the minimum brand standards to improve their performance. Ultimately, if the unit continues to underperform, the brand owner can terminate the agreement and withdraw the brand name and support for the property.

2.5.3 Service Failure, Customer Complaints and Service Recovery

This section discusses service failure, followed by a discussion on customer complaints and end with service recovery.

2.5.3.1 Service Failure

Service failure is when service performance does not meet the customer's expectation in such way that leads to customer dissatisfaction (Zeithaml et al., 2013:180). Customers can become very emotional about the service failure, whether the failure is serious or minor (Levy and Grewal, 2014:414). Service failures are allocated to one of three main categories, as determined by Reid and Bojanic (2006:65):

- **Service delivery system failures** mean to fail at delivering the company's core services. These failures are the consequence of usually available services being unavailable, unreasonably slow service, or some other core service failure that differ from company to company. For example, a hotel's pool can have a leak and be closed.
- **Customers' needs and special requests** are not responded to by employees. These failures result from special needs, customer preferences, customer errors, and disruptions by others (that is, disputes between customers). For example, a hotel guest may possibly want to have a pet in his room.
- **Unprompted and unsolicited employee actions** refer to the actions, both good and bad, of employees that are not expected by the customers. These actions may be related to the level of attention an employee provides to customers or to the uncommon actions that can be performed by employees under adverse circumstances. For example, a hotel front desk clerk might give a free upgrade to a guest who had waited in the queue for too long.

2.5.3.2 Customer Complaints

Customers who experience a service failure can complain to the company to resolve the failed service (Norvell et al., 2018:378). Research suggests that only 45% of customers who experience a problem with a service provider complain to the employees serving them, and a very minor number of 1% to 5% complain to someone at the company's headquarters (Wilson, 2012:340). According to Norvell et al. (2018:378) the complaining customer who experiences a successful service recovery is less satisfied than a customer who does not experience a failed service. However, the non-complaining customers are less satisfied than the customers who have been recovered and more satisfied than the customers who experience a poor recovery service (Norvell et al., 2018:378). The way the company handles the complaint have an impact on whether the customer stays or leaves the company, and this is explained in more detail in section 2.5.2.3.

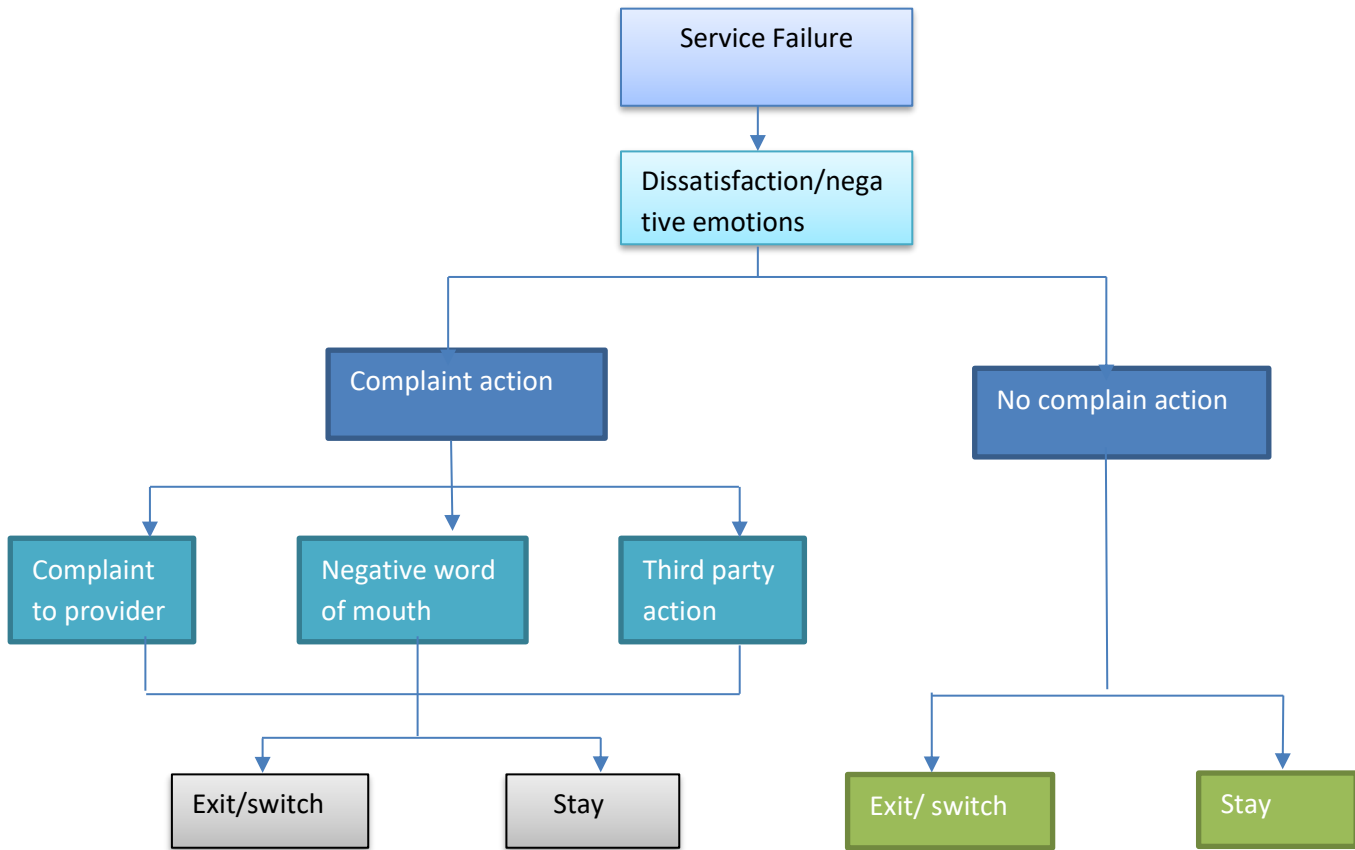


Figure 2.4 Service failure and customer complaints

Source: Wilson (2012:340)

Figure 2.4 shows that, when a company fails to deliver a quality service, it influences the customer’s judgement, and this results on customer dissatisfaction. Some unsatisfied customers complain while the other ones won’t complain. The unsatisfied customers, who complain, do it to the provider, spread bad word of mouth about the failure of service delivery to others, or take a third-party action. The customers may not complain because they have no idea about how to complain, or they judge for themselves that there is no reason to complain because it doesn’t matter anyway. They can decide to stay with the company or to exit the company and never come back.

The unfixed service failure can influence those customers who exit and can influence other customers about their own negative experiences. It can even lead to challenging the company through customer rights organisations or legal channels (Wilson, 2012:340). Customers who do not experience a service failure are more likely to recommend a business than those who experience a service failure, even with a satisfactory recovery (Norvell et al., 2018:378).

2.5.3.3 Service recovery

Research has shown that solving customers' problems successfully has a strong influence on customer satisfaction and word of mouth communication (Wilson, 2012:340). Word of mouth communication has a positive and negative impact on customers because the source of the message (friends, relatives and associates) is trustworthy (Bowie and Buttle, 2011:355). In fact, customers who are successfully involved in service recoveries frequently show greater levels of satisfaction than customers who do not report service failures or complain (Reid and Bojanic, 2006:66). Sometimes, certain companies have customers who are, at first, dissatisfied with a service experience and then experience a great level of exceptional service recovery. Apparently, they can be even more satisfied and more likely to return than if no problem had happened at all; they seem to be more satisfied after they experience a service failure than they would have been before (Wilson 2012:340). Wilson (2012:340) cite an example: consider a hotel customer who arrives to check in and finds that there is no room available. For the purpose of recovery, the hotel's front-desk employee immediately promotes this guest to a superior room at the same price. The customer, excited with this compensation, reports that he or she is exceedingly satisfied with this experience and is even more impressed with the hotel than before.

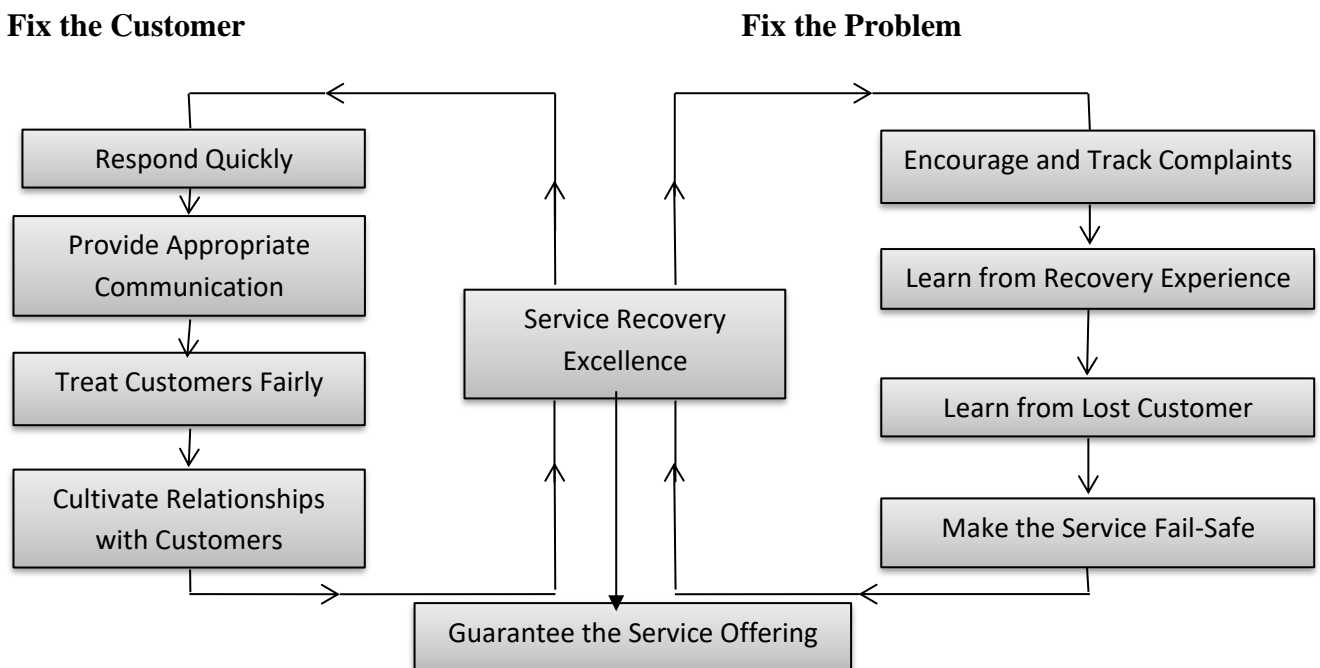


Figure 2.5 Service recovery strategies

Source: Zeithaml et al. (2013:188-189)

Figure 2.5 shows that service recovery strategies have two common types. The first type contains all the actions reserved by the company to rebuild the relationship with the customer – that is, to “fix the customer”. The second one is the actions taken to resolve the problem and, if possible, to inhibit it from repeating – that is to “fix the problem.” Clearly, both types of actions are important, however, fixing the customer needs to be done before fixing the problem. Customers usually expect more when they take the time and effort to complain. They are not only expecting a response but also expect the company to take responsibility. They expect to be assisted quickly and to be treated courteously during the process. When customers complain, they want quick responses. Accordingly, once there are service failures or complaints from customers, the company needs to be ready to respond quickly. Inappropriately, several companies require customers to contact many employees, a practice frequently referred as “ping-ponging”, before having their problem resolved. Responding quickly to service failures can go a long way in appeasing an unsatisfied customer. The facility to provide response involves not only structures and processes that allow quick action but also empowered employees. Thus, to allow them to respond quickly, employees must be trained and empowered to solve problems as they happen. An unsolved problem can quickly escalate. The Ritz Carlton, for example, maintains that the first employee to be aware of a customer’s complaint “owns” that complaint. Thus, an employee who is busy fixing a light in the hotel corridor “owns” that complaint and must ensure that the problem is handled suitably before he goes back to his work. Zeithaml et al. (2013:189) determined that another way to quickly handle problems or complains is to build systems that allow customers to resolve their own service needs and fix their own problems by using the technological approach. Customers directly interact with the company’s technology in order to solve their own customer service issues, which provide them with direct answers.

This section was relevant to the interview question with regards to service complaints and service recovery in the hotel.

2.6 Summary

This chapter has shown that customer service and customer satisfaction are important in the hotel industry. Managers must understand their customers’ needs and expectations and always look for ways to deliver a service quality that meets or exceeds their customers’ expectations. Customer service and customer satisfaction are essential in the hotel industry; they can change a customer’s perceptions. It is obvious that in today’s competitive hotel industry, some customers might be influenced by the service delivery of a hotel which can limit their choices when they need a hotel

service. Delivering service quality leads to customer satisfaction. It has also been shown that hotels need to encourage their customers to complain if the service is lacking in quality. Moreover, the hotel industry needs to be aware of how to correct customer complaints with service recovery. Therefore, the success of service recovery leads to customer satisfaction and can change the perception of customer service in the hotel industry. It should be a prime consideration for the hotel industry to keep their customers satisfied.

The next chapter provides a comprehensive review of literature on customer perception.

Chapter 3: Customer Perception of Service

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses customer perception of service in the hotel industry. Customer perception of service is very important in the hotel industry as customers have many options from which to choose a hotel; they have begun to learn how to act in a changing market environment. Consumer behaviour has changed gradually over the past few decades. Today customers pay more attention to service quality and that is why customers behave in a way they feel the most comfortable. Customer perception has been discussed in section 2.4, where it showed that customers form their perceptions based on their experiences; when they receive a quality service they are satisfied and their perception is positive and they are not satisfied when they do not receive a quality service, which result in a negative perception. Therefore, it is essential that hotels are aware of these changes in customer behaviour to satisfy their customers in order to deliver quality service, which results in creating positive customer perception.

Firstly, this chapter discusses customer behaviour; elaborate on what determines the consumer's buying decision and which factors influence consumer behaviour. Secondly, customer perception is discussed and defined; the factors influencing customer perception is determined and relationship between service quality, customer expectation and customer perception is explained. Thirdly the conclusion of this chapter is presented.

The chapter starts with the literature on consumer behaviour.

3.2 Consumer Behaviour

Every day consumers make various decisions about what to buy, and the buying decision is the focal point of the marketer's work (Armstrong and Kotler, 2015:161). Consumer buying behaviour is the buying behaviour of the final consumers – those who buy for personal use not for business purposes (Pride and Ferrell, 2012:192).

3.2.1 Consumer Buying Decision Process

Armstrong and Kotler, 2015:175 determined the procedure of the consumer buying decision process which comprises five stages as shown in figure 3.1: problem recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase, and post purchase evaluation. Pride and Ferrell (2012:192) state

the important points to consider at each stage. First, the buying action is one of the procedure's stages and not normally the first stage. Secondly the figure shows that a purchase occurs, not all the procedure's decisions lead to a purchase; people can end the procedure at any stage. Finally, not all consumer decisions contain all five stages. People who are engaged in extended problem solving and routinized response behaviour may forget some stages.



Figure 3.1 Consumer buying decision process

Source: Armstrong and Kotler (2015:175).

Figure 3.1 shows that the consumer's decision process consists of five stages: need recognition, information search, evaluation of the alternatives, the purchase decision and the post purchasing decision. However, the buying process starts long before the actual purchase and continues long after. Businesses should focus on the entire process rather than on the purchase decision only (Armstrong and Kotler, 2015:175).

The above figure suggests that all consumers go through the five stages of the buying decision process. However, the consumer may be quick or slowly when they are busy with the process of the buying decision. And sometimes the consumer skips or reverses some stage during the process. It depends on the consumer's character, the products and the buying situation stage (Armstrong and Kotler, 2015:175).

3.2.1.1 Stage 1: Problem Recognition

This process starts when the consumer recognises their need or a problem (Ebert and Griffin, 2015:392). The speed of consumer problem recognition may be quite rapid or rather slow. Sometimes an individual has a problem or need but is unaware of it (Pride and Ferrell, 2012:193). Therefore, the need can be triggered by internal stimuli when one of the person's normal needs rise to a level high enough to become a drive (Armstrong and Kotler, 2015:175). For example, a couple that travels overseas for their holidays may recognize that they will need a hotel to stay at during their holidays. They then decide to book a room in the hotel.

To create recognition of such a need or problem, marketers use sales personnel, advertising, and packaging to help (Pride and Ferrell, 2012:193). For example, a hotel could use a television advertisement and people who see the advertisement would then recognise the suitable hotel for their holidays.

3.2.1.2 Stage 2: Information Search

After recognising a need, consumers look for all information on the different alternatives available before making a buying decision (Ebert and Griffin, 2015:392). Consumers can get information from different sources such as personal sources (family, friends, neighbours and acquaintances), commercial sources (advertising, salespeople, dealer websites, packaging and displays) and public sources (mass media, consumer rating organisations, social media, online searches and peer reviews). This means more information for the consumer and therefore, he starts looking for other available brands and features (Armstrong and Kotler, 2015:175). For example, a couple looking for information on a hotel where they can spend their holidays may look for the hotel's information, having heard about it from their friends' experiences and knowledge.

3.2.1.3 Stage 3: Information Evaluation

After getting information and constructing a consideration set of alternative products, the consumer is ready to decide. Consumers use the information stored in memory and obtained from outside sources to develop a set of criteria for purchase (MacDaniel, et al., 2013:192). For example, a consideration set of hotels might include Moloko, Garden Court Sandton City, Park inn Sandton, Protea Montecasino, Emerald, and Protea Capital Pretoria. According to Brassington and Pettit (2013:86) the consumer makes a list of performance criteria and then evaluate each provider or available product against it. This evaluation may be based on objective criteria, related to the characteristics of the product and its use (price, specification, service, etc.). For example, Mary may assess each hotel based on what she heard about the hotel's service, as she might be looking for a hotel with quality service.

3.2.1.4 Stage 4: Purchase

In the purchase stage, the consumer decides to make a purchase (Ebert and Griffin, 2015:392). In this case, the consumer is required to finalise the proposed deal, and this can happen at the sales store, over the telephone or by email (Brassington and Pettitt, 2013:86). From the previous example,

after a couple decides at which hotel to spend their holiday; they send an email or make a call to book the hotel room and ask for an account number for payment. After that the couple decides to go ahead with the payment by transferring money to the hotel's account.

Sellers may make it easy or difficult for potential customers to make their purchase (Brassington and Pettitt, 2013:86). A customer may not get all the assistance he needs to make purchase. For example, a customer could make a call to book a hotel room and asks for more information about the hotel's services and the payment. It happened that the receptionist on the hotel's line was not friendly or was too busy talking to her friend instead of giving customer the necessary information, he could change his mind about booking into that hotel and go for another hotel.

3.2.1.5 Stage 5: Post Purchasing Evaluation

After buying, the consumer may either be satisfied or dissatisfied with the product he bought. This results in post purchase behaviour which is of interest to the seller (Armstrong and Kotler, 2015:177). The author argued a question: what determines if the consumer is satisfied or dissatisfied with a purchase? The answer lies in the relationship between the consumer's expectations and the performance of product received. Therefore, if the product does not meet the consumer's expectation, the consumer is dissatisfied; if it does meet the expectation, the consumer is satisfied; and if it exceeds the expectation, the consumer is delighted. In addition, the author claimed that a satisfied consumer will buy the product again and will recommend the product to others. For example, once the customer is in the hotel, he would start determining if the hotel meets his expectation. If the customer is satisfied, this might influence his word of mouth to other customers positively and he would come back to the hotel again. If the customer is not satisfied, this might have a negative influence on his word of mouth, resulting in the customer not coming back to use the service again and not recommending it to others.

3.2.2 Factors Influencing Consumer Behaviour

Figure 3.2 shows four factors that have an influence on consumer behaviour. The first factor is the culture factor that includes culture, subculture and social class. The second is the social factor that includes groups and social networks. The third is the personal factor that includes age and the lifecycle stage, occupation, economic situation, lifestyle, personality and the self-concept. The last is the psychological factor which includes motivation, perception, learning, and beliefs and attitudes. All mentioned factors are explained in more detail in the next sections.

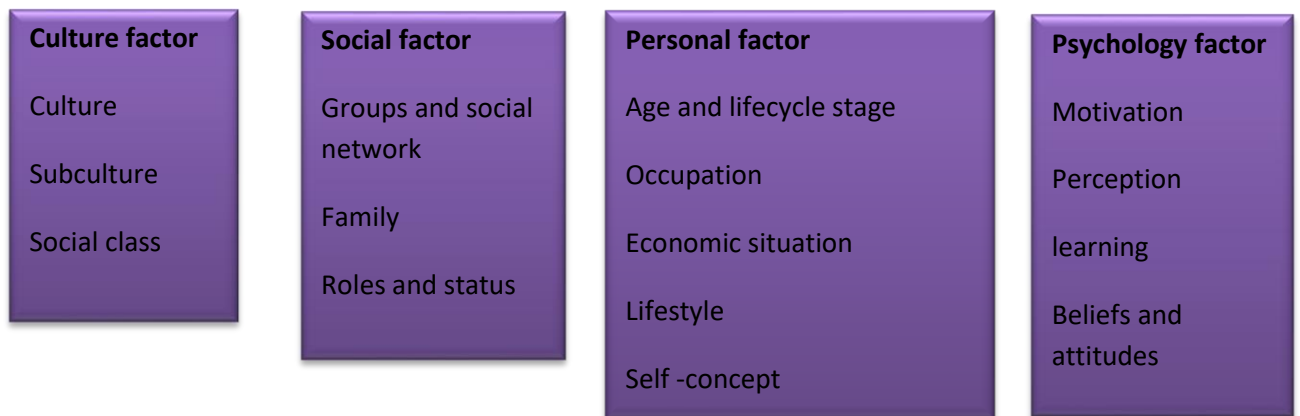


Figure 3.2 Factors that influence the consumer decision process

Source: Armstrong and Kotler (2015:162)

The above figure shows factors that have an influence on the consumer’s purchase decision process. These factors are now be discussed in greater detail.

3.2.2.1 Culture Factor

The cultural factors that have an influence on the consumer’s buying decision include culture, subculture and social class.

3.2.2.1.1 Culture

Culture is the most basic cause of a person’s wants and behaviour (Armstrong and Kotler, 2015: 162). Culture is defined as a group of people who share the same beliefs, morals, values and customs (Levy and Grewal, 2014:195). Growing up in a society, a child learns basic values, perceptions, wants, and behaviours from his or her family and other important institutions (Armstrong and Kotler, 2015:162). Culture is one of the social factors that impact the consumer’s decision and influences consumer behaviour (Levy and Grewal, 2014:195). For example, a black African may choose to stay in a hotel where they serve African food. Marketers are always trying to spot cultural shifts to discover new products that may be requested (Armstrong and Kotler, 2015:162).

3.2.2.1.2 Subculture

Each culture contains smaller subcultures, or groups of people with shared value systems based on common life experiences and situations (Armstrong and Kotler, 2015:162). Subcultures include nationalities, religions, racial groups and geographic regions (Armstrong and Kotler, 2015:162).

Many subcultures make up important market segments, and markets often design products and marketing programs fitted to their needs (Armstrong and Kotler, 2015:162). Muslim families may not stay in a hotel where they practice anything haram. (In this context it refers to the fact that Muslim people do not eat or cook pork and may not serve or drink alcohol.).

3.2.2.1.3 Social Class

According to Armstrong and Kotler (2015:162) everywhere in society, they have social class structures. Social class is defined as the division of society into group with members who share the same values, interests and behaviours (Armstrong and Kotler, 2015:162). Social class is not established or measured by a single factor like income, but is rather a combination of occupation, income, education, wealth and other variables (Armstrong and Kotler, 2015:162). Therefore, marketers pay a lot of attention to the behaviour of a social class as people of the same social class have the same purchasing behaviour (Armstrong and Kotler, 2015:162). For example, a minister who is on holiday with his family is expected to stay in five-star hotels, because of his position in the society.

3.2.2.2 Social Factor

The consumer's decision is also influenced by his external social environment, which includes groups and social networks, family, and roles and status.

3.2.2.2.1 Groups and Social networks

A lot of small groups have an influence on an individual's behaviour (Armstrong and Kotler, 2015:165). People are influenced by reference groups either directly, by conversation, or indirectly, by observation (Levy and Grewal, 2014:195). People are often influenced by reference groups to which they do not belong (Armstrong and Kotler, 2015:165). A reference group is a group that is used to judge other people or groups, based on their beliefs, feelings or behaviour (Levy and Grewal, 2014:195). Membership groups are groups that people belong to that has an influence on their behaviour (Armstrong and Kotler, 2015:165). A person can have different reference groups like family, friends, co-workers or the celebrity he/she wants to imitate (Levy and Grewal, 2014:195). Reference groups have an influence on the buying decision by giving information, providing rewards for specific purchasing behaviours, and enhancing the consumer's self-image (Levy and Grewal, 2014:195). For example, a person who stayed in the hotel during the holidays in Durban influenced

his friend to stay in the same hotel when he went to Durban because of the quality service he received at that hotel.

Word of mouth has a powerful influence on the consumer's buying decision (Armstrong and Kotler, 2015:165). Word of mouth recommendations from a trusted friend, associates or other consumers are more trustworthy than other sources such as advertisements and salespeople (Armstrong and Kotler, 2015:165). For example, a gentleman spent three weeks in a hotel in Sandton. He was extremely happy about the service and said that the hotel's staff was treating him like a king. He felt like he was at his own home. A few weeks later, one of his friends wanted to go to Pretoria. He also planned to stay in the same hotel because of what he had heard from his friend. He went there and got the same treatment. Positive word of mouth has a great influence on customers, and the other people who may become customers in the future. The greatest way to gain positive word of mouth is by creating a memorable and positive service experience (Zeithaml et al., 2013:40).

Opinion leaders are the people inside the reference groups who have special skills, knowledge, personalities, or other characteristics, that allow them to exert social influence on others (Armstrong and Kotler, 2015:165). Opinion leaders are also called influential or leading adopters, when these influential talks, consumers listen to them (Armstrong and Kotler, 2015:165). For example, one of the members from a church wanted to go to Gauteng for a church mission for a week. An opinion leader suggests that they could go to Pretoria and visit the orphans. He also suggests a hotel they could stay at in Pretoria because he has had a good experience with that hotel.

Online social networks are online communities that people use to communicate with, and they exchange information between them (Armstrong and Kotler, 2015:165). Social networks include blogs (Consumerist, Gizmodo, Zen habits, etc.), message boards (Craigslist), social media sites (Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and Foursquare) and virtual worlds (Second life and Everquest) (Armstrong and Kotler, 2015:165). Online social networks have a big influence on consumers in the market (Armstrong and Kotler, 2015:165).

3.2.2.2.2 Family

The family is the most important consumer buying organisation in society, and has been researched extensively (Armstrong and Kotler, 2014:167). People make purchase decisions on the product and service that the entire family will consumer or use (Levy and Grewal, 2014:194). Family members

have a big influence on the consumer's buying decision (Armstrong and Kotler, 2014: 167). Therefore, businesses should consider how a family makes decisions and understand that different family members might influence the decision (Levy and Grewal, 2014:194). Marketers have focussed their attention on the roles and influences of the husband, wife and children for different products and services (Armstrong and Kotler, 2014:167). When making a purchase decision in the family, all family members are considered (Levy and Grewal, 2014:194). For example, when choosing a hotel to stay at over during holidays, all family members may participate in making the decision. Like going to a hotel, where the kids could have access to a swimming pool and other kids' activities around the hotel.

3.2.2.2.3 Roles and Status

People fit in different group such as families, clubs, organisations, and online communities (Armstrong and Kotler, 2015:167). The position of the person in each group is defined as their role and status (Armstrong and Kotler, 2014:167). A role is the duties that a person agrees to perform for the people around them (Armstrong and Kotler, 2014:167). Each role carries a status that indicates the general esteem given to it by society (Armstrong and Kotler, 2014:167). A person selects a product to buy according to their role and status (Armstrong and Kotler, 2014:167). For example, when a chief executive officer of a certain company books a hotel for a business meeting he is attending, service provision will depend on his position and of the people he is meeting with. If he is also a father and husband, and needs to take his family on a holiday, he might have to choose a different hotel because he needs a hotel where his family could have a joyful and great stay.

3.2.2.3 Personal Factor

A consumer's decision can be influenced by personal factors such as age and life cycle stage, occupation, economic situation, lifestyle and personality, and self-concept.

3.2.2.3.1 Age and Life-cycle Stage

Goods and services that consumers buy change over their lifetimes (Armstrong and Kotler, 2014: 167). Taste in the food, clothes, furniture and recreation change proportionally to the age of the consumer (Armstrong and Kotler, 2014:167). Life stage changes usually result from demographics and life changing events like marriage, having children, purchasing a home, divorce, children going to college, changes in personal income, moving out of the house and retirement (Armstrong and Kotler, 2014:167). For example, a family going on vacation for the first time since they've had kids,

may have to change their usual hotel and use a hotel that is close to the kid's parks and where there could be other kids to play with.

3.2.2.3.2 Occupation

The occupation of the people influences the goods and services they purchase (Armstrong and Kotler, 2015:171). Occupational groups are being identified by marketers with regards to their interest in products and services (Armstrong and Kotler, 2015:171). For example, if a hotel has a meeting room to host occupational or businesses meetings customers that stay in the hotel for business reasons or work purposes.

3.2.2.3.3 Economic Situation

A person's economic situation affects his or her store and product choices. Marketers watch trends in personal income, savings and interest rates (Armstrong and Kotler, 2015:170). For example, the presidential suite in the hotel is reserved for rich customers; as they are the only ones who can afford it.

3.2.2.3.4 Lifestyle

Lifestyle is defined as the way consumers spend their time and money to live (Levy and Grewal, 2014:194). For many consumers the question of whether the product or service fits with their actual lifestyle, which might be sedentary, or their perceived lifestyle, which might be outdoorsy, is an important one (Levy and Grewal, 2014:194). Psychographics is a method used to describe consumers based on their psychological attributes which include the lifestyle of the consumer; how the person lives, acts and interacts with the world (Armstrong and Kotler, 2015:170). People with the same culture, social class and occupation have different lifestyle (Armstrong and Kotler, 2015:170). The lifestyle concept can help marketers to understand the change of the consumer's values and how it can affect the consumer's behaviour (Armstrong and Kotler, 2015:170). When buying a product, the consumer buys the product that presents the most (Armstrong and Kotler, 2015:170).

3.2.2.3.5 Personality and Self-concept

Personality involves all features, traits, behaviours, and experiences that make people different and unique from each other and is a very extensive and deep area of study (Brassington and Pettitt, 2013:93). Personality is generally defined in terms of traits such as self-confidence, dominance,

sociability, autonomy, defensiveness, adaptability, and aggressiveness (Armstrong and Kotler, 2015:171). Personality is at the heart of all consumers' behaviour. Therefore, marketers define the personality behaviour of a group of consumers and try to reflect it in the product and around the marketing of the product (Brassington and Pettitt, 2013:93). For example, a person with a self-confident character, who is used to being noticeable in high society, would decide to stay in luxury five-star hotels. Insecure and unsociable people, who do not like to be noticed, would choose to stay in a quiet and unnoticeable hotel.

3.2.2.4 Psychology Factors

Marketers can influence the purchase decision of the customers through the psychology factors that can affect the people who receive the message from the marketers (Levy and Grewal, 2014:190). Among them are motives, attitudes, perceptions, learning and lifestyle.

3.2.2.4.1 Motivation

It has been explained that marketing is all about satisfying customer needs and wants. According to Armstrong and Kotler (2015:172), some needs are biological in nature and come from states of tension such as hunger, thirst, or discomfort. Others are psychological and come from the need of recognition, esteem or belonging. Therefore, when a need is not satisfied, it motivates a person to get satisfaction; a motive is a need or want, which is strong enough to cause the person to seek satisfaction (Levy and Grewal, 2014:190). For example, a person who wants to go on a week-long beach holiday in a hotel would have no interest in buying a new car; he would choose to first go on holiday, and only thereafter he could start thinking about the car.

3.2.2.4.2 Perception

People's actions are influenced by their own perceptions of situations (Armstrong and Kotler, 2015:173). Perception is when people select, organise and interpret information that give them a meaningful picture of the world (Levy and Grewal, 2014:193). All people gather information through their five senses: sight, hearing, smell, touch and taste (Armstrong and Kotler, 2015: 173). In marketing, perception has an influence on the acquisition and consummation of goods and services by assigning meaning to the colour, symbol, taste and packaging. (Levy and Grewal, 2014:193). Though, each person receives, organises, and interprets this sensory information in an individual way (Armstrong and Kotler, 2015:173). For example, Jack and his girlfriend were having Easter dinner in the hotel's dining room. The waiter in charge came to check if the customers were

fine every 15 minutes. There was nothing to complain about and they didn't need anything else, so Jack's girlfriend shouted at the waiter that he was disturbing them. However, Jack appreciated the waiter's hospitality; he had a good manner of caring for the customer and asked his girlfriend to apologise to the waiter for her rudeness.

3.2.2.4.3 Learning

People learn when they are acting (Armstrong and Kotler, 2015:174). Learning is defined as a process of change in people's thoughts and behaviour that result from experience and that leads to the consumer making the decision to purchase (Levy and Grewal, 2014:193). Armstrong and Kotler (2015:174) defined learning as a change in an individual's behaviour that results from experience. Therefore, learning affects both attitude and perceptions (Levy, 2014:193). Learning happens through the interplay of drives, stimuli, cues, responses and reinforcement (Armstrong and Kotler, 2015:174). For example, advertising a hotel can help the consumers to learn more about that hotel and create the opportunity for them to become buyers in the future. Advertising a product can help consumers to learn more about what they are supposed to know about the product once they use it (Brassington and Pettitt, 2013:96).

3.2.2.4.4 Beliefs and Attitude

Belief is defined as a thought that a person keeps about something (Armstrong and Kotler, 2015:174). Beliefs can be created through a real knowledge, opinion, or faith and may or may not carry an emotional charge (Armstrong and Kotler, 2015:174). Attitude is when a person persists with the evaluation of his feeling and behaviour to an object or an idea (Levy and Grewal, 2014:172). Attitude can change people's mind and make them like or dislike things or move them toward or away from these things (Armstrong and Kotler, 2015:174). People learn to have an attitude, and this can last very long and be developed over a long period of time. It can also be changed in a short period of time. For example, a person used to like a hotel; he thought that his favourite hotel was the best hotel in South Africa because the employees were always responsive and friendly toward him. He felt completely at home in the hotel. After a long period, the hotel changed to employees who did not know him, they were not as friendly and responsive as he was used to. Since then he has never felt like he was at home in the hotel and suddenly his attitude changed, and he decided not to go back to that hotel.

The next section discusses how customers perceive the service, as it is the focus area of this study.

3.3 Customer Perception of the Service

This section firstly discusses the customer's perception of service; secondly, factors influencing the customer's perception; and thirdly, the relationship between quality service, customer expectation and customer perception.

3.3.1 Definition of Customer Perception of Service

Customer perception of service quality, and what it means, can be vastly different from what the company perceives to be quality service (Machado, 2014:124). Therefore, understanding the customers' opinion of service quality is necessary for a company that is concerned about what interests their customers (Machado, 2014:14). The service company is not motivated to be without customers (Hoffman and Bateson, 2006:303). Today, service quality has become the great equaliser in numerous companies and organisations and is the key – if not the only – distinguishing element among the same types of companies (Machado, 2014:124). Each company's service must first be explained, and customer satisfaction measured (Hoffman and Bateson, 2006:303). Two businesses can offer similar products, but the customer can choose one above the other because of the company's well and unflinching level of service (Machado, 2014:124).

3.3.2 Factors That Influence Customer Perception

It was shown in chapter 2, section 2.4 and in figure 2.3, that customer perceptions are influenced by situational and personal factors. These factors are defined by Machado (2014:142-143) in detail below:

- **Service encounters:** this defines every occasion where the service provider and customer are together. Service encounters can involve impressions about the general service quality delivery; overall staff behaviour, their precise knowledge or skills, quality and the way they respond to after sale services. For example, an old couple heard from their son that there is a great hotel in Pretoria, when they decided to visit Pretoria, they went to that hotel to spend the weekend; the receptionist received them with a nice smile like she knows them and made the old couple feel like they were welcome in that hotel.
- **Evidence of service:** this influences the customer's perception by eliminating the hesitation and doubt that services generate in customers' minds. If a service provider can deliver evidence of service to the customers, it builds a positive perception, as the customers have proof to confirm the completion of the service process. For example, after the receptionist finished checking if there is a room available for the couple, she informed

them, in a good manner, that there was one available; which makes the couple feel more than welcome in the hotel and gives them the evidence that they can get a room in that hotel.

- **Image:** the image of a company has an impact on the customer's perception in both a positive and negative way. If an organisation has a positive image, the customer can be more inclined to spread a positive word of mouth communication. But if the organisation's image is negative, this can generate a negative customer perception. From the same example, the older couple had known from their son that the hotel offered quality service, that is what created their positive perception, and was the reason they decided to go to that hotel.
- **Price:** price has an influence on customer perception because of the intangibility of service. Customers regularly associate an expensive price with great quality expectations and a cheap price with low quality offerings. For example, after the receptionist informed them of the price of a room per night, the old couple accepted the room and stayed in the hotel; the higher price was justified by the high-quality service of that five-star hotel.

3.3.3 The Relationship between Service Quality, Customer Expectation and Customer Perception

According to Machado (2014:126), most of the customers of any company, have assumptions or expectations when they are dealing with the company. Customer expectations are defined as views about a service delivery, standards or reference opinions, to which performance is compared to (Zeithaml et al., 2013:51). Service quality is defined as customers' perceptions of how well a service meets or exceeds their expectations (Pride and Ferrell, 2012:382). When assessing quality service, customers tend to compare their perceptions of performance with these reference points. Because customers compare their perceptions of performance with these evaluative reference points, the knowledge about customers' expectation is essential to service marketers (Zeithaml et al., 2013:51). Companies are conscious toward delivering quality customer service, know that they must first be aware of the customer's expectations and how to recognize them; then, more essentially, how to meet them and satisfy the customers (Machado, 2014:126). The first, and probably most serious, phase of delivering service quality is to know what the customers are expecting (Zeithaml et al., 2013:51). Therefore, it is essential for companies to identify what customers expect and improve their service product in order to meet or exceed these expectations (Pride and Ferrell, 2012:382). To meet customer expectation is not easy; it may be tough to attain (Machado, 2014:126). To be unable

to meet a customer's expectations means losing a customer's business where a different company succeeds with the exact same target (Zeithaml et al., 2013:51). Customers change and develop their expectations, this reason is hard for companies to meet them continuously (Machado, 2014:126).

There is a relationship between customer expectation, service quality and customer perception. As customers are always expecting quality service, when their expectations are met, they are satisfied, and this creates a positive customer perception. For example, a gentleman went to stay in a hotel in Johannesburg for the weekend because he had heard from his friend about their quality service. Once he got there, he really received a great experience, starting from the reception, to the housekeeper and the hotel's restaurant. They offered him a quality service, which met his expectations and created a positive perception.

3.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, the researcher discussed the introduction and customer behaviour, where the reasons why customers make their buying decision was shown. It has been shown that customers always want to be satisfied with their buying decision. In addition, the chapter discussed customer perception, how the customer perceived service delivery; it showed that perception can be either positive or negative. The positive perception is when the customer's expectations are met, and they are satisfied with the service or product. And perception is negative when the customer's expectations are not met.

The next chapter discusses methodology.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the detailed plan of how the study was conducted. The research problem is defined, primary and secondary research objectives are identified, and it describes the research design. In addition, the chapter discusses the data collection techniques that were used, designing the questionnaire and sample plan. The fieldwork is discussed, the preparation and processing of the primary data are determined, and the data analysis approach is discussed. Limitations of the study is presented as well as the ethical considerations.

The next section discusses on marketing research process.

4.2 Marketing Research process

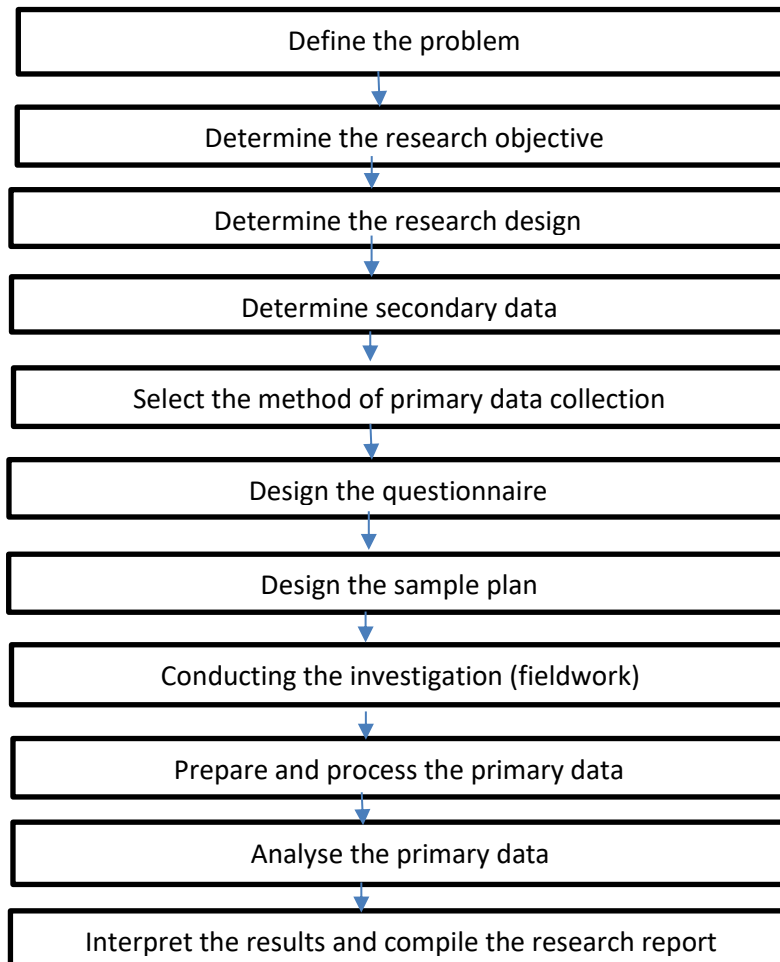


Figure 4.1 Marketing research process

Source: (Wiid and Diggines, 2015:41)

Marketing research was defined by Armstrong and Kotler (2015:131) as a systematic design, collection, analysis and reporting of the appropriate data to a marketing department of a business or organisation. Most importantly, marketing research indicates the information required to decide on the method of data collection, implements and manages the procedure of data collection, analyses the results and communicates the results to the decision-maker in order to significantly resolve the marketing problem (Wiid and Diggines, 2015:36). Moreover, in order to get a clear picture of the process of marketing research, different stages related to the marketing research process, as developed by Wiid and Diggines (2015), are described in detail below. The marketing research process, as proposed by (Wiid and Diggines, 2015:41), constitutes the blueprint that guides the researcher in assessing that all the steps related to the marketing research process are coherently used and interconnected to one another.

4.2.1 Define the Problem

Armstrong and Kotler (2015:132) asserted that marketing managers and researchers should work together in order to define the problem and have an agreement on the research objectives. In addition, to define a research problem correctly, the researcher must perform a number of tasks. The researcher must discuss the problem with the decision makers of the client's organisation, interview industry experts and other knowledgeable individuals, analyse secondary data, and sometimes conduct qualitative research (Malhotra, 2015:55-56).

According to Malhotra (2015:67), the definition of a research problem helps the researcher to do the following:

- It permits the researcher to get all the information needed to solve the marketing problem.
- It directs the researcher to be focused and to go ahead with the research in a consistent manner.

In chapter 1, section 1.3.1, it was shown that by considering previous studies related to the service quality and customer perception in the hotel industry, there is paucity on research investigating the perceptions of customer service in the hotel industry in general and, in particular, in Pretoria. In chapter 3, it was shown that service can affect customer perception. In this study, in chapter 1, section 1.3.1, it was shown that customers have become more concerned about the service that hotels provide. Customers expect quality service; they are satisfied when they receive what they expect, but the lack in offering a quality service can negatively affect the customers' perceptions about the

hotel. The research problem therefore is the lack of information on the perception of customer service in the hotel industry in Pretoria. The research question can therefore be presented through the following questions:

Primary research question:

- What are the perceptions of customers in terms of the service provided in the hotel industry in Pretoria?

Secondary research questions:

- Does service quality influence customer expectations in the hotel industry in Pretoria?
- What are the factors that contribute to form the perception of service in the hotel industry in Pretoria?

After identifying the research problem, the researcher must determine the research objectives (Armstrong and Kotler, 2015:132).

4.2.2 Identify the research objective

Research objective in the exploratory phase is defined as the gathering of preliminary information that will help define the problem (Armstrong and Kotler, 2015:132). Furthermore, Wiid and Diggines (2015:58) also define the research objective as the success that the researcher expects to achieve. The research objective must provide all the necessary information to solve the problem or to be utilised in the study (Wiid and Diggines, 2015:58). In this study, the objectives, as presented in chapter 1, were identified to resolve the problem. The primary objective of the study was to explore the customer's perceptions on service provided in the hotel industry in Pretoria. The secondary research objectives are to understand the effect of service quality on customer expectations and to identify factors that form the customer's perceptions in the hotel industry in Pretoria.

The secondary research objectives are to:

- Understand the effect of service quality on customer expectation in the hotel industry in Pretoria;
- Identify factors that form customers' perceptions in hotels industry, in Pretoria

Customers always expect to receive a service quality. Therefore, this study shows how service quality can affect their perceptions. After identifying the research problem and objectives, researchers must determine the exact information needed and develop a plan for collecting it (Armstrong and Kotler, 2015:132).

4.2.3 Determine the Research Design

This section discusses the research design used in this study. A research design is the process of focusing the researcher's perspective for the purposes of a study. In the same vein, the purpose of the research design is to plan and structure the marketing research project in order to increase the validity of the research result and findings. In other words, the research design is the plan of how the research investigation will be conducted (Wiid and Diggines, 2015:42). It is important to note that the choice of an appropriate research design helped the researcher to achieve the objectives of the study.

4.2.3.1 Research Design Classification

Research design can be classified, depending on the objective of the research, into conclusive and exploratory research designs (Wiid and Diggines, 2015:65-67).

4.2.3.1.1 Exploratory Research Design

Exploratory research includes a primary investigation of a problem or situation; identifying the consideration of further studies and to determine the problem itself (Clow and James, 2014:27). Babbie (2017:92) defined exploratory research as examining a new interest or when the subject of the study itself is relatively new. Exploratory research is often used in the first stage of a more comprehensive research study (Clow and James, 2014:27).

According to Babbie (2017:92) exploratory research is normally done for three purposes:

- To satisfy the researcher's curiosity and desire for better understanding.
- To test the feasibility of undertaking a more extensive study.
- To develop the methods to be employed in any subsequent study.

4.2.3.1.2 Conclusive Research Design

Conclusive design is when the researcher must study the research problem in a conclusive form, and then has to choose a possible course of action from different options (Wiid and Diggines, 2015:67).

The conclusive form comprises of descriptive and causal research:

- Descriptive research is necessary when the specific market or marketing knowledge is unclear, or the knowledge of an industry is vague (Wiid and Diggines, 2015:67). Descriptive research answers the questions who, what, when, where and how in describing the characteristics of customers, products, and other marketing phenomena that it is under study (Clow and James 2014:29).
- Causal research studies aim to indicate the connection between variables or occurrences (Wiid and Diggines, 2015:68). Causal research is openly related to predictive studies, like approximating upcoming values such as sales income, market shares and sales orders (Wiid and Diggines, 2015:68). For example, with a study on the impact of customer satisfaction on sales in the hotel industry the researcher may show how customer satisfaction can raise the sales, if the customers are satisfied, they may come back to the hotel; this results in more sales.

Table 4.1 The distinction of exploratory, descriptive and causal research

	Exploratory research	Descriptive research	Causal research
Amount of uncertainty characterizing decision situation	Highly ambiguous	Partially defined	Clearly defined
Key research statement	Research question	Research question	Research hypothesis
When conducted?	Early stage decision making	Later stages of decision making	Later stages of decision making
Usually research approach	Unstructured	Structures	Highly structured
Examples	<p>“Our sales are declining for no apparent reason”</p> <p>“What kinds of new products are fast-food customers interested in”</p>	<p>“What kind of people patronized our stores compare to our primary competitor?”</p> <p>“What product features are most important to our customers?”</p>	<p>“Will consumers buy more products in blue package?”</p> <p>“Which of two advertising campaigns will be more effective?”</p>

Nature of results	Discovery oriented, productive, but still speculative. Often in need of further research.	Can be confirmatory although more research is sometimes still needed. Results can be managerially actionable.	Confirmatory oriented. Fairly conclusive with managerially actionable results often obtained.
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Source: Zikmund and Babin (2010:56)

According to Wiid and Diggines (2015:63), research design is defined as an approach to the research, which can be qualitative, quantitative or multi (mix) method. The approach used in this study was exploratory study as the purpose of the study is to explore the perceptions of hotel customers in terms of service in the hotel industry in Pretoria. Considering that there is a paucity of knowledge about this subject, this approach enabled research to gain understanding on the perception of customer service in the hotel industry in Pretoria.

4.2.4 Collecting the Secondary Data

The secondary data are constituted with data from sources such as published and unpublished articles, books as well as databases on the internet. According to Wiid and Diggines (2015:43), secondary data is defined as data that has been previously collected by any company or external source with a different purpose than that of solving the research problem. No additional marketing research is essential if the problem has already been solved by the secondary data. However, if the problem is not solved after collecting the secondary data, an official marketing research investigation must be conducted (Wiid and Diggines, 2015:43). Besides, Malhotra (2015:89) emphasise the necessity of collecting primary data, only if the analysis of the secondary data did not contribute to solving the research problem. When data are collected to address a specific research problem, they are referred to as primary data (Malhotra 2015:89). In this study, the findings on the secondary data indicated that the research problem has not been adequately addressed. That is why the researcher conducted the primary research.

4.2.5 Select the Method of Primary Data Collection

Wiid and Diggines (2015:70) maintained that primary data is data that has not been collected previously, and which must be collected by a formal marketing investigation. Besides, they claimed that primary data is specifically concerned with the research problem and is more relevant to the

research objectives than secondary data. Primary data is obtained from both internal and external sources such as the staff of an enterprise, customers and retailers as well wholesalers and competitors of the enterprise (Wiid and Diggines, 2015:71).

To collect the primary data for this study, a primary research was conducted. In addition, the primary data was obtained from the external sources such as the hotel's customers (Wiid and Diggines, 2015). Therefore, the researcher conducted interviews with selected customers in one hotel in Pretoria; this is discussed in more detail in section 4.2.7, the design of the sample plan, later in this chapter. It is worth noting that the process of data collection can be qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods.

4.2.5.1 Quantitative Research

Quantitative research is framed in terms of using numbers rather than words or using closed-ended questions (quantitative hypotheses) rather than open-ended questions (qualitative interview questions) (Creswell, 2014:32). In this view, Wiid and Diggines (2015:71-72) suggests these three methods that need to be used in collecting data: surveys, observations and experiments.

These three methods are briefly discussed below:

4.2.5.1.1 Survey Method

Survey entails collecting data about selected individuals by using direct or indirect questioning, like a questionnaire sent through the mail (Wiid and Diggines, 2015:72). For example, the researcher may ask questions in the questionnaire regarding customer satisfaction in the hotel industry that the hotel's customers must answer and then give back the questionnaire to the researcher.

4.2.5.1.2 Experimental Method

The experimental method is like testing. It is done in a controlled environment, and conclusions are then generalised to apply to the wider context (Wiid and Diggines, 2015:71).

4.2.5.1.3 Observation Method

Wiid and Diggines (2015:71) asserted that the observation method takes place when people and situations are watched. Human observation takes place when, for example, researchers personally monitor the number and behaviour of consumers in a supermarket and record the information on predesigned forms (Wiid and Diggines, 2015:71).

4.2.5.2 Qualitative Research

According to Clow and James (2014:96), qualitative research is defined as an excellent means of conducting exploratory research. During qualitative research the researcher keeps a focus on learning the meaning that the participants hold about the problem or issue, not the meaning that the researcher brings to the research (Creswell, 2014:186). In addition, qualitative research aims to explore a matter in order to understand the original reasons and motives (Wiid and Diggines, 2015:64). This research method helped the researcher gain an understanding on the perception of customer service in the hotel industry in Pretoria. The purpose of qualitative research is to explain and define an existing situation for a specific group and generalise the result (Wiid and Diggines, 2015:64).

In addition, Creswell (2014:185) explained, that in qualitative research, researchers are the ones who collect data by examining documents, observing behaviour, or interviewing participants. Therefore, they may use a protocol – an instrument for collecting data – but the researchers are the ones who gather the information. Qualitative data helps researchers to understand processes, especially those that emerge over time; provide detailed information about setting or context; and emphasize the voices of participants through interviews (Tumba, 2014:56). Qualitative methods facilitate the collection of data when other measures do not exist and provide a depth of understanding of the concepts (Tumba, 2014:56).

Table 4.3 The distinction between quantitative and qualitative research

	Qualitative research	Quantitative research
Type of question	Probing	Limited probing
The size of sample	Small	Large
Amount of information from each respondent	Substantial	Varies
Requirements for administration	Interview with special skills	Interview with fewer special skills or no interview
Type of analysis	Subjective, interpretive	Statistical, summation
Hardware	Sound recorders, projection devices, video recorders, pictures, discussion guides	Questionnaires, computers, printouts, mobile devices

Degree of replicability	Low	High
Research training	Psychology, sociology, social psychology, consumer behaviour, marketing research	Statistical, decision models, decision support systems, computer programming, marketing, marketing research
Type of research	Exploratory	Descriptive or causal

Source: McDaniel and Gate (2012:117)

4.2.5.3 Mixed Method Research

Mixed method research is defined as a way of using more than one method of collection, analysis, interpretation and reporting of data; by mixing the qualitative and quantitative approaches (Wiid and Diggines, 2015:65).

According to Creswell (2014:293), mixed method research is an approach to inquiry that combines both qualitative and quantitative forms of research. Furthermore, Tumba (2014:57) claims that the central premise of mix method research is that the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches, in combination, provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone. Attempting to explain the purpose of using mixed method research, Creswell (2014:264) supposed that both forms of data collection provide different types of information (open-ended data, in the case of qualitative and closed-ended data, in the case of quantitative). He further assumed that each type of data collection has its own limitations and strengths, one need to consider how the strengths can be combined to develop a stronger understanding of the research problem or questions and, as well, overcome the limitations of each.

This study utilised the exploratory approach which is by nature a qualitative research method. Due to the paucity of information related to the perception of customer service in the hotel industry in Pretoria, the exploratory approach allowed the researcher to obtain first hand data which contributed to extend the existing literature on the perception of customer service; to build and expend knowledge in the field of service quality in the hotel industry. It also enabled the researcher to understand the perceptions of customers on service quality. The exploratory approach assisted the researcher in understanding why customers decide to come back or not to come back to the hotel

and determined their perceptions in terms of service in the hotel industry. The researcher collected data from the customers in one selected hotel in Pretoria.

4.2.6 Design the Questionnaire

A questionnaire is defined as an instrument used to collect data from participants; consequently, it plays a significant influence on how to determine if the marketing problem is solved or not (Wiid and Diggines, 2015:164). In the same vein, Gray (2014:352) described questionnaires as research means through which people are asked to respond to the same set of questions in a pre-determined sequence.

It is important to note that, designing and choosing the instrument to be used in the process of data collection (fieldwork) depends on the nature of the data to be collected and the research methods that will be applied to the study under research. On the one hand, when the research study follows the quantitative approach, the use of a questionnaire (structured questions with structured responses) with closed-ended questions is required to collect data. For closed-ended questions, the respondent is asked to select an answer from among a list provided by the researcher (Babbie, 2017:257). On the other hand, when the research study follows the qualitative approach, the design with structured questions requiring unstructured responses, or open-ended questions are considered. According to Babbie (2017:257), open-ended questions are when the responded is asked to provide his or her own answer to the question.

When deciding on the type of questions to be used in a specific research study, the researcher must think about the probable reactions or expected answers of the respondents (Wiid and Diggines, 2015:169). There are two kinds of questions: structured questions with structured responses and structured questions with unstructured responses (Wiid and Diggines, 2015:169). They are as follows:

4.2.6.1 Structured Questions with Structured Responses

Structured questions with structured responses are the kind of question where respondents must choose one out of several possible answers (Wiid and Diggines, 2015:169). For example, multiple choice questions, where one question has three or four possible answers, from which the respondents must choose one. These questions have one right answer.

4.2.6.2 Structured Question with Unstructured Responses

Structured questions with unstructured responses are questions that give confidence to the respondent to collect and express their own answers completely (Wiid and Diggins, 2015:171). For example: What can you say about the service provided in this hotel? This question encourages the respondent to express his or her own opinion.

Table 4.4 Advantages and disadvantages of structured questions with structured responses and structured questions with unstructured responses

	Advantage	Disadvantage
Structured questions with structured responses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Easy to use as they are pre-coded ● Not expensive ● Uses less time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Loss of questionnaire ● Unhappy respondent as they cannot give their own response; they must choose from the given responses. ● Not easy to understand (intelligently elaborated questions) sometimes respondents must guess which may have impact on the response.
Structured questions with unstructured responses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● It is appropriate questions as responses are not limited. ● Appropriate questions for a researcher with limited knowledge on the topic under study, or when the researcher is not sure on the answer, a specific question may be suggested. ● It is appropriate when the researcher is expecting a great diversity of answers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● It takes time. ● It is expensive as they must be analysed by a professional with specific knowledge. ● Limited number of questions that must be asked before respondents become exhausted. ● Often with many responses, they are statistically and analytically insignificant. ● Frequently the responses are not easy to understand.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It can be useful to determine the feelings or motivation of respondents regarding the questions. • It is more appropriate than closed questions when the researcher is measuring sensitivity, as they provide exact responses on the matter under study. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unhappy respondents as they need to provide significant responses.
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Source: Wiid and Diggines (2015:169)

In this study, the researcher used structured questions with unstructured responses. The researcher asked open-ended questions; and conducted interviews with the hotel’s customers by asking them questions and allowing them to respond with their own answers. This enabled the researcher to gain the opinion of the customers by expressing their views, their motivation and expectation regarding the question.

4.2.7 Design the Sample Plan

According to Wiid and Diggines (2015:183), a sample is defined as a subsection of a population (or universe). Generally, sample guidelines for qualitative research means, to carry on the research until the researcher gains a deep knowledge of the issues under study and to stop if researcher does not gain any new knowledge (Cooper and Schindler, 2012:151). This is called data saturation (see definition in chapter 1). According to Bradley (2010:151), a sample is selected from the interested population. Figure 4.2 points out the different steps related to the process of sampling that the researcher needs to follow when drawing a sample from the population and is explained in detail thereafter.

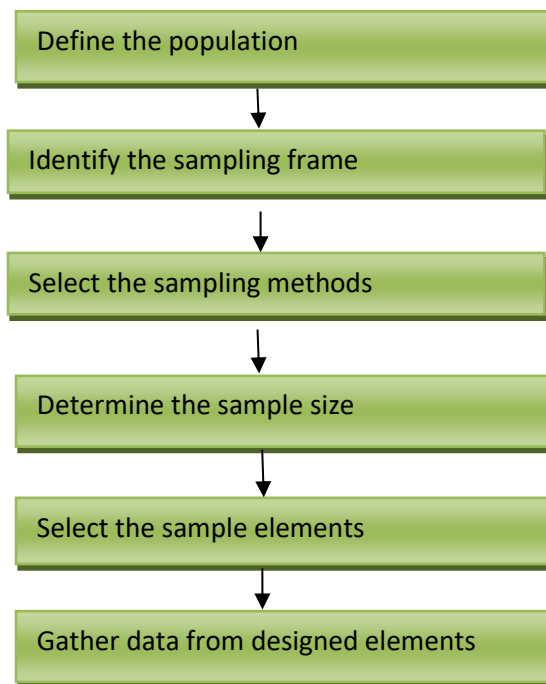


Figure 4.2 Steps of sampling process

Source: Wiid and Diggines (2015:187)

4.2.7.1 Step 1: Define the Population

The population is a compiled of a number of people or a mix of people or objects that become an issue to be studied (Wiid and Diggines, 2015:188). The concept of population (or universe) is defined as a whole set of people that can provide the required information (Wiid and Diggines, 2015:188). The population can, for example, consist of a specific group of individuals, households, families, businesses, manufactures, farmers and professional people from whom data are required (Wiid and Diggines, 2015:188). For this study purpose, the target population was restricted to customers that spent at least a night in one selected hotel in Pretoria.

4.2.7.2 Step 2: Identify the Sampling Frame

According to Babbie (2017:211), a sampling frame is a list, or a quasi-list, of elements from which a probability sample is selected. When a sampling frame is to be representative of the population, it is essential that the sampling frame include all members of the population. In addition, the sampling frame must be consonant with the population we wish to study (Babbie, 2017:211). Straits and Singleton (2018:108) noted, that the sampling frame is not sampling, it is the operational definition of the population that provides the basics for sampling. According to Straits and Singleton (2018:108) a sampling frame means the set of all cases from which the sample is selected. There are

two ways of constructing a sampling frame, which correspond to the two ways to define a set, or subset, in logic: listing all cases and providing a rule defining a membership.

To gain insight into the study, the researcher selected participants from the population which were customers of one selected hotel. Accordingly, customers were chosen from one selected hotels in Pretoria. The researcher selected customers to be sampled from the customers who entered or exited the hotel. To get access to the hotel and the selected participants, the researcher had a recommendation letter from UNISA as well as permission from the hotel management (see section ethical consideration 4.5).

4.2.7.3 Step 3: Select the Sampling Methods

As seen in figure 4.1, Bradley (2010:160) indicates that there are two types of research designs: probability (also recognized as random) and non-probability (also recognized as non-random).

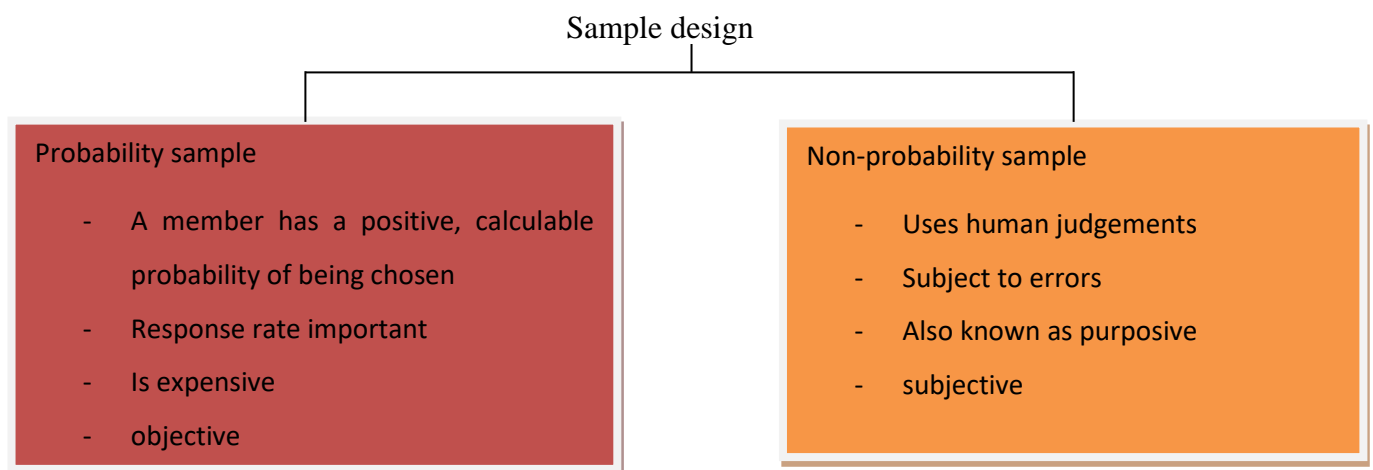


Figure 4.3 Distinction between probability and non-probability sampling

Source: Bradley (2010:160).

The probability sample shows that:

- A member is confident and has a calculable probability to be chosen; this means that it is known that any element could be chosen.
- The response rate is important; this means that it is necessary to know the number of participants.
- It is expensive: it cost more money.
- It is objective; it is not based on personal feelings.

Conversely, the non-probability sample:

- Uses human judgements; this means a way of evaluating a person or a situation.
- Is subject to errors; it may be wrong due to bad judgement.
- Is also known as purposive; it has aim.
- It is subjective; it is based on personal impression or feelings.

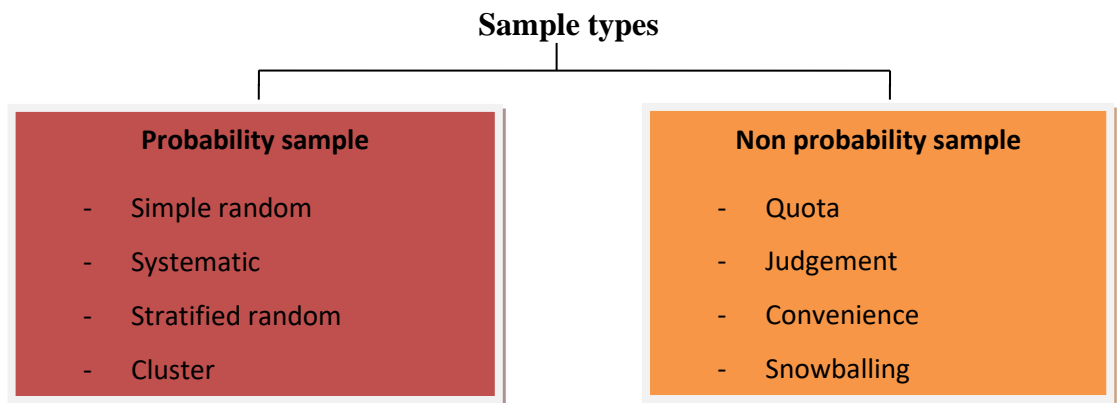


Figure 4.4 Types of probability and non-probability samples

Source: Bradley (2010:161)

Figure 4.4 shows the sampling types. The first is probability sampling which includes simple random, systematic, stratified random, cluster and other types and is explained in more detail in subsection 4.2.7.3.1. The second is non-probability sampling which includes quota, judgement, convenience, snowballing and other types; this is explained below in more detail.

4.2.7.3.1 Probability Method

According to Babbie (2014:203), probability sampling is when a researcher wants precise, statistical descriptions of a large population. Therefore, the application of probability sampling involves a somewhat sophisticated use of statistics.

There are five types of probability sampling:

- Random sampling refers to a process that gives each element in a set, such as each case in a population, an equal chance of being selected (Straits and Singleton, 2018:110).
- Systematic random sampling is a process by which every element in the total list is chosen to be included in the sample (Babbie, 2014:222).
- Stratified random sampling is when the population is first subdivided into two or more mutually exclusive segments, called strata, based on categories of one or a combination of relevant variables. Therefore, random samples are then drawn from each stratum, and

these subsamples are joined to form the complete stratified sample (Straits and Singleton, 2018:116).

According to Wiid and Diggines (2015:197), random sampling can be used when:

- The population is heterogeneous with regards to the elements to be studied and connected to the element of the population; and
 - The population is homogeneous with regards to the element to be studied and the entire population.
- Cluster sampling is when both simple random sampling and stratified random sampling assume that a complete list of the population is available. Therefore, the population is broken into groups of cases, called “clusters”. These clusters generally consist of natural groupings, such as universities and places of worship or geographic areas such as county cities and roads. Cluster sampling draws cases only from the sample clusters. To draw a sample, one first selects, at random, a sample of clusters. Then one obtains a list of all cases within each selected cluster (Straits and Singleton, 2018:118-119). For example, the researcher wants to choose customers to be interviewed from hotel X. He/she can divide the population into different categories depending on their nationality. The researcher can select either a random number of customers to be interviewed from each category (this is called clusters) or interview a random number of customers from hotel X.
 - Multistage sampling is probability sampling that uses multiple steps that include defined probability techniques. Usually, the geographic areas are sorted step-by-step in smaller units (Bradley, 2010:197).

Table 4.5 Advantages and disadvantages of probability sampling techniques

Description	Cost and degree of use	Advantages	Disadvantages
Sample random: the researcher assigns each member of the sampling frame a number, then selects sample units by random method.	High cost moderately used in practice (most common in random digit dialling and computerized sampling frames).	Only minimal advance knowledge of population needed; easy to analyse data and computer error.	Requires sampling frame to work from; does not use knowledge of population that researcher may have; larger errors for same

			sampling size than in stratified sampling; respondents may be widely dispersed; hence cost may be higher.
Systematic: the researcher uses natural ordering or the order of sampling frame, selects an arbitrary starting point, then selects items at a preselected interval.	Moderate cost, moderately used.	Simple to draw sample; easy to check.	If sampling interval is related to periodic ordering of the population, may introduce increased variability.
Stratified: the researcher divides the population into groups and randomly selects subsamples from each group. Variations include proportional, disproportional, and optimal allocation of subsample sizes.	High cost, moderately used.	Ensures representation of all groups in sample; characteristics of each stratum can be estimated, and comparisons made; reduces variability for same sample size.	Requires accurate information on proportion in each stratum; if stratified list is not already available, they can be costly to prepare.
Cluster: the researcher selects sampling units at random, then does a complete observation of all units or draws a probability sample in the group.	Low cost, frequently used.	Clusters geographically defined, yields lowest field cost; requires listing of all clusters, but of individuals only within clusters; can estimate characteristics of	Larger error for comparable size than with other probability samples; researcher must be able to assign population members to unique cluster or else duplication or omission of individuals will result.

		clusters as well as of population.	
Multistage area of sampling: progressively smaller areas are selected in each stage by some combination of the first four techniques.	High cost, frequently used, especially in nationwide surveys.	Depends on techniques combined.	Depends on techniques combined.

Source: Zikmund and Babin (2010:433)

4.2.7.3.2 Non-Probability Methods

According to Wiid and Diggins (2015:191), non-probability sampling is based on the judgement of the researcher, which means that the interviewer has some control over who is chosen to be part of the sample. There are four types of non-probability sampling:

- **Convenience sampling** relies on the available subjects, such as stopping people at a street corner or some other location (Babbie, 2014:199). Researchers simply select a requisite number from those that are conveniently available (Straits and Singleton, 2018:124). In this study, to explore the perception of customer service in the hotel industry, convenient sampling was used. The interviews were conducted with the hotel's customers that researcher selected from the entrance and exit of the hotel. This was easiest way as it allowed the researcher to conduct the interview with customers depending on their availability.
- **Judgement sampling** is appropriate to select a sample based on knowledge of a populace; its elements and the purpose of the study (Babbie, 2017:196). In other words, Straits and Singleton (2018:125) asserted that it is when a researcher relies on his or her expert judgment to select units that are representative or typical of the population. For example, the researcher can collect information by interviewing customers who has had two years' experience with the hotel's service, because they are the most knowledgeable about the hotel's service.
- **Quota sampling** is a form of purposive sampling that bears a superficial resemblance to stratified random sampling. Like the latter, quota sampling divides the population into relevant strata such as age, gender, and race (Straits and Singleton, 2018:125). In addition,

the author stated that once the strata are established, each interviewer is given a quota for each category of people that he or she is supposed to interview, within a specific geographic area. For example, the researcher may use interviewers to do interviews with the population that have been divided into groups based on factors such as age, gender, level of education and income, in order to choose. Therefore, each interviewer can do interviews with one group.

- **Snowball sampling** use a process of chain referral; when members of target population are located, they are asked to provide names and addresses of other members of the target population, who are then contacted and asked to name others, and so on (Straits and Singleton, 2018:125). For example, a researcher must collect information about the perceptions of customer service in the hotel. She can select the customer to be interviewed and ask them to recommend the name of other customers they may know who have stayed or are currently staying in that hotel. The snowball can become bigger as the customers refer other customers.

Wiid and Diggins (2015:191) states that the non-probability sampling methods take less time and are more convenient and less expensive than probability sampling methods to implement in practice. This has led to non-probability methods being preferred, especially in market research and opinion surveys, where speed is of the essence (Wiid and Diggins, 2015:191).

Table 4.6 Advantages and disadvantages of non-probability sampling methods.

Description	Cost and Degree of use	Advantages	Disadvantages
Convenience: the researcher uses the most convenient sample or economical sample units.	Very low cost, extensively used.	No need for list of population.	Unrepresentative samples likely; random sampling error estimates cannot be made projecting data beyond sample is relatively risky.
Judgement: an expert or experienced researcher selects the sample to fulfil a purpose, such as ensuring	Moderate cost, average use.	Useful for certain types of forecasting, sample guaranteed to	Bias due to expert's beliefs may make sample unrepresentative; projecting data beyond sample is risky.

that all members have a certain characteristic.		meet a specific objective.	
Quota: the researcher classifies the population by pertinent properties, determines the desired proportion to sample from each class, and fixes quotas for each interview.	Moderate cost, very extensively used.	Introduces some stratification of population; requires no list of population.	Introduces bias in researcher's classification of subjects; non-random selection within classes means error from population cannot be estimated; projecting data beyond sample is risky.
Snowball: initial respondents are selected by probability samples; additional respondents are obtained by referral from initial respondents.	Low cost, used in special situations.	Useful in locating members of rare populations.	High bias because sample units are not independent; projecting data beyond sample is risky.

Sources: Zikmund and Babin (2010:432)

This study is exploratory research in nature. The researcher used a non-probability sampling method, specifically convenience sampling, based on hotels' customers' availability.

4.2.7.4 Step 4: Determine the Sample Size

Sample size is defined as the number of elements involved in the study (Malhotra, 2015:274). The nature of the research has an influence on the sample size (Malhotra, 2015:274).

Therefore, the sample size in this study depended on saturation. This meant that, when gathering qualitative data, the researcher realised that no fresh data sparked new insights or revealed new properties and decided to terminate the process of data collection (Creswell, 2014:296). For this study the participants had to be between 18 and 65 years old, as specified in the ethical clearance form. In exploratory research design, such as qualitative research, the sample size used is normally small; while in quantitative research, such as descriptive survey, the sample size used is large (Malhotra, 2015:274). A sample unit was constituted by customers from one selected hotel in

Pretoria, therefore 25 participants, the hotel's customers were chosen according to their convenience and depending on data saturation.

4.2.7.5 Step 5: Selecting the Sample Elements

This step consists of selecting respondents; rule and process to select the participants that are incorporated in the data collection step (Wiid and Diggins, 2015:206). To select the site or hotel, in which the researcher intends to collect the data, a list of at least five hotels in the researcher's neighbourhood was purposively designed. Moreover, the researcher requested permission to conduct interviews with the selected hotels' customers (participants) and from these five hotels in Pretoria, the first hotel to grant the permission on time was constituted as the site where the research was conducted. In addition, the participants were selected based on a specific range of age, 18 to 65 years old, due to their maturity and responsibility in thinking and giving their consent to be included in the process of data collection, as stipulated in the ethical clearance form. Furthermore, a participant must stay in the hotel at least one night because this length of time enabled the participant to be informed about the quality service in the hotel. The selection of sample elements was limited to Pretoria due to the time and financial constraints that the researcher was facing.

4.2.7.6 Step 6: Gather Data from Designated Elements

In many qualitative studies, inquirers collect multiple forms of data and spend a considerable time in the natural setting gathering information (Creswell, 2014:189). In addition, Creswell (2014:190) proposes four types of data collection to be used when gathering data. These types of data collections are named: qualitative observation, qualitative interviews, qualitative documents, and qualitative audio and visual materials. The types of procedures of qualitative data collection, as suggested by Creswell (2014:190) are explained below:

- **Qualitative observation** is when the researcher takes field notes on the behaviour and activities of individuals at the research site. In these field notes, the researcher records, in an unstructured or structured way (using some questions that the inquirer had set prior to the interview), activities at the research site. Qualitative observers may also engage in roles varying from a nonparticipant to a complete participant. Typically, these observations are open-ended, in that the researchers ask general questions of the participants allowing the participants to freely express their views.
- **Qualitative interviews** require that the researcher conduct face-to-face interviews with participants, telephone interviews, or engage in focus group interviews with six to eight

interviewees in each group. These interviews involve unstructured and generally open-ended questions that are few and intended to elicit views and opinions from the participants. In the same vein, Babbie (2017:273) defined interviews as a way of orally collecting data and recording the respondent's answers. The researcher asks questions to the respondents and they respond with their own answers. It is a face-to-face encounter.

- **Qualitative documents** are data which the researcher collects and may be public documents (e.g., newspapers, minutes of meetings or official reports) or private documents (e.g., personal journals and diaries, letters or e-mails).
- **Qualitative audio and visual materials** are data that may take the form of photographs, art objects, videotapes, website main pages, e-mails, text messages, social media texts, or any forms of sound.

The types of instruments to be used in collecting data, including their strengths and weaknesses are discussed in table 4.7.

Table 4.7 Qualitative data collection types, options, advantages, and limitations

Data collection types	Option types	Advantages of the type	Limitation of the type
Observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete participant-researcher conceals role. • Observer as participant – role of researcher is known as observer – observation role secondary to participant role. • Complete observer – researcher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researcher has a first-hand experience with participant. • Researcher can record information as it occurs. • Unusual aspects can be noticed during observation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researcher may be seen as an intrusive. • Private information may be observed that researcher cannot report. • Researcher may not have good attention and observational skills.

	observes without participating.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Useful in exploring topics that may be uncomfortable for participants to discuss. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certain participants (e.g., children) may present special problems in gaining rapport.
Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face to face - one to one, in person interview. • Telephone researcher - interviews by phone. • Focus group – researcher interviews participants in a group. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Useful when participants cannot be directly observed. • Participants can provide historical information. • Allow researcher control over the line of questioning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides indirect information filtered through the view of interviewees. • Provides information in designated place rather than the natural field setting. • Researcher’s presence may bias responses. • Not all people are equally articulate and perceptive.
Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public documents – minutes of meetings or newspapers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enables a researcher to obtain the language and words of participants. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not all people are equally articulate and perceptive. • May be protected

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private documents – journals, diaries or letters. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be accessed at a time that is convenient to researcher – an unobtrusive source of information. • Represents data to which participants have given attention. • Written evidence, it saves a researcher the time and expense of transcribing. 	<p>information unavailable to the public or private access.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires the researcher to search out the information in hand to find the places. • Requires optically scanning for computer entry. • Materials may be incomplete. • The documents may not be authentic or accurate.
Audio – visual materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Photographs • Videotapes • Art objects • Computer messages • Sounds • Film 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May be an unobtrusive method of collecting data. • Provides an opportunity for participants to directly share their reality. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May be difficult to interpret. • My not be accessible publicly or privately. • The presence of an observer (e.g. photographer) may be disruptive and affect responses.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is creative in that it captures attention visually. 	
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Source: Creswell (2014:191-192)

In this study the researcher collected data through interviews. Widd and Diggins (2015:122-123) identified three types of personnel interviews:

- **Door-to-door interviewing**

Door-to-door interviewing means literally going to the home of the interviewee. It used to be more popular, however, with advancements in technology people has become more security conscious. Data collected through this method is high quality, as the interviewer can manage the flow of the interview. If the interviewee is not available, the researcher would try to make another appointment again.

- **Mall intercept interviews**

Mall intercept interviews are surveys that are conducted in shopping malls. A benefit of this method is that, unlike door-to-door interviewing, the interviewer does not have to go to lots of different locations to contact respondents. However, the researcher must carefully choose respondents to ensure the quality of the data collected for the study.

- **Executive interviewing**

Executive interviewing focuses on interviewing people in their offices, about issues relating to the industry's products or services. Appointments need to be made for these interviews to ensure that the correct people are interviewed.

Before starting the process of data collection, the researcher developed an interview protocol to make sure that the process of collecting data has covered all issues related to the purpose of the study and points (areas) to be covered during the process of data collection. According to Creswell (2014:194), the researcher plans to develop and use an interview protocol for asking questions and recording answers during a qualitative interview. In addition, Creswell (2014:14) stated that researchers record information from interviews by making handwritten notes, by audio taping, or videotaping.

Creswell (2014:194) provides critical components that need to be considered when developing an interview schedule:

- A heading (date, place, interviewer, interviewee).
- Instructions to be followed by the interviewer to ensure that a standard procedure is used from one interview to another.
- The questions (typically an ice-breaker question at the beginning followed by die interview questions).
- Ask questions and ask to explain in more detail their ideas or what they have said.
- Make enough space between questions for recording responses.
- Finally, a thank you speech to recognize the time spent by the interviewee during the interview.
- It is supportive to note in this if the information is primary material (i.e. information gotten directly from the individuals or situation under study) or secondary material (i.e. information used from other people or written by others). It is also helpful to make a comment about the reliability and the value of the data sources.

For this study in depth-interviews were used to collect data. Kumar (2011:137) differentiates two forms of interview as follows:

- **Unstructured interviews**

Kumar (2011:137) declares that the strength of unstructured interviews is the almost complete freedom they provide in terms of content and structure. He also claims that the researcher is free to order questions in whatever sequence he/she wishes and may formulate questions and raise issues on the spur of the moment, depending upon what occurs to the researcher during the discussion.

- **Structured interview**

Kumar (2011:137) maintains that in structured interviews, the researcher asks a predetermined set of questions, using the same wording and order of questions as specified in the interview schedule.

To collect data in this study, the researcher went to one selected hotel in Pretoria and selected participants from the hotel's customers that were entering or exiting the hotel according to their convenience. In this study the qualitative data was used to collect data by means of structured face-to-face interviews, which is appropriate for an exploratory study as it allowed participants

(interviewees) to deeply express their perceptions on the subject under study and enabled them to provide answers in their own words without any restriction from the interviewer. In the same vein the researcher used a device to recode the interviews. Firstly, the interviewer asked for permission from the participants to use a device (recorder) during the interview process. Secondly, the interviewer described the main objective of the study to the participants. Thirdly, the researcher informed the participants that they have the right to, at any time, discontinue the interview process if they wanted to do so. Lastly, participants were informed about their safety and that no information will be used against them after participating in the interview process.

4.2.8 Conducting the Investigation (Fieldwork)

Prior to conducting the fieldwork, the researcher needs to decide which method to use in order to collect data, the site to conduct the study as well as the process of selecting the participants in the study. This means that the researcher developed an interview guide which served as a roadmap during the investigation. In addition, the researcher also considered the degree of his/her involvement with participants and observed all aspects related to ethics in fieldwork. The researcher made sure that the permission to conduct the study is presented, that they had enough time and fulfil all the administrative requirements. According to Wiid and Diggines (2015:213), the quality of the responses obtained during the fieldwork depends largely on the interaction between the researcher and the participants as the latter may sometimes be emotional. In addition, the interaction during the investigation process may be influenced by background characteristics, psychological attitudes, perceptions and behaviours of the both the researcher and the participants (Wiid and Diggines, 2015:213).

In conducting his/her tasks the researcher should display the following personal requirements as proposed by Wiid and Diggines (2015:213-214):

- **Communication.** He/she must be a good talker and listener, attuned to the verbal as well as the non-verbal behaviour of the respondent, and must have good self- control.
- **Interpersonal relations.** He/she must get on well with people and be accepted by other people.
- **Language proficiency.** He/she must be capable of good verbal expression and reading comprehension and must preferably be able to communicate in more than one of the official languages.
- **Responsibility.** He/she must able to act responsibly and must be reliable.

- **Adaptability.** He/she must be able to adapt to a broad spectrum of situations with different respondents.
- **Sensitivity.** He/she must be sensitive to, and know how to behave in different situations with, different respondents.
- **Emotional control.** He/she must not get emotionally involved or be easily upset and must instil confidence so that the respondents feel free to air their opinions.
- **Acceptability.** The image and first impressions that respondents form of the researcher must naturally influence their responses.

Moreover neutrality, motivation, patience and honesty are important characteristics of the researcher or fieldworker (Wiid and Diggins, 2015:214). Wiid and Diggins (2015:210), reiterates that the researcher can use other people (fieldworkers) to collect data. In this study, there was no need to use other people as the researcher was the only one to conduct the interviews with selected customers in one the hotels in Pretoria.

4.2.9 Prepare and Process the Primary Data

The process of preparing raw data started with the editing through the process of cleaning as it helped the researcher to have a clear picture of the raw data before its transformation by the process of coding, to be captured into the electronic format, by using the Atlas software, in which it was analysed. According to Creswell (2014:290), coding is the process of organizing the material into chunks or segments of text and assigning a word or phrase to each segment in order to develop a general sense of it. In this regard, Babbie (2017:396) cautions that qualitative data processing is as much an art as a science. In addition, he claims that it is a lot like learning how to paint with water-colours or compose a symphony.

Furthermore, Babbie (2017:257) stated that the responses of open-ended questions, in which the respondent is asked to provide his or her own answer to the question, must be coded before they can be analysed. In addition, the author defined coding as a process that requires the researcher to interpret the meaning of the responses. The above methods of qualitative data analyses are discussed in more detail in next the section.

4.2.10 Analyse the Primary Data

In this section the researcher discusses, in more detail, qualitative data analysis and qualitative computer data analysis.

4.2.10.1 Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA) is the range of processes and procedures that move from the qualitative data that have been collected, into some form of explanation, understanding or interpretation of the people and situations under investigation (Sunday, 2015:19).

In addition, Sunday (2015:26) proposed five types of qualitative data analysis that are explained below in more detail.

4.2.10.1.1 Content Analysis

The process of data analysis involves reducing the volume of raw information, sifting significance from trivia, identifying significant patterns and constructing a framework for communicating the essence of what the data reveal (Tumba, 2014:67). Besides, Kumar (2019:248) declared that content analysis means analysing the contents of the interviews or observational field notes in order to identify the main themes that emerge from the responses given by the participants or the observational notes made by the researcher. According to Kumar (2019:248), this process involves a few steps that are displayed in the table below.

Table 4.8 Content analysis process

Steps	Description of the process
Identify the main themes	The researcher needs to go carefully through the descriptive responses given by participants to each question in order to understand the meaning of their communication. From these responses the researcher develops broad themes that reflect these meanings. He/she will notice that participants use different words and language to express themselves. It is important for the researcher to select the wording of the themes in a way that accurately represents the meaning of the response categorised under a theme. These themes become the basis for analysing the text of

	unstructured interviews. Similarly, researcher need to through the filed notes to identify the main themes.
Assign codes to the main themes	Whether or not researcher assigns a code to a main theme is dependent upon whether he/she wants to count the number of times a theme has occurred in an interview. If the researcher decides to count these themes, he/she should, at random, select a few responses to an open-ended question or from his/her observation or discussion notes and identify the main themes. The researcher continues to identify these themes to the same question until he/she has reached saturation point. Write these themes and assign a code to each of them, using numbers or keywords, otherwise just identify them as themes.
Classify responses under the main themes	After having identified the themes, the researcher must go through the transcripts of all the interviews or the notes and classify the responses or contents of the notes under the different themes. He/she can also use a computer program such as NUD*IST N6, NVivo, or XSIGHT for undertaking this thematic analysis. In this study, Atlas software will be used to analyse qualitative data.
Integrate themes and responses into the research report	After identifying responses that fall within the different themes, the next step is to integrate them into the research report. How the researcher integrates them into the report is mainly his/her choice. Some researchers, while discussing the main themes that emerged from their study, use verbatim responses to keep the feel of the responses. It entirely depends upon the way researcher wants to communicate the findings to the reader.

Source: Kumar (2014:248)

4.2.10.1.2 Narrative Analysis

According to Sunday (2015:28), narratives are transcribed experiences and every interview/observation has a narrative aspect. In the same vein, researchers must sort out and reflect up on them, enhance them and present them in a revised shape to the reader. The core activity in narrative analysis is to reformulate stories presented by people in different contexts and based on their different experiences (Sunday, 2015:28).

4.2.10.1.3 Discourse Analysis

This is a method of analysing naturally occurring speech (spoken interaction) and all types of written texts (Sunday, 2015:29). In addition, this analysis focuses on how people express themselves verbally in their everyday, social life; this means how language is used in everyday situations (Sunday, 2015: 29).

- Sometimes people express themselves in a simple and straightforward way.
- Sometimes people express themselves vaguely and indirectly.
- Analysts must refer to the context when interpreting the message because the same phenomenon can be described in several different ways, depending on context.

4.2.10.1.4 Framework Analysis

The following is a process used in framework analysis (Sunday, 2015:30):

- Familiarisation: transcribing and reading the data.
- Identifying a thematic framework: initial coding framework which is developed from both prior issues and emergent issues.
- Coding: using numerical or textual codes to identify specific pieces of data which correspond to different themes.
- Charting: charts created using headings from the thematic framework.
- Mapping and interpretation: searching for patterns, associations, concepts and explanations in the data.

4.2.10.1.5 Grounded Theory

According to Sunday (2015:31), this theory starts with an examination of a single case from a “pre-defined” population to formulate a general statement (concept or a hypothesis) about a population. In addition, the analyst examines another case to see whether the hypothesis fits the statement (Sunday, 2015:31). If it does, a further case is selected, but if it doesn’t fit there are two options: either the statement is changed to fit both cases, or the definition of the population is changed in such a way that the case is no longer a member of the newly defined population. Then another case is selected, and the process continues. In such a way one should be able to arrive at a statement that fits all cases of a defined population (Sunday, 2015:31).

4.2.10.2 Computer Qualitative Data Analysis

According to Talanquer (2014:84), in last twenty years qualitative data management has had advancements in analytical software. Petrova (2014:2) stated that before the proliferation of QDA software, qualitative research was done by highlighting segments of text (quotations) and writing notes (codes and memos) in the margins of the pages. Index cards with key ideas were arranged on white boards and connections drawn among them to create a network view. Commercially available CAQDAS (Computer assisted qualitative data analysis packages) such as Atlas.ti, Dedoose, MAXQDA, and NVivo allow users to import different types of data (e.g. text, images, audio, and video) and categorize them according to user-defined attributes or descriptors like gender, educational level, or course grade of study participants (Talanquer, 2014:84).

According to Talanquer (2014:84), the analysis of qualitative data involves a variety of tasks: copying, transcribing, and organizing data; segmenting and coding transcripts, images, audio, and video; stepping back from the data, seeking to identify overarching themes and patterns; building and applying a coding scheme at different levels (e.g. descriptive, interpretative); and identifying quantitative patterns in coded segments across different participants. In addition, Petrova (2014:2) established that QDA software provides more flexibility on how coded data, whether that is text, images, videos, etc., is viewed and analysed.

In this study, the researcher used the qualitative data analysis software, Atlas.ti. Creswell (2014:195) asserted that computer analysis software assists in analysing data because using a hand coding technique is a time-consuming procedure. According to Babbie (2017:404), today, qualitative data analysis (QDA) programs abound. Where the analyst's problem used to be merely finding any such program, the problem now lies in choosing one of so many. They are a few commonly used QDA programs such as Atlas.ti, Ethno, Ethnograph, HyperResearch, HyperTranscribe, MAXQDA, NVivo, QDA Miner, Qualrus, TAMS, and Weft. It should be noted that in this study the researcher used the Atlas.ti software program to analyse data. In addition, the researcher was assisted by an expert Co-coder who is more knowledgeable in computerizing qualitative data analysed with Atlas.ti software.

4.2.11 Interpreting the Results and Compiling the Research Report

The researcher must interpret the results and explain their meaning for decision making (Wiid and Diggines, 2015:322). To explain the meaning of the results, the researcher provides the research findings of the study in chapter 5 and give recommendations in chapter 6.

4.3 Ethical Considerations

Ethics is commonly defined as a set of moral principles that guide a person's behaviour (Babbie: 2007). These morals are formed by social norms, cultural practices and religious influences. Ethics reflects principles about what is right, what is wrong, what is just, what is unjust, what is good, and what is bad in terms of human behaviour. The perception of customer service in the hotel industry is a sensitive issue in this study. A consent form was presented to the participants to get their approval to voluntarily participate in the study. The researcher had the responsibility to guarantee that they were no harm to the participants and the principles of anonymity and confidentiality was followed. Therefore, the researcher adhered to those ethics in this study.

4.3.1 Voluntary Participation

Participants need some personal information about the researcher and the research subject in order to agree or disagree to participate in the study (Babbie, 2017:63). In this study the researcher had to clearly explain that he/she was student at UNISA conducting research on the perception of customer service in the hotel. The researcher further explained the objective of the research, why he/she needs the participants to participate and the reason why the researcher needed to do the interview with them. After explaining, the participants decided if they were ready to respond to the interview or not, as they had the right to refuse to participate or refuse to answer a question that they do not want to answer.

4.3.2 Anonymity and Confidentiality Used in the Study

4.3.2.1 Anonymity

An interviewer collects the information from identifiable respondents, that it is why the researcher had to guarantee the anonymity of the interviewee. The researcher promised to not reveal their identity and assured them that, whoever reads the research would not be able to connect a response with a given respondent (Babbie, 2017:67). During the interview process the researcher conducted face-to-face interviews with the hotel's customers; he/she guaranteed to conserve their identities if they voluntary gave her their names.

4.3.2.2 Confidentiality

The researcher ensured that the confidentiality of the respondents is observed. The researcher could recognize any given person's responses, but researcher promised not to expose their name publicly

(Babbie, 2017:67). During the interviews, the researcher assured the participants that voluntary gave their names or other confidential information that they will be kept confidential. It should be noted that the co-coder has signed a consent letter to maintain the confidentiality of this project and the participants.

4.3.3 Deception

In general, deception is defined as the act of hiding the truth or making someone believe something that is not true. Babbie (2005:67) suggests that, to avoid deception during the research, the researcher must inform the participants that he/she is conducting a research study. During this research, the researcher informed the participants that he/she was conducting a research study.

4.3.4 Permission

To collect the data, the researcher had a recommendation letter as well as the ethical clearance certificate from UNISA's Department of Marketing which was presented to one of the representatives of the selected hotel in order to be granted permission to conduct the research. Therefore, the researcher was able to do interviews with participants.

This study explored the perception of customer service in the hotel industry in Pretoria. The researcher conducted face-to-face interviews with customers in one selected hotel in Pretoria, at a time that was convenient for them.

4.4 Criteria of Quality Measurements

This section discusses reliability and validity that are used to measure the accuracy of the data collected. Creswell (2014:201) asserted that in order to check the accuracy of the findings, the researcher should use reliability and validity. Reliability is a measurement method that would yield the same result, for the same data, even when it has been collected repeatedly (Babbie, 2014:154). Validity is defined as the extent to which an empirical measure adequately reflects the real meaning of the concept under consideration (Babbie, 2014:154).

4.4.1 Qualitative Validity Process

Creswell (2014:201-2013) cited Gibbs (2007) and recommended several qualitative validity procedures:

- Triangulation is defined as using different data sources of information, examining the evidence from the sources and using it to build a coherent justification for the themes.
- Member checking means using the final report of the findings and taking it back to the participants to ensure that the participants feel that they are truthful.
- Use a rich, thick description to convey the findings; see a description that puts the reader into the setting and give them a subject to discuss when sharing the experience. For example, creating themes and codes.
- Clarify the bias the researcher brings to the study. This is an open and honest narrative created from the self-reflection of the researcher; this resonates very well with the reader and help them to understand the report.
- Present negative or discrepant information that runs counter to the themes. This is when the researcher brings in the contradictory story that forms part of the evidence; it helps build the theme and the report are more realistic and more valid.
- Spend prolonged time in the field means that the researcher spent more time onsite, which helped researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the site and the people; therefore, this also lends credibility to the narrative report.
- Use peer debriefing to enhance the accuracy of the account. During this process the researcher use people who evaluate and asks questions so that the report resounds with people other than the researcher.
- Use an external auditor to review the entire project. An auditor is someone different from the peer debriefing, who is not familiar with the project or the researcher. He can provide an evaluation report through a process of research or conclusion of the study.

In order to check the truthfulness and validity of the findings in this study, the researcher used the following 4 validity strategies:

- The researcher used a rich, thick description to convey the findings, during the creation of the themes and codes, so that the result could be more truthful and richer.
- In order to clarify the bias, the researcher brings to the study, a narrative was done by the researcher by interpreting the findings.
- The researcher presented negative and discrepant information, in this case the researcher presented negative situations, which were proclaimed by the participant on the result findings.

- The researcher has spent a prolonged time in the hotel where data were collected, in order to get a better understanding of the hotel and its customers.

4.4.2 Qualitative Reliability Processes

Creswell (2014:203) cited Gibbs (2007) who suggested several qualitative reliability procedures:

- Check the transcripts to make sure that they do not contain obvious mistakes, made during the transcription.
- Make sure that there is not a drift in the definition of the codes, a shift in the meaning of the codes during the process of coding.
- The researcher needs to coordinate communication among the coders by regular, documented meetings and by sharing their analysis.
- Cross-check the codes developed by different researchers by comparing results that are independently derived.

In order to check the reliability of the findings, the researcher used the following reliability strategy processes:

- The researcher read and reread the transcripts to ensure that they did not contain mistakes made during the transcription.
- The researcher and co-coder ensured there was no drifting in the definition of the code, a shift in the meaning of the codes during the coding process.
- During the coding process, the researcher communicated regularly with the co-coder.

4.4.3 Qualitative Generalisation Process

This process is used in a limited way in qualitative research, since the intent of this form of inquiry is not to generalise the findings to individuals, sites, or places of those under study. The generalisation occurs when qualitative researchers study additional cases and generalise the findings to the new cases. However, to repeat a case study's findings in a new case setting requires good documentation of qualitative procedures, such as a protocol for documenting the problem in detail and development of a thorough case study database (Creswell, 2014:204).

It should be noted that this process was not applicable to this study.

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, the researcher discussed the process of marketing research. Both the research problem and the research objective have been defined. It has been determined that exploratory research design was used in this study. Secondary data did not contribute to solve the research problem therefore; the researcher used primary data only. Research methods have been explained and a qualitative research method was used to collect primary data. The two types of questions have been defined; structured questions with unstructured responses were used, where participants expressed themselves freely with their own responses. The sample plan has been designed; in this study the population was from one selected hotel in Pretoria and the sample was taken from its customers. The reason for selecting the sample method was explained, a non-probability sampling method was used in this study, it has been noted that participants were selected depending on their convenience. To collect data, the researcher conducted face-to-face interviews with customers in one selected hotel in Pretoria. It was determined that the researcher was the one that conducted the investigation (fieldwork). After collecting data, it was indicated that the researcher prepared and processed the collected data, therefore the researcher analysed qualitative data with the use of computer data analysis, Atlas.ti software. The data analysis and result findings are explained in chapter 5; and the researcher provides the findings and gives recommendations in chapter 6. The ethical consideration that was followed in this study was presented.

Chapter 5: Research Findings and Data Analysis

5.1 Introduction

The primary objective of this study was to explore the customer's perceptions of service quality provided in the hotel industry in Pretoria. The following objectives were declared to achieve the primary objectives:

- Understand the effect of service quality on customer's expectations in the hotel industry in Pretoria.
- Identify the factors that influence customer's perceptions of service quality in the hotel industry in Pretoria.

In order to achieve the primary objective, the literature review was conducted in chapter 2 and chapter 3. Chapter 2 reviewed customer service and customer satisfaction, the customer's expectation of service quality and the SERVQUAL model of service quality. Chapter 3 reviewed customer perceptions and determined the factors that influence customer perceptions as well as the influence of customer satisfaction on the customer's perceptions.

This chapter presents the data analysis that was used in the study and the research findings. Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA) is the range of processes and procedures whereby the researcher moves from the qualitative data that have been collected, into some form of explanation, understanding or interpretation of the people and situations the researcher is investigating (Sunday, 2015:19). According to Talanquer (2014:84), the analysis of qualitative data involves a variety of tasks: copying, transcribing, and organizing data; segmenting and coding transcripts, images, audio, and video; stepping back from the data, seeking to identify overarching themes and patterns; building and applying coding schemes at different levels (e.g., descriptive or interpretative); and identifying quantitative patterns in coded segments across different participants. It should be noted that hand coding is a laborious and time-consuming process, even for data from only a few individuals (Creswell, 2014:195). Therefore, the researcher can use qualitative computer data analysis (Creswell, 2014:195). In addition, Petrova (2014:2) established that QDA software, electronically, provide more flexibility on how coded data (whether that is text, images, videos, etc.) is therefore viewed and analysed.

Qualitative software programs have become quite popular, as they assist the researcher with organising, sorting and searching for information in text or image databases (Creswell, 2014:195). Before starting with analysis data, like interviews, must be transcribed into word processing documents (Smit, 2002:66). In this study, the researcher used computer qualitative data analysis. Atlas.ti software was used to analyse the data.

5.1.1 Atlas Qualitative Data Analysis Process

The researcher used qualitative data analysis with Atlas ti software because using hand coding is a time-consuming procedure (Creswell, 2014:194). Petrova (2014:2) established that, Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA) software, electronically, provide more flexibility on how coded data (whether that is text, images, videos, etc.) is viewed and analysed. Software designed for the analysis of qualitative data has the increased capacity to retrieve, sort and interrogate unstructured data in ways that was not possible with pencil and paper (Bazeley, 2013:17).

5.1.1.1 Familiarisation with Data

Transcription of verbal data is when data collected are verbal data, such as interviews. Therefore, data collected using interviews will have to be transcribed into word documents (Braun and Clarke, 2006:87).

In this study, after the data collection, the researcher played the recorder, listened to the interviews, and transcribed the verbal data (interviews) collected into a word document. When engaging in data analysis of the data collected, it is important to read through the documents of the data set at least once before you start with coding (Braun and Clarke, 2006:87).

The researcher along with the co-coder read through all the data collected as they were to become more familiar with the data collected before starting the analysis. It should be noted that the researcher was assisted by an expert co-coder as he/she is more knowledgeable in computerizing qualitative data analysis with Atlas ti. software. The co-coder signed a confidentiality agreement.

5.1.1.2 Creating a Project

A project in Atlas.ti is a project file of data collected, which included analysis information's such as quotations, codes and themes (Archer, et al., 2017:11). In this study, the researcher and co-coder created a project file in the Atlas ti software, which contained all the data analysis information.

5.1.1.3 Import Documents

In order to start data analysis with Atlas ti software, the researcher and co-coder imported word documents of data collected (interviews that were transcribed into word documents) into the Atlas ti software. After importing the word documents, all text from the word documents were used as quotations. Any text inserted from documents is known as a quotation (Archer, 2017:22).

5.1.1.4 Coding

According to Creswell (2014:198), coding involves taking text data or pictures collated during data collection, segmenting sentences (or paragraphs) or images into categories, and labelling those categories with a term, often a term based in the actual language of the participant (called in vivo term). Coding is a process of assigning a code, often it is a word or a phrase that would symbolically assign a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute to a portion of the language-based or visual data (Van Der Walt, 2018:9). According to Smit (2002: 69), coding plays an important part in analysis; and it needs to establish where and how it originates. In addition, coding is conceived as attaching a keyword to text segments. Furthermore, Babbie (2017:257) stated that with open-ended questions, the respondent is asked to provide his/her own answer to the question. Therefore, the open-ended responses must be coded before they can be analysed. In addition, Babbie (2017:257) defined coding as a process that requires the researcher to interpret the meaning of the responses.

Van Der Walt (2018), explained below the two ways of coding:

- **Descriptive coding:** Descriptive coding is a way of summarising the primary topic of the data that is represented. The data may consist of a sentence to a whole paragraph. The idea behind this is to capture the pure essence of what is being mentioned.
- **In-Vivo coding:** tend to make use of the language and meaning that the participants appointed to the context that was presented to the researchers. It is when researcher makes use of the “jargon” used by participants during the analysis process. researcher uses the language within the codes.

In order to assign a code, the researcher and co-coder created the meaning of responses (quotations) from the participants. These codes were allocated to the quotations. The in-vivo coding and descriptive code were followed. It should be noted that each code that was assigned to the quotations summarized its meaning.

5.1.1.5 Creating Themes

This is the phase that involves examining the codes and collating the data to identify significant, broader patterns of meaning (potential themes). It then involves collating the data relevant to each candidate theme, so that researcher can work with the data and review the viability of each candidate theme (University of Auckland, 2019).

Themes become the sub-headings of the final chapter in the thesis or the report, as they provide the structure (Van Der Walt, 2018:15). In this chapter themes were used as subsections for the data analysis. The codes in each theme give a road map of the different aspects that needed to cover in the discussion of each theme (Van Der Walt, 2018:15).

5.2 Qualitative Data Analysis with Atlas ti and Interpretation of Findings

This section discusses data analysis and interpretation of the findings. Table 5.1 below presents the themes and codes created from the data collections, and it is followed by the interpretation of the research findings. The researcher must interpret the results and explain their reasons for decision-making (Wiid and Diggins, 2015:322).

Table 5.1 Themes and codes:

Themes	Codes
Theme 1: Demographic information	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Customer demographic• Days spent in the hotel• Reason for visit
Theme2: Basic service of the hotel	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Booking process• Clean and comfortable room and other areas of the hotel• Restaurant service• Safety• Hotel responsiveness
Theme 3: Customer service	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Service delivery• Value for money• Customer expectation• The change of services in the hotel

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service quality
Theme 4: Customer perception	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Factors of service quality in the hotel • Employee interactions • Customer dissatisfaction • Customer satisfaction • Feeling Like Home Experience • Word of mouth communication and recommendation of the hotel • Service complaints and service recovery

It should be noted that four themes were created, and several codes were assigned to each theme; those codes were allocated from the quotations. It was noted that quotations are from word documents (interviews) that were imported into Atlas ti. All the themes and codes are discussed, and quotations supporting the codes are displayed in the next subsections.

5.2.1 Theme 1: Demographic Information

The first theme outlines the information of the participants, their reason for visiting the hotel and how many days they spent in the hotel. Three codes (customer demography, days spent in the hotel and the reason for visit) were developed from this theme.

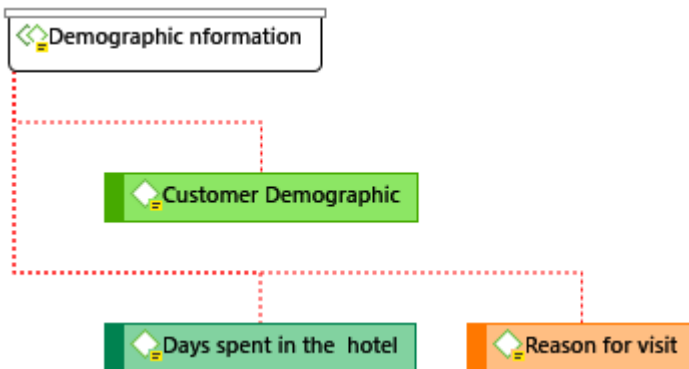


Figure 5.1 Demographic information

Source: This figure was exported directly from Atlas.ti

5.2.1.1 Customer Demographic

The researcher conducted face-to-face interviews with selected customers of one hotel in Pretoria, depending on their convenience. It should be noted that twenty-three of the participants were South

African citizens. The other two customers were foreigners, one from Cameroon and the other one from Madagascar. All the participants were adults between the ages of 18 to 65 years old. Therefore, the hotel should ensure that they meet the needs of different customers from different countries with different cultures and backgrounds.

5.2.1.2 Days Spent at the Hotel

The researcher selected customers who had spent at least one night in the hotel, depending on their convenience. It should be noted that the participants indicated that their stay in the hotel were mostly short term, consisting between one and seven days on average. However, some participants have spent more than 10 days, which can be considered an extended stay.

5.2.1.3 Reason for Visit

The participants had different reasons to stay in the hotel; this may be for business, pleasure or others. It appeared that one participant was in the hotel for pleasure and twenty-three participants were in the hotel for business reasons.

Another significant aspect that was identified was that one participant was a student attending classes at one of the universities in Pretoria. The participant always stayed in the hotel for one week, once a month.

“Participant 7: I am attending the classes at University as a part time active, so I come a week in a month, that week I always stay here.”

It was evident that participants stayed in the hotel for business and pleasure. According to the research findings, most of the participants were at the hotel for business purposes, only one participant was there for pleasure and one other participant was at the hotel for a study reason.

5.2.2 Theme 2: Basic Service of the Hotel

The second theme discusses services provided in the hotel such as the booking process, cleanliness of the hotel, safety in the hotel, services in the restaurant and the responsiveness of the employees. Service is defined as activities or benefits offered for sale that are essentially intangible and do not result in the ownership of anything, for example hotel services (Armstrong and Kotler, 2015:34). Levy and Grewal (2014:8) also defined service as intangible customer benefits that are produced by

people or machines and cannot be separated from the producer, for example the services that hotels provide. The hotel industry is one of those service industries which provide a combination of services and products to their customers (Malik et al., 2018:6). Fives codes were developed from this theme.

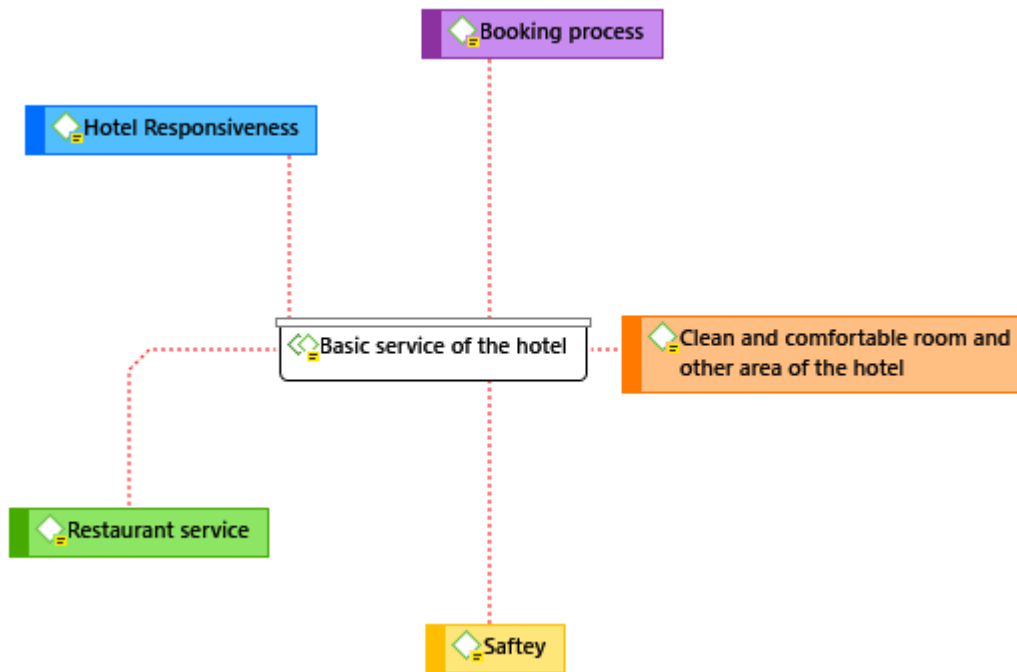


Figure 5.2 Basic service of the hotel

Source: This figure was exported directly from Atlas.ti

5.2.2.1 Booking Process

When a customer checks into the hotel, the receptionist “produces” the check-in while the customer “consumes” it (Bowie and Buttle, 2011:28). The what and the how of service influences customer perception and thus contribute to the customer’s satisfaction of the service (Chitty et al., 2012:6).

Some participants stated that their bookings were done telephonically, and it was very quick. It should be noted that one participant felt that it was very quick for him as he has been coming to the hotel for the almost thirty years and most of employees knows him by name.

“Participant1: The process you do it telephonically, yeah it is very quick, like now I am saying I know them for almost 30 years, so it is when I pick up the phone and they hear my name, almost everybody knows me, they are like a family.”

“Participant 3: You can call in, and you will get a quick response, it is not something that takes long, even email response is very quick. It is always been smooth and checking out was a smooth process.”

There were also participants who had done their bookings online and via email, they have described the booking process as quick and organised. One participant mentioned that he did not spend much of his data bundle during the online booking process as it was done very quickly. A participant explained that there was a welcome drink at reception and the receptionists were very kind and responsive.

“Participant 2: it is quick, they are so organized, and they increase capacity, add staffs at the reception when they have a lot coming in, they are so quick and welcome with drinks.”

“Participant 5: Booking, you can book online, it is ok, booking process at reception was fine, inside information they were kind, they were responsive”.

“Participant 8: It was very easy for us to get booking rooms from department, they first require a quote, and it was very close to where I am having my meetings, they insist to get the booking as soon as possible. Very speedy and very professional.”

One participant mentioned the booking that was done in advance like a shuttle service, and it was later cancelled, but the hotel did not create any problems.

“Participant 4: Yes, it is very quick, and they quickly answer you on email, and if you book something and want to cancel after they don't create a problem. For example, we used their shuttle when we came, and we cancelled the shuttle to return, this didn't create a problem and it was booked in advance. And they are some hotels which would create a problem to cancel something that was booked in advance.”

Some participants explained they did not do the booking by themselves as it was done by a travel agent or by their employers. It should be noted again that some participants felt special because the hotel's employees knew their names. A participant mentioned that the hotel has the option of a porter to take the luggage to the rooms. When there were a lot of customers to check in, the hotel arranged

for more staff at reception to assist with check-ins, which made the service very faster, and the costumers didn't even notice that there were a lot of people as the check-in was done quickly.

“Participant 6: I can't really tell you because our bookings are done by a travel agent. But I have never received complain from travel agent. But I have never done it by myself, I can't really comment. It was easy, obvious when I arrive here and for the fact that they know me, and they call me by my surname. It is quick and easy when you check in. They send to your room, you have option of a porter to take your luggage to your room, I have never experienced any problem on checking in and out.”

“Participant 7: It is faster, I don't do the booking, it is done by my work, I did it only once online and it was done faster, you won't even loose data because it is done straight. When you get here, you give them your surname and find everything done, their system is faster. Even check in it doesn't take more than 5 min, it is faster.”

“Participant 10: I don't wait on the queue, I normal don't find them busy and they are many people to serve. The booking is not done by me. My organisation is doing the booking. I mean I confirmed on Monday to my office that I will be coming and by yesterday we received confirmation.”

“Participant 11: I did not contact the hotel by myself, but I think to book a room here is a long process because for example employer will have to look for the condition but if I come myself, I think it will be faster”.

“Participant 12: I cannot say much on that one as I am using a travelling agency, so I just inform travelling agency, they are the one to contact the hotel and I tell them that I want to go this place, date and time, then they just inform me the booking number from the hotel, otherwise I don't get involved with the hotel regarding the booking. The process of checking in, I noticed we were quite a lot, but they were too many people at reception assisting, I think they knew and prepared their staff; therefore, they were very quick, and we didn't feel the waiting time and immediately I left. For check out, I checked out this morning, but I had to attend a meeting and go in the afternoon, but they offered me to keep my luggage down and when I go in the afternoon I will fetch it, unfortunately my meeting took too long then I have to extend, for me it was good as I was supposed to go to my

meeting with my luggage but I was pleased that the reception offered to keep my luggage while I would be busy in the meeting.”

“Participant 14: We are booked by the agency that the department use to do the booking, so immediately you are told it is done. For now, I will be talking about previous, coming in is so quick, they are a lot of people at the desk who will be helping, when you come in even if they are busy, they will say to you, after helping this one, I will be with you. Going out is the same they are no hustles where you will be in queue for long time, there is no queue here. It is very quick.”

“Participant 21: I haven’t really booked a room, it was booked for us, I haven’t experienced that part of service. It was booked through our work for us and they have made all the arrangement for us to come here. I have no problem before and now checking in everything was available and I had one or two problem with key, and it was sorted out immediately. So, I have never had any problem with checking in previously and checking out was also not issue.”

“Participant 22: I don’t know because my room is booked by my company that I work for. Checking in was very prompt, when we came to the desk immediately our rooms were allocated to us, we just had to complete the form and it was very promptly.”

“Participant 18: you find they pre- booked you, when you come you just say I am here, and they give whatever they must do, is less than 5 min, we are booked by a travelling agent.”

“Participant 13: It is very good. I mean within 2 min it is done. My process of checking in and out is very simple and easy for me because if you inform them upfront that you will check out that day , your account will be ready and when you arrive here your booking documents, administration is in place like tonight I walked in here , I arrived 7:45 pm and I went to reception, my documentation was there. It is easy and always like that.”

There is a participant who stated that the checkout is also very quick. Other hotels first inspect the room when they do the checkout, but in this hotel, they did not inspect the room. The participant went to the reception when it was time to check out, which made the service very quick.

“Participant 9: It is immediately. It is not like in other hotel, because other hotel before you check out, they have first to inspect the room, so here it not like that, you just come to reception and they check you out, I like the way here they do it.”

Another participant explained, as well, that he did not do the booking himself, his personal assistant did it for him. Whenever he asks her to book a hotel in Pretoria, she always knows which hotel to book. Like it was noted by other participants, the hotel’s employees knew him by name and the booking was smooth and easy. When he arrived at the hotel, the room was already assigned to him. He only had to confirm if he had a car and needed to provide his car registration. Some customers who have been in the hotel previously described the booking as being completed faster since the hotel’s employees already knows them.

“Participant 15: I don’t personal book, I asked my Personal Assistant (PA) to book for me, whenever I asks her to book, she knows by now which hotel to book. Last week I told her that this year she must not book me any other hotel in Pretoria, she can even confirm it. It very easy, it is soft and there is no up and down. Remember booking is already been done, I just come here, basically when I get there in my room which has already been assign and the only thing they need to know is if I have a car, the registration of the car. Some of them they know me by name, they will just say he is here and go check in their system, it takes few seconds, it is very quick.”

“Participant 16: very quick, if you have been a guest previously, they have all your information, so just a matter of signing. I would say prompt and quick enough.”

“Participant 17: Well checking out I can say from the past, you come to the front desk and say I am checking out, and after four minutes then you are done. I am thinking of Monday when we walked in it was a quick response.”

One participant had not checked out yet, but he appreciated the check-in and described the service as being good.

“Participant 23: I didn’t book for myself. At the work they booked me, they always book their people here, so they are happy with here. Checking in was good, I didn’t check out yet. I am still going to check out.”

A participant stated that when they arrived at reception, everything was arranged, they only checked their ID. It should be noted that the customers appreciated the shuttle service that was always ready to drop them at work and picked them up from work on time.

“Participant 19: when we arrived here at the reception everything was booked already just must approve by means of ID and you get your access card. Checking in and out like in the morning, the shuttle is ready, and it is arranged by the hotel and collecting at the venue where we are working and dropping off at night that is prompt.”

“Participant 20: the process is very convenient and good.”

A participant described the booking process as quick and safe because, when he exited with the car, he needed to sign with his access card, therefore it was very safe with the car.

“Participant 24: it is prompt. It is convenient process because it is safer, when you got at the exist with your car you need to sign out with your card, so it is safer for the car. The process is very quick.”

Only one participant contradicts the booking process, he described it as being average. According to him the hotel needed to keep the information of the customers so that, when a customer came back again, he would not have to rewrite or provide his information again. According to him the hotel should update their system and save their customers' information.

“Participant 25: I think it is average, because they need to change the system like when I am back in the same hotel and they don't need personal information, I thinks their system should capture the information and when I am here in future then It will show up my name and all the information, so that I will have only to sign, not rewrite again your address and everything's, if not then why do I use the same place, because it is not the first time, we are always using this hotel.”

It appeared that the booking process was faster. Although some participants did not do their own bookings, they have not received reports of complications from the booking agents. Participants have not experienced challenges regarding this administrative process. Some participants

appreciated the fact that the hotel employees knew them by their names and recognized them when they arrived at the hotel, which make their service much faster as they do not have to provide their information again. However, one participant contradicts the above-mentioned. He explained that he has been coming to the hotel for a long time and didn't appreciate the booking service, as he must always provide his information when he came to the hotel. According to him the hotel should change their system so that, when a customer came back, the system would have all his information. It should be noted that there was a participant who considered the check-in and checkout service as safer because, when he exited, he needed to sign with his hotel access card which is very safe for the car.

5.2.2.2 Clean and Comfortable Rooms and Other Areas of the Hotel

A clean and comfortable room is one of the biggest concerns of the participants as they expected to sleep in a hotel that is a comfortable and clean.

There was a participant who has experienced all the different rooms, from the cheapest to the presidential suite; he/she described the rooms as being perfect, clean and user friendly.

“Participant 1: The room it is very clean, I have got experience with all the rooms, from the cheapest room to the presidential suit. Yeah, I used all their rooms, perfect, clean and user friendly.”

Most of the participants noted that the rooms are clean and always good, the lined cleaned, and even the carpets were clean and smelled good.

“Participant 8: Cleanliness, quality food, profession staff, and access to the conference room and access to the parking and I have access to safe parking”

“Participant 9: After they clean their carpet, they put something that I think it absorbs that odour, so everything is perfect in this hotel.”

“Participant 10: the rooms are cleaned; the bed linen is clean, and the bath is clean.”

“Participant 11: The cleanliness is fine.”

“Participants 13: the cleanness of the room is always good.”

“Participant 15: Very important when you come to this place there is no smell, that place is clean. All towels are clean”.

“Participant 16: everything is clean”.

There was a participant who mentioned that everything in the hotel was clean and fresh, especially the bedroom which was white; according to him/her a white room means sleep and have a nice dream.

“Participant 14: everything it is clean and fresh every time, especially the bedroom itself is clean, it is white and white can mean a lot like nice dreams, it can tell you that where you are sleeping, just sleep and dream”

Another participant described the hotel as a clean place, even in the restaurant there was no food on the floor. He/she stated that when a customer dropped the food, the staff always cleaned it up.

“Participant 15: place is clean, there is no food on the floor, and when one of us drop food, they came clean and pick up. The place is clean.”

Another participant mentioned that the place was beautiful and extremely clean, even the parking area was very clean.

“Participant 15: I like this place is very beautiful and extremely clean, even by the car parking is very clean.”

A participant explained that the rooms were clean and tidy and mentioned that every day the hotel provided a clean pair of bed linen.

“Participant 17: the rooms are always clean and tidy, every day we receive a clean pair of bed linen”

The responses showed that the hotel was clean everywhere, especially the rooms which were comfortable and clean. The participants described the hotel as being clean and stated that everything in hotel was clean. Even the restaurant, where they could not even find food dropped on the floor as the staff in the restaurant was always cleaning and picking up the food from the floor. There was always a good, fresh smell in the hotel. A participant mentioned that they received a clean pair of bed linens every day and that the carpets were always cleaned. It should be noted that the parking in the hotel was also always clean. It appeared that cleanliness is very important to the customers, according to them they expected to sleep in a clean place and everywhere in the hotel was clean, even the parking.

5.2.2.3 Restaurant Service

Customers of a restaurant are deeply affected by the speed and friendliness with which a restaurant processes its customers may be just as important as the meal itself (Palmer, 2009:24). Marketers need to make sure that the organisation's service delivery processes are efficient, customer friendly and competitive (Bowie and Buttle, 2011:34).

A restaurant is included in the services provided in the hotel. Participants described the service in the restaurant as a service quality with friendly staff. They provided good meals and were always on time. It should be noted that they had a choice of buffet or could order from the menu.

“Participant 1: Of course, I am going to have a meal right now. Sometimes you serve yourself, sometime if you don't want what is on the buffet, you order what you want. The service is hundred percent good”

“Participant 2: it was quick. I would give the restaurant in the evening order to make it morning for take away breakfast, then in the morning they will give me breakfast take away.”

“Participant 3: Yes, it is always on point, food is good, and you enjoy your meal.”

“Participant 4: Yes, only eat here in the evening other meals I eat outside. They have good food and good service.”

Participants stated that the restaurant can offer any food or cook whatever food a customer request.

“Participant 11: I think to stay here, they got a good care and they will offer you whatever food you want, and they will cook it for you”

Participant described the restaurant as being perfect, with excellent service.

“Participant 5: Yes, I did. The meal was fine; the service was okay.”

“Participant 8: Yes, the service in the restaurant was excellent.”

“Participant 9: Yes, I do, the service is always perfect.”

“Participant 11: Yes, the service at the restaurant is excellent”

“Participant 13: Yes, the meals are excellent. The service is very good.”

Participants described the service delivery from waiters as very good.

“Participant 17: service delivery is good from the waiters. I am eating here every night, fantastic I think I told you already, it is good, and the food is a good food.”

“Participant 18: yes, it is nice. It is all right you have the Menu and the buffet, so it is all right.”

Some participants described the service in the restaurant as excellent and the staff as very helpful.

“Participant 19: I was pleased, happy and satisfied as you have option like menu and the buffet as well.”

“Participant 21: the food is good. Service is excellent, I think I am eating too much, they have good food, good quality food and people working here are very helpful, it is a good experience in a dining room”

“Participant 22: yes, the service is very good. When I came to the restaurant, they are very efficient.”

“Participant 24: yes, I had, it was a good service.”

“Participant 25: yes, the service was excellent”

“Participant 23: yes, the service is very good, like I said I got my own special waiter.”

It appeared that one participant was extremely happy because that night the hotel offered African food which surprisingly included pap, meat and spinach for dinner.

“Participant 12: It is okay but tonight food was just too good, there was a spinach and a pap, I was focusing in my pap and meat, but that spinach got my attention and I even didn't go for desert, after that I just left.”

It has been noted by a participant that the staff in the restaurant care a lot about their customers, especially in the case of a disabled customer. During his/her stay, the staff assisted him/her with all the services in the restaurant. They even dished up for him/her with friendliness.

“Participant 6: Yes, I have been having meals, breakfast, lunch and supper in this hotel. The service is awesome, and they have so many options, the staff are friendly, especially in my case they are always friendly and willing to assist me even to dish up for me. It is quite overall good experience.”

Some participants even chose to stay in that specific hotel because of the quality of the food.

“Participant 7: I think the most important thing that made me choose this hotel for the entire year is their food.”

It was noted that the food offered in the restaurant was fresh and delicious. The staff were always around to help and assist participants in the restaurant. They offered drinks and would make sure of what they wanted to drink before bringing it to the table.

“Participant 14: Right now, I am from the restaurant and the food is fresh and nice, as I said they are very friendly even the people who are catering us there, they can help you if you don’t want this, they will just give you what you want, the service here is very excellent. The meal itself is good and the service itself, and there is a lot of to order, and they will be coming to you within 5 min, the one with drinks will come and ask you what you would like to drink, they don’t just give you a drink without asking first.”

The chef in the restaurant was described as helpful, he was ready to assist the participants at any time and made any food on the request of the participant. It has been noted that the left-over food was not kept for the next day, but they made fresh food every day.

“Participant 15: Last night I came here past 10 pm, the restaurant was close and I told them that I was hungry, the manager called the chef who was already out on his way and asked him to come back and make me some food, and he come back, he made me a full chicken with chips and salad, and I can tell you I was very hungry , I couldn’t believe when they told me the food was already in your room while I was still busy talking. The food is always warm and fresh, for example when I was dishing up there was one last piece meat left and when I went back to get another one, there was a lot of fresh meat as I said to you last night when I asked for the food they said to me they don’t have food as is going out, as they don’t keep it and give to the guest the following day so that was very important answer. They always make fresh food.”

“Participant 16: As the perception of customer, the chef went out his way to make me a jerry. Changing chef on duty last night, he even waited for me this evening, that is just an example of how they care for their customers, they have made a special meal for one of the guests, just for him and immediate they have put it together. So, from that point of view this a wonderful hotel. Waitress is charming, they need to know you, the service is brilliant.”

Suddenly, there was a participant that was not happy with restaurant and do not believe that the food was fresh, as the participant became sick after eating the food in the restaurant.

“Participant 10: Yes. The service at the restaurant is very good. The only thing I am not sure is the food, how long they keep their food, because I am sick from yesterday, I am not sure is it is fresh. The food is not fresh, it is like they warm it and bring it back.”

There was another participant who was in the hotel with family (spouse and a child), for thirty days, they were not happy with the restaurant service. As they were staying for a long time, they expected to be given different options for the food like African food or to be given a cooking facility in their room, so that they could cook what they wanted. He/she also mentioned that when they requested a fridge, they only got a small fridge, which did not help because there was no cooking facility in the room. However, they explained that they had to adapt to the challenge and when they needed something different from the buffet or menu, they would have to buy it from outside the hotel and give it to the chef to cook for them.

“Participant 11: I think in terms of expectations there is a lot of things. Like for example my expectation can be issue when it comes for side of the food, me because I am staying for a long time for more than a month, I was supposed to be given an option so that I will change, I can say maybe the really challenge I am facing is the food now, so I have to adjust with the condition because there is nothing I can do, but if I need something maybe from outside then I will have to buy it and give them to cook it for us that is the challenge. For example, I was expecting the cooking facility in my room, so that I can buy food myself and cook it. And I was also expecting a fridge, but they gave us a fridge that is small, but it is useless to have a fridge without a cooking facility. I think they need to have a cooking facility in the rooms to cater all the people because some people don't like what they cook.”

Generally, most of participants were very satisfied with the service provided in the restaurant. It should be noted that some of the customers chose the hotel because of the restaurant services, like the quality of the food and service delivery from the waiters. Some participants stated that the chef could prepare food that is not on the menu in order to provide service quality and ensure the customers eat what they want to eat. Restaurant services included a buffet, or the customers could order from the menu. The service was very quick, and the waiters were friendly toward the participants. One participant was not happy because the food was not fresh. Another participant with family were not happy as they were not given different options of food like African food as they were staying for long, in addition the room did not have a cooking facility to assist them to cook what they wanted to eat. They had to buy from outside and give it to the chef to cook for them.

5.2.2.4 Safety

Hotel operators should emphasise the importance of the assurance aspect by ensuring that the safety of the customers is taken care of (Liat et al. 2017:48). Security is defined as the freedom from danger, risk and doubt. It involves physical safety, financial security and confidentiality (Stefano et al., 2015:434). As it applies to the basic service of the hotel, safety was referred to as a safe hotel, safe rooms and safe parking as well. It was seen that the participants were concerned about the safety in their rooms, and when their luggage was taken up. One participant noted that the hotel's staff helped to carry their luggage to make sure that the customers made it safely up to their rooms. The participant also stated that the rooms were safe even when they were not locked.

“Participant 1: if they see that you have got many bags then they will take your bags up to the room and you are safe in the room. Sometimes you can leave the room unlocked; there are no thieves.”

“Participant 23: I think is for my safety, I like hotels because I percept them as being safe”

One participant noted that they were safety conscious in the hotel, especially in areas such as the bar, at the ATM (Automated Teller Machine) and in the lift. They mentioned that hotel had cameras everywhere around.

“Participant 2: I will give you an example, they just installed new ABSA ATM here, after I withdrew the money, I didn't take all money, then the security come to me and said you left your money in the ATM, he gave me R 100 that was left. They don't want to allow anyone they don't know to drink from the bar as they can be thief then they may follow the guest to the lift to their rooms and they may take everything and lock you inside, the only thing here is that they have security conscience and they have cameras. It is first class; they have security all over, upstairs, at the entrance with cameras. I am very satisfied with the hotel, what is good as well they have their own internal maintenance guys, only get specialist.”

It was mentioned by a participant that there was safe parking available as some participants have access to safe parking.

“Participant 6: I have a dedicated parking for myself, it is nice.”

“Participant 8: I have access to safe parking”

“Participant 11: I can’t complain, I am satisfied in term of parking is very safe, security very tight, environment is also good”

“Participant 15: it is safe and there are enough people around the place, and there are enough parking and people looking after the cars, there is no people who can steal your stuffs, I have never lost anything on the table or whatever, it is safe here.”

Another participant stated that he did not think that the hotel is the best because the external environment of the hotel is not in a safe.

“Participant 12: it is not the best, I don’t think it is very good environment, I have not heard anything bad but when you just go out you got scary.”

It is important to highlight that the participants that visited the hotel evaluated safety as one of the basic services of the hotel; safe rooms, safe parking, a safe environment as well as safety at the ATM (Automated Teller Machine). According to the participants, they have never seen or heard of a thief in the hotel. They felt safe in the hotel. It is evident that the hotel was safe everywhere, even in the parking. It has been stated that some of the participants chose the hotel with regards to their safety, and that they believed that the hotel was safe everywhere. However, one participant did not feel safe in the hotel environment, according to him/her it was scary to go outside.

5.2.2.5 Hotel Responsiveness

Responsiveness refers to the willingness of the service personnel to assist customers in a timely, efficient manner and that includes items such as helpfulness, friendliness and the warmth of the service staff (Rauch et al., 2015:90).

There were some participants who described the hotel staff as being prompt, organised, quick and responsive to their needs during their stay.

“Participant 2: it is quick, they are so organised, and they increase capacity, add staffs at the reception when they have a lot coming in, they are so quick, welcome with drinks.”

“Participant 3: You can call in, and you will get a quick response, it is not something that takes long, even email response is very quick”.

“Participant 3: If you ask something right now, like last week I asked the barman to take something for me to the room, they immediately take it to the room.”

“Participant 5: They are prompt that when you call, and they will come.”

“Participant 18: promptness, they do respond prompt on what you ask.”

“Participant 20: very efficiently on time.”

“Participant 24: as well as if you need something you can get it quick.”

“Participant 25: they are responding on time.”

Some participant mentioned that hotel staff was helpful, always ready to assist the customer in a timely manner.

“Participant 6: Always with anything that you need, if you phone the front desk with less than 5 min, they will assist you with either adaptor or internet problem, or if you need ice, they are very supportive, very helpful.”

“Participant 7: they are very faster, when you call to request more coffee or shampoo, before putting down the phone, they will be at the door delivering and it doesn't matter what time, they are always available whatever is the case.’

“Participant 8: They have always responded promptly.”

“Participant 9: Always when I want something, they do it immediately.”

“Participant 10: very prompt, faster, if I want iron or if I want drinks they are on time.”

It appeared that when participants ordered an iron, it was brought to their rooms on time. It was mentioned as well, that when a participant did not want to go to the dining room and they ordered dinner from their rooms, it would be brought up on time.

“Participant 12: I will just talk about this morning, when I woke up late, I arranged for iron and they were quick to do that, one of the days in the week when I didn’t want to go for dinner, I just ordered, and they were just on time.”

“Participant 14: I am going to phone now when I am in the room asking for the iron, they will transfer me to where I get the iron, and it will be brought to me immediately”

“Participant 15: I went down to ask for iron, and then when I came back up one of the ladies was waiting for me with the iron, and then she said you do not have to go down, you can call. I couldn’t believe it as she was there with the iron before I got back to my room.”

“Participant 19: It means a lot to me because punctuality and promptness is one of the keys for the success of any business and to please any customer. If I phone asking for an iron or a board then they will say it is on the way.”

Other participants explained that the front desk staff and computer facility staff were very helpful and provided a speedy service.

Participant 17: I also want to compliment the front desk staff they are very helpful, speed service, I think that can be another factor if you look speed service, prompt service, I also want to compliment the business unit which is around the corner for printing and use of computer facilities, when you go there , and you want to print something , there is a prompt service.”

“Participant 17: I did not have need anything except tonight when I had to go to church and that was urgent within the time, I was standing around them, and it was quick.”

“Participant 21: I haven’t really had any serious issues but when I asked them to change my key, it was sorted out immediately.”

It was proven that the service provider in the hotel was prompt in responding to the needs of their customers in their rooms and regarding services during their stay. The staff were quick and organised. Participants stated that when they called reception regarding any service, like an iron, internet or an adaptor, the employees responded quickly. The hotel staff were responsive to their needs and requests. They were willing to help and provide a prompt service to their customers.

5.2.3 Theme 3: Customer Service

The third theme discusses customer service in the hotel. Excellent customer service is vitally important in all businesses. This means that customer service establishes the connection between the client and service delivery or the hotel (Kimanuka, 2014). Service delivery, value for money, customer expectation, the change of service in the hotel, and service quality are the five codes developed from this theme and each code will be discussed in more details.

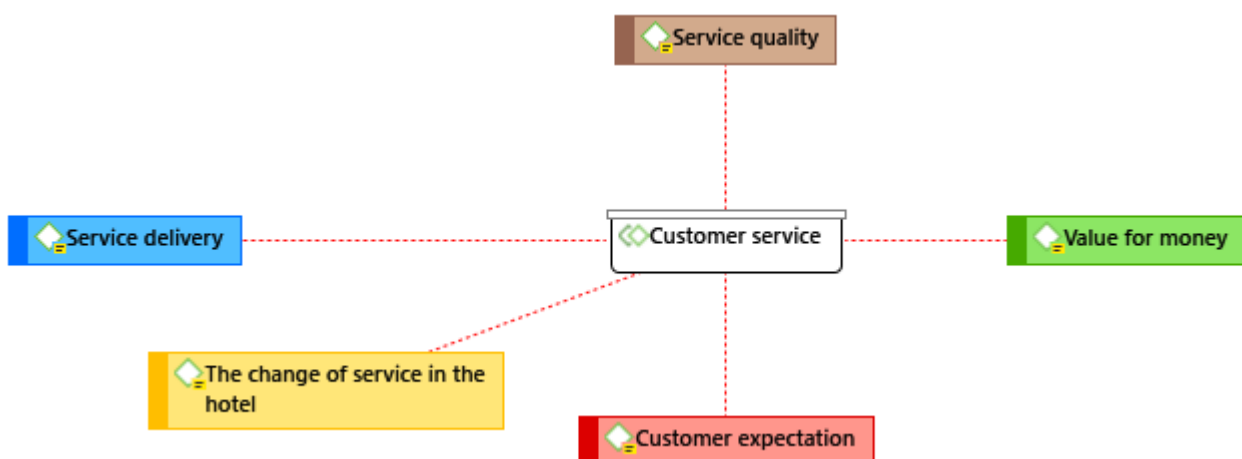


Figure 5.3 Customer service

Source: This figure was exported directly from Atlas.ti

5.2.3.1 Service Delivery

Service delivery is defined as those aspects of the service experience that involves direct interaction between the customer and the service provider (Rauch, 2015:93). Therefore, service is very difficult to evaluate. Quality should therefore be a common concern for both guests and the service providers in the hotel (Ramphal and Nicolaides, 2014:2).

According to some participants, the service delivered in the hotel was good, quick and the staff were very helpful.

“Participant 2: the quality of their service it is the first class”.

“Participant 4: Personnel is very good.”

“Participant 7: the first time I came here, they welcomed me with a warm hand, like they showed me the place, and do some sort of introduction and everyone was friendly.”

“Participant 11: I think to stay here, they got a good care, they will offer you whatever that you need”

“Participant 11: I think when it comes to the services, they are good.”

“Participant 17: I must compliment the staffs of this hotel for all standing work.”

“Participant 17: I think if you use that word factor is what you are looking in the hotel, service is very good.”

“Participant 21: yes, absolutely as I said the service that I am getting here is good and everything is nice.”

Other participants stated that they would come back to the hotel because of the good service they received.

“Participant 1: of course, I will come back because the service is good.”

“Participant 7: Definitely I will come because of the service I am getting here.”

“Participant 23: I will come back because of the service that I have received.”

It has been noted by the participants that the hotel offers a shuttle service which was available and punctual; the participants could get fast transport to go anywhere they wanted to, and it was always on time. The parking service delivered was also good. It should be noted that no extra money was charged to the participants for parking.

“Participant 2: it is fast and very quick, and they are very helpful. They got also transport desk there. When you want to go somewhere maybe to university, they have a car, they will take you there. If you got a motor vehicle when you go out, they will stamp out and sign off so that you can go out and you don't pay.”

“Participant 10: even if you want a cab and you go to the cab people, they are always available to help you with shuttle. The fact that they transport us and fetch us from meeting. I don't have to call someone else to come fetch me. Transport is available and arranged on time, and they are punctually”

“Participant 17: they have got a brilliant service, what I like about this hotel is the fact that when you have a meeting, you use the shuttle, I must also say that for us Christian the hotel offered to take us to church so this was a service delivery.”

Participants were treated well during their stay in the hotel, therefore they felt that because of the friendliness and helpfulness of the employees, the service delivery from the hotel was excellent. It was evident that the hotel delivered excellent service. Hotels should always ensure to deliver a service quality to their customers, as customers are very concerned about the service delivery.

5.2.3.2 Value for Money

According to Machado (2014:142-143), customers habitually perceive price as being the cost, time and effort they must spend to receive the benefits they want. In addition, the author stated that customers regularly expect that an expensive price equates to great quality and a cheap price with low quality offerings (Machado, 2014:142-143).

Participants considered the money they paid as the cost of staying in the hotel, however they expected to receive a service quality and that meant value for their money.

“Participant 1: to me service quality it is when you pay, you had in money, you expect to get what you paid for”

“Participant 3: I mean as a customer; I always believe that you are delivering a service and I am paying for the service”

“Participant 5: Service quality should mean that you have value for your money”

“Participant 5: The physical environment is fine for value of money you pay is okay. “

“Participant 6: Definitely it is important, service quality is quality of service you receive and obviously you pay for quality and for stay.”

“Participant 21: if I had to pay obviously, I want the best service in terms of the food, in terms of the accommodation, all that services.”

“Participant 22: as a guest I feel that I pay to be here, I need a good quality service”

As it was indicated, the participants valued their stay in the hotel. They felt that the service provided, and the environment of the hotel was well worth the price that they paid to stay in the hotel. It should be noted that, according to the participants, when customers pay money, they expect to receive a service quality that is worth their money.

5.2.3.3 Customer Expectation

When customer expectations are met, the customer is satisfied (Kotler, 2015:42). Customers may choose to stay in the hotel if the service received exceed their expectations (Rather and Camilleri, 2019:6).

One participant mentioned that the service in the hotel was very good and he was treated like a king.

“Participant1: in the hotel you expect to be served well, in the hotel you expect to be treated like a king, this is exactly what they are doing here.”

Some participants stated that the service received met their expectations. They expected to sleep in a comfortable room, be helped with what they needed and received a service quality from the service provider.

“Participant 2: yes, it was above my expectation, I couldn't believe it.”

“Participant 4: It is very good hotel, especial services and personnel are very good. Just to be helped in what I need, they are very good to help”

“Participant 7: My expectations as a customer, the first time I came here, they welcomed me with warm hands, like they showed me the place, and do some sort of introduction and everyone was friendly.”

“Participants 7: their service in general from the rooms when you have a problem they respond immediately. That is all I was expecting. It has everything that I was expecting in the room, like a comfortable table for me to study and quiet room to study. I am getting everything that I was expecting.”

“Participant 8: yes, the room did meet my expectations, everything, the bedding is nice”

“Participant 8: because it meets all my expectations and my all needs.”

“Participant 12: First, I just need to be treated as a customer, everywhere in a work environment there is always someone who is a customer. Those are the expectations, so I have meet that.”

“Participant 21: yes, fine, it has got everything that the person needs,”

“Participant 23: I expected a very good service, at least I got it”

“Participant 20: I was expecting the basic stuff. The basic stuff has been exceeded like the food, meal, the room.”

Another participant mentioned that his/her expectations were met; he/she requested a bar fridge and it was installed in his/her room. They noted, as well, that breakfast was served in their room, when it was requested.

“Participant 9: my expectations have been met because I even asked for far a bar fridge and they have brought it, when I asked for something if that I don’t have it in my room, they brought it, even the breakfast, I love their breakfast very much.”

Some participants considered cleanliness as part of what they were expecting, and it met their expectations, as the hotel was clean everywhere.

“Participant 13: Yes, it is very nice and comfortable rooms with all the facilities that I need. The aftercare I mean if there is something wrong in the room, it will be fixed within reasonable time, the cleanliness of the room is always good.”

“Participant 14: It met my expectation, everything it is clean and fresh every time, especially the bedroom itself, it is clean, white and white can mean a lot like niece dreams, it can tell you that where you are sleeping, just sleep and dream.”

“Participant 15: my expectation was a clean bathroom, a workable and specially a clean shower and bath. Very important when you come to this place there is no smell, that place is clean, no freeze jumping up down on you. All towels are clean even If I don’t use those. It is a very spacious room, I mean I can roll around and there is a TV, you can watch TV important channels are there and there is coffee in the room. So, the service is very good. My expectation has been met.”

“Participant 25: yes, it meets my expectation, it meets my expectation in terms of neatness and space.”

When a customer does not get what he was expecting he will become dissatisfied (Kotler, 2015:42). Rauch et al. (2015:88) stated that customers may be less likely to return to the hotel if the service received did not meet their expectations. Only one participant with his family didn’t meet their expectations as they were expecting a room that had a cooking facility, or to be given options when

it came to their food choices therefore they had a challenge with the hotel food that they were not used to it and they were staying in the hotel for a month.

“Participant 11: I think in terms of expectations there is a lot of things. Like for example my expectation can be issue when it comes for side of the food, me because I am staying for a long time for more than a month, I was supposed to be given an option so that I will change, I can say maybe the really challenge I am facing is the food now, so I have to adjust with the condition because there is nothing I can do, but if I need something maybe from outside then I will have to buy it and give them to cook it for us that is the challenge. for example, I was expecting the coking facility in my room, so that I can buy food myself and cook it. And I was also expecting a fridge, but they gave us a fridge that is small, but it is useless to have a fridge without a cooking facility. I think they need to have a cooking facility in the rooms to cater all the people because some people don't like what they cook.”

Participants indicated they expected to receive a good service, this include a clean room, a shower and bath in a good condition, good service in the restaurant, a television in the room as well as being treated like a king. In general customers felt that the hotel services have met their expectations. Some felt that their expectations were not only met but sometimes the service provider even exceeded them. It appeared that most of the participants have had their expectations met. However, a participant with family did not meet their expectation. They were expecting a cooking facility in the room or given a choice about the kind of food they liked or were used to eat since they were staying for a long period. Customers' expectations are met when their needs are met. Hotels should always make sure to meet the needs of their customers.

5.2.3.4 The Change of Service in the Hotel

Marketing and operations must play a role and change product and service offerings to ensure that customers' needs are the focus of product development (Bowie and Buttle, 2011:31).

It was mentioned by a participant, who has been visiting the hotel that nothing ever changes there. The service has been good, and the employees are still friendly, but everything is just the same since the first day they went there.

“Participant 1: It has not changed, I mean it has always been best, since I started from day one, food is nice, people are nice, and barmen are nice. And people come here are friendly”

Another participant also stated that there was no change in the service, the only change the hotel did implement was to refresh the courses in the bar and kitchen.

“Participant 2: it still the same, it hasn't changed. Instead what they do here, they have refresher courses in the bar, kitchen, all of them.”

There was a participant who mentioned that the hotel did not change but, when comparing it to 10 years ago, the hotel had improved the rooms and kept up the standard. Participant noted as well that the hotel has merged with another hotel group and kept their standards up as well as the standards of their improvements.

“Participant 3: they have never changed; they have maintained their standard. In over years they have improved their rooms, if you look them ten years back, they always kept up their standards, they are always improving. I think where I am, I am satisfied. The improvement and they do it themselves gradually, even when they merged this hotel with another hotel, this how their name changed. They didn't drop their standard; they keep the standard up. For me I am happy with the service, everything is fine. Because people thought thing maybe be change when there was going to be that merge to put on two hotels and this one, but they have kept up the standard and their improvement to standard.”

It appeared that the hotel provided good services that keeps customers coming back to the hotel.

“Participant 8: I have always received very good service here”

“Participant 9: It has always been like this, because I was not using this hotel but since I started to use it, I don't want to change anymore.”

“Participant 10: this hotel has been consistent. I have been here before, and I keep coming back.”

A participant mentioned that even after hotel had changed its name, everything was still the same.

“Participant 12: I see now they changed the name, but everything has been the same, that is why I enjoy staying here, because of their service, I have been here before.”

There was a participant who believed that, if the hotel had changed, it was in a positive way otherwise he would not have come back to the hotel.

“Participant 12: It changed in a positive way, otherwise I could check somewhere else, if one of the things were not here, for example if I come here and need to prepare for an important meeting in the morning, and it is not easier, obvious if I come next time, I know that I must I could check in somewhere else, so I will say here it has not change if it has maybe I haven’t notice, it could have been for the better.”

It was confirmed by a participant that there was a change or improvement in the hotel, a change of employees. In the evenings they are helped by men.

“Participant 14: there is improvement along here, this not the first I came here. When I come for the third time, I could see change even change in people who were working here, we would have been helped by women at some stage when we came late in the evening and then we are helped by men. It is not same thing every time, they change, and that change brings improvement.”

A participant, who has been a customer for the past ten years, confirmed that the hotel changed ownership, but said that the hotel was still the same. They also said that it is very beautiful outside.

“Participant 15: as I said I have been here for the past ten years, I have also seen the company change the hands, but I haven’t felt anything in terms of quality or nothing. You know you should come here in summer evening and walk down here, and you will see a nice garden, it is so beautiful, the whole place there is a lot of plants outside.”

The responses showed that the hotel has kept up the standard of their service delivery. Some participants have never noticed any change in the services from the hotel while others have noticed changes. Any changes that have been made to the service has been positive like the change of the hotel name, employees and renovation of the rooms as well as when the hotel merged with another

hotel. Therefore, the hotel should make sure that the change keeps the service up to standard, for example if they change employees; they need to hire qualified people that provide excellent service to the customers. If they do renovation, these renovations must be up to standard to ensure that the customers' needs are met. If they merge with another hotel or change the franchise, they need to make sure that the other hotel's policies are in line with their own, with regards to the standards of services delivered.

5.2.3.5 Service Quality

Service quality is defined as a comparison of the perceived expectations (E) of a service with the perceived performance (P). Therefore, there is a service quality when the perceived service exceeds the customer's expectation (Dubey and Sahu, 2019:55). This definition of service quality has its origins in the expectancy-disconfirmation paradigm (Dubey and Sahu, 2019:55). The diagram of the disconfirmation paradigm has been shown and discussed in chapter 1.2.4 by Lamb et al. (2011:5). Customers of any company have expectations once they are dealing with the company (Machado, 2014:126). Service quality is defined in accordance with business standards, like the stars of the hotel services however, a guest is satisfied when they receive a service quality (Luo and Qu, 2016:312).

When assessing quality service, customers tend to compare their perceptions of performance with certain reference points. Jasinskas et al. (2016:564) cited SERVQUAL quality criteria as defined by Parasuraman, Zeithalm and Berry (1988). These nine criteria for service quality are explained below:

1. **Tangible evidence** refers to the attractiveness of the environment, staff clothing, clarity of written material, and up-to-date technology.
2. **Reliability** is when the customer's needs are considered like the availability and regularity of correct information; the quality of service delivered to the customer does not change regardless of the time of day or the person delivering it.
3. **Responsibility** is the quick reaction to the customer's request and the employee's willingness to answer the customer's inquiries.
4. **Competence** refers to employees, who are competent at their work; who can provide exact and correct information while being friendly, polite, helpful and respectful toward the customers.
5. **Confidence** is related to the suitable image of the hotel and the delivery of service quality in the hotel.

6. **Safety** is related to the safety in the hotel buildings, protection of customers when they are using technology and the protection of customers' data. The hotel management promises to deliver a proper service to the customers.
7. **Accessibility** means that employees have no difficulty interacting with customers via telephone, email or face-to-face; a suitable workplace for convenient communication.
8. **Communication** means that the employees of the hotel should have good communication skills, be polite, professional and good mannered. They should understand the customer's problem, express concern, and be able to give a possible solution to the problem.
9. **Understanding** is the price that is worth the service quality; the consideration of the customer's request (e.g. when dinner should be served).

Some participants defined service quality differently; the value they get for their money, service quality that is first-class, service that is up to standard, or a friendly employee that makes the customers feel like they are at home.

“Participant 1: to me service quality it is when you pay, you had in money, you expect to get what you paid for. So, in that sense that is why all hotels in Pretoria, I only come to this hotel, I think since 1991, I have been customer in this place.”

“Participant2: the quality of their service it is first class, in the rooms, the restaurant, the reception, anyway, security and everything”.

“Participant 3: Because of the work that I do. We have also workshops in this hotel, it has been over ten years, we normal hosted diplomates, ministers that come to our workshops, and always in terms of service they are up to standard, because even the diplomates communities they got also their standard that they expect in a hotel, and minister that always come to our workshop.”

“Participant 6: Definitely it is important, service quality is a quality of service you receive, obviously you pay for quality and for stay.”

“Participant 7: for me service quality is like a friendly employee who makes us feel as home and what I am getting here”

“Participant 14: Service quality is the quality that you get from everybody who is working, quality in everything.”

“Participant 24: it is everything that should be provided by the hotel in terms of friendliness.”

“Participant 25: I think to be timely and to do everything accordingly.”

It was explained by other participants that service quality is getting good attention and a good response to customers’ queries; it is when the customer is satisfied with the service they received. It was mentioned as well that service quality is when the customer felt free and comfortable in the hotel and received all the information about the hotel when they arrive at the front desk.

“Participant 8: Service quality means that you get good attention and your queries are adapt with and when you go to the restaurant you get good service there and good food, cleanliness and also in the room good service and coming back in the evening the room is good smelling and the air-conditioner is important to me and TV is nice, those are things that make you stay nice.”

“Participant 9: The service quality I think I must be satisfied with what I get in my room like the linen must be to standard, like shower, bath and everything must be up to standard”

“Participant 13: As a client, service quality and customer service are very important. That happens most importantly in accommodation industry. You as customer you must feel comfortable , you must be feel free to request not to hide if there is a problem and it must be attended immediately and also if there is a problem such as load shedding or lift that is not working, when you arrive or booking, it has to be brought to your attention then you can decide upfront, I am going to stay there or not. When you arrive here maybe during the booking the problem was not there, and it happens so it is important to bring that challenges to you.”

There was a participant who explained that service quality is when everything in the hotel is in a good working condition, like the lifts, light switches, and irons. And the good quality of food and drinks in the restaurant as well as the quality with regards to the cleanliness of the hotel.

“Participant 15: it means everything to me, for me quality is more important than quantity. Even these hotels when it comes to food, I think it both, I mean the quantity is there and the quality is also here. As I said to you earlier, they bring you big plate of food, nice food , you know there is a big choice there but that it is not the most important thing, as I said to you the food is fresh, they don’t eat roster bread and stuff so they fill the cold drink every now and then, and it is fresh, and the place is very clean, like quality is very important. Even the lift is working, someplace you will find the lift is not working, light switching off and you don’t know why is switching off like it is not working, iron not working but here the stuffs are all working.”

A participant defined service quality from the services delivered; the ability of the employees and their politeness, like the shuttle driver who greeted the customer before driving.

“Participant 16: quality of service is like today the stand is at this level and tomorrow stand is out. The approach of all employees here, the ability of the transport to work, the driver in the morning greets the guests and politeness. Good quality is evidence.”

It was mentioned by a participant that the hotel has a brilliant service, in addition to the normal shuttle service the hotel offered transport to the Christian customers to go to church on Holy Wednesday.

“Participant 17: so far no complains in this hotel as they have got a brilliant service, what I like about this hotel is the fact that when you have a meeting use the shuttle, I must also say that for us Christian the hotel offers us to take us to church so this was a service delivery.”

A participant noted that service quality is when a customer doesn’t have to call a waiter, therefore a waiter must be around to check on the customer.

“Participant 18: service quality is means you don’t wait for a long time, you don’t have to call a waiter, the waiter must make around to your table to check if you are fine with everything even if you are done eating, he must clear the table as soon as possible.”

Other participants mentioned that service quality is very important and means a lot to them. Therefore, they may come back to the hotel and would be willing to refer others to the hotel, if they receive a service quality.

“Participant 20: it means a lot, if I get quality service I will come back here.”

“Participant 21: that is priority, quality equals me coming back, no quality I won’t come back, the same I get a good service I will tell one person, and I get bad service I will tell ten people.”

“Participant 22: the service quality is very important to me. Service quality means my perception of what I expect from the hotel. They must be friendly, prompt and you want to be treated like a customer and you need to feel welcome, so that is for me important.”

Jasinskas et al. (2016:564) cited SERVQUAL quality criteria, as defined by Parasuraman, Zeithalm and Berry (1988). The resulting findings correspond to the nine criteria of SERVQUAL, but they were not used to collect data in this study:

- **Tangible evidence:** The hotel was beautiful inside and outside, with a swimming pool and at tree in the garden outside. The hotel has kept the information of the customers who regularly come to the hotel therefore the check-in was very quick. Except, one participant who indicated that the hotel should change or update their system so that when a customer comes back the system would have all the information of the customer.
- **Reliability:** Most of participants expected to sleep in a clean and comfortable room. They have described the hotel as being clean and comfortable with clean white linens. The restaurant in the hotel is another concern of the participants. The service delivered in the restaurant was a service quality, quick with friendly waiters. The booking process was very fast.
- **Responsibility:** The hotel’s employees were quick to answer the customers’ queries, they were friendly and helpful. However, there was a participant who stated that the employees were not responding on time and another participant who claimed that the front desk should be friendly. It was evident that most of the participants described the hotel’s staff as being promptly organised and responsive to their needs during their stay.
- **Competence:** The employees were respectful, disciplined, helpful, approachable, sociable, kind and friendly. The service provider of the hotel was prompt in responding

to the customers' needs. Service quality was determined by the ability of the employees and their politeness; like the shuttle driver who greeted the customers before driving. Furthermore, the hotel offered a shuttle to transport the Christian customers to go to church on Holy Wednesday.

- **Confidence:** Some participants stated that the hotel has kept up the standard of their service delivery and that any changes that have been made to the service have been positive. These changes include the change of ownership of the hotel, the change of the hotel name, the merger of the hotel with another hotel group, changes of the employees and the renovation of the rooms.
- **Safety:** It is important to highlight that some participants were more concerned about the safety in the hotel than others; they used safety to evaluate the service quality of the hotel. They have described the hotel as being safe everywhere - in the rooms, at the ATM as well as in the parking area. However, one participant did not feel safe regarding the external environment of the hotel; according to him/her, it is scary to go outside the hotel.
- **Accessibility:** Employees' interaction with participants was very good. Employees kept their cool and the employees spoke different South African languages. It was also noted that the shuttle service guys are friendly, helpful and patient with customers.
- **Communication:** Employees of the hotel were always ready to assist their customers. A bar fridge was installed in the room when a participant requested it, and breakfast or dinner was served in the room when a customer asked for it.
- **Understand the customer:** It should be noted that participants considered that the service delivery of the hotel was worth the money they paid; this means they received a service quality that equalled the value of their money.

It was evident that the hotel provided a service quality; therefore, some participants were willing to come back and recommend the hotel to others in their network. Service quality is very important to the customers as they experience service quality when the service perceived has met what they were expecting.

5.2.4 Theme 4: Customer Perception

The fourth theme is focussed on customer perception. The customer's perception of service quality and what it means can be vastly different from what the company perceives to be quality service (Machado, 2014:124). According to Armstrong and Kotler (2013:169), all individuals have learned

by the flow of information through their five senses: sight, hearing, smell, touch and taste. On the other hand, each person receives, organises, and interprets this received information in his own way.

Customer perception relates to how participants perceived the service provided in the hotel. Participants considered different factors when they perceived service quality. Generally, the perceptions of most of the participants were positive and they were satisfied with the service in the hotel however, there were some who were not satisfied with some aspects of the services offered. Participants related satisfaction to the service received in the hotel, this include hygiene or cleanliness, employee interactions, additional services offered to customer like shuttles, internet (WiFi), and service complaints and recovery. Some of the satisfied participants noted that they experienced a feeling like home; in order words they described the hotel experience as a “home away from home”. This relates to the comfort expected to be received.

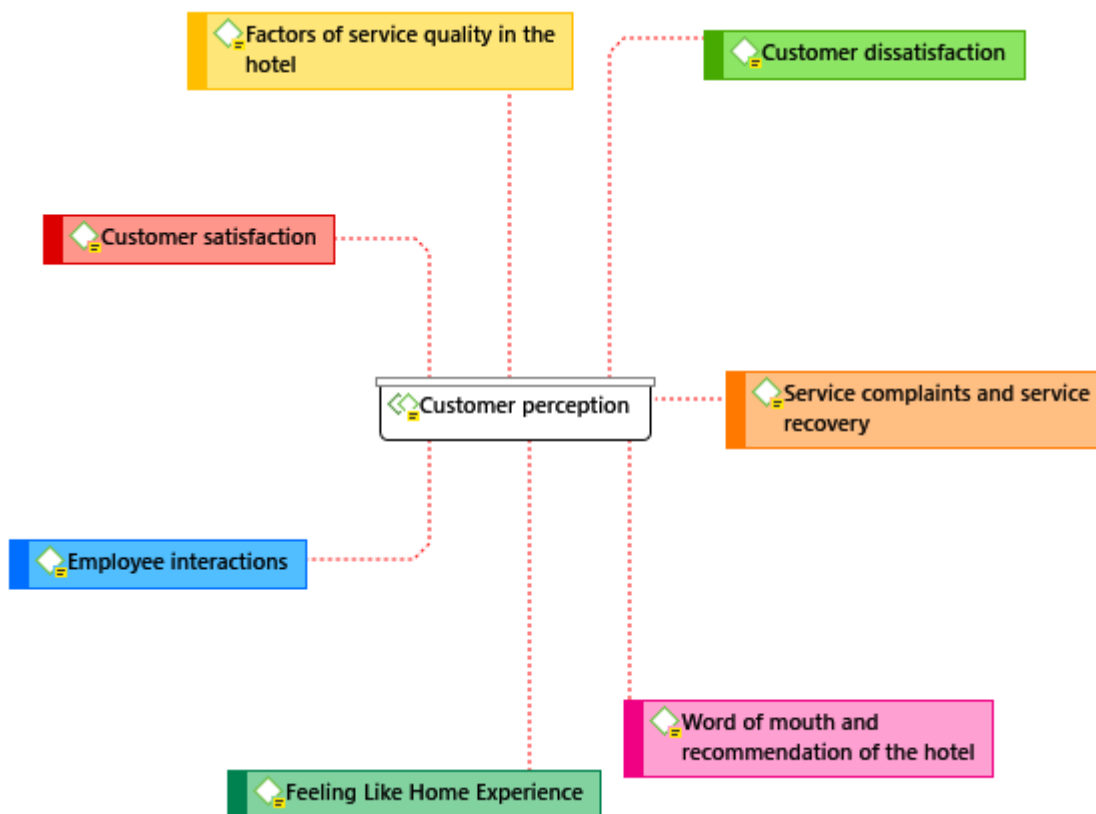


Figure 5.4 Customer perception

Source: This figure was exported directly from Atlas.ti

5.2.4.1 Factors of Service Quality in the Hotel

Participants have different ways to judge the factors of service quality. According to Machado (2014:142-14) there are four factors of service quality:

- **Service encounters:** it defines every occasion where the service provider and customer are together. Service encounters can involve impressions about the general service quality delivery; the overall behaviour of the staff, their precise knowledge or skills and the way they respond to after sale services.
- **Evidence of service:** this factor influences perception and needs to alleviate the hesitation and doubt that services generate in customers' minds. If a service provider can deliver evidence of a service to customers, it will build a positive perception, as the customers will have proof to confirm the completion of a service process.
- **Image:** the image of a company has an impact on the customer's perception in both a positive and negative way. If an organisation has a positive image, the customers will be more disposed to positive word of mouth communications.
- **Price:** the price has an influence on the customer's perception because of the intangibility of service. Customers regularly expect great quality associated with an expensive price and low-quality offerings from a cheap price.

Participants described service encounters as a factor that they used to judge service quality in the hotel; the way they were treated, the quick response of the staff, the quality from the delivery service, the staff's friendliness as well as the booking services.

“Participant 1: What factors? The way I am treated, if I am in the room, I order room service, the time factor, and quality of food.”

“Participant 3: as I said, it starts from the warm, the person that serves you, if that person is rude, I don't think I will come back and spent money. But here first at the counter, front desk, they are kind and at bar and restaurant they are always kind, and conference room they are kind, for me that is most important thing, how they are relate to their clients because they are working in the hotel, this is good. Also, their inquiry, where we make our reservations, they are always working around to make sure about everything that we have requested.”

“Participant 7: Friendliness, you are not even scared of them, you feel like home, feel free.”

“Participant 18: promptness, they do respond prompt on what you ask.”

“Participant 19: I am looking at the promptness, being ready, being available and to the fulfil to the need of the clients. Availability, visibility of the staff in case of urgency then they are available at that moment.”

“Participant 20: friendliness, on time and respect. You need to feel safe; you need to have a proper sleep. Safety and you need to be fit if you are paying for service.”

“Participant 21: the things that I value in terms of service quality is helpfulness in the hotel like they are helpful people if you need anything, you might have left your tooth paste at home and they would like to check if they have got it, even if they will make a plan for you or go extra mile to help you, the service that you get in dining room, if they are friendly or helpful.”

“Participant 22: factors are friendliness, staffs how they interact with you as a customer, and your room, how it is presented to you if it is clean, and your safety regarding honest your stuffs being safe and people cleaning your room, those things are stuffs that you expect from the hotel.”

Another participant used the evidence of service factor to judge the service quality such as the way he was treated at the front desk and guided to the room, the good working condition of the taps and lights, cleanliness, and the responsiveness of the employees when services like internet is not working. It should be noted that the below participants were not happy with the internet service, the quality of WiFi was not good.

Participant 5: factors I use to judge service quality is first at reception, the way I am received at reception, secondly especially what they say they are going to do, was the expectation, then you should get it, the way you are guided to your room, the basic services like internet lights, water, cleanliness of the room, those are things that at least should be taking care of, responsiveness if you have a problem and you have feedback immediately, if you have a problem with internet, you expect to have a response from management or system, so that they don't tell people they don't have this and expect to have information that the concerns are taking, once we express that something is not working, they respond to you very well. I don't think there is a quality service in this hotel, it is not a South African standard, firstly their internet is horrible, it is something that I was not expecting. I have been in most of all countries in Africa, but this quality of internet is not good, even the way you complain, they were not away that the internet is a problem, even when you send information, they

don't even respond to you instead justifying why, there is just a defensive attitude. And the lights were going off in the hotel."

"Participant 11: I think I can say they are excellent in all departments. The cleanliness is fine, but WiFi is not excellent maybe it is because there is a lot of people sometime is slow and other time is faster, but I can make it fair."

Some participants have experienced the same service encounters as evidence of service; the friendliness of the employees, the feeling like being at home in the hotel as well as the image of a comfortable and clean hotel.

"Participant 9: The factors go together with cleanliness, the way they treat me, they must be friendly so that I can come back again, if the receptionist is friendly, obvious if they treat me with dignity and respect obviously, I will come back. They treat me with respect and the room is perfect."

"Participant 6: There is number of things, first thing will be friendliness of the staffs, the secondly the way the room is set out and lastly will be overall experience is the food that is provided."

"Participant 10: It is cleanliness, kindness, warm of the people that are working here, helpfulness, and when you need something you get it on time."

"Participant 12: it is the reception is number one that is very much important and obvious the place where you are going to spent much of your time, does it allow the kind of business, if the room is quit place to work and prepare if you must do a presentation, all the kind of those things."

"Participant 13: Firstly, is friendliness, helpful attitude, facilities must be in place and clean, whenever I have a request and my request must be satisfied within a reasonable time, one cannot come and say I want this now, there is a process and a period before client requirement will be satisfied. People who attend to the client; that interaction is very important because is how you get the feeling I am here, and I don't want to go to another place, I want to stay here, this my home away from home."

“Participant 15: I don’t want people that feel they get paid to be angry and to be staffed up, for me they should be friendly and kind, and one other thing is sarcastic, when you ask people questions and they want to give you a sarcastic answers, for me it is important that you don’t give that kind of answers, you should remain professional and calm all the times.”

“Participant 17: Friendliness of the staff at as you walk into the hotel and the hotel needs to be brilliantly clean that should be the first impression when you walk inside the hotel and that will give you indication of what you can expect in the hotel.”

“Participant 25: like to judge on resource that I needed like if I need iron, to get it on time because I have a meeting in the morning.”

“Participant 24: I judge with quality of food, cleanliness, judge them with the arrangement of boardroom for the meeting, as well as the condition of room”.

There were some participants who used the image factor and safety and cleanliness as well to judge service quality in the hotel. These included a clean hotel, a safe hotel and safe parking.

“Participant 8: Cleanliness, quality food, profession staff, and access to the conference room and access to the parking and I have access to a safe parking.”

“Participant 14: The first is thing is because I want to sleep well, I check firstly if it is safe enough to sleep here in that room, the second thing it will be because when we come here we even use their rooms for some discussions and there is enough space and there is nobody else to disturb, like this morning we were in a meeting room doing presentation so there was nobody else to disturb, it was only us.”

Other participants used the evidence of service factor to judge the service quality in the hotel, such as the service in the restaurant and the internet and computer service; they were satisfied with those services.

“Participant 23: I think you can use everything like at the reception how they received you, you look their room if they are clean, their restaurant and the food they are serving, the personnel if they are friendly and enjoying what they are doing at their work. For now, I am happy with all those factors.”

“Participant 17: so the factors that I use to consideration is, like service in the restaurant is excellent that is one factors, in the restaurant everything is tidy and clean, service delivery is good from the waiters, speed service, I think that can be another factor if you look speed service, prompt service, I also want to compliment the business unit which is around the corner for printing and use of computer facilities, when you go there , and you want to print something , there is a prompt service. I think if you use that word factor is what you are looking in the hotel, service is very good.”

Some participants used the price factor, the money they paid to stay, to judge service quality in the hotel; they felt that the service quality should value their money.

“Participant 1: to me service quality it is when you pay, you had in money, you expect to get what you paid for”

“Participant 3: I mean as a customer; I always believe that you are delivering a service and I am paying for the service”

“Participant 5: Service quality should mean that you have value for your money”

“Participant 5: The physical environment is fine for value of money you pay is okay. “

“Participant 6: Definitely it is important, service quality is quality of service you receive and obviously you pay for quality and for stay.”

“Participant 21: if I had to pay obviously, I want the best service in terms of the food, in terms of the accommodation, all that services.”

“Participant 22: as a guest I feel that I pay to be here, I need a good quality service”

The participants used the service encounters, evidence of services, image and price to judge service quality and all those factors have influence on their perceptions.

The first factor was service encounters, which was used to judge the service quality in the hotel. The participants described the service encounters as being responsive, quick, friendly and helpful to their needs and requests during the service delivery.

Secondly, the evidence of service factor was used to judge the service quality of the hotel; participants mentioned that it provided a service quality in their rooms, the restaurant, and the internet and computer service. It should be mentioned that two participants were not happy about the internet provided in the hotel, which was not a good quality.

The image of the hotel was the third factor used to judge the service quality of the hotel. It was described as clean and safe everywhere, including the parking area.

Lastly the participants considered the price factor. For the money they paid to stay in the hotel they expected to receive service that was worth the price. They expected to get a good value for their money.

Participants expected to receive a service quality from the hotel, and they used the above-mentioned factors to judge the service they received. This had an influence on their perception. Therefore, the hotel should make sure that the above-mentioned factors meet the customers' expectations.

5.2.4.2 Employees Interactions

The employees' interactions were respectful, disciplined, helpful, approachable, sociable, kind and friendly.

“Participant 1: the employees have got respect, they are discipline and yes, I am very satisfied.”

“Participant 2: the staff here is very helpful, friendly”.

“Participant 5: The employees are fine; they are approachable and socialised”

“Participant 13: They are always friendly, they are helpful, they are always who you can rely on.”

“Participant 3: But here the first at the counter, front desk, they are kind and at bar and restaurant they are always kind, and the conference room service are kind, for me that is most important thing, how they are relate to their clients because they are working in the hotel, this is good.”

“Participant 25: I think interaction it is excellent”

As most of participants who were satisfied (this will be seen in the next section), and others who did not have any complaints, have stated that their interactions with the employees were excellent.

“Participant 6: I cannot complain, I have been staying here for a number of years. All the employees, from the cleaners to the helpdesk, the general workers are all friendly. They all know what is going on and what they expect. I am very satisfied.”

“Participant 7: I am extremely satisfied. I will all of them give them hundred percent”

“Participant 17: especially the service delivery in this specific hotel, and friendliness from the restaurant staff I think is immaculate, you are being greeted, there is a good conversation with one of the waiters, or the lady that seating in front, they are friendly.”

“Participant 9: In my case they were no interaction because I never complained because I am always satisfied, the way they treat me it makes me no to complain so they will be no interaction.”

“Participant 10: with the employee I am satisfied with them, and the other thing they are old, so we all trust older than the youngest one.”

“Participant 14: if there was a percentage, I was going to rate them. I was going to give hundred and one percent but now we don't have one, then it will be hundred percent”.

“Participant 18: they do their work, I am satisfied.”

It was said that the employees were always friendly, even at night. It amazed, the way they interacted with participants; they kept their cool and spoke different South African languages. It was also noted that the shuttle service guys were friendly, helpful and patient with the participants.

“Participant 15: for me it is the people can respond to your questions, to your needs, to your expectations, the very important people to smile. I always tell people they don't get paid to be rude, they get paid to smile. I can't believe here even in the night they are always the same, friendly and sometimes I just stand and talk to them, they will talk to you and have time for you, and they can even speak various languages. What is amazing for me is even these people can speak to all of us, this keep their cool even if people ask them different things and they keep their cool and answer and they can see many people with smiles, and then what is important is they shuttle service guys who take you around here and how they talk to you with all the patience in the world, talking to you and telling you about Pretoria this and that, I mean even they have seen so many people for long, they are still very friendly and for long without losing their concentration or getting frustration, they are just friendly and they will ask if they can carry this things for you, they always have the time for you that is my point. They are friendly, I talk to all of them, they interact and talk to you and I am sure I have seen them talking to the other people. Whatever you ask if there is something, they can do for you. I am very satisfied with their interaction.”

“Participant 16: there is a lady she was getting difficult to go in and out in the shuttle of the hotel that took us to work, he was very exceptional patient, very careful about, exactly to make sure she is get in when I observed, I mentioned this to him, it was a driver who took us to work today.”

Employees of the hotel were described again as being happy, and that made the participants feel good.

“Participant 21: present, happy, they make you feel good, they smile, they say hello and with them that is what we want, you don't want people get angry and standing there like they want to bet you up.”

“Participant 23: I got a good counter at the reception, the drivers who is taking me to my work with a shuttle are very friendly, from the restaurant I already made a friend with another old man, so he serves me every day when I am in the restaurant. The employees are very good.”

There was a participant who was not happy with interaction he had with the employee at the front desk; he advised that they should be friendlier.

“Participant 22: employees of the hotel like I said earlier, the front desk should be friendlier, that is my only problem.”

It was evident that the participants formed their perceptions during their interactions with the employees. Most of participants stated that the hotel employees were friendly, happy, helpful, kind and respectful. It should be noted that the employees’ interactions play an important role in the customers’ perceptions during the service delivery. However, there was an employee at the front desk that was unfriendly, therefore the hotel should concentrate on training their employees to deliver a service quality to the customers.

5.2.4.3 Customer Dissatisfaction

Customers are dissatisfied when the service they received does not meet their expectations, therefore the hotel manager should know that dissatisfied customers would not visit the hotel again (Cheng et al., 2019:188).

Some participants were dissatisfied with the service of the hotel. One participant described the hotel environment as a noisy.

“Participant 8: It is a bit noisy, I haven’t gone outside, but is a bit noisy because it is in a city, I haven’t really gone outside but I must be honest. Depends on what evening is, last night was some gun shoot but you know we leave in South Africa, it is how everywhere is.”

A participant was not satisfied with the internet service in the hotel, he expected the internet to be of a good quality so that he could work and communicate with his family and colleagues during his stay. The responsiveness of the employees was poor, according to the participant. When he/she asked for an iron, it took up to thirty minutes and they had to follow up.

“Participant 5: I don’t think that is quality service in this hotel, it is not a South African standard, firstly their internet is horrible, it is something that I was not expecting. I have been in most of all

countries in Africa, but this quality of internet is not good, even the way you complain, they were not away that the internet is a problem, even when you send information, they don't even respond to you, instead justifying why, there is just a defensive attitude. And the lights were going off in the hotel."

"Participant 11: The response is very poor. Sometimes you will call ask for iron, they may respond after 30 min and if you don't follow up then you won't get it. They will just keep quiet. That is the problem and this thing has been going on for some days and waiting the response from them. WiFi is not excellent maybe it is because there is a lot of people sometime is slow and other time is faster, but I can make it fair."

Another participant stated that he did not think that the hotel was the best because it is not in a good environment. Even though he has never heard anything bad he was still scared to go outside.

"Participant 12: it is not the best, I don't think it is very good environment, I have not heard anything bad but when you just go out you got scary."

Another participant was not happy because the employees at the front desk were not friendly.

"Participant 22: employees of the hotel like I said earlier, the front desk should be friendlier, that is my only problem."

Another participant was not happy because he was not comfortable with the floor and there was no air-conditioning in the passage, and it was too long.

"Participant 23: I am not comfortable with the floor where I stay if they can put air-condition in the passage as they are too long."

Only a few participants were not satisfied with the services they received in the hotel. This was related to the staff that was not friendly, poor responses to requests, unsatisfactory internet services, and environmental factors like noise, as well the air conditioning in the passage. It should be noted that dissatisfied participants developed a negative perception of hotel service.

5.2.4.4 Customer Satisfaction

Satisfaction and service have certain things in common; satisfaction is seen as a broader concept, whereas service quality focuses specifically on the dimension of service. Tichaawa and Ntimane (2017:27) maintained that customers are deeply concerned about hotel service and Butnaru and Licau (2017:84) asserted that customer satisfaction is the main element of the perception of service quality, according to Zeithaml et al., 2013:7). According to Lamb, Hair and McDaniel (2011:5), customers experience a feeling of satisfaction when a product has met or exceeded their expectations. When the customers are being offered more than they are expecting, the service quality highly confirm the customers' expectations. It will increase the level of satisfaction and the customer will positively communicate about the hotel's service by word-of-mouth Butnaru and Licau (2017:84) asserted that customer satisfaction is the main element of the perception of service quality. They are satisfied if the performance of the product matches their expectation, and they are dissatisfied if it falls below the expectations (Armstrong and Kotler, 2015:42).

They are participants who have had their needs and wants met, as the hotel provided service quality which lead to their satisfaction. Participants explained that they were satisfied because the service was perfect as well as the gym and swimming pool.

“Participant 1: Well, like I said, I am happy; my opinion was perfect, sometimes it was when I check in with my wife, they treated us well, when we checked out I always like to do thing by myself, as a member of a leading party, I want to remain as a people, I want to be served by people, I don't want to be treated like I am the boss, sometime I want to do things by myself. I am satisfied, now there is a Gym, you can see the fitness that I have, there is a swimming pool and what else do you need.”

“Participant 3: I am hundred percent satisfied.”

“Participant 6: I have been staying here for a number of years. All the employees, from the cleaners to the helpdesk, the general workers are all friendly. They all know what is going on and they what they expect. I am very satisfied.”

“Participant 4: Very good services.”

Some participants were satisfied with the hotel and the security service in the hotel and they liked the way that the hotel uses only its internal maintenance people.

“Participant 2: it is first class; they have security all over, upstairs, at the entrance with cameras. I am very satisfied with the hotel, what is good as well they have their own internal maintenance guys, only get specialist”

One participant was satisfied with the service as he/she has been a customer of the hotel for long and has developed a relationship with hotel’s employees. The participant mentioned that the employees did not take advantage of the relationship and they made sure to appease the customers.

“Participant 3: yes, I have been doing this because of the service, how they take care of me as a customer, how they relate to me as a customer. Even if there is a relationship but they are still a customer relationship which they don’t close or take advantage that you have been in a long staying relationship. Sometimes people become too comfortable and they know that you are a regular customer, but then they are not comfortable they will always make sure they appease you all the time.”

“Participant 7: I think the friendliness is very much important to the customers, they are so bright, even if you are not satisfied with some of the things, you will talk to them in a polite way. You won’t hesitate to tell them as you know you are dealing with friendly people. I am satisfied with everythings”

A participant was satisfied because of the cleanliness of the hotel, the location which is in an accessible place, the television and the bar service.

“Participant 6: Definitely. Everything that I have mentioned to you; number one the location is awesome, the people here are friendly and helpful, the layout is cool, the place is accessible, just all is good experience.”

“Participant 15: the physical environment for me is nice because there is space here and the furniture which we are seating on here are the quality and there is more of it, it is spacious here and beautiful, you can see the lights, this place is nice, it doesn’t smell dusty like dusty, there is a big

TV, there is bar there and people don't shout, outside there is a big swimming pool, and people can go seat there at night, romantic evening outside. All these things are very important atmosphere, I like this place is very beautiful and extremely clean, even by the car parking is very clean."

"Participant 17: I think it is brilliant, outside is beautiful."

"Participant 9: I am satisfied with everything."

There were participants who have been coming back to the hotel because they are satisfied with the service.

"Participant 13: Very quickly, I have been staying here for over three years, I just come back here because I am satisfied."

"Participant 15: yes, because I have already told you that I instructed my Personal Assistant to book me here whenever I must come to Pretoria. I am normally a kind of person who like to go to places, I think I have gone to all places and have settle to myself that this where I feel comfortable in Pretoria."

A participant was satisfied with the hotel especially because of the shuttle service.

"Participant 14: I don't know how many times I have been coming here and even now if they will say the meeting is here, I will sleep here. But if they say that the department itself, I will stay sleep here because when you sleep here in the morning there is a shuttle that will take you to your place. This a place to stay even if it is on my own, but for now I don't have money, but I will come back definitely with my family."

The participants were also satisfied with the coffee and tea provided by the hotel that they could offer to their visitors, the structure of the hotel, the furniture, the screen that shows new arrivals, the parking and the fresh food.

"Participant 15: they have coffee and tea, I can have a visitor here and drinks coffees, they even come to me asked me if I can speak to you, these people are patient for everybody, they will do

whatever they can do, this place is clean and tiles are clean, there is nothing to complain. This place is on the corner, if you park by the front you must go around the gate and go up but there is nothing, they can do about it. What I like here is the tiles, furniture are solid, the ceilings are quit high but that doesn't sound important, and when you seat here there is a screen that indicate to you what people will be here tomorrow, so it all there, this place has been used fine, government are all here, and they have many meeting here in a day. And always fresh food."

A satisfied participant mentioned that the hotel cared for the customers, and that it was a wonderful hotel.

"Participant 16: they care for their customers, they have made a special meal for one of the guests, just for him and immediate they have put it together. So, from that point of view this a wonderful hotel."

"Participant 18: When your needs are meet. Whatever that you need it is responded to."

"Participant 19: I am pleased and satisfied with the service that I am receiving here up to now, there is no complains."

"Participant 20: Yes, they are ok and very good, service is excellent."

"Participant 21: I think the basic things when I look from the check in, you don't want any hustles in terms of your booking when you come in, everything must be done, you just must sign it. The room must be in a good state in other way it must be comfortable, bathroom clean and tidy, hot water and taps works, in the restaurant and dining room, the food must be in a good quality, the service must be good. And now I am happy for them because that is fine for me."

"Participant 24: I am satisfied, outside and inside "

"Participant 25: I think, I have met satisfaction, there is no complaint."

Most of the participants were satisfied with the service they received in the hotel. Therefore, they have formed a positive perception regarding the service in the hotel. Some customers have been

coming back to the hotel because of the satisfied service and how well they are treated in the hotel. It should be noted that delivering service quality leads to the satisfaction of customers. Internet access, the good environment of the hotel and interactions with the employees are all part of what customers expect in order to be satisfied.

5.2.4.5 Feeling Like Home Experience

Service experience and the customer's emotions can also affect the level of customer satisfaction with the service brand (Bravo et al., 2019:1025). Customer perception is a way that a customer evaluates his experience with quality service (Zeithaml et al., 2013:45). Having positive experiences during their stay, in terms of emotions and satisfaction, should likely improve the customers' attitude towards the hotel chain (Bravo et al., 2019:1026). Customers rate the service quality by how well a service meets or exceeds their expectations (Dibb, 2012:390).

Some participants have felt at home during their stay in the hotel. There is a participant who mentioned he knows the owner and that the service was always good, therefore it felt like home in the hotel.

“Participant 1: of course, I will come back because the service is good and even now, I know the owner of the hotel, so I am at home”

“Participant 2: yes, I stayed here in the 1980 when the Director General who was here introduced to the owner, since then even the drinks I get them for free, I just sign off. So, it makes me home”

“Participant 3: This hotel for me is like a home”

“Participant 4: It means that I feel ok, I feel like at home.”

“Participant 7: the first I came here, they welcomed me with warm hands, like they showed me the place, and do some sort of introduction and everyone was friendly. They made me feel at home”

“Participant 13: as I said, it is a home away from home.”

“Participant 14: as guest you need to be welcomed and feel at home, then you know that I am part of this, by moving around and meeting other people, talking to people coming here and talking to

them, right now I was helped, I didn't come with charger but immediately I was helped, here is my phone, it is safe and brought back to me. As guest you need to be welcome, safe where you are, it should be like home"

Some participants felt like they were at home during their stay in the hotel. This is also related to the experiences of the participants in relation to the service quality of the hotel. This was a positive perception of participant who experience a feeling like home in the hotel. Therefore, this meant that their needs were met and that they have received a service quality in the hotel.

5.2.4.6 Word of Mouth and Willingness to Recommend the Hotel to Others.

When customers are satisfied with a provided service quality they will come back again and recommend the business in their networks (Dedeogria and Halil, 2015:133). However, dissatisfied customers will not visit the hotel again and they will spread negative feedback on social media (Cheng et al., 2019:288).

Participants were generally satisfied, and some participants mentioned that they have already recommended the hotel to others in their network; other participants were willing to spread, by word of mouth, a recommendation to others in their networks.

"Participant 1: I do, especially my friends, if they have conferences to other businesses, I recommend them."

"Participant 2: I do always, even my family knows, like yesterday, guys from Free State are coming on the 15th next month to Carletonville via Pretoria, I told them to let me know on time so that I can book them here."

"Participant 3: Yeah, I have done that in the past and I still do it."

"Participant 7: I do, even now my classmates are staying here, they check out today. I am their marketing agent now. I am bringing in customers."

"Participant 10: yes, I have done it with my colleagues that are here."

“Participant 13: Yes. I do, most of my colleges also come stay here.”

“Participant 14: I recommended one of my colleagues, right now they are two of them from the department in Kimberly, they come today, they are here with me.”

“Participant 15: I have already did it, I tell other people that rather come here, because they always ask me are you coming with us, and I said no to them and asked if they have been this hotel, then they want to know about the hotel and I tell them about the hotel. I mean there is another hotel here not far from here but do not go to that place is dangerous and there is nothing. And here you can walk safely from here and go down. This hotel is safe.”

“Participant 19: yes, for sure if they get the opportunity or if they are around here in the facility for more than few days then I will recommend the hotel.”

“Participant 21: yes, I will; recommend, it is a very nice hotel, satisfies all the basics that you need.”

One participant, who believed that the hotel is expensive, stated that she/he could only recommends the hotel to people who could afford it.

“Participant 4: Yes, but I will have to choose which one, because this hotel is very expensive it will depend if the person will be able to afford the cost.”

A dissatisfied participant stated that he would never recommends the hotel to others, if his employer booked the hotel again, he would ask him to swap for another hotel because of the poor internet service.

“Participant 5: No, if I won’t come back then I won’t tell somebody to come. If they organize conferences, I will tell them to swap this hotel until this issue is resolved. My recommendation will be contingent to solve this issue of internet problem.”

Another participant, who was not satisfied with the restaurant service, asserted that he would never come back for a long stay and he would never recommend the hotel to others intending to stay for

long as the hotel did not provide the African food that he was used to eat and was expecting to have same kind of food in the hotel.

“Participant 11: I will come but not for long, 2 or 3 days. Long stay I won’t come back, we grow up eating different food, and here you will find eating other type of food, sometime is nice but other time not good. They need to change that.”

“Participant 11: I can but not for long stay only for few days.”

Responses showed that most of the participants who were satisfied with the service in the hotel, have formed positive perceptions which have led to their positive word of mouth and recommendations of the hotel to others in their network. However, the participant who believed that the hotel is expensive would have to make sure that other people could afford the hotel before making any recommendations. It should be noted that the two participants who were not satisfied have formed negative perceptions of the hotel service; therefore, they would not recommend the hotel to others in their network until the problem is resolved.

5.2.4.7 Service Complaints and Service Recovery

One of the ideal methods to strengthen customer relationships is by listening to their complaints; therefore, the customers’ voices are often received in the form of complaints reported to the hotel when service failures occur (Cheng, 2019:188).

Some participants have never complained as the service they received was satisfactory. However, it should be noted that they admitted that complaints are important.

“Participant 1: I have never complained, the service is perfect, no I have never complained.”

“Participant 9: No, I have never complained. I think service complaints it is very much important.”

“Participant 19: I never had a complain. Yes, service complaints are important as everything is not perfect, maintenance is a key, so you also must act here so that the need of clients is solved.”

“Participant 23: I think it is important, when you are not happy you need to speak out so that they can improve. No, I have not complained here.”

“Participant 12: I haven’t complained but I believe it is very good, because sometimes you may complain, I mean, complaining is letting people be aware. Sometimes it happens, that it is over their mind or whatever but when you complain it is very much good. Complaining some people take it in bad way but normal it is not, for example when you let them know I slept in this bed yesterday and I am coming is not clean and then you find out their schedule got mixed up and accidentally they missed to clean your room.”

“Participant 13: It is very good. It is important to attend to your client’s requirements. My work is also client oriented, if I don’t have a happy client, my work is not satisfied.”

“Participant 14: No, I have never complained here. Service complaints is very important, it is for them to improve because if you are not happy you will never come back again that is why it is nice if you take complains as after that everything will recover because of the complains.”

There was a participant who never complained and believe that complaints are very important. Therefore, the participant suggested that, before complaining, a customer should start with a compliment.

“Participant 15: there is nothing in this world that is perfect, there will always be complaints and compliment. And it is important that if people can respond to the complains that will make people forget that they have ever complains. But it is weird when people don’t respond to the complaints personal. I am a kind of person if I said something wrong, I will talk to the person, I want to treat people the way I am treat by them, I rather go to the person and tell him please do this and don’t do this. I am also a kind of person, when it be come to a business and see something, they could do to enlarge their market share, then I could even share those views that I have so long. I always believe that if you compliment people, you are thankful that they are posit behaviour man. If I see something good here, I always tell them that is good, keep it up. I believe if there is a complaints system in, there should be obvious compliment system as well. If there is a complaint, you must give people the chance to be able to respond or to recover to what you have complained, you can just expect to complain and not to be able to compliment. My mother taught me this even when you want to criticize

someone, actual your criticism should start by a complemental. Never just complaint, nobody will listen to a complaint. Because people listen to a complaint when you start with a compliment and then you end it with a compliment, otherwise people may do whatever you think they do for you, but you will just see people want to do something for you when you are nice, and it doesn't cost a cent."

Another participant who has never complained admitted that the hotel has a brilliant service.

"Participant 17: so far no complaints in this hotel as they have got a brilliant service"

A participant asserted that complaining is very important and suggested that the staff need to listen to their customers to find out if there is a problem; even a difficult customer should be listened too.

"Participant 20: it is very important in business environment; they are people to listen to customers about any complaints they should have. We need to understand that some people are difficult because they are serving a client, then they need to listen to them and find out if there is a problem."

One participant has never complained, even when he received a failed service. He did not complain as he thought that the employee might be fired and would then struggle financially.

"Participant 2: No, I haven't complained the service is fine. No let me be honest with you, I regards the staffs as my friends, one day my wife went to the Free State and I drove her to Bloemfontein, one of the staff as they all used to the family told my wife that we will look after your husband sis (Sister) don't worry when I come back the next Sunday to pick up my wife from Pretoria station, the same staff said we didn't even clean up your room because your husband was not sleeping here. We didn't change anything that caused a big fight with my wife. I was afraid to report the staff and she might be in a trouble and get fired. And what she said was not good, she couldn't say it to my wife then it caused fight with my wife. The other people said I should report her, and then I said I couldn't do it as we must apply our mind before we do anything, and know her background first, maybe she is a single mother or she pays herself rent in big house or a shelter, I explained we don't get to emotional, when we get emotional we lose our senses, sometimes we regret what we have done and it affects, and up today she still working here. And she doesn't know that I know her."

Some participants could not remember any incidents where they had to complain.

“Participant 3: I am trying to recall, but there is one incident few years back. I got a very well quick response, but I can’t remember what was is it.”

“Participant 16: I have had reason to enjoy it and not to enjoyed it, they take attention and they attended to it, I cannot even recall what was it. I do think it is important to complain.”

There was a participant who noted that it is important to complain but when he had to complain, the complaint was not recovered. The hotel employees started to explain the system, and they did not take responsibility; according to him there is no service recovery in the hotel. However, he mentioned that the workers were not to blame, the problem is the hotel’s system.

“Participant 5: It is important, I complained about the internet problem, which was generalized and my colleagues who were here, management said they are not connected to the reality. When you complain they start explaining the process, they start to justify why, everyone is taking the blame to somewhere else that it is because of their service provider, they are not taking responsibility. Service recovery here is not, the workers are fine, but the problem is their system which they organized is not responsive.”

Another participant believed that it is important to complain; for a business that deals with client’s complaints it is a very important aspect. This is where the hotel could determine its weaknesses and strengths.

“Participant 6: Yes, any business or any company that deals with clients, that is one the most aspect, where you get feedback from, this where you can determine your swap analysis you know what strengths is, your weakness and know where to improve. It is very important for any business to have feedback from clients to understand where we need your expectation potential and where do we learn. I have never had any reason to complain in this hotel.”

A participant had to complain as the lights were not efficient and the room was not cleaned. He/she didn’t shout or get angry but asked in a polite manner because of the friendliness of the employees. He/she noted that both the supervisor and the cleaning lady felt bad and apologised to them; thus, the complaint was recovered.

“Participant 7: It was not a complain but I went to register as a complain, the lights were not efficient for me, when I reported they couldn't fix it as they couldn't fix it at the time and they could only fix it the following day, they asked me if it will be fine to wait until next day or to move to another room, I moved as I needed to study, it was okay. I remember there was this time that I went to the class I dried my hair some of my hair went on the floor so when I came back there were finished cleaning, I was tired and lying down then I noticed the hair on floor, because of their friendliness I told the lady at reception that I think my room was not cleaned, then she sent the supervisor, and lady was so sorry and she apologised and felt bad, for me it wasn't a big deal but they really take their job very serious. They are people who get angry and rude, so because of their friendliness I was able to resolve things with them in a polite manner without complicate things and get angry and shout.”

A participant complained about the access card, and the complaint was recovered immediately.

“Participant 18: no, I have never complained, like I say I only complained when I went to my room and the key was not working and they assisted me. Yeah, it is important to complain, like when you encounter any problem, for example if you complain that the aircon is not working, and they check if it is not working then they move you to another room.”

One participant complained because he felt that the room was too far away, and the complaint has not been recovered yet.

“Participant 10: I have, I asked them yesterday, but I don't know whether they are full or what, they still put me in a room just far, and some of us don't like walking long distance to their room and they didn't respond to me.”

A participant asserted that the hotel employees were very responsive to complaints and they make sure the failure of the service does not repeat again.

“Participant 11: Those people if you complain about something, the good part of it, they don't repeat it, except issue of ironing. The mistake that they commit, they make sure they do cover you to forget about those things, so just to cover you mental so that you don't judge or take them otherwise.”

“Participant 21: well I am sure, my wife always says if I am not happy maybe in a restaurant then I must just let them know if I had a problem that I don’t like this, my food is cold or whatever, sometimes I said just don’t worry just leave it. But if you don’t tell place what you are not happy about, then that service may continue and may lose more customers. So, it is important that you just tell them, but you don’t have to be rude, you tell them in a nice way you can say look here that is the problem, you need to attend to it. It is important to do that; you must give them some feedback. My complaint was my room, which wasn’t really a complain, when I smelled a smock as a non-smoker then they changed the room immediately, so it was not a really complain, it was just the way they reacted in term of my request.”

A participant presumed that when he paid to stay at the hotel, he should get a good service therefore; if he complained about a failed service, the hotel should reach out and improve the service.

“Participant 22: as a guest I feel that if I pay to be here, I need a good quality service, I need to be treated as I am important and when I do complain they should react to it and improve my request. Service complain is very important because if you complain and nothing get done to it then the service cannot be improved on, so for me that is important factor they must make allowance for complain and act on it. I did complain about the air conditioner and they said that is the best they can deliver because the air conditioner is part of the stricture.”

“Participant 24: yes, it is important because make the hotel to see where they need to improve.”

“Participant 25: it is very important because like if we must have lunch 12, it means everything should be on time, so that we can have lunch and go back to meeting, if not then we can complain. No, I have not complained yet.”

Many participants were satisfied with the service and they have never lodged any complaints with the hotel. However, according to the participants who did complain, it was easy to complain to the hotel staff as they were very friendly, and they resolved the problem in a polite manner. Some of the participants mentioned that when they complained about a matter related to maintenance or other services in the room, the staff were prompt in responding and recovering the service. One participant mentioned that he/she didn’t want to complain as it might get the employees in trouble with the

management. In general, most of the participants believed that complaining about a failed service is the only way the hotel can recover and improve their services. Other customers who were dissatisfied with a service believed that there was no service recovery as the hotel never attended to their complaints.

5.3 Summary

Chapter 5 discussed and interpreted of the empirical findings of the study. This chapter started with a recap of the research objectives of this study and the qualitative data analysis that was used. A brief description of the participants was provided, and four themes were created. This description was followed by an exploration of the findings which included a discussion of three theme codes with several codes under each theme.

For the first theme, consideration was given to the participants of this study in order to get their information. As the research approach that was used in this study was exploratory, in order to collect data, the researcher conducted interviews with the participants. Those participants were the hotel's customers who have stayed in the hotel for at least one night and agreed to participate in the interviews according to their convenience.

For the second theme, consideration was given to the basic services of the hotel. The booking process, the cleanliness and comfort of the rooms and other areas of the hotel, safety in the hotel, services in restaurant as well as the responsiveness of the employees. The basic services of the hotel were discussed by the participants and contributed to the understanding of the service of the hotel.

For the third theme, consideration was given to customer service in the hotel. The participants defined customer service as how the hotel treated them, how services were delivered to them during their stay, and if they received value for their money. It should be noted that customers value the services of the hotel by the money they paid, and they expected to receive a service quality. Some customers declared that the changes in the services of the hotel have been in a positive way. Most of the customers visited the hotel often and re-visited it because of the service quality of the hotel.

The second and third theme contributed to the achievement of the first objective which was to understand the impact of service delivery on the customer's expectation. Therefore, these above-

mentioned themes uncovered that service delivery influences the customer's perception and as a result, the customers expected the hotel to deliver service quality.

For the fourth theme, consideration was given to customer perception. Firstly, the participants identified different factors they perceive to judge service quality, and this contributed to the achievement of the second objectives. Then we looked at customer satisfaction. It should be noted that customers related satisfaction to the service quality they received in the hotel, this included hygiene or cleanliness, employee interactions, as well services offered to customers like the shuttle service and internet access (WiFi). The perceptions of most of the customers were positive as they were satisfied with the service in the hotel. However, there were some who were not satisfied with some aspects of the services offered. Accordingly, service complaint, and recovery should be offered to resolve the failed service. Some of the satisfied customers noted as well that they felt at home in the hotel, in other words they described the hotel experience as a "home away from home". This relates to the comfort they expected to receive. Therefore, this theme also contributed to the achievement of the main objective which was to explore the customer's perceptions on the service provided in the hotel industry in Pretoria. The participants displayed that positive perceptions are formed when the service provided is satisfactory and negative perceptions are formed when the service is not satisfactory. A satisfied customer will spread good word of mouth and recommend the hotel to others in their network and they will re-visit the hotel.

The next chapter provides the conclusions and recommendations for further study.

Chapter 6: Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Introduction

This study aimed to explore the perception of customer service in the hotel industry in Pretoria. This section revisits the research objective to determine the achievement of the study based on the result of the analysis. Therefore, the primary research problem was presented by the following question:

- What are the perceptions of customers in terms of the service provided in the hotel industry in Pretoria?

From this research question, the primary objective of the study was to explore customers' perceptions on service provided in the hotel industry in Pretoria. In order to achieve this primary objective, secondary objectives were created:

- Understanding the effect of service quality on the customer's expectation in the hotel industry in Pretoria.
- Identify the factors that influence the customer's perceptions of service quality in the hotels industry in Pretoria.

In the next section, researcher provides the connection between the objectives provided in chapter 1 and 4, secondary data provided in chapter 2 and 3 as well as the primary data provided in chapter 5. This chapter discusses the achievement of the objectives, draw conclusions and make recommendations. It discusses the areas of concern of the participants and identify areas of further study as well as the limitations of the study.

6.1.1 Connection of Objectives, Secondary Data and Primary Data

This study explored the perception of customer service in the hotel industry in Pretoria; this was provided in chapter 1 and in the literature review in chapter 2 and 3. However, there is paucity on research investigating the perceptions of customer service in the hotel industry in general and, specifically, in Pretoria. Therefore, it was worthy to note that the lack in offering a service quality in the hotel industry in Pretoria can negatively affect customers' perceptions in terms of customer service. In the same vein, this situation results in the customers' dissatisfaction. The problem is thus the lack of knowledge and information on the study related to the perceptions of customer service in the hotel industry in Pretoria.

A qualitative study was conducted using an exploratory approach. In order to collect data, the researcher used the case study of one hotel in Pretoria. Therefore, participants were selected from one selected hotel's customers. To select the participants a non-probability sampling method was used, specifically the convenience approach, on the hotel's customers; who were available depending on their convenience. The size of the study depended on the saturation which was reached at twenty-five participants. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with the participants and the interviews were recorded. Afterwards the interviews (respondents' answers) were transcribed. The researcher used Atlas.ti software to analyse data; the data collected were grouped using the themes and the codes that were allocated to each theme. The finding of the study was discussed in chapter 5.

In the next sub sections, all the objectives were considered before making conclusions, which were based on the data collected in this study.

6.1.1.1 The First, Secondary Objective: Understand the Effect of Service Quality on the Customer's Expectation in the Hotel Industry in Pretoria.

The first objective of this study was to understand the effect of service quality on the customer's expectation in the hotel industry in Pretoria. Generally, participants expected the hotel to deliver a service quality.

From the literature review we know that excellent customer service is vitally important in all businesses. This means that customer service establishes the connection between the client and service delivery or the hotel (Kimanuka, 2014). Service delivery is defined as those aspects of the service experience that involve direct interaction between the customer and the service provider (Rauch et al., 2015:93). Therefore, service is very difficult to evaluate. Quality should then be a common concern for both guests and the service providers in the hotel (Ramphal and Nicolaidis, 2014:2). The customers often evaluate the functional attributes of service quality "during" and "after" the delivery of the service performance (Rather and Camilleri, 2019:2). When customer expectations are met, the customer is satisfied (Kotler, 2015:42). Customers rated the service quality by how well a service meets or exceed their expectations (Dibb, 2012:390). When customers are satisfied with a provided service quality they will come back again and recommend the business to others in their networks (Dedeogria and Halil 2015:133). A hotel should know what their customers

are expecting in order to meet their needs. Therefore, if a service provider delivers service quality then the customer's expectations are met.

The objective is to understand the effect of service quality on the customer's expectation. Participants were very concerned about the services provided in the hotel, as they expected to receive a service quality that met their expectations. Employees were friendly, helpful and polite. However, a participant indicated that the front desk employees were not friendly. The service provider was very quick and promptly responded to the needs of the participants. The participants considered the booking process, which include check-in and out as being fast. Furthermore, a participant indicated that hotel should upgrade their system and keep customers' information. Mostly the participants confirmed that hotel was beautiful as well as clean and comfortable; therefore, their expectations had been met.

It is important to highlight that the participants equated safety to service quality in the hotel, and most of them asserted that the hotel was safe everywhere; in the rooms, at the ATM as well as in the parking area. However, one participant did not feel safe regarding the external environment of the hotel. He/she described it as being scary outside the hotel. The restaurant delivered a service quality to the participants and the waiters were friendly and helpful. However, some participants were not satisfied with the food. It should be noted that one participant complained that they got sick after eating the food; therefore, they thought that the food was not fresh. Another participant stated that the hotel does not provide African food. The hotel has kept up the standard of their service and any change that has been made to the service has been positive. These changes included the change of the hotel name, changes to the employees, renovation of the rooms as well as the hotel's merge with another hotel group. It should be noted that the participants considered the service delivery of the hotel worth the money they paid; this means they received a service quality that value their money. According to most of the participants the hotel delivered a service quality.

This objective has been met, according to the above-mentioned findings customers expected to receive a service quality. It can be suggested that service quality has influenced the customer's expectations in the hotel industry in Pretoria. Jasinskis et al. (2016: 564) cited the nine criteria of SERVQUAL quality criteria, as defined by Parasuraman, Zeithalm, and Berry (1988). It should be noted that the SERVQUAL quality criteria model has been supported in the resultant findings of

this study (tangible evidence, reliability, responsibility, competence, confidence, safety, accessibility, communication and understanding) and has been highlighted in this study.

Customers' expectations in Pretoria are met when the hotel delivers a service quality. Customers considered service quality as a means of meeting their expectations. Some customers determined that service quality is getting value for the money they paid. Others value the service by the way they are treated, the room service, the quality of the food and the hotel's response time. It should be highlighted that some other customers are more concerned about the safety in the hotel. The hotel should ensure that they meet the expectations of the customers and go beyond those expectations.

6.1.1.2 The Second, Secondary Objective: Identify the Factors That Form the Customers' Perceptions in the Hotel Industry in Pretoria.

The objective was to identify the factors that form the customer's perceptions in the hotel industry in Pretoria. This objective was formed to understand that customers have different factors that they use to judge service quality in the hotel and that leads to their perceptions.

In the literature review, customer perception is defined as a way that customers evaluate their experience with quality service (Zeithaml et al., 2013:45). Butnaru and Licau (2017:84) asserted that customer satisfaction is the main element of the perception of service quality. When customers are satisfied with a provided service quality they will come back again and recommend the business to others in their networks (Dedeogria and Halil, 2015:133). However, dissatisfied customers will not visit the hotel again and they will spread negative feedback on social media (Cheng et al., 2019:288). According to Lamb, Hair and McDaniel (2011:5), customers experience a feeling of satisfaction when a product has met or exceeded their expectations. When the customers are offered more than they were expecting, the service quality highly confirm the customers' expectations and it will increase their level of satisfaction. These customers will positively communicate about the hotel's service by word-of-mouth. Machado (2014:142-143) presented four factors of service quality that influence customer perception. Those factors have been discussed in the literature review and were used to analyse the data and the resultant findings in chapter 5 (service encounter, evidence of service, price and image). The participants in the hotel used the above-mentioned factors to judge service quality in the hotel. It should be noted that the participants use the service encounter factor to judge service quality in the hotel, such as the friendliness and helpfulness of the employees, as well as their responsiveness. Therefore, customers form perceptions regarding the service they

received from the service encounter. Next the participants use evidence of service such as clean and comfortable rooms, the responsiveness of employees, service quality from the restaurant, internet and computer services as well as the shuttle service. The image factor was also used to judge the service quality this included a beautiful and clean hotel as well as a clean and comfortable room. In addition, it should be highlighted that customers felt safe in the hotel as well as in the rooms, around the hotel and in the parking area. Safety is emphasised as one of the criteria of service quality. Lastly, the price factor was used by the participants to evaluate service quality in the hotel; customers expected to receive service quality that equals the value of their money.

This objective has been met according to the above-mentioned findings. Customers have different factors that they use to judge service quality in the hotel industry in Pretoria. The suggestion can be made that the hotel should consider the above-mentioned factors (service encounter, evidence of service, image and price) that will contribute to delivering service quality. This will help them meet the expectations of their customers who will form positive perceptions of the hotel, which will lead to their satisfaction.

6.1.1.3 Primary Objective: Explore Customers' Perceptions on Service Provided in the Hotel Industry in Pretoria.

The purpose of the study was to explore customers' perceptions on service provided in the hotel industry in Pretoria. In order to achieve this primary objective, all the above objectives were used. In the literature review it was stated that, customer perception of service quality and what it means can be vastly different from what the company perceives to be quality service (Machado 2014:124). Perception is a way that people analyse, interpret and make sense of received information, and it is affected by personality, experience and mood (Brassington and Pettitt, 2013:93). According to Armstrong and Kotler (2013:169), all individuals have learned by the flow of information through their five senses: sight, hearing, smell, touch and taste. On the other hand, each person receives, organises, and interprets this information in his own way. Customer perception is a way that the customer evaluates his experience with quality service (Zeithaml et al., 2013:45). Therefore, service experience and the customer's emotions can also affect the level of customer satisfaction with the service brand (Bravo et al., 2019:1025).

The first, secondary objective identified that service quality has an influence on the customer's expectations; therefore, a customer's expectation is met when the hotel delivers a service quality.

The SERVQUAL service quality criteria have been emphasised as a model that can be followed, in order to provide service quality in the hotel (tangible evidence, reliability, responsibility, competence, confidence, safety, accessibility, communication and understanding).

The second, secondary objective identified that customers have different factors that form their perceptions in the hotel industry in Pretoria. It can be suggested that the hotel should ensure that their employees deliver a service quality that meets the customer's expectations as the customers have different factors, they use to judge service quality. Those factors are formed during the service delivery (service encounter, evidence of service, image and price). The hotel should deliver service quality to meet the customer's expectation; therefore, the customer will be satisfied when they get what they were expecting. As a result, a satisfied customer will form a positive perception, will spread good word or mouth and will recommend the hotel to others in their network. In addition, when the needs of customers are met, they will be satisfied and will develop a feeling of being "at home" in the hotel.

This main objective has been met as the findings suggest that most participants were satisfied with the service they received in the hotel. As a result, they have formed positive perceptions regarding the services of the hotel. Some customers have been coming back to the hotel because they were satisfied with the service and how well they were treated in the hotel. Most of participants were also satisfied with the friendly, helpful, kind and respectful employees of the hotel. It should be noted that the employees' interactions play an important role in customer perceptions during the service delivery. Furthermore, customers form their perceptions during their interactions with the employees. Their expectations were met, and they have received a service quality in the hotel. Participants, who were satisfied with the service in the hotel, have formed positive perceptions, which lead to positive word of mouth and recommendations of the hotel to others in their network. In addition, the satisfied participants have developed a feeling of being "at home" during their stay in the hotel

However, a few participants were not satisfied with the services received in the hotel. This was because some of the staff were not friendly, they received poor responses, inadequate internet services, and external environmental factors like noise and being scary outside of the hotel as well the air-conditioning in the passage. Another participant was dissatisfied with the internet service in the hotel as he/she could not do work or communicate with his/her family and colleagues. Another

complaint included the responsiveness of the employees that was described as poor by a participant; when he/she asked for an iron, it took up to thirty minutes and they had to follow up. It is important to highlight that one participant was not satisfied due to the unfriendly front desk employees. Furthermore, a participant was not satisfied as he/she was not comfortable with the floor they were on and there was no air-conditioning in the passage, which was too long walk.

Some participants were dissatisfied due to responsiveness of the employees that was poor. It should be highlighted that the dissatisfied participants have developed a negative perception of the hotel service and would not recommend the hotel to others in their network. One participant also proclaimed the hotel is expensive thus he/she would have to ensure that people could be able to afford the hotel, before making a recommendation.

Many participants who were satisfied with the service never lodged any complaints with the hotel. However, according to the participants who complained, it was easy to complain to the hotel staff as they were very friendly, and they resolved the problem in a polite manner. Moreover, the participant who complained about maintenance or other services in the room admitted that the employees were prompt in responding and recovering the service. Another participant declared that he/she didn't want to complain as they didn't want to make it difficult for the employees with the hotel management. However, most of the participants proclaimed that complaining about a failed service is the only way the hotel can recover and improve their services. Another dissatisfied customer presumed that the hotel did not have a service recovery as the matter was not resolved when they complained.

The suggestion can be made that customers form perceptions of service received in the hotel in Pretoria during the service delivery, therefore the hotel should ensure that they provide service quality to their customers. This will establish customer satisfaction and lead to a positive perception of the hotel service.

6.2 Areas of Concern from Participants

This section is part of the results or findings of the data analysis that present the concerns of the participants toward the hotel. Most of the participants complained about air-conditioning at the hotel. Other areas also noted as something that needs to be improved were:

- **Customers should be allowed to bring their own alcohol to the hotel and pay a corkage fee only.**

Participants suggested that, because drinks from the hotel bar are expensive, the hotel should install a corkage fee system for customers who cannot afford to buy a drink from the bar therefore; they will bring in their own drinks and only pay a corkage fee.

“Participant 2: No but the only think I remember is that I travel a lot, some hotels they let client drinks their own whiskey or whatever drink at the bar and only pay for corkage fee, I will recommend if they can let the guest come with their own drink if they want to and only pay for corkage fee as here it is not allowed, if they do it will be first class as the drinks are very expensive. One of the hotels around here they do, I couldn’t believe it when I went there and only paid R 15 for corkage fee, which was very cheap.”

- **There should be ventilation through the windows and not only a reliance on air-conditioners.**

The windows were always closed; therefore, the hotel used air-conditioning to ventilate the rooms. This blocked the fresh air from coming into the bedrooms and some participants are used to fresh air as the air-conditioning was considered unhealthy.

“Participant 4: but we also need a small window in the bedrooms to get air as we are used to open the window, but here they use air-condition which is not also good for our health.”

- **Improve the internet services.**

The internet was of a poor quality, this prevented the participant to do their work or to communicate with their family and their colleagues.

“Participant 5: No, if I won’t come back then I won’t tell somebody to come. If they organize conferences, I will tell them to swap this hotel until this issue is resolved. My recommendation will be contingent to solve this issue of internet problem. The thing that they fail, it is shameful to have a problem with internet, they should fail in another issues, cleanliness that are fine, they need to improve their internet that is the minimum fail on that, no matter how comfort you are, nobody will take you seriously. If I cannot reach my office or my family, I cannot get thing done as there is no internet, by the way this South Africa, where you expect best in Africa. It seems like the service

provider is disconnected with management. Their internet is weak, patchy and instable this is really a poor job.”

- **Special diets should be catered for by the restaurant and they should have someone at the front desk that can assist disabled customers like the deaf.**

The hotel did not have a professional to communicate with people with disabilities like the deaf. Neither did the hotel request information about the diets of their customers; it should be considered that some customers may be on a special diet for health reasons, for example diabetic customers.

“Participant 6: Any business there is always room for improvement. They are few small things that should be asked when guest checking in, like special diet for example if you are diabetic which means you need to eat small intervals a little bit, a specially when you in the venue there is tea and usually, there is cookies which is a problem for a diabetic. And then I don’t know if they cater for all type, for example hearing and vision impairment, I don’t think they made provision for that, for example they don’t have anyone at the desk who will be able to communicate with someone who is deaf, that should be a problem if somebody books here and he cannot understand because he is deaf.”

- **Ensure that there are enough toiletries for those travelling without their own.**

The hotel did not provide a set of toiletries in the bathrooms and only provided it on request. This should be a concern for customers who travel unplanned.

“Participant 7: I think the body lotion, but they know as I told them, to me a hotel is place where anytime, I can come unplanned and stay, if I want to bath then I will need body lotion, soap, tooth paste, those small things should always be available, but I was told body lotion is available on request.”

- **Offer fresh food and polish the furniture.**

The hotel should provide fresh food to their customers. One participant proclaimed that he/she got sick after eating the hotel’s food. Participants also believed that the hotel should polish the furniture.

“Participant 10: The food is not fresh, it is like they warm it and bring it back, secondly, they must polish furniture, but I am asking myself if hotel cannot sacrifice few Rands and polish so that it looks good other thing that I don’t like is the room with tiles, I like a room with carpets as it is warm.”

- **Install cooking facilities in the rooms and a quicker response to calls from clients.**

The hotel should cater for all kinds of different foods, like African food, as some participants did not like what they cooked. In addition, the hotel should install cooking facilities in the rooms for customers to cook what they want. Furthermore, the front desk should respond to the calls from the customers quickly.

“Participant 11: I think they need to have a cooking facility in the rooms and cater for all the people because some people don’t like what they cook. it is not like they are bad, those things maybe they are bad for me but not to other people, but when it comes to issue of responding the calls from the clients and issues for the food.”

- **Make an office in the rooms for the business customers so that they can work in their rooms.**

The hotel should make place for an office in the room so that businesses customers are able to work there, as they stay in hotel for work purposes.

“Participant 16: just make provision for me to work in the room.”

- **Improve repairs and maintenance.**

The hotel should improve their regular maintenance of the facility and upgrade the bathrooms.

“Participant 13: In terms of service quality regular repair maintenance of facilities and upgrade the bathrooms.”

- **Install air-conditioning in the passages.**

The passage is too long, and it gets hot while the customers walk to their rooms, the hotel should install air-conditioners there.

“Participant 23: like I said everything is good, but I am not comfortable with the floor where I stay if they can put air-conditioner in the passage as they are too long walk. Only aircon upstairs passage, it is the only thing that makes me uncomfortable for now.”

- **Improve the existing air-conditioning.**

The air conditioners of the hotel were of an old style; therefore, it didn't ventilate enough air, which was not easy during summer as it gets very hot. The hotel should therefore improve the air-conditioning system. In addition, it was also recommended that the gym needs to be upgraded.

“Participant 8: The air conditioner is working fine but it is old model that makes a lot of noisy, but I am just happy there is an air conditioner.”

“Participant 18: they need to upgrade their Gym and to upgrade their aircon. “

“Participant 17: As I told you before I think they need to upgrade their aircon system.”

“Participant 19: yeah, the room was fine and everything, only air conditioner is not fine especially this time, therefore the air-conditioner should be improved, especially in summertime, the air conditioner is very discomfort, it should be improved.”

“Participant 20: Some for me are improvement and some of the facilities in the room like air conditioner and TV because of the humanity I am not use to it, I could recommend it, I don't think air conditioner is up to standard, that is my opinion, they need to look at it. They should improve the air-conditioner.”

“Participant 22: the only problem I had with the room, it was the air-conditioner that was not working, and it is very noise, I think they should upgrade the air conditioner as it is very hot in Pretoria. The service is very good the only think they should improve is the reception, they can be a bit friendly, more welcoming, they are not very friendly. They are things that they can be improved on, like I said front desk should be more friendly, they should improve air conditioner in the rooms, and in my room the shower doesn't work properly”

“Participant 18: they need to upgrade their Gym and to upgrade their aircon.”

- **Have professional and friendly reception staff.**

The employees at reception should be more friendly and welcoming toward the customers. Additionally, bathroom maintenance, like the shower that was not working properly, needs to be done more frequently and in a timely manner.

“Participant 22: The service is very good the only think they should improve is the reception, they can be a bit friendly, more welcoming, they are not very friendly. They are things that they can be improved on, like I said front desk should be more friendly, they should improve air conditioner in the rooms, and in my room the shower doesn’t work properly.”

- **Put available resources in the rooms and upgrade the hotel system.**

The hotel should place available appliances like an iron in the rooms. They should also keep customers’ information in the hotel system so that, when they come back, they only need to present their ID and the receptionist will get all the required information from the system. They should also make hotel rooms family friendly as they seem to cater to people on business trips.

“Participant 25: I need is all the sources that require to be in place like iron, in some other hotel they put an iron in the rooms, so that you won’t have to request for iron from the reception but here I have to call to get iron in the morning, all those sources are just small thing that should be provided in the rooms.”

“Participant 25: I think it is average, because they need to change the system like when I am back in the same hotel they need personal information, I thinks their system should capture the information and when I am here in future then It will show up my name and all the information, so that I will have only to sign, not rewrite again your address and everything’s, if not then why do I use the same place, because it is not the first time, we are always using this hotel. I have noticed, their rooms accommodate people who travel for business. When you come with families in some hotels you may find big room with two beds, so that the children can have their bed.”

- **Install a compliment system.**

The hotel should install a compliment system for the customers so that they can leave a compliment when they are satisfied with the service. This will enable the hotel management to know where they are doing well and be able to compliment the staff who are doing a great job. Before complaining it

is also good to start with a compliment. Therefore, the employees will know that they are doing right and what they need to improve on.

“Participant 15: I always believe that if you compliment people, you are thankful that they are positive behaviour man. If I see something good here, I always tell them that is good, keep it up. I believe if there is a complain system, there should be obviously a compliment system as well. If there is a complaint, you must give people the chance to be able to respond or to recover to what you have complain, you can just expect to complain and not to be able to compliment. My mother taught me this even when you want to criticize someone, actual your criticism should start by a complement. Never just complain, nobody will listen to a complaint. Because people listen to a complaint when you start with a compliment and then you end it with a compliment, otherwise people may do whatever you think they do for you, but you will just see people want to do something for you when you are nice, and it doesn't cost cent.”

6.3 Limitations of the Study

This study was limited to the perception of customer service in the hotel industry in the Pretoria. The data was collected in 2019 in one selected hotel in Pretoria, where the researcher conducted interviews with twenty-five participants that were selected from customers of the selected hotel who were available to be interviewed at their convenience. Participants were customers who had stayed in the hotel for at least one night. The participants were all adults between the age of 18 to 65 years. Therefore, the results could not be applicable to all the customers of the selected hotel or all the hotels in Pretoria and so it cannot be generalised. The interviews were conducted in English.

6.4 Recommendations for Further Study

Based on the findings and the conclusions discussed above, various recommendations for future researchers can be offered. These recommendations are:

- From the research study it was clear that the participants formed perceptions on service they received in the hotel in Pretoria, some of the satisfied participants will come to the hotel again due to the service quality they received. An area that would benefit from a more detailed exploration is the impact of service quality on customer loyalty.
- From this research study it was seen that customers form perceptions of service quality in the hotel in Pretoria. Further study could be done on how to find out what the customers' expectations in the hotel are.

- For this research study, participants were only from one hotel in Pretoria, the study could be expanded to all other cities in the Gauteng province.
- For further research on this topic, it will be suitable to use mix methods approach while conducting study related to customer perception in hotel industry.
- From the research study, it was clear that participants were from the hotel industry, a further study could be of benefit in all other accommodation industries.
- For the research study, qualitative research was used to collect data, future research can use the service quality factor to rate their service.
- From the research study, it was noted that most of the participants were South African citizens, with only a few foreigners. Further study can use only foreign customers to find out their perception of service quality in the hotel industry, to be able to compare to South African customer's views.
- An attempt could be made to create a model of factors of service quality in the hotel industry in South Africa; that can be successful and may assist in promoting and improving the services provided in hotels.

6.5 Conclusion of the Study

The perception of customer service plays an important role in the hotel industry because it can contribute to the improvement of the hotel industry in Pretoria. In this study the perception of customer service from the participants who have been in the hotel and have experienced the service of the hotel was analysed. The findings of the study revealed that customers form perceptions from the services provided in the hotel. The participants who visited the selected hotel in Pretoria, most were South African citizens and only a few others were foreigners from other African countries. It should be noted that the hotel receives different customers with different backgrounds. Most of the participants were at the hotel for business and only a few for pleasure. It should be a concern for the hotels to ensure the delivery of service to all customers with different backgrounds as they are all concerned about the quality of services provided in the hotel. Customers expect to receive service quality that is good value for their money; this includes a comfortable, safe and clean room, responsive and helpful employees as well as safety in the hotel. Therefore, the hotel industry must deliver services that meet the expectations of the customers. It should be noted that the participants judge the service received in the hotel differently, and most of them have received the service quality that they were expecting. This has established their satisfaction and lead to their positive perceptions

of service quality in the hotel. As a result, they will spread a positive word of mouth communication to their network and some have developed a feeling of “being home” in the hotel.

However, a few participants did not receive the service quality that they were expecting, therefore they were not satisfied with the service. This leads to their negative perception of the hotel. Furthermore, most of participants proclaimed that the service complaints and service recovery is very important as this will assist the hotel in improving their service. When a customer complains about a failed service, the hotel should ensure to recover the complaint and make sure the customer walks out satisfied. Therefore, when the failed service is recovered, the customer will be satisfied, and the perception will be positive.

It is hoped that the findings and recommendation presented in the study will be useful and beneficial to hotels to know what to consider when perceiving their service quality process as well as what aspects to look out for that lead to the negative perceptions of service.

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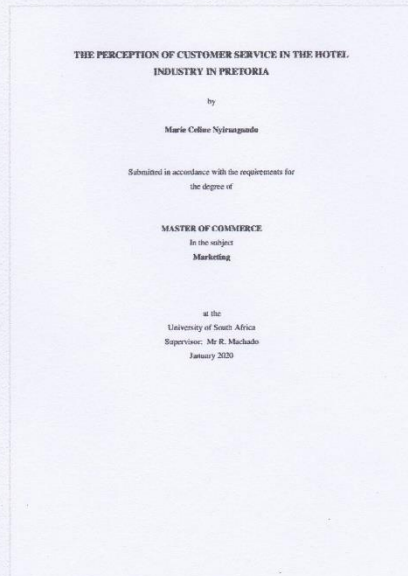


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UNISA DEPARTMENT OF MARKETING AND RETAIL MANAGEMENT ETHICS
REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date 27-11-2018

Dear Ms Marie Celine Nyirangondo

**Decision: Ethics Approval from
2018 - 2021**

NHREC Registration # : (if
applicable)

ERC Reference # :
2018_MRM_011

Name : Ms Marie Celine
Nyirangondo

Student # : 51839172

Staff # : n/a

Researcher(s): Ms Marie Celine Nyirangondo, 51839172@mylife.unisa.ac.za,
0646836899

Supervisor (s): Mr Ricardo Machado, machar@unisa.ac.za, 0124294020

Working title of research:

The perception of customer service in the hotel industry, Gauteng Province

Qualification: Mcom

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the Unisa Department of Marketing and Retail Management Ethics Review Committee for the above mentioned research. Ethics approval is granted for 3 years.

*The **low risk application** was **reviewed** by the Department of Marketing and Retail Management Ethics Review Committee on 1 November 2018 in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.*

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

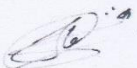


1. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.
2. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the Department of Marketing and Retail Management Research Ethics Committee.
3. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
4. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing, accompanied by a progress report.
5. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.
6. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data require additional ethics clearance.
7. Minor changes suggested by the committee be amended on the Form 1.

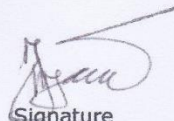
Note:

*The reference number **2018_MRM_011** should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.*

Yours sincerely,



Signature
Chair of Department of
Marketing and Retail Management ERC
E-mail: jwiid@unisa.ac.za
Tel: (012) 429-2381



Signature
Executive Dean: College of Economic and
Management Sciences
E-mail: mogalmt@unisa.ac.za
Tel: (012) 429-4805

Semi structured interview questions with hotel's customers

1. Customer Expectation

- As a customer, what was the reason for your stay in this hotel? (business, pleasure, visiting friends and others).
- How long was your stay?
- How important is it for you to stay in this hotel?
- As a customer, what were your expectations in terms of service in this hotel?

2. Service quality

- As a customer, what does service quality means to you?
- What factors do you use to judge service quality in this hotel?
- Has this changed over time?
- How prompt is the process of booking a room in this hotel?
- What was your opinion of the process of checking in and out in this hotel?
- What was your view of the room itself- did it meet your expectations?
- How prompt did the hotel employees respond to your needs during your time staying?
- Did you have a meal at the hotel? What was the service at the restaurants like?
- How important is for you, service complains and service recovery? (If you ever had to complain).

3. Customer satisfaction

- As guest, what is needed to be satisfied?
- How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the physical environment?
- How satisfied or dissatisfied are you overall with the employees' interactions?
- Would you come back to the hotel- Why or why not?
- Would you recommend this hotel to others?
- What is your nationality, age, how much do you travel or stay at hotels in a year, are you married or single and do you have children or not?
- Is there anything you feel this hotel should improve in terms of service quality?

Thank you for your time

Proof of edit by

Michelle du Bruyn

Copy Editor/Proofreader

Title:

**The Perception of Customer Service in the Hotel
Industry In Pretoria.**

Author/s:

Marie Celine Nyirangondo

Date:

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Editor's qualification:

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