



**AN ASSESSMENT OF SERVICE QUALITY AT A SELECTED RESTAURANT IN
DURBAN, KWAZULU-NATAL**

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DECLARATION

I, **Nkosinathi Nonyane** (student number **215082518**), declare that:

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ii. This dissertation has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other tertiary institution.

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ABSTRACT

Scholars' interest in service quality in the fast food industry is growing. Fast food restaurants are aiming at meeting customers' expectations of service quality. There is therefore need to assess customers' expectations and experiences of service at the restaurant under study. The aim of the study was to ascertain the service quality gap between customers' expectations and experiences of service quality. Quantitative research methodology was used to underpin the study. Convenience sampling was used to select respondents. Two hundred and sixty four questionnaires were collected. Data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Findings indicate that customers' expectations surpassed their experiences of service quality on the five dimensions of the RATER Model. The largest service quality gap scores were reliability and responsiveness in this order. The smallest service quality gap score was tangibility. There is need for the restaurant to improve the reliability and responsiveness of the service quality because customers' needs are not met. On the other hand, there is need to further reduce the small service quality gap score of tangibility at the restaurant.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the background of the study and research problem. This is followed by research questions and the research objectives. Then, the justification and significance of the study, and the brief introduction to the research methodology are discussed. The last part of the chapter deals with definitions of terms, outline of the chapters, and summary of the chapter.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Scholars argue that service quality is a critical factor in marketing service or production (Zhu, Wymer and Chen, 2002; Zikmund, Mcleod and Gilbert, 2003; Agarwal and Kumar, 2016). Agarwal and Kumar (2016) said that service quality has influence on customers' satisfaction, loyalty, trust, and perceived value. When customers are not satisfied with service quality provided to them they leave their service providers for another service provider perceived to be offering better service quality (Akanlagm, 2011). Customers also tend to speak badly about service providers they have abandon for another service provider (Botes, 2008). Thus, it is important that companies in the service industry monitor and improve service quality.

In South Africa, fast food is one of the main businesses that fall under service business (Yen, Liu, Chen and Lee, 2014). One sure way of monitoring and improving service quality is ensuring that managers of fast food restaurants have knowledge on how to measure service quality. This is crucial because service quality is an elusive concept (du Plessis, 2010). When restaurants do not understand and are not able to measure service quality, this may widen the gap between customers' expectations and experiences of service quality (Xu, Goedegebuure and Van de Heijden, 2006).

The gap between customers' expectations and experiences of service quality has an impact on service quality. Therefore, it is important that fast food restaurants are able to measure service quality. Several models have been developed to measure service quality including the service quality model, multilevel model, serviperf and the Nordic model (Egan, 2011). Though these models have been found to be useful in measuring service quality, there is no study the researcher is aware of conducted to measure service quality at fast food restaurant under study in Durban.

The restaurant under study is one of the world's largest chain for hamburger fast foods restaurants. The restaurant under study provides service to more than 70 million customers in 122 countries with more than 40 000 outlets (du Plessis, 2016). The first restaurant was opened around 1950s. The restaurant under study predominantly trades in hamburgers, chicken, chicken sandwiches, soft drinks, desserts, and breakfast items. The restaurant study also offers salads, wraps and vegetarians items to mention but a few (Evenson, 2005).

The restaurant's corporation earns revenues through a franchise and restaurants, and through operating restaurants. More than 15 per cent of the restaurant is owned and run by the restaurant's corporation directly. The remaining restaurants are operated through franchise agreements and joint ventures (Gachiri, 2015).

In South Africa, the restaurant under study opened the doors of the first restaurant in the 1990s, and today there are over 200 restaurants across the nine provinces of South Africa (du Plessis, 2010). More than 10 000 people have been trained and employed. More than 80.0per cent of the food served is from local suppliers and services over 10 million customers per month (Minami, 2012).

Though the restaurant under study has huge advertisement projects through billboards, television, newspapers, signage and sponsoring social events (Oliver, 2010), customers' expectations and experiences of service quality, and the gap between the two are not known. Thus, this study explores customer's expectations and experiences of service quality, and the gap between the two dimensions.

1.3 RESEARCH PROBLEM

The fast food industry scholars are now focusing their attention on service quality in order to improve competitive advantage in the industry (Naik, Krishna and Gantasala, 2010). Previous studies show that quality refinement is one of the main challenges to be realised in the fast food industry (Ojala, 2006). The fast food restaurant industry exists in order to meet consumption needs of the people. Several studies on service quality show that there is a dearth of knowledge among managers for fast food restaurants on the service quality that they are providing to customers. The dearth of understanding of the service quality in the fast food restaurants leads to poor fast food service quality, customers' dissatisfaction, bad public image of the restaurants, dissatisfaction among employees and low morale. However, managers, leaders, and other stakeholders are making efforts to improve service quality in the fast food industry (Lee and Lin, 2005). Addressing the issue of service quality in the fast food industry is not a priority today but working on enhancing service quality is a matter that must be addressed for the survival of fast food industry (Ouyung, 2010). Thus, this study explores customers' expectations and experiences of service quality provided by the restaurant under study to improve the fast food service delivery system.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What are customers' expectations of service quality at the restaurant under study?
- What are customers' experiences of service quality at the restaurant under study?
- What are the gaps between customers' expectations and experiences of service quality at the restaurant under study?

1.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To understand customers' expectations of service quality at the restaurant under study.
- To ascertain customers' experiences of service quality at the restaurant under study.
- To determine the gaps between customers' expectations and experiences of service quality at the restaurant under study?

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE/IMPORTANCE/CONTRIBUTION

A study of service quality at the restaurant under study in Durban is important as it may contribute to the understanding of customers' expectations and experiences, and gap between expectations and experiences. In view of the above, the restaurant and other fast food restaurants may use food service quality as a tool to encourage people to buy their fast food.

The knowledge on service quality to be generated may be the restaurant's strategy to boost its fast food service value, which can add value to its endeavors of absolutely becoming a service quality restaurant in Durban.

1.7 JUSTIFICATION/RATIONALE

Service quality has strong influence on several factors including lower costs, business performance, customer loyalty, profitability, and customer satisfaction (Garvin, 2008). Service quality also increases competition between fast food restaurants and helps stakeholders to have better knowledge of customers' service-quality expectations and experiences (Ahmad and Sungip, 2008). It is mainly when customers' expectations and experiences are known that it become feasible to deal with the issue of service quality with appropriate strategies and policies. It is obvious that if this study is not conducted, they will be a dearth of knowledge on the gaps that exist between customers' expectations and experiences of service quality at the restaurant under study (Bae, 2012), as a result the restaurant will continue to provide service quality that may not be satisfying customers.

1.8 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The epistemology of positivism was used to inform the study. A case study research design was used as a research blueprint, quantitative research methodology was used to underpin the study, and census sampling method was employed to select respondents. Data was collected using questionnaires. The RATER (Reliability, Assurance, Tangibles, Empathy and Responsiveness) Model that highlights five important business areas customers use to analyse strength or weaknesses of a service were used to inform the study, and the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 21 in particulate descriptive ntial statistics were used to analyse data (Bryman, 2007). Literature deals with constructs of the fast-food industry, historical account service quality in the fast-food restaurant industry and the significance of the fast-food service industry. The application of the key research ethical principles met the requirements of the research office at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN).

1.9 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study was only conducted at one restaurant in Durban. Therefore, findings cannot be generalised to any restaurant.

1.10 DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS

- **Reliability:** “It explains employees’ ability to provide the promised services to the customers on time, accurately and consistently” (Brink and Berndt, 2004:23).
- **Assurance:** “It measures employees’ competencies; skills, knowledge, abilities, behaviours, capabilities, courtesy) and using them to inspire trust in their customers” (Carman, 2010:28).
- **Tangibles:** The dimension explains how personnel, physical facilities, communication materials equipment, and personnel appear and their influence on service quality (Malhotra, 2007).
- **Empathy:** This dimension deals with the capacity of employees to build caring relationship with customers (Nelson, 2009).
- **Responsiveness:** This dimension deals with employees’ ability to offer prompt and high service quality to the patients (Olorunniwo, Hsu and Udo:72).
- **Service quality:** “Is a focused evaluation that reflects the customer's perception of specific dimensions of service: reliability, responsiveness, assurance, Empathy, tangibles” (Palmer, 2011:23).
- **Fast food restaurants:** Are eating places that serve fast foods, and “are typically part of a restaurant chain or franchise operation that provisions standardized ingredients and/or partially prepared foods and supplies to each restaurant through controlled supply channels” (Egan, 2011:2).

1.11 OUTLINE OF THE DISSERTATION

The dissertation has five chapters as presented below.

- **Chapter one: introduction and background to the study;** this chapter deals with the introduction, background to the study, research problem, the significance of the study, research questions and objectives. This is followed by the conceptual basis and limitations of the study.
- **Chapter two: literature review;** this chapter presents literature on constructs of the fast-food industry, provides a historical account service quality in the fast-food restaurant industry and the significance of the fast-food service industry.
- **Chapter three: research methodology;** the research design, methodology, study site, population, target population, sampling methods, and the sample size. In addition, the chapter presents data collection instruments and analysis techniques. The chapter ends by highlighting ethical measures that guided the study.
- **Chapter four: presentation, analysis and discussion;** this chapter presents and discusses findings in detail theorised around the phenomenon of service quality. Themes discussed and analysed are; reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibility of service quality.
- **Chapter five: conclusions and recommendations;** the chapter presents conclusions and recommendations based on the key findings.

1.12 SUMMARY

The chapter presented the background of the study followed by the research problem. The research questions and research objectives are also presented. Then, the justification and significance of the study, and the brief introduction to the research methodology are presented. This is followed by definitions of terms, outline of the chapters, and summary of the chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

FOOD SERVICE INDUSTRY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the food service industry where the fast-food restaurants are finding a niche. The chapter examines the relevant constructs of the fast-food industry by describing the main characteristics. Then the chapter examines and provides a historical account of the conceptualisation of service quality in the fast-food restaurant industry. The account of the significance of the fast-food service industry is also provided.

2.2 THE FOOD SERVICE INDUSTRY

Food service industry is an over-arching term referring to all establishments that serve food regularly (Payne and Frow, 2005) for consumption either at home or on the premises where food is prepared (Petousis, 2008). A food service is regarded as commercial when its main business is to sell food for profit (Read, 2009; Qadri, 2015).

Over the years, the food service industry has evolved from just providing quick meals to becoming a significant part of family life as it relieves families from meal preparation (Saurina and Coenders, 2002). Food quality is an important part of food service industry together with service performance and ambience created by the service provider (Sattari, 2007). Thus, the food, presentation, taste and smell together with the service aspects (Stone, 2000); and, ambience, interior décor, spatial organisation and music are all important part of the meal experience which determines customer satisfaction (Tsoukatos and Rand, 2007).

2.3 THE FAST-FOOD RESTAURANT INDUSTRY

Fast-food restaurants serve fast-food on their premises or as part of another restaurant (Van Dyke, Prybutok and Kappelman, 2009; Van Huyssteen, 2014). Anderson and Keer (2002) assert that fast-food restaurants have quick food service where food payment is made before receiving food, has limited eat-in services and no waiting staff. Fast-food restaurant's target market is working professionals and parents who need quick and low priced meals (Awara and Amacechi, 2014). This study focuses on service quality, fast-food restaurant in Durban.

2.3.1 Fast-food industry

One of the most significant changes in food consumption that occurred in the last fifty years is the increasing trend to consume food prepared outside the home (Barnes, 2006). Since the early 2000s, the fast-food industry has grown rapidly (Bates, Bates and Johnson, 2003) resulting in increase in fast-food industry academic literature (Berndt, du Plessis, Klopper, Lubbe and Roberts-Lombard, 2009). The growth of the fast-food industry has largely been influenced by the American lifestyle (Banes, 2006).

Quick-service, limited service and relatively low prices sets fast-food outlets apart (Chan, Hui, Lo, Tse, Tso and Wu, 2003). This approach is inspired by the growing customer awareness of the need to get more value for their money (Chen and Hu, 2013). Thus, fast-food marketers highlight the value-for-money and convenience of fast-food to targeted consumers (Chandon, Wansink and Laurent, 2010). Nevertheless, customer satisfaction from the quick and convenient service of fast-food may exceed satisfaction from the food purchased (Sahagun and Vasquez-Parraga, 2014). Satisfied consumers usually develop a trust relationship resulting in commitment and loyalty to the brand (Sahagun and Vasquez-Parraga, 2014).

Fast-food is increasingly consumed more creating an increase in the number of meals per day (Chen, 2012). However, the value derived from fast-food is a combination of food, service and the restaurant. Consumers pursue these values to satisfy their hunger; for convenience; entertainment; and, social interactions (Park, 2014). For example, in Korean, fast-food outlets are considered efficient, economic and exotic areas for socialising and entertainment (Park, 2014). However, the functional value of visiting a restaurant is to satisfy hunger.

2.3.2 Fast-food industry in South Africa

South Africa has one of the fastest growing fast-food industry in the world. Similar to international trends, the industry grew increasingly since the early 2000's due to growth of the Black Middle-class resulting in rising household incomes, and increasing female participation in the formal sector (Maumbe, 2012). In 2012, the fast-food industry had grown by more than 16 per cent (Euromonitor International, 2012). Between 2008 and 2012, the number of 16 year-old consumers increased by 13 per cent translating to about 26.5 million consumers. A 2017 projection shows that about 34.1 million consumers will buy fast food at least once in four weeks (Planting, 2013).

The remarkable growth of the fast-food industry resulted in remarkable increase in global fast-food industry investment (Dibb and Meadows, 2004). In 2010, 4991 fast-food outlets were part of the fast-food chain while 3670 were independently owned (Igumbor, Sanders, Puoane, Tsolekile, Schwarz, Purdy, Swart, Durao and Hawkes, 2012). Over the same period, there was an increased in all sorts of pre-packed foods in South Africa (Igumbor et al., 2012). Between 2005 and 2010, snack bars, ready meals and noodles increased by 40 per cent. On the other hand, 11.3 per cent of the population purchased food from street vendors twice a week compared to 6.8 per cent that bought from fast-food outlets (Steyn and Labadarios, 2011). Despite that the amount of food purchased from street vendors is twice as much as that purchased from restaurants (Steyn and Labadarios, 2011), fast-food chains have aggressive expansion strategies to increase their market share. It is this powerful competition that fast-food outlets have to deal with using customer-oriented marketing strategies streamlined to culture specific characteristics (Dimitriadis and Stephens, 2008).

The South African fast-food industry is made up of local and international brands such as Chicken Licken, KFC, McDonald's, Nando's and Steers (Maumbe, 2012). Yumi Brands, to which KFC is part, has the largest share of the fast-food industry comprising of 771 outlets and 509 Famous Brand outlets (Euromonitor International, 2015). Yumi Brands provide all-day meals which attract many consumers throughout the day.

2.4 CONSUMER CONSUMPTION OF FAST-FOOD

Consumers' food habits have changed from the traditional home preparation due to changing genders roles which has increased household income but has added pressure to conduct household chores. Goch (2009) and Andaleeb and Conway (2006) highlight a tripled fold

increase in married women force since 1950. Resultantly, meals are not planned while mealtime is no longer an occasion (De Metos, Vieira and Veiga, 2012). This creates the need for quick meal solutions such as that provided by the restaurant industry (De Jager and Du Ploy, 2007).

Researchers (Dunn, Mohr, Wilson and Witter, 2008; Mulvaney-Day, Womack and Oddo, 2012) show that consumers buy fast food at least once a week. Convenience drives consumers to buy fast food and later become loyal to fast-food outlets (Candel, 2011). Consumers support fast-food outlets because of time limit to prepare meals at home (McCracken and Brandt, 2007) since transaction time is much less than home-meal preparation (Heider and Moeller, 2012). In addition, the demands of gender roles regardless of employment status, income level and civil status are contributing factors to consumer support of fast-food outlets (Fox, Montgomery and Lodish, 2004; Raajpoot, Sharma and Chebat, 2008).

Donlagic and Fazlic (2015) argue that majority of fast food has high fat content, which in the long term may have negative health effects. Despite that fast-food is unhealthy, the convenience to consumers in terms of cost and time is valued (Flint, Blocker and Boutin, 2011). Thus, fast food saves consumers time and is convenience in a contemporary world that is increasingly becoming efficient and needs instant gratification (Fornell, 2010).

2.5 SERVICE QUALITY

Parasuraman, Zeithmal and Berry (1985) saw it unfit to use a product-base definition of the service sector. Resultantly, the authors coined the term ‘service quality’. Henceforth various definitions of service quality have emerged as depicted in the table below.

Table 1: Service quality definitions

Authors	Definitions	Similarities/Differences
Gronroos (2003; 2004; 2007; 2007; 2009; 2010)	...a customer perception of the difference between expected service and perceived service.	Difference between expectations and perceptions
Parasuraman, Zeithaml	...comparison between customers’	Compares expectations

and Berry (1985)	expectations and perceptions of service.	with the perceptions
Zeithaml (1988)	...customer's assessment of overall excellence or superiority of the service.	Overall assessment of service
Guesalaga and Pitta (2014)	...customer perception of how well a service meets or exceeds their expectations	Compare expectations with perceptions
Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry (1991)	...overall evaluation of a specific organisation that results from comparing its performance with consumers' general expectations of how the organisation in its industry should perform	Compare expectations with performance
Cronin & Taylor (1992)	...in measuring perceived service quality, the level of comparison is what a customer should expect; whereas in measures of satisfaction, the appropriate comparison is what a consumer would expect.	Expectations of customers in terms of the service
Stevens, Knutson and Patton (1995)	...service quality is a function of the interaction among three independent variables: normative expectations, predictive expectations and actual service quality; the lower the expectations the consumers have about what should happen, the better their perceptions of the actual service; the higher their expectations about what will happen, the better their perceptions of the actual service.	Compare the expectations with perceptions

Despite the difference in wording of service quality definitions, they all relate to expected and perceived service (Cronin and Taylor, 1992; Oliver, 1993; Zelthaml, Berry and Parasuraman, 1993). Gronroos (1984) and Parasuraman et al.'s (1988) definition is widely accepted which stipulates that service quality should be seen as the difference between customer expectations and service performance.

2.5.1 The History of service quality

Japan and the United States of America (USA) were the first to recognise the importance of quality towards competitive advantage and business survival (Kandampully, 2007:62). After World War II, Japan and the USA focused on quality improvements as part of rebuilding their economy (Kandampully, 2007:56). This was based the work of Deming, Juran and Crosby which extended overall management to include 'practical tools for quality management (Kandampully, 2007:62). Deming formulated a 14-point plan for improving quality (Gregoire, 2010:31; Kandampully, 2007:64) while Juran argued that quality is achieved through people and not techniques. Juran's work resulted in 10 steps for quality improvement called total quality management (TQM) (Kandampully, 2007:67). Conversely, Crosby is renowned for the 'zero defect' and 'do it right the first time' approaches, four absolutes for managing quality and 14 steps for quality management (Kandampully, 2007:69).

Service quality was first introduced in the manufacturing industry. However, quality in the service sector is only evident in the 1980s' literature (Kandampully, 2007:73). Nevertheless, service quality was not easily measured as product quality due to intangibility of service (Parasuraman et al., 1988). As such, service marketers had to devise different measures of quality such as consumers' impression of service which became the standard for measuring quality (Gronroos, 1992 in Kandampully, 2007:73). Since the 80s, the concept of service quality has been a subject of research and various service quality models have been proposed (Martinez and Martinez, 2010).

The first service quality model developed by Gronroos (1984) proposed that service quality is the difference between consumers' expected and perceived rendered service. Two dimensions of service quality were identified to include functional and technical quality; functional quality relates to how the service is delivered while technical quality pertains to what service

is provided (Gronroos, 1984). Therefore, perceptions of how and what services are delivered are important to determining the quality of service rendered.

- Parasuraman et al (1985) proposed another service quality model which posits that service quality is a function of the difference between expectation and performance along all quality dimensions. Within this model, Parasuraman (1985) proposed a ‘gap analysis’ composed of five gaps that influence service quality and include:
- **Gap 1:** the difference between customer expectations and management perceptions of customer expectations;
- **Gap 2:** the difference between management’s perception of consumer expectations and the translation of these perceptions into service quality specifications;
- **Gap 3:** the difference between service quality specifications and service actually delivered;
- **Gap 4:** the difference between service delivery and external communication to consumers about the service delivery; and
- **Gap 5:** the difference between customers’ expectations and perceived service.

The gap analysis identifies the gap between service providers’ and consumers’ perception of service quality dimension. Using Gap 5, SERVQUAL scale was formulated to determine service quality and was based on disconfirmation paradigm (Parasuraman et al., 1988).

SERVQUAL model presents 10 dimensions for understanding customer service expectations and perceptions (Parasuraman et al., 1988). The 10 dimensions included: tangibles; reliability; responsiveness; communication; credibility; security; competence; courtesy; understanding; and knowing customers. These were reduced to 5 items and became known as the RATER model used in this study composed of:

- Reliability - ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately;

- Assurance - knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence;
- Tangibles - physical facilities, equipment and appearance of personnel
- Empathy: caring, individualised attention the firm gives its customers (Parasuranam et al., 1988).
- Responsiveness - willingness to help customers and provide prompt service;

Service quality was therefore based on consumer feedback on service expectations and experiences (Kandampully, 2007:117; Landhari, 2009). However, SERVQUAL was dismissed as being unreliable under different circumstances and was replaced by SERVPERF (Akbaba, 2006; Kandampully, 2007; Cronin and Taylor, 1992). Similar to SERVQUAL, SERVPERF is based on consumer perception of service provider performance. The difference, however, is that consumer expectations are not measured (Cronin and Taylor, 1992). SERVPERF was later modified to be applied in the restaurant industry as DINESERV (Dabholkar, Shepherd and Thorpe, 2000).

Apparent from the discussion is that all the models measure consumer perceptions of service quality and the models present frameworks for measuring service quality (Gilibert, Veloutsou, Goode and Moutinho, 2004). Nevertheless, the models are each interpreted differently and used to determine the outcome whether formative or reflective.

2.5.2 Consumers' expectations

Consumer expectations are based on previous experiences and what they are familiar with. That is, a consumer will perceive products and product attributes according to expectations (Gronroos, 2006). It is important for marketers to know which products or services consumers deem important in order to improve products or services according to consumer needs (Gronroos, 2004). Thus companies need to constantly exceed consumer expectations to keep consumers satisfied and loyal (Hume and Mort, 2008).

2.5.3 Consumers' experiences

Experience is "...the process by which an individual selects, organises and interprets stimuli into a meaningful and coherent picture of the world" (Gronroos, 2006:33). Experience results

from two inputs: physical stimulus from the outside environment and consumer's own expectations related to previous experiences (Isac and Rusu, 2014).

2.5.4 Service quality in the restaurant industry

In recent years, the restaurant industry has experienced intense competition (Jain, Jain and Dhar, 2007), mainly attributable to the global economic recession and abundance of fast-food restaurants (Johnston, Silverstro and Fitzgerald and Voss, 1999). Now more than ever, restaurants need to distinguish themselves from competitors through quality service delivery. Thus, service quality is critical to improving customer satisfaction (Wong and Fong, 2010).

Researchers (Clemes et al., 2008; Yusoff et al., 2010) highlight the importance of service quality to the success of fast-food restaurants. Restaurants need to continuously ascertain and improve the quality of customer service because measuring service quality is critical to service improvement (Juwaheer, 2011; Jones and Taylor, 2012). As such, customer satisfaction is used to measure service performance and is a benchmark for improving service (Gupta and Zeithami, 2006).

Service quality is multi-dimensional concept whose dimensions are important to customers that frequent fast-food restaurants (Gronroos, 2006). Researchers (Gronroos, 2004; Parasuranam et al., 1985, 1988; Cronin and Taylor, 1992; Stevens et al., 1995) highlight various dimensions of service quality. Important to this study is Oyewole's research on service quality in the fast-food industry. Oyewole's (1999) study was conducted in two phases: the first phase was in summer 1997 where seven fast-food restaurants were surveyed with a total of 68 customers completing the survey. Respondents in this study had to list characteristics they used in evaluating service at a fast-food restaurant and from this, 93 attributes were identified. The second phase of the study required a new set of customers, from seven fast-food restaurants, to rate the 93 attributes identified in the first phase on a 5-point semantic differential scale. From this process, 10 dimensions of service quality were identified (Oyewole, 1999). It is on these attributes that my study is grounded on.

2.5.5 Oyewole's conceptualisation of service quality in the fast-food restaurant industry

Oyewole's service quality instrument includes the following dimensions: hygiene and efficiency; courtesy; health consciousness; child-friendliness; ease of complaint, comforts; orderliness; availability; expeditiousness; and, communication. These are discussed next.

2.5.6 Hygiene and Efficiency

Hygiene and efficiency is composed of fresh-tasting and well-prepared food, quality of food, food served at right temperature, fulfilling orders accurately and giving correct change, clean employee work area and good employee hygiene habits, sincerely attending to customer problems, clean facilities and rest rooms, clean tables, good mannered attendants and customer service (Oyewole, 1999). Hygiene and efficiency are two different aspects that should not be combined into one attribute, therefore, they will be separated as follows:

Hygiene - cleanliness and service attitude of a restaurant determine customer satisfaction (Kang and James, 2004). That is, appearance of staff has a strong influence on customer's pleasure and arousal (Kaura and Datta, 2012). Therefore, success of a restaurant is directly affected by consumer's perception of these attributes (Ladhari, 2007). Additionally, food hygiene is related to food safety which determines consumer's purchasing decisions (Leonard and Sasser, 2012). Food safety is composed of principles, practices and implementation of the following attributes: processing; preparing; transporting, handling and serving food that is safe to eat (Barrie, 2006).

Efficiency - customer service provision starts with product design and ends with delivery to consumers. Effectiveness of service delivery is measured through consumer feedback (Niu, 2010). Therefore, waiting staff should be trained in technical skills, product knowledge and interpersonal skills (Patten, 2004). This is because waiting staff are restaurants representatives since they come into contact with consumers and determine whether a consumer will return (Malabie, 2009). Thus, consumer perception is influenced by efficient customer service (Mokhlis, 2012) because consumers create an unconscious perception of the service they receive (Modikwa, 2009). On the other hand, employee promptness and friendliness in dealing with consumers, are important (Oliver, 2010).

2.5.7 Courtesy

Courtesy is friendliness, care, attention and welcoming of customers (Oyewole, 1999). It is vital for waiting staff to be knowledgeable about the restaurant offerings to be able to provide good and quick service. On the other hand, front-line staff create first impression of the restaurant, thus determine the quality of the service to be delivered (Peelen, 2017). Ultimately, a customer's interaction with a fast-food restaurant and the employees determines

customer perception of service quality and satisfaction with the restaurant experience (Payne, 2006).

2.5.8 Health Consciousness

Health consciousness refers to nutritional information availed, healthy food options, concern for the environment and displaying government health certification (as required in the USA) (Oyewole, 1999). According to the USA Menu Education and Labelling Act (MEAL), restaurants are required to avail nutritional information at the point of purchase to consumers (Gerend, 2009). Additionally, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010 requires that restaurants include calorie information on menus. Such information increases consumer consciousness about the food they consume outside the home (Nestle, 2010).

Fast-food is generally energy rich and nutrient poor which is concerning amid increasing obesity rates (Bowman and Vinyard, 2004). Obesity is linked to fast-food consumption (Binkley et al., 2000), therefore availability of healthier menu options enhances consumer perception of value and satisfaction (Kwun, 2011; John and Tyas, 1996). This is because consumers are increasingly interested in healthy options due to healthy lifestyles they adopt. Thus, healthy foods in restaurants enhances satisfaction and loyalty (Kivela, Inkabaran and Reece, 2009).

Over 30 per cent of daily caloric intake and 50 per cent of yearly food spending in the USA is outside the home (Harnack and French, 2008; Chu, Frongillo, Jones and Kaye, 2009). However, frequent consumption of food outside the home is often associated with high obesity rates which portrays a negative image of restaurants (Jeffery, Bexter, McGuire and Linde, 2006). Therefore, promoting good health in food-related business has become an important strategy especially that consumers demand healthier meal options (Hur and Jang, 2015). In response, quick service restaurants in the USA are making an effort to promote a healthy image; for example, McDonalds developed healthier meal options that are under 400 kilojoules such as grilled meat rather than fried (Hur and Jang, 2015). The rest of the world is not far behind the USA.

2.5.9 Child-Friendliness

Child-friendliness means providing menu options and incentives such as toys for children and accommodating children's needs such play areas (Oyewole, 1999). The fast-food industry's

biggest category of expenditure is child-directed marketing (Ohri-Vachaspati, Isgor, Rimkus, Powell, Barker and Chaloupka, 2015). Fast-food companies emphasise toys and other give away products to market their products to children rather than focussing on the food offered (Bernhardt, Wilking, Adachi-Mejia, Bergamini, Marijnissen and Sarfent, 2013). Bowman et al's (2004) study shows that one out of three children eat fast food daily, a fivefold increase since the 1970s. There is currently child-targeted television advertising for fast-food despite that the food is nutrient poor and energy rich (Powell, Schernbeck and Chaloupka, 2013; Kirkpatrick, Reedy, Kahle, Harris, Ohri-Vachaspati and Krebs-Smith, 2014).

2.5.10 Ease of Complaint

Customer satisfaction is a measure of service outcomes and quality and can be used to competitively compare organisations (Paula, Long and Weiner, 2002). Complaining helps customers vent about service dissatisfaction and seek compensation without necessarily becoming disloyal to the restaurant (Oliver, 2010). Customer feedback is important for service quality improvement (Gregoire, 2010); to enhance customer satisfaction and business growth (Phillip and Hazlett, 1997). With increasing industry competition, it is critical that customer feedback is heeded (Ladhari, Bruna and Morales, 2008) as failing to do so would result in consumer dissatisfaction and negative publicity through word of mouth and customer disloyalty (Pizam, Shapoval and Ellis, 2016).

There are various avenues for customer feedback which allows restaurants to understand the quality of their service (Oyewole, 1999). Tollfree numbers (Oyewole, 1999) and internet customer feedback portals (Goetzinger, Park and Widdows, 2006) are two ways customers can provide feedback. However, internet complaints portals (Plewa and Conduit, 2016) are quick and easy communication mode for the restaurants and customers (Memarzadeh and Chang, 2015).

2.5.11 Comfort

Besides good food, environmental attributes influence consumers' perception of restaurants (Garg, 2014). The physical environment can produce feelings of excitement, pleasure and relaxation (Reinartz and Kumar, 2003; Podnar and Javernik, 2012) and as such, environmental attributes are used as tangible measures of service quality (Roberts-Lombard and Du Plessis, 2012). Important environmental attributes include restaurant design elements (spacious internal area, décor, colour scheme and texture of walls), comfortable seating area,

and background music (Oyewole, 1999). Bright lighting and colours on the exteriors attract attention and symbolise quick service and low prices (Garg, 2014). On the other hand, non-visual attributes such as smell and temperature in the restaurant affects consumer perception of the restaurant (Garg, 2014). All these should be customised to reflect the desired theme.

Restaurant space helps consumers visualise mentally before engaging with the space emotionally (Lin, 2004) while interior design determines the amount of time consumers spend in the restaurant (Ryals and Knox, 2004). Colour draws and stimulate consumers' emotional responses (Bellizzi & Hite, 1992) similarly to music (Dube, Chebat and Morin, 1995; Mattila and Wirtz, 2001). Ambience is another important aspect of service quality (Santos, 2003) as it can be perceived as the quality of the surrounding space (Liu and Jang, 2009). Creating good ambience requires that interior design, music, temperature and odour are synchronised to have a good effect on consumers as they walk in (Ryu and Jang, 2007). The aromas from the food can increase consumer hunger perception and food consumption (Edwards, 2012) while strong aromas can have the opposite effect.

Emotional experience of consumption determines satisfaction (Bigne, Andreu and Gnoth, 2005), as such, it is important for restaurants to understand consumer emotions about a product (Barsky and Nash, 2002). Music, noise, cleanliness, crowdedness and lighting all affect consumers' emotions which in turn affect overall customer satisfaction (Ladhari et al., 2008). Food, service and the surroundings should be of acceptable quality as they determine consumer behaviour in the restaurant (Brady and Cronin, 2001; Ryu and Jang, 2008).

2.5.12 Orderliness

Order in the food outlet gives a first impression of the establishment forming part of the total fast-food experience (Dawes and Rowley, 2006). Attributes such as waiting line (Oyewole, 1999), accessibility of drive-through (Tan and Kek, 2004) and waiting time affect customer satisfaction and loyalty (Viek, Beatty and Morgan, 2012; Tolpa, 2012).

Customers can complain about the whole experience because of long waiting time even though the food quality is good (Van Ryzin, 2004). This is because consumers use fast-food restaurants because of speed of service (Yuksel and Yuksel, 2008). However, long waiting time can give customers ample time to select their meal especially when making healthy choices (Lieux and Manning, 2002). Ultimately, waiting-time influences perceived service

quality because short waiting time will produce higher consumer satisfaction, and vice versa (Yalch and Spangenberg, 2000). Therefore, waiting time should be minimised by increasing service staff at peak times (Berndt and Tait, 2012).

2.5.13 Availability

Availability refers to flexible and convenient operation hours (Beukes, 2015). Extended operating hours makes it easy for consumers to purchase food after work hours (Beytell, 2010). Accessibility is easier if fast-food outlets offer delivery services and are located conveniently for consumers. Thus, location is an important factor for financial success in the fast-food industry. The location of the fast-food restaurant is determined strategically to ensure convenient access to consumers and ensure sustainable profits (Karande and Lombard, 2005; Thomadsen, 2007). It is such attributes that have revolutionised modern family eating behaviour (Beytell, 2010).

2.5.14 Expeditiousness

Expeditiousness refers to crowding and variety in menu offerings (Oyewole, 1999). Variety is the number of different menu items available (Namkung and Jang, 2007). Restaurants constantly develop new menu items such as food and beverage, to attract customers (Namkung and Jang, 2007). This is because variety is an important attribute of food quality and enhances consumer satisfaction (Bradley, 2010). In addition, crowding, waiting time and orderliness, highlighted in previous discussions, are also attributes of expeditiousness.

2.5.15 Communication

Communication refers to opportunity for two-way conversation between waiting or frontline staff and customers; this includes asking questions, communicating orders to customers and staff identification through name-tags (Oyewole, 1999). Effective communication with customers is important in reducing customer dissatisfaction and maintaining patronage (Kimes and Wirtz, 2002; Wirtz, Kimes, Ho and Patterson, 2003). Frontline staff are critical to the service experience as they can either satisfy or dissatisfy customers (Kivela, Inbakaran and Reece, 2000). Thus, fast-food restaurants with well-behaved staff can enhance customer relations and perceptions of service quality (Garg, 2014), and vice versa.

Berry et al. (2006) proposes that the 'humanic clue' which refers to staff enthusiasm, body language, choice of words and voice tones, tidiness and dress-code all impact on customer

overall impression of the restaurant. If customer expectations are exceeded through pleasant interaction with service providers, satisfaction is high and loyalty is enhanced (Garg, 2014).

2.5.16 The food quality

Food quality is crucial for meeting consumer expectation as it determines consumer satisfaction and loyalty (Sulek and Hensley, 2004). Despite this, most quality-related studies on restaurants overlooked the importance food and quality and focus on service delivery (Namkung and Jang, 2007). For instance, Oyewole's (1999) study did not identify food as a specific dimension, despite that it is a crucial aspect of consumer expectation. Lupton (1998) highlights that as much as it is a social experience, food consumption appeals to the senses which makes food fundamental to the restaurant experience and consumer satisfaction (Namkung and Jang, 2007). Nevertheless, providing quality, fresh and tasty food that gives a restaurant competitive advantage among its competitors is still a challenge (Namkung and Jang, 2007).

Since food is the main product in a restaurant, it plays an important role in the overall experience of the restaurant. Customer satisfaction and post-dining experience are related to food quality (Liu and Jang, 2009). According to Namkung and Jang (2007), food presentation, menu variety, healthy options, taste, freshness and food temperature were the most sought after attributes for consumer satisfaction. Similarly, Liu and Jang (2009) identified the same attributes and added food safety while Lawless (2000) identified food appearance which, according to Gamble, Jeager and Harker (2006), is important for creating sensory perception.

Food presentation is one of the product or service factors on the tangible quality scale (Raajpoot, 2002). It refers to attractive presentation or decoration of food as a tangible cue for customer perception of quality (Namkung and Jang, 2007). Taste is another significant aspect that affects customer satisfaction and loyalty (Botes, 2008). Similarly, freshness of food is an intrinsic quality cue (Buttle, 2006) and it refers to crispness, juiciness and aroma of food (Peneau, Hoehn, Roth, Escher and Nuessli, 2006). The taste of fresh food is not just about the quality of the food product but extends to the experience when tasting the actual food products (Korsmeyer, 2009). Thus, taste is the meaning and interactions that help consumers make sense of food (Rolls, Roe and Meengs, 2006; Spiller, 2010; Mann, Mol, Satalkar, Savirani, Selim and Sur, 2011) which influences consumer satisfaction and future behaviour

towards the restaurant (De Stricker, 2006). Temperature is another sensory element of food quality (Johns and Tyas, 2006). Together with taste, aroma and presentation, temperature affects how food flavours are evaluated (Delwiche, 2004). Therefore, customer satisfaction with food quality is a powerful predictor of customer intention to return (Oh, 2000).

2.6 Summary

The chapter reviewed literature on the fast food service industry, historical account of service quality in the fast-food restaurant industry, and the importance of the fast-food service industry. The chapter shows that there are various scales for measuring service quality. This study adopted the RATER model scale, which is relevant to the fast-food industry. The RATER model was chosen because it is a multi-dimensional research instrument suitable to investigate consumer expectations and experiences of service quality delivered at the restaurant under study using five dimensions; tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy that represent service quality.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Research methodology is a systematic and critical way of conducting research. This chapter presents the research methodology to be used to conduct this study. The chapter starts by presenting the research design, methodology, study site, target population, sampling method, and sample for the study. The chapter also presents measures for validity and reliability, data collection instruments, data analysis techniques, and summary for the chapter.

3.2 PHILOSOPHY FOR THE STUDY

Auguste Comte coined the term positivism in the nineteenth century, a statement about the power of science and rational thought. According to Fisher (2004), the intention of positivism is to produce general laws that can be used to predict, in terms of probability at least, if not with an absolute certainty. Bryman (2012) defines positivism as an epistemological position that advocate working with observable social entity.

Denzin and Lincoln (2005), also described positivism as an epistemological position that advocates the application of methods of the natural science to the study of social reality and beyond. They further explain that its concept is also taken to entails the following principles:

- Only phenomena and hence knowledge confirmed by the senses can genuinely be warranted as knowledge (principle of phenomenalism);
- Purpose of the theory is to generate hypotheses that can be tested and that will thereby allow explanations of laws to be assessed (principle of deductivism);
- Knowledge is arrived at through gathering of facts that provide the basis for laws (principle of inductivism);

- Science must and presumably can be conducted in a way that is value free (that is objective); and
- Availability of clear distinction between scientific and normative statements and a belief that the former are the true domain of scientists.

In perceiving the consumer behaviour to be fixed and knowable and the idea that marketers believe consumer behaviours are predictable. Thus, this research adopted positivism; it is of the belief that human society just like the natural world, is subject to fixed laws and as such behaviours can be determine (Creswell, 2014). Based on this, positivism research is the most suitable in observing consumer perception, this is supported by Fisher (2004), he stated that the intention of positivism is to produce general laws that can be used to predict behaviours, at least in terms of probability if not with absolute certainty. Fisher (2004), positivism holds that an accurate and value-free knowledge of things are possible. It holds out possibility that human beings and their actions an institution can be studied as objectively as the natural world.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

This study will employ what is called a case study research design. A case study research design is a research approach that allows a researcher to focus on one particular issue in an organisation or entity thus avoid the generalization of the research problem being investigated (Creswell, 2009). The design allows a researcher to dig deeper into the phenomenon and bring out the nuance of what is being studied (Yin, 2009). This makes it easy to understand the research problem under study. Creswell (2014) explained that a case study is effective when exploring a current real-life situation and sets the foundation for research apply their findings and extend the existing way of doing things. Yin (2009) understands a research design as a comprehensive empirical inquiry plan on a contemporary phenomenon within an everyday context. The design is used “when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence may be used” (Yin, 2014:23). Researchers have continued to apply the case study research design with success in well-planned studies focusing on real-life issues, situations, events, and problems. This is because researchers find a case study research design practical in bringing out information that can help to understand a complex problem or issue and contributes new idea to the existing body of knowledge. The research design also allows for the employment of different research methods in one study hence allowing the study to generated rich and comprehensive

data to understand a research problem (Creswell, 2013). The case design is appropriate for this study as it allowed the researcher to focus on one issue of service quality and generate multifaceted data using different data collection methods so as to have a comprehensive understand of service quality at the restaurant under study.

3.4 RESEARCH APPROACHES

This study used a quantitative research methodology to explore service quality at the restaurant under study in Durban. The method is mainly used to quantify a phenomenon being studied by collecting numerical data or data that can easily be transformed into statistics that can help understand a research problem. Creswell (2014) explained that quantitative methodology is used to quantify or measure opinions, attitudes, behaviours, and any defined constructs. Quantitative research methodology uses measurable data to uncover patterns and formulate research facts (Guba, Hunter and Brewer, 2008). This study used quantitative research methodology because it is suitable in measuring phenomena such as service quality at the restaurant under study. Quantitative research methodology was also employed because it allows data to be collected using structured research instruments like one suggested by the RATER model. This study used a structured questionnaire to collect data. Quantitative research methodology allows research results to be generated from a large sample size that is representative of the whole population under study. This study generated a representative sample. Quantitative research methodology has highly reliability. For this reason, the researcher used this methodology to facilitate the replication of the approach in future research. The researcher had to use quantitative research methodology because it is effective in generating objective answers that this study sought. Quantitative research methodology was used for a reason that it makes all facets of the study to be meticulously designed prior to data collection. Since a phenomenon under study is complicated, quantitative research methodology helped to provide instruments that helped to carefully study leadership competencies. The methodology also enabled the researcher to quantify respondents' attitudes, views, and behaviours towards service quality. To have a better understanding of service quality the customers' perspective, the researcher presented data in the form of statistics using different non-textual arrangements. Hence quantitative research methodology was used so that data is presented using tables, figures, charts, and other non-textual forms. The quantitative research methodology enabled the researcher to conduct a

structured study and generate results that may be generalised to the large population. Results generated in the study may be used to predict future results on service quality in the fast food industry.

3.5 STUDY SITE

A study site is defined as place where a study is conducted in or from (Mutinta, 2017). This study was conducted at a fast food restaurant in Durban. Durban is the largest city in the South African province of KwaZulu-Natal. Durban's metropolitan municipality ranks third among the most populous urban areas in South Africa after Johannesburg and Cape Town making it a good place to operate fast food restaurants. It is also the second most important manufacturing hub in South Africa after Johannesburg (Statistics South Africa, 2016).

3.6 TARGET POPULATION

The target population is a specific population a researcher is interested in making as part of the study (Bruan and Clarke, 2006). Maxwell (2012:11) defines the target population as a "group of individuals or objects to which researchers generate a sample and are interested in generalizing the conclusions". Mutinta (2016) said that in many cases target populations also known as theoretical population have varying parameters or characteristics. According to Giggs (2014), researchers should try to ensure that target populations' characteristics corresponds to entire population. The target population for this study is customers at the restaurant under study in Durban.

3.7 SAMPLING STRATEGIES

According to Creswell (2014), sampling is as a process of selecting a small portion of the population to represent the entire. Since the researcher used quantitative research methodology to conduct the study, probability sampling method was used to select employees. Probability entails that selection of respondents is dependent on random selection (Guba, Hunter and Brewer, 2008). Random selection is a process a researcher follows to gather a sample that is representative of the target population or entire population for a specific study. Random in this context means the people or units are selected by chance, which means that each person or unity has the same probability of being selected to be part of the study. To select respondents for this study, census sampling was used. Census sampling is the selection of every subject or everything or every unit in the population. It is also known as a complete conscription that implies that it is a complete study of everyone. This technique

allows the researcher to select all respondents based on his or her knowledge of a population and the purpose of the study. The researcher selects all respondents, as they are needed to give him or her information to understand the phenomenon under investigation. All customers that were available the time the research visited the restaurant were asked to participate in the study. There was no customer who refused to complete the questionnaire. One hundred and twenty (120) customers completed the questionnaires.

3.8 SAMPLE

A sample is defined as a subset of the entire population selected to participate in the study (Creswell and Plan Clark, 2009). In quantitative research, a sample is understood as a subset or portion of a population generated to represent the entire population. When conducting research, it is sometimes unfeasible to study every subject or every unit of a given population because the number of people or units is too large or infinite to be managed. The sample for this study included all customers that were found at the restaurant the researcher went to collect data.

3.9 SAMPLE SIZE

A sample size is defined as the total number of units or people selected to participate in a study. Lincoln and Denzin (2012) define a sample size as the entire number of individuals or pieces from which data is collected in a study. The sample size is an important aspect of any study as it helps to make inferences about a population under study. The sample size for this study was 120 generated using census sampling. Therefore, a sample size of 120 was appropriate as the researcher studied all customers found at the restaurant on the day data was collected.

Table 2: Sample Size

GENDER	COUNT	PER CENT
Male	56	46.7 per cent
Female	64	53 per cent
	120	100.0 per cent

3.10 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

Bryman (2007) defines data collection as a process of gathering information on the research questions or variables to understand the research problem under study. This is done using established and systematic methods that then enable the researcher generate data that answers the main research questions.

3.10.1 Questionnaires

This study used questionnaires to collect data. A questionnaire is a data collection research tool that has a series of questions and other prompts in order to gather information from respondents (McDaniel and Gates, 2004). Questionnaires will be used because they are easy to analyse, and are familiar to managers and supervisors to be studied. Questionnaires also allow researchers to study a large population in an affordable way and are easy to administer. Questionnaires had several sections: section A dealt with the short biographical information; section B explored the Reliability of service quality; section C studied the Assurance of service quality; section D dealt with the Tangibility of service quality; section E studied the Empathy of service quality; and F studied the Responsiveness of service quality. One hundred and twenty (120) respondents completed the questionnaire to provide data needed to understand the phenomenon under study. Respondents were asked to complete the questionnaires there and then.

3.11 DATA QUALITY CONTROL

In order to have a credible study it is important to put in place several data quality control measures that include validity and reliability (Braun and Clarke, 2006). This quantitative study adhered to these two principles and procedures to ensure that the findings were credible in measuring the phenomenon under study.

3.11.1 Validity

Validity is the extent to which a research concept or construct is accurately measured (Yin, 2009). The researcher used content validity to ensure that the questionnaire adequately covers all the content that it should with respect to service quality. Using content validity, the research ensured that the study covered all constructs the questionnaire was designed to measure. This was done by ensuring that all constructs in the RATER model informing this study received greater coverage. The researcher employed face validity by asking subject experts' opinion on whether the questionnaire measured the concept of service quality.

3.11.2 Reliability

Reliability is understood as the consistency of a measure (Creswell, 2014). To ensure that the questionnaire consistently measured what it was intended to measure, service quality, a pilot study was conducted with two customers at two different times to ascertain if the same responses were given each time the questionnaire was completed. In other words, inter-rater/observer reliability and test-retest reliability was used to achieve consistency in the questionnaire.

3.12 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis is defined as the organization and interpretation of the data gathered in a study (Creswell, 2013). This being a quantitative study, SPSS version 23.1 was used to quickly and easily analyse data using descriptive statistics (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

3.12.1 Descriptive statistics

Data was analysed to help the study to describe and present data in a meaningful way by presenting patterns that emanated from the data. No conclusions were made beyond the data analysed. Descriptive statistics technique was used to describe data. Maxwell (2012) argues that descriptive statistics enables researchers to present data in a more meaningful way that makes it easy to interpret the data. The technique also helped to measure central tendency. This central position is realised using statistics such as median, mode, and mean. Descriptive statistics was used to measure the spread of data using range, quartiles, variance and standard deviation.

3.13 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The University of KwaZulu-Natal Ethics Committee provided ethical clearance and the restaurant under study the gatekeeper's letter. The researcher obtained consent from the respondents after explaining to them in detail what the study was all about. In addition, confidentiality, privacy and anonymity of the respondents were upheld in order to avoid compromising respondents' rights.

3.14 SUMMARY

This chapter presents the systematic plan to be used to conduct this study. The chapter presents the philosophy, research design, methodology, study site, target population, sampling method, and sample for the study. The chapter also presents measures for validity

and reliability, data collection instruments, data analysis techniques, and summary for the chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents research results and discussion on the findings obtained in this study. This chapter has four sections. The first section presents the research process followed in this study. The second section deals with the research objectives that the study wanted to achieve, the third section presents data under five themes; responsiveness, assurance, tangibility, empathy, and reliability, and the fourth section presents the summary to the chapter.

4.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To understand customers' expectations of service quality at a restaurant in Durban.
- To ascertain customers' experiences of service quality at a restaurant in Durban.
- To determine the gap customers' expectations and experiences of service quality at a restaurant in Durban.

4.3 RESEARCH PROCESS FOLLOWED

The researcher obtained ethical clearance from the University of KwaZulu-Natal Ethics Committee, a gatekeeper's letter from the restaurant under study, and the consent from the respondents. Ethics was upheld in order to avoid compromising respondents' rights include confidentiality, privacy, and anonymity. The questionnaire was the primary tool used to collect data. The research instrument consisted of 21 items, with a level of measurement at a nominal or an ordinal level. The questionnaire was divided into 5 questions which measured various themes as illustrated below: biographical data, responsiveness, assurance, tangibility, empathy, and reliability. One hundred twenty (120) questionnaires were distributed, and the study achieved 100 per cent response rate.

4.5 RELIABILITY STATISTICS

The two most important aspects of precision are reliability and validity. Reliability is computed by taking several measurements on the same subjects. A reliability coefficient of 0.70 or higher is considered as “acceptable”. The table below reflects the Cronbach’s alpha score for all the items that constituted the questionnaire. The data collected from the responses was analysed with SPSS version 24.0. The results are presented using the descriptive statistics in the form of graphs, cross tabulations and other figures.

Table 3: The Cronbach’s alpha score

Competency Construct	Items included	Cronbach’s alpha	Name of single measure
Responsiveness	R1-R11	.883	R ₁
Assurance	T12 – T15	.603	A ₂
Tangibility	T16 – T21	.716	T ₃
Empathy	E22 – E25	.726	E ₄
Reliability	R26 – R35	.920	R ₅

The reliability scores for all but one section exceeds the recommended Cronbach’s alpha. This indicates a degree of acceptable, consistent scoring for these sections of the research.

4.6 BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

This section summarises the biographical characteristics of the respondents.

4.6.1 Gender

Overall, table 4 below shows that out of the sample of 120 respondents, 56 (46.7 per cent) were males and 64 (53.3 per cent) were females.

Table 4: Gender responses

Gender	Count	Per cent
Male	56	46.7 per cent
Female	64	53.3 per cent
	120	100.0 per cent

This means that there was an adequate representation between males and females in the study. The findings also show that young people visit the restaurant more than any other group.

4.6.2 Age

Table 5 below shows that a little less than half of the respondents were older than 40 years (45.8 per cent), with similar levels observed in the middle age groups and 4.2 per cent comprising respondents less than 30 years old.

Table 5: Age

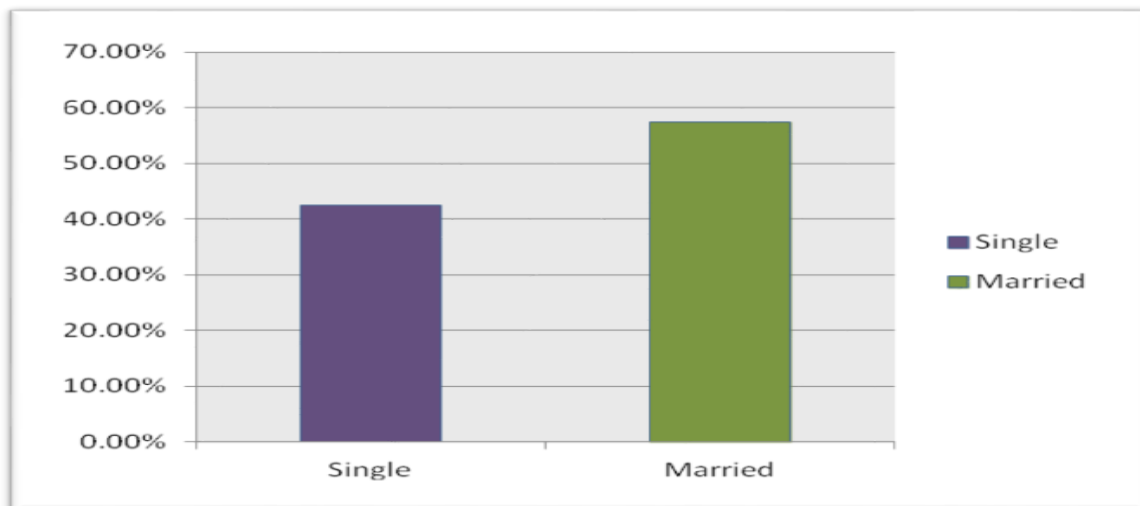
Age	Count	Per cent
21-30	57	47.5 per cent
31-40	38	31.7 per cent
41-50	25	20.8 per cent

The findings suggest that the study involved older people than younger people.

4.6.3 Marital Status

The results indicate that the majority of the respondents 69 (57.5 per cent) were married and 51 (42.5 per cent) were single. This finding comes a surprise because ordinarily one is tempted think that people who are married visit restaurants less than those who are single.

Figure 1: Martial status



The finding that majority of the respondents were married is supported by Modikwa (2009) who said that rapid urbanisation and the increase of women who are formally employed has affected people’s lifestyles and the demographics especially in big cities such as Durban.

4.6.4 Frequency of eating fast food at the restaurant

The findings indicate that 45.8 per cent of the respondents eat from the restaurant three times a week, while 39.2 per cent eat from the restaurant once a week, 11.7 per cent reported that they eat from the restaurant once a week, and 3.3 per cent eat from the restaurant five times a week.

Table 6: Frequency of eating fast food at the restaurant

Number of times	Count	Per cent
Less than once a week	14	11.7 per cent
Once a week	47	39.2 per cent
Two to three times a week	55	45.8 per cent
Four to five times a week	4	3.3 per cent

The findings do not come as a surprise because Durban is one of the cities that is experiencing an increase in restaurants, an indication of high demand of fast food in South Africa. The findings are in agreement with Du Plessis (2010)’s view that 20 years ago majority of the people in South African visited fast foods once in a week.

4.7 EXPECTATIONS OF SERVICE QUALITY AT THE RESTAURANT

The objective of the study was to ascertain customers' expectations of service quality at the restaurant under study.

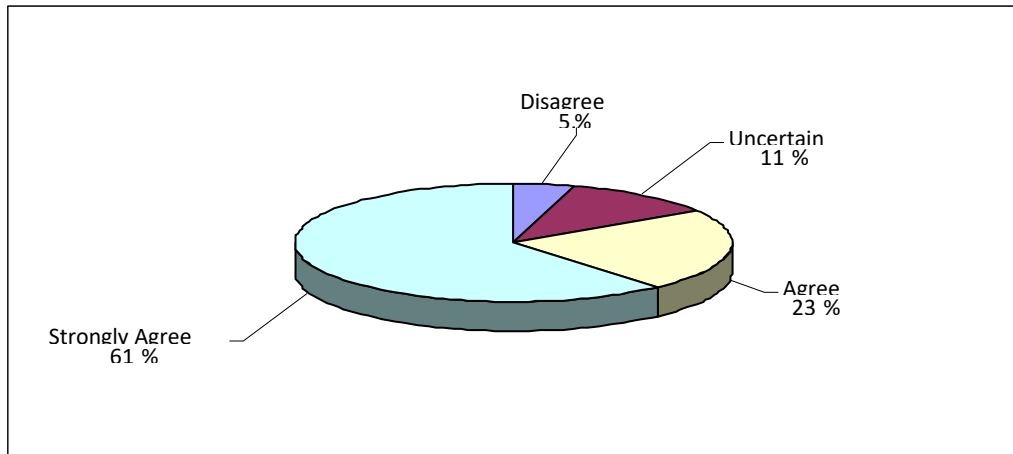
4.7.1 Reliability

Respondents were asked about their expectations of the reliability of service quality at the restaurant under study. The findings indicate that 83.0 per cent of the respondents (77.0 per cent strongly agreed and 7.00 per cent agreed), 11.00 per cent disagreed and 5.00 per cent were neutral to the statement that they expected the service to be carried out timeously. Respondents were also asked if they expected restaurants employees to have genuine interest in solving customers' problems; 95.0 per cent agreed (72.0 per cent strongly agreed and 23.0 per cent agreed). The findings are supported by Duodu and Amankwah (2011) who argues that customers expect service providers to give them service that is dependable and accurate. This means that the dimension of reliability is largely concerned with the service outcome. As a result, many customers perceive reliability as the "core" of service quality and they tend to have higher expectations for it. Edvardsson (2005) said that reliability is the most important dimension in meeting customers' expectations because the dimension of tangibles, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy are more concerned with the service process most important in exceeding customers' expectations.

4.7.2 Tangibles

Respondents were asked about their expectations in terms of the tangibility of the service quality provided by the restaurant. The study found that, in total, 84.0 per cent of the respondents agreed (61 per cent strongly agreed and 23.0 per cent agreed) to the statement that the restaurant should have modern looking equipment, while only 5.0 per cent disagreed, and 11.0 per cent were neutral as presented in the figure below.

Figure 2: Expecting modern looking equipment

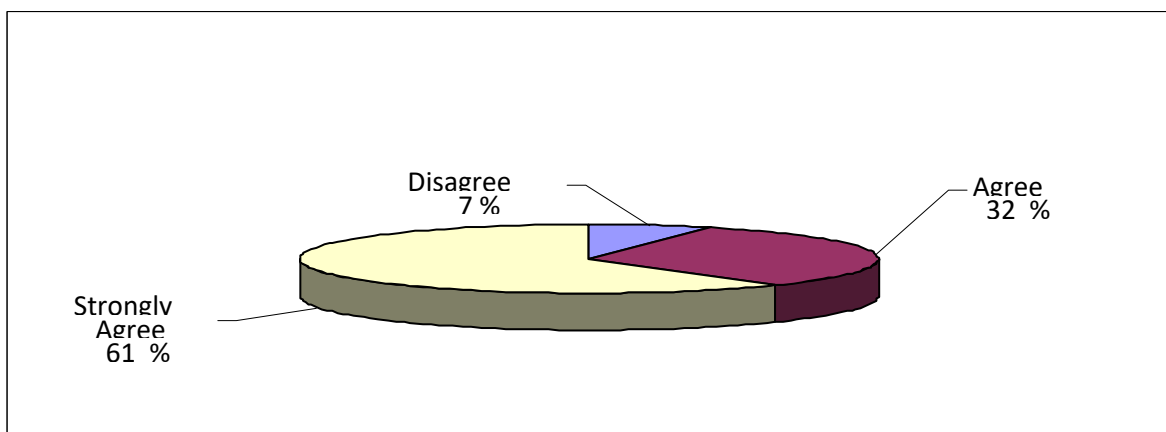


When asked if they expect appealing physical facilities, all respondents agreed (100 per cent; 54 per cent agreed and 46 per cent strongly agreed), and 87 per cent agreed (59 per cent strongly agreed and 28 per cent agreed) to the statement that employees at the restaurant should be neat. The finding is in agreement with the Frost and Kumar (2000)'s study that reported that customers tend to be impressed with service quality if physical facilities, equipment, personnel, and communications materials are good looking. However, the danger is for service providers to make everything look appealing, and then fall short on other dimensions of service quality.

4.7.3 Responsiveness

Respondents were asked about their desire for responsive service quality; 93.0 per cent (61.0 per cent strongly agreed and 32.0 per cent) and 7.0 per cent disagreed to the statement that they expect responsive service quality to be provided as promised. Refer to the figure below.

Figure 3: Expect services to be provided as promised



The study also found that 93.0 per cent of the respondents agreed (55.0 per cent strongly agreed and 38.0 per cent agreed) to the statement that restaurant employees should inform customers when a service will be provided. The study further found that 87.0 per cent of the respondents agreed (54.0 per cent strongly agreed and 33.0 per cent agreed) to the statement that restaurant employees should provide prompt service to customers, 7.0 per cent disagreed and 6.0 per cent were neutral. Eighty per cent (88.0 per cent) of the respondents also reported that they expect restaurant employees to provide service quality all the times while 12.0 per cent were neutral. This finding is confirmed by Ganesan-Lim, Russell-Bennett and Dagger (2008) who said that customers desire service providers to respond promptly, quickly, rapidly, and instantly. In the same line of thought, Ganiyu, Uche and Elizabeth (2012) argues that responsiveness is more than 1/5th of service quality assessment.

4.7.4 Assurance

The study found that 95.0 per cent of the respondents agreed (38.0 per cent strongly agreed and 57.0 per cent) to the statement that they expected that the service quality provided by the restaurant would instil confidence in them while 5.0 per cent were neutral. The study found that 90.0 per cent of the respondents agreed (67.0 strongly agreed and 23.0 agreed) and 10.0 per cent were neutral to the statement they expected service quality that would make them feel safe to transact with the restaurant employees. The findings indicate that 93.0 per cent of the respondents agreed (48.0 strongly agreed and 45.0 agreed), while 7.0 per cent were neutral to the statement that they expected knowledgeable restaurant employees. This finding ties well with Gilbert et al (2004)'s finding that customers expect good service quality therefore service providers are expected to be experts of the service they are providing.

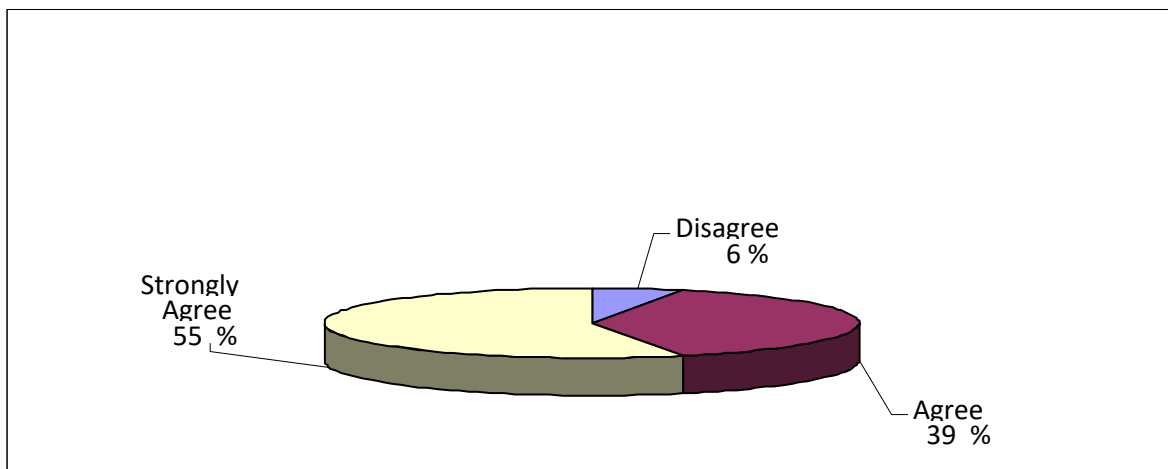
4.7.5 Empathy

The majority of the respondents, 76.0 per cent agreed (53.0 per cent strongly agreed and 23.0 per cent agreed) to the statement that they expect personalised service quality.

The study found that 84.0 per cent (55.0 per cent strongly agreed and 29.0 per cent agreed) and 16 per cent were neutral to the statement that they expected restaurant employees to have their best interest, and the trend was observed with regards to expecting their specific needs to be understood where 84.0 per cent of the respondents agreed (46.0 per cent and 38.0 per

cent) and 16.0 per cent were neutral; 94.0 per cent of the respondents agreed (55.0 per cent strongly agreed and 39.0 per cent agreed), and 6.0 per cent were neutral to the statement that they expected restaurant employees to give them personal attention.

Figure 4: Expecting employees to give customers personal attention



The study also found that 84.0 per cent (46.0 per cent strongly agreed and 11.0 per cent disagreed), and 5.0 per cent were neutral to the statement that they expect the restaurant to have convenience operating hours; and 84.0 per cent (55.0 per cent strongly agreed and 29.0 per cent agreed) and 16.0 per cent were neutral to the statement that they expect employees to have their best interest. These findings mean that customers expect service where service providers are caring and give them individualised attention.

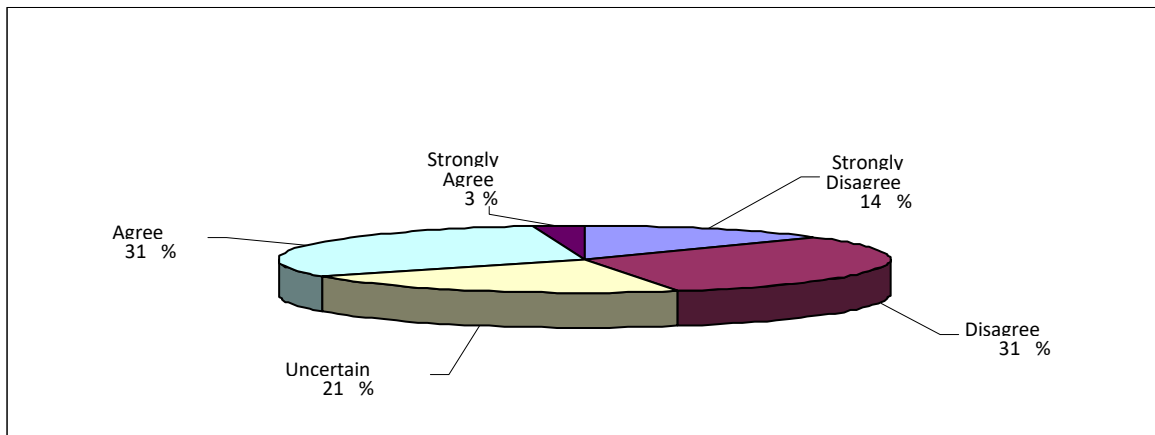
4.8 EXPERIENCES OF IN SERVICE QUALITY AT THE RESTAURANT

The objective of the study was to determine customers' experiences of service quality at the restaurant under study.

4.8.1 Tangibles

When respondents were asked if the restaurant had modern looking equipment, 44.0 per cent of the respondents agreed (31.0 per cent agreed and 3.0 per cent strongly agreed) and 45.0 per cent disagreed (31.0 per cent disagreed and 14.0 per cent strongly disagreed), and 21.0 per cent were neutral as presented in the figure below.

Figure 5: The restaurant has modern looking equipment



The study also found that 40.0 per cent disagreed (26.0 per cent disagreed and 14.0 strongly disagreed) to the statement that physical facilities at the restaurant are appealing, 35.0 per cent agreed (32.0 per cent agreed and 3.0 per cent strongly agreed), and 25.0 per cent were neutral. Further, the study found that 64.0 per cent of the respondents agreed (50.0 per cent agreed and 14.0 per cent strongly agreed), 15.0 per cent disagreed (9.0 per cent disagreed and 6.0 per cent strongly disagreed), and 21.0 per cent were neutral to the statement that restaurant employees were neat. The study also found that 49.0 per cent of the respondents agreed (40.0 per cent agreed and 9.0 per cent strongly agreed), 28.0 per cent were neutral,

and 23.0 per cent disagreed (16.0 per cent disagreed and 7.0 per cent strongly disagreed) to the statement materials were visually appealing.

The findings show that slightly more respondents disagreed to the statement that the equipment is modern, physical facilities are appealing, except for personnel being neat. In short, the restaurant is making certain that employees' appearance and uniform are neat but failing in other factors that have influence on customers' experience of the tangibility of service quality. This is one of the reasons Harris (2010) said that for customers to have high tangible service quality, service providers should focus on physical facilities, personnel, equipment, and communication materials.

4.8.2 Reliability

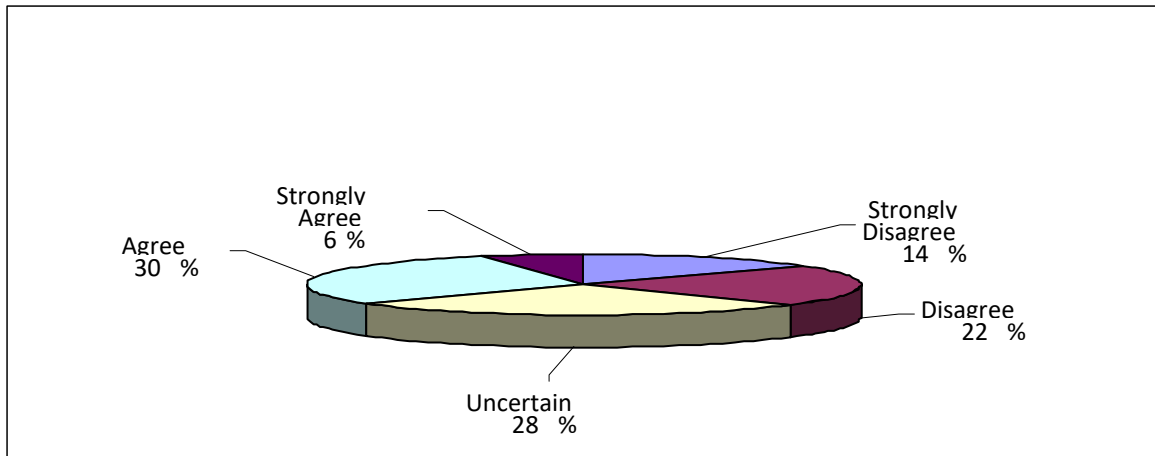
Respondents were asked about their experiences of the reliability of service quality in terms of being timeously; 57.0 per cent of the respondents disagreed (29.0 per cent disagreed and 28.0 strongly disagreed), 26.0 per cent were neutral and 17.0 per cent agreed (12.0 per cent agreed and 5.0 per cent strongly agreed). The same trend was observed with the statement that staff provide service right the first time, the restaurant employees provide service as promised, and the service is error free.

The findings show that customers had low experience of the reliability of service quality. This means that the restaurant is failing to do what it tells customers it will do. In agreement, Gyasi and Azumah (2009) said that customers want to count on their service providers because they value reliability. Reinforcing the finding Hugo and Zondagh (2007) said that it is three times more important to be reliable than have shiny new equipment or flamboyant uniforms.

4.8.3 Responsiveness

The findings indicate that 36.0 per cent the respondents in total agreed to the statement that the restaurant provides customers prompt service and another 36.0 in total disagreed to the same statements and 28.0 per cent were neutral as demonstrated in the figure below.

Figure 6: Prompt service



The study found that in total, 57.0 per cent of the respondents agreed and 24.0 per cent disagreed respectively to the statement that employees at the restaurant are willing to help customers, and 19.0 per cent were neutral. The same trend was observed with the statement that employees were too busy to respond to customers. In total, the study found that 48.0 per cent of the respondents disagreed to the statement that they are told exactly when a service would be provided, while 38.0 per cent agreed, and 20.0 per cent were neutral.

The findings indicate that there are efforts being made by the restaurant to provide responsive service quality to customers. Even then, the restaurant still needs to pull up its socks in its willingness to help customers and provide prompt service especially being precise when a service would be provided.

4.8.4 Assurance

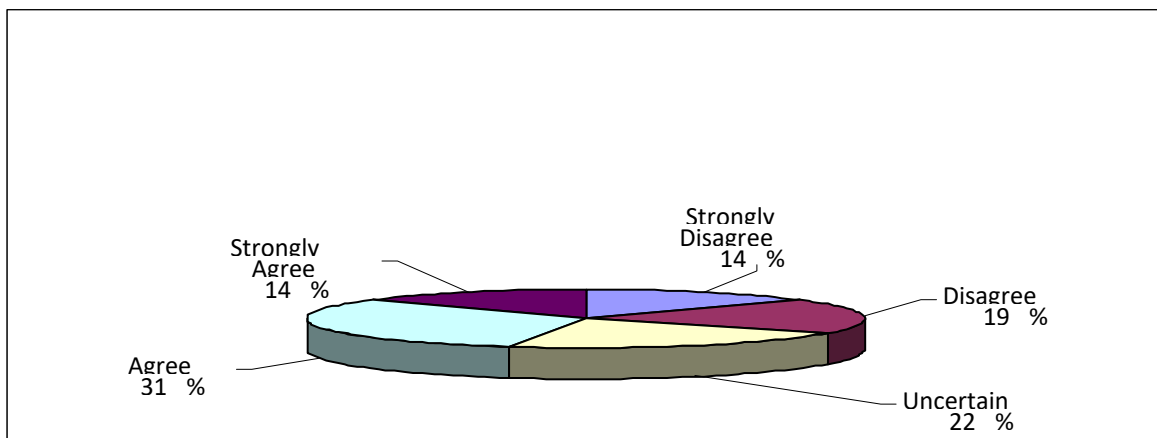
When respondents were asked if the restaurant was able to instil confidence in customers, 38.0 per cent in total agreed, 36.0 disagreed, and 26.0 per cent were neutral. The same trend was observed with the statement that customers feel safe to deal with staff and the statements that employees were courteous and knowledgeable.

The findings imply that customers' experiences of the assurance of service quality as far as knowledge and courtesy of restaurant employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence are not met.

4.8.5 Empathy

The study found that in total, 44.0 per cent of the respondents agreed and 33.0 per cent disagreed to the statement that the restaurant has convenience hours of operation as presented in the figure below, and the same trend was observed with regards to other statements such as the restaurant provides personal attention and has the best interest of the customers.

Figure 7: Restaurant has convenience hours of operation



However, in total, 40.0 per cent of the respondents disagreed to the statement that the restaurant provides individual attention and 33.0 per cent, in total, agreed and 27.0 were neutral.

The findings show that customers' experiences of the empathy of service quality especially restaurant employees being caring, and providing individualised attention is not impressive. This finding resonates well with Leverin and Liljander (2006)'s finding that services can be

performed completely to specifications. However, customers may not feel provider employees care about them during delivery. As a result, this hurts customers' evaluations of providers' service quality.

4.9 GAPS IN SERVICE QUALITY BETWEEN CUSTOMERS' EXPECTATIONS AND EXPERIENCES

The objective of the study was to determine the gap between customers' expectations and experiences of service quality at the restaurant under study in Durban as presented in the table below.

Table 7: Gap between customers' expectations and experiences of service quality

Question	Expectation Mean	Perception Mean	GAP	Dimension Score	Dimension
1	4.41	2.78	-1.63	-1.26	Tangibles
2	4.46	2.86	-1.60		
3	4.47	3.56	-0.91		
4	4.21	3.29	-0.92		
5	4.50	2.34	-2.16	-1.94	Reliability
6	4.68	2.55	-2.13		
7	4.28	2.53	-1.75		
8	4.47	2.51	-1.96		
9	4.51	2.80	-1.72		
10	4.48	2.97	-1.52	-1.42	Responsiveness
11	4.35	2.91	-1.44		
12	4.61	3.36	-1.25		
13	4.23	2.76	-1.47		
14	4.33	2.98	-1.35	-1.39	Assurance
15	4.56	2.80	-1.77		
16	4.16	2.89	-1.27		
17	4.41	3.22	-1.19		
18	4.29	2.89	-1.40	-1.36	Empathy

19	4.19	3.13	-1.06		
20	4.44	3.11	-1.33		
21	4.39	2.93	-1.47		
22	4.30	2.78	-1.53		

4.9.1 Tangibility

The study found a very small gap score (-0.91) for the tangibility of the service quality at the restaurant, meaning that the restaurant is making an effort to have visually attractive physical facilities. The experience of service quality gap score was large at -1.63 in relation to the restaurant having modern looking equipment. The findings imply that customers feel that the equipment at the restaurant looks old therefore to be replaced. Lee, Choi, Kim and Hyun (2014) said that even though tangibility may be the least important dimension, appearance matters to customers.

4.9.2 Reliability

The smallest reliability service quality gap score is -1.72 in relation to error free records. The largest service quality gap score in relation to the restaurant being able to carry out promises timeously was -2.16. The findings tie well with Min, Khoon and Tan (2012)'s argument that customers want to engage in transactions with companies that have the ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately. Oodith and Parumasur (2015) also said that customers want to do business with companies that keep their promises, particularly their promises about the service outcomes and core service attributes. The implication of the findings is that the restaurant is failing to deliver on its promises-promises about service quality.

4.9.3 Responsiveness

The findings indicate that the smallest service quality gap score is -1.25 in relation to the restaurant's willingness to help customers. The largest service quality gap score was -1.52 in relation to the restaurant giving clear communication to customers on the service provided. The findings mean that the restaurant is failing in the sense that employees seem not to be willing to help customers and provide prompt service. Palmer (2011) advises that genuine responsive service quality should involve attentiveness and promptness in dealing with

customer's requests, questions, complaints and problems. Parasuraman (2005) also said that responsiveness service should capture the notion of flexibility and ability to customise the service to customers' needs.

4.9.4 Assurance

The study found that the smallest service quality gap score was -1.19 in relation to employees possessing knowledge to answer customers' questions. The largest service quality score gap was -1.77 in relation to customers feeling safe to transact with the restaurant. It is therefore logical to deduce that the service quality customers are provided with is deficient of knowledge of courtesy and the ability to inspire trust and confidence in customers. Peighambari (2007) alleges that this dimension is particularly important for the services such as fast food services that customers perceive as involving high rising and difficult to evaluate.

4.9.5 Empathy

The findings show that the smallest service quality gap score in relation to restaurant having convenient hours was -1.06. The largest service quality gap score was -1.53 in relation to the restaurant employees being able to address customers' specific needs. The findings indicate that the restaurant is not meeting customers' desires in terms of caring and individualised attention. Seth, Deshmukh and Vrat (2004) explained that it is important to provide individual attention to customers as it shows that the company does best to satisfy customers' needs. Wang, Lo and Yang (2004) added their voice by saying that empathy is critical because it enhances customers' trust, confidence and loyalty.

In short, when the differences between customers' expectations and experiences of service quality were compared, findings indicate a negative average gap score of -1.47, which shows that customers' expectations are higher than their experiences of service quality offered by the restaurant.

4.10 MEASURING THE SERVICE QUALITY SCORES OF THE FIVE RATER MODEL DIMENSIONS

This objective of the study was to measure service quality scores of the five constructs of the RATER model.

4.10.1 Tangibility

When the gap between customers' expectations and experiences of service quality were compared, the study found a small gap score compared to other dimensions. Tangibility of service quality was rated the best at -1.26. The highest score on tangibility was related to the appearance of restaurant materials such as menus, cups, plates, spoons, forks, and others. The lowest experience score was 2.78 in relationship to modern looking restaurant equipment. The findings show that there is a gap between what customers expect and the service quality they get. The restaurant can provide service quality to customers by improving on the appearance of restaurant equipment.

4.10.2 Reliability

The dimension of the reliability of service quality was rated the worst with a score of -1.94. This suggests that restaurant employees do not show sincere interest in attending to customers' problems. The score showing sincere interest was however rated highest for expectations (4.68) while the same score of experiences of sincere interest was rated low at 2.55. The lowest service quality score for reliability was in relation to the restaurant performing the service right the first time, while the lowest experience of service quality score for reliability was in relations to the restaurant providing service when promised. Wetsch (2006) said that reliability is a phenomenon of being able to provide service quality to customers as promised, a service that is not met by the restaurant. There is need for the restaurant to close the gaps between customers' expectations and experiences of service quality. Awari (2001) said that one of the problems restaurants face is over promising service quality to customers. Christopher, Payne and Ballantyne (2002) in agreement states that restaurants must keep their promises and provide service quality at specific times promised and provide the service right the first time. There is need for the restaurant to prioritise the need to provide reliable service quality.

4.10.3 Responsiveness

When expectations and experiences of responsiveness were compared, the study found responsiveness to be the second worst service quality dimension with a score of -1.42. The findings show that the highest score for customers' expectations of service quality to be 4.61 in relation to restaurant employees willing to help customers. The highest experience of service quality was 3.36 in relation to restaurant employees' willingness to help customers. The lowest score for expectations of service quality in relation to employees being too busy to respond to customers' questions was 4.23 and the lowest experience of the same was

statement was 2.76. It is therefore unarguable that the restaurant is not meeting the aspirations of the customers to have prompt service. Egan (2004) states that restaurants should be willing to respond to customers and do so on time. In agreement, Ekinci, Dawes and Massey (2008) found that the service of responsiveness is incomplete if the service provided does not include paying attention, giving quick service, attending to customers' complaints and problems.

4.10.4 Assurance

The dimension of the assurance of service quality was rated third worst service at -1.39 when the expectations and experiences of service quality were compared. The highest score for customers' expectations was 4.56 in relation to customers feeling safe in their transactions with the restaurant compared to the highest score of 3.22 for experiences of restaurant employees being able to answer customers' questions knowledgeably. The study found that the lowest expectations of service quality score in relation to restaurant employees being courteous to customers was 4.16, and the lowest score for experience of service quality with regards to customers feeling safe to transact with the restaurant was 2.80. These findings suggest that the restaurant is not able to inspire trust and confidence in customers. Thus, the restaurant needs to be aware of the importance of creating trust and confidence in customers to gain competitive advantage and win customers' loyalty.

4.10.5 Empathy

The findings indicate empathy as the fourth worst dimension of service quality (-1.36). The highest expectation score related to restaurant employees giving customers individualised attention was 4.44. The highest experience score of service quality in relation to the restaurant having operations hours that are convenient to customers was 3.13. The highest gap score for empathy was -1.53 in relation to the restaurant employees having an understanding of customers' specific needs. The restaurant is therefore struggling to meet customers' need for empathy service quality by not providing customers' good communication and not understanding their needs. Ekinchi (2008) cautions that in this competitive world, the customers' requirements are rising day after day and it is companies' duties to meet the demands of customers. If this does not happen, customers who do not receive individual attention will search elsewhere.

4.11 SUMMARY

The dealt with the research results and discussion on the findings obtained in this study. The first section presented the research process. The second section presented the research objectives that the study set out to achieve, the third section presented and discussed data under five themes; responsiveness, assurance, tangibility, empathy, and reliability, and the fourth section presents the summary to the chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the conclusions and recommendations of the study. The conclusions and recommendations are based on the key findings on service quality provided by the fast food restaurant under study in Durban focusing on the responsiveness, assurance, tangibility, empathy, and reliability of service quality. The chapter ends with a chapter summary.

5.2 CONCLUSIONS

5.2.1 Tangibles

The study found that tangibility of service quality at the restaurant under study was the best service provided to customers. The highest service quality gap score was -1.26 related to the appearance of physical facilities. Beukes (2015) argues that when expected tangibles are not provided in the service sought by customers, it means that physical representations or images of the service that customers use to evaluate quality are not met.

It is therefore recommended that the management team at the restaurant should channel its resources to buy new restaurant equipment and ensure that facilities that customers use are visually appealing and well maintained.

5.2.2 Empathy

The empathy of the service quality gap score was -1.36. The highest gap score was related to the restaurant having customers' best interests at heart and being able to understand customers' specific needs. The findings imply that the restaurant is not able to provide the care and individualised attention customers expect (Botes, 2008).

It is therefore recommended that restaurant employees be trained in matters of empathy service quality. The management team at the restaurant should promote service quality culture of empathy among all employees to improve in meeting customers' expectations and therefore enhance experiences of service quality.

5.2.4 Assurance

The findings show that assurance service quality is the third best performing service quality dimension with a gap score of -1.39. However, the findings show that the restaurant is performing below the expectations of customers in terms of employees' knowledge and courtesy and the ability to inspire trust and confidence.

There is need for the restaurant management team to provide information and training to restaurant employees to empower them with skills to deal with customers' problems and requests. The restaurant should ensure employees-job fit by matching employees' skills and job they are supposed to do.

5.2.4 Responsiveness

The study found responsiveness to be the worst performing dimension of service quality with a score of -1.42. The finding suggests that employees at the restaurant are not willing to help customers and their service is not prompt as expected. This finding is in agreement with Boshoff and Gray (2004)'s view that the responsiveness of service quality fails if employees are not able to help customers willingly and instantly as expected.

The restaurant management team should ensure that customers have the fastest possible response system to minimise response time to customers' issues or requests.

5.2.5 Reliability

The study found the reliability of service quality to be the worst service with a score of -1.94. The findings show that the restaurant is not meeting customers' expectations in terms of keeping its promises and core attributes. The highest gap score was related to the restaurant employees executing promises sincerely and timeously.

Therefore, the restaurant is recommended to put in place mechanism such as good communication channels and systems between customers and restaurant employees to ensure that promises to customers are upheld all the times.

5.3 FUTURE RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS

- Future research should be conducted using qualitative research methodology to uncover trends in thought and opinions, and dive deeper into the problem of service quality in the restaurant under study.
- This research should be replicated at provincial and national levels of the restaurant under study. There is also a need to conduct a comparative research of all the provinces to ascertain if there are differences in understanding of service quality from different geographic sites.
- There is need to study the influence of socio-demographics or characteristics of a population such as age, race, genders, income, and others on the understanding of service quality in fast food restaurants.
- The RATER model should be used to evaluate service quality at the provincial and national level as a vital input to service quality assurance programmes in the fast food

restaurants. This would give the management and employees' insight into changes that should be affected therefore enhance service quality and customer satisfaction.

5.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The chapter presented the conclusions and recommendations of the study based on the key findings on the responsiveness, assurance, tangibility, empathy, and reliability of service quality provided by the restaurant under study. The chapter ends with this chapter summary.

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APPENDIX 1

Ethical Clearance



UNIVERSITY OF
KWAZULU-NATAL
INYUVESI
YAKWAZULU-NATALI

09 October 2017

Mr Nkosinathi Nonyane (215082518)
School of Management, IT & Governance
Westville Campus

Dear Mr Nonyane,

Protocol reference number: HSS/1631/017M

Project title: An assessment of Service Quality at a selected restaurant in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal

Approval Notification – Expedited Approval

In response to your application received on 07 September 2017, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

/ms

Cc Supervisor: Dr Given Mutinta
Cc Academic Leader Research: Professor Isabel Martins
Cc School Administrator: Ms Angela Pearce

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

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APPENDIX 2 Informed Consent Letter

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
**SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT, INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND
GOVERNANCE**

Information Sheet and Consent to Participate in Research

August 2017

Dear respondent,

I, **Nkosinathi Nonyane**, am a full time postgraduate student of the University of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa. I am in the Faculty of Management in the School of Management, Information Technology and Management based at the Westville campus. I am undertaking a research project titled: **An Assessment of Service Quality at X Restaurant in Durban, Kwazulu-Natal**. This project is being supervised by **Dr Given Mutinta** of the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

I am writing to invite you to consider participating in a study that involves the study of McDonalds customers. The aim and purpose of this study is to explore the service quality provided by McDonalds. Your participation in this study is purely voluntary and your anonymity will be protected by the researcher.

This study will involve a questionnaire that can take approximately 20 minutes to complete. I will be asking a range of questions regarding your expectations and experiences of service quality at McDonals. The questions will be close-ended. Transcripts will remain confidential and will be used to generate findings that will form the basis of my Masters dissertation.

It is my hope that this exploratory study will help bring attention to the the service quality provided by McDonalds.

This study has received ethical approval and clearance by the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (approval no.....). I undertake to cover all the direct costs involved in this study will be covered by the researcher.

All data, both electronic and hard copy, will be securely stored during the study and archived for 5 years. After this time, all data will be destroyed.

Please contact **Nkosinathi Nonyane** if you have any questions about the study, or would like more information.

Cell no.: (+27) 795455544

Email: nkosinathinonyane@gmail.com

Address: University of KwaZulu-Natal Westville Campus, Durban. South Africa.

Supervisor: **Dr. Given Mutinta**

Contact: 0312601772

Alternatively you may contact the UKZN Humanities and Social Science Research and Ethics Committee:

Mrs Mariette Snyman

Humanities and Social Science Ethics (HSSREC) Research Office,

Govan Mbeki Building, Westville Campus, Private Bag X54001, DURBAN 4000

Tel: 031 260 8350 Snymanm@ukzn.ac.za

Thank you in advance for your cooperation with this research exercise.

Sincerely,

Nkosinathi Nonyane

APPENDIX 3 QUESTIONNAIRE

**AN ASSESSMENT OF SERVICE QUALITY AT A SELECTED RESTAURANT IN
DURBAN, KWAZULU-NATAL**

Service Expectations Questionnaire

Based on your experiences as a customer of The restaurant, please think about the kind of restaurant that would deliver excellent quality of service. Think about a restaurant with which you would be pleased to do business. Rating guide is as follows:

RATINGS	
1	STRONGLY DISAGREE
2	DISAGREE
3	UNCERTAIN
4	AGREE
5	STRONGLY AGREE

		EXPECTATIONS QUESTIONNAIRE				
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	Excellent restaurants will have modern-looking equipment.	1	2	3	4	5
2	The physical facilities at an excellent restaurant will be visually appealing.	1	2	3	4	5

3	Employees at an excellent restaurant will be neat appearing.	1	2	3	4	5
4	Materials associated with the service (such as pamphlets or statements) will be visually appealing at an excellent restaurant.	1	2	3	4	5
5	When excellent restaurants promise to do something by a certain time, they will do so.	1	2	3	4	5
6	When a student has a problem, an excellent restaurant will show a sincere interest in solving it.	1	2	3	4	5
7	Excellent restaurants will perform the service right the first time.	1	2	3	4	5
8	Excellent restaurants will provide their services at the time they promise to do so.	1	2	3	4	5
9	Excellent restaurants will insist on error-free records.	1	2	3	4	5
10	Employees in excellent restaurants will tell customers exactly when services will be performed.	1	2	3	4	5
11	Employees in excellent restaurants will give prompt service to customers.	1	2	3	4	5
		EXPECTATIONS QUESTIONNAIRE				
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree
12	Employees in excellent restaurants will always be willing to help customers.	1	2	3	4	5

13	Employees in excellent restaurants will never be too busy to respond to customers' requests.	1	2	3	4	5
14	The behaviour of employees in excellent restaurants will instil confidence in customers.	1	2	3	4	5
15	Customers of excellent restaurants will feel safe in their transactions.	1	2	3	4	5
16	Employees at excellent restaurants will be constantly courteous with customers.	1	2	3	4	5
17	Employees at excellent restaurants will have the knowledge to answer customers' questions.	1	2	3	4	5
18	Excellent restaurants will give customers' individual attention.	1	2	3	4	5
19	Excellent restaurants will have operating hours convenient to all their customers.	1	2	3	4	5
20	Excellent restaurants will have employees who give customers personal attention.	1	2	3	4	5
21	Excellent restaurants will have the customers' best interest at heart.	1	2	3	4	5
22	The employees of excellent restaurants will understand the specific needs of their customers.	1	2	3	4	5

Directions for Service Perceptions Questionnaire

Show the extent to which you believe The restaurant has a feature described by the statement. Once again, circling a 1 means you strongly disagree that The restaurant has that feature, and circling a 5 means that you strongly agree. You may circle any of the numbers in the middle that show how strong your feelings are. There are no right and wrong answers - all we are interested in is a number that best shows your perceptions about The restaurant.

RATINGS	
1	STRONGLY DISAGREE
2	DISAGREE
3	UNCERTAIN
4	AGREE
5	STRONGLY AGREE

		PERCEPTIONS QUESTIONNAIRE				
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	The restaurant has modern-looking equipment.	1	2	3	4	5
2	The restaurant's physical facilities are visually appealing.	1	2	3	4	5
3	The restaurant's employees are neat-appearing.	1	2	3	4	5
4	Materials associated with the service (such as pamphlets or statements) are visually appealing at the restaurant	1	2	3	4	5
5	When the restaurant promises to do something by a certain time, it does so.	1	2	3	4	5
6	When you have a problem, the restaurant shows sincere interest in solving it.	1	2	3	4	5
7	The restaurant performs the service right the first time.	1	2	3	4	5

8	The restaurant provides its services at the time it promises to do so.	1	2	3	4	5
9	The restaurant insists on error-free records.	1	2	3	4	5
10	Employees at the restaurant tell you exactly when services will be performed.	1	2	3	4	5
11	Employees at the restaurant give you prompt service.	1	2	3	4	5

		PERCEPTIONS QUESTIONNAIRE				
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree
12	Employees at the restaurant are willing to help you.	1	2	3	4	5
13	Employees at the restaurant are never to busy to respond to your requests.	1	2	3	4	5
14	The behaviour of employees at the restaurant instils confidence in you.	1	2	3	4	5
15	You feel safe in your transactions with the restaurant	1	2	3	4	5
16	Employees at the restaurant are consistently courteous with you.	1	2	3	4	5
17	Employees at the restaurant have the knowledge to answer your questions.	1	2	3	4	5
18	The restaurant gives you individual attention.	1	2	3	4	5

19	The restaurant has operating hours convenient to all its customers.	1	2	3	4	5
20	The restaurant has employees who give you personal attention.	1	2	3	4	5
21	The restaurant has your best interests at heart.	1	2	3	4	5
22	Employees at the restaurant understand your specific needs.	1	2	3	4	5



09 October 2017

Mr Nkosinathi Nonyane (215082518)
School of Management, IT & Governance
Westville Campus

Dear Mr Nonyane,

Protocol reference number: HSS/1631/017M

Project title: An assessment of Service Quality at a selected restaurant in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal

Approval Notification – Expedited Approval

In response to your application received on 07 September 2017, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

.....
Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

/ms

Cc Supervisor: Dr Given Mutinta
Cc Academic Leader Research: Professor Isabel Martins
Cc School Administrator: Ms Angela Pearce

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

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