

**UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU NATAL**

**EVALUATION OF EXTENSION SERVICE QUALITY UNDER  
UMNGUNGUNDLOVU DISTRICT**

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**A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Business Administration**

**Graduate School of Business  
Faculty of Management Studies**

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# **DECLARATION**

I, Lamlile Happiness Ndlovu declare that

- (i) The research reported in this dissertation, except where otherwise indicated, is my original research.
- (ii) This dissertation has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.
- (iii) This dissertation does not contain other persons' data, pictures, graphs or other information, unless specifically acknowledge as being sourced from other persons.
- (iv) This dissertation does not contain other persons' writing, unless specifically acknowledge as being sourced from other researchers. Where other written sources have been quoted, then:
  - a) their words have been re-written but general information attributed to them has been referenced.
  - b) Where their exact words have been used, their writing has been placed inside quotation marks, and referenced.
- (v) This dissertation does not contain text, graphics or tables copied and pasted from the internet, unless specifically acknowledged, and the source being detailed in the dissertation and in the References sections.

Signature :

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# ABSTRACT

In the modern days government organization are operating in a new climate environment of accountability. According to Rennekamp (2000:1), funders want more than accurate record keeping and the summary of what was done with their appropriation. They want information that communicates value of the programs. Therefore, more attention is being paid to customer satisfaction as funding decisions are made. Even when an organization meets its performance goals, few taxpayers want to finance an organization if its programs are viewed as irrelevant or official are perceived as rude.

The major objective of this study is measuring farming community perceptions and expectations of the quality of extension services rendered by the Department of Agriculture and Environmental Affairs (DAEA) within uMngungundlovu District. Research indicates that customers judges service quality based on multiple factors i.e. dimension of service quality :

- Empathy- the provision of caring individual attention (statements 1-4)
- Responsiveness – the willingness to help the customer (statements 5-9)
- Assurance – the knowledge and courtesy of the employees (statements 10-14)
- Reliability – the ability to perform the promised service reliably and accurately (statements 15-18)
- Tangibles –the appearance of physical facilities, equipment, communication materials (19-22) ( Zeithaml and Bitner 2006 : 153) .

These five dimensions of customer satisfaction were used as framework for both the collection and presentation of data. The results of the study have shown that all five dimensions of service quality are significantly important as far as extension work is concerned in the DAEA.

The average gap score between the extension service perception and expectation for each of service quality dimensions are empathy (-0.23), responsiveness (-0.25), assurance

(-0.23), reliability (-0.36) and tangibles are (-0.31). There is a narrow gap between the extension services 'perception and expectation for all five dimensions. However the negative differences implies that the expectation scores have exceeded the perception scores. This calls for some level of improvements.







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**APPENDIX 1**  
**UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL**  
**GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS**

MBA Research Project  
Lamlile Ndlovu : (033 3476210)  
Maxwell Phiri : (033 2605843 )

UMngungundlovu Extension Customer Satisfaction Survey

Please note this questionnaires is to be filled out by farmers\customers that receive extension services from Department of Agriculture and Environmental Affairs. Your honest answers will help us learn how we can do a better job, as well as tell us what we have done well. All responses will be treated in a confidential manner.

The questionnaire should only take 15-30 minutes to complete. In this questionnaire, you are asked to indicate what is true for you, so there are no “right” or “wrong” answers to any question. Work as rapidly as you can. If you wish to make a comment please write it directly on the booklet itself. Make sure not to skip any questions. Thank you for participating!

**SECTION A**

Background Information

Farmer/Customer name (Optional).....

1. Are you \_\_\_\_\_ male \_\_\_\_\_ female?
2. What farming category do you fall into?  
Commercial Farmer LRAD Farmer Communal land-small scale Farmer Other, specify
3. Your farming Enterprise? Crop Livestock Sugar cane Other Specify.
4. How many years have you been using the Extension services?  
< 1 1 - 5 6 -10 11-15 > 16 years

The following statement relate to your feeling about extension service delivery.

- The scale of 1-5 will be used meaning :

1	Strongly disagree
2	Somewhat disagree
3	Undecided
4	Somewhat agree
5	Strongly agree

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Undecided	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	1. Extension Officers give their farmer individual attention
Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Undecided	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	2. Extension Officers have your best interests at heart
Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Undecided	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	3. Extension Officers understand your specific needs
Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Undecided	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	4. Extension business hours are convenient.
Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Undecided	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	5. Extension Officers listen to you and keep you informed
Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Undecided	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	6. Extension Officers are quick to respond to issues.
Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Undecided	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	7. Extension Officers are always willing to help.
Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Undecided	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	8. Extension Officers provides accurate and up to date information.
Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Undecided	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	9. Extension helps make informed decision.
Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Undecided	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	10. Extension officers are knowledgeable of their subjects.
Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Undecided	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	11. Extension provides new information
					12. Extension helps solve problem.

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Undecided	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	
Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Undecided	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	13.Extension helps in development of new practices.
Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Undecided	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	14. Extension Officers are friendly and courteous.
Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Undecided	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	15..Extension is a good investment of public funds.
Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Undecided	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	16.The information provided is easy to understand
Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Undecided	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	17..Extension Officers provides information at the time they promise to do so.
Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Undecided	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	18. When you have a problem, the Extension Officer shows a sincere interest in solving it.
Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Undecided	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	19. Local Extension Office is approachable
Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Undecided	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	20. Extension Officers use appropriate teaching methods.
Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Undecided	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	21.Extension materials (training modules, pamphlets) which are associated with the service are visually appealing
Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Undecided	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	22. Extension officers are easily identifiable.

Finally we would like to know what can we do to improve our services to you?

**SECTION B**

This section deals with farmers/customers opinions towards extension service delivery. Please tells us the extent to which you think extension services should possess the following features by selecting a number that best shows your expectations using a scale of 1-5 :

1	Strongly disagree
2	Somewhat disagree
3	Undecided
4	Somewhat agree
5	Strongly agree

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Undecided	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	1. The best Extension Officer will gives their farmer individual attention.
Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Undecided	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	2.The best Extension Officers will have your best interests at heart.
Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Undecided	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	3.The best Extension Officers will understand your specific needs.
Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Undecided	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	4.. The best organization will have convenient business hours.
Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Undecided	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	5.The best Extension Officers will listen to you and keep you informed
Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Undecided	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	6. The best Extension Officers will be quick to respond to issues.
Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Undecided	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	7.The best Extension Officers will always be willing to help.
Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Undecided	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	8 .The best Extension Officers will provides accurate and up to date information.
Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Undecided	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	9.The best Extension will help makes the informed decision.

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Undecided	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	10. The best Extension officers will have knowledge to answer farmers questions.
Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Undecided	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	11.The best Extension will provides new information
Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Undecided	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	12. The best. Extension will helps solve problem.
Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Undecided	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	13.The best Extension will helps in development of new practices.
Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Undecided	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	14.The best Extension Officers will be friendly and courteous.
Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Undecided	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	15.The best extension will be a valuable investment of the public funds.
Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Undecided	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	16. The best Extension Officers will always be willing to help.
Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Undecided	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	17 .The information must be easy to understand and applicable.
Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Undecided	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	18. The best extension officer will never be too busy to solve you're your problem.
Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Undecided	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	19. The best Local Extension Office will be approachable
Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Undecided	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	20. The best Extension Officers will always use appropriate teaching methods, suitable for ill rate people as well.
Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Undecided	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	21.Extension materials (training modules, pamphlets) which are associated with the service will be visually appealing at the best extension office.

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Undecided	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	22. The best extension officers are easily identifiable and famous in their wards.
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End of the Questionnaire ( Thank you for taking the time to complete the questionnaire)

APPENDIX1 (Zulu version)

Qaphela : Lemibuzo mayiphendulwe umuntu othola usizo lokwelulekwa umnyango wezolimo nezemvelo kwaZulu Natali. Impendulo eyiqiniso izosisiza ukuthi sazi ukuthi singawenza kanjani umsebenzi wethu ngendlela eyanelisayo ,iphinde isitshale ukuthi ikuphi esikwenze kahle. Izimpendulo zonke ziyokuba imfihlo. Uyazizwa ukuthi usho lokho obonayo ukuthi kuyingqiniso kuwena, ngakho ayikho impendulo eyothathwa njengesiyona. Ukuphendula imibuzo kungathatha isikhathi esingangemizuzu engu 15 kuya ku 30.

Siyabonga.

ISIGABA A.

UMninigwano ngomlimi

Igama (libhale uma uthanda).....

1. Engabe \_\_\_\_\_ungowesifazane? \_\_\_\_\_ ungowesilisa?
2. Ungena kumuphi umkhakha wabalimi?  
Umlimi omkhulu Umlimi ngohlelo lweLRAD Umlimi osafufusa Okuye
3. Wenza kuphi kulokhu? Izitshalo Imfuyo Umoba Izitshalo nemfuyo. Okuye
4. Mingaki iminyaka usebenzisana nabeluleki?  
1 1 - 5 6 -10 11-15 > 16 iminyaka

Lemibuzo elandelayo, imayelana nemizwa yakho ngosizo oluthola kubaluleki bezolimo. Khetha okukodwa.

Khetha okukodwa okuhambisana nemizwa yakho kulokhu okulandelayo.

1	Angivumi nhlobo
2	Ngingase ngingavumi
3	Angivumi futhi angiphiki
4	Ngingase ngivume
5	Ngivuma kakhulu

angivumi	ngingase	angivumi	ngingase	ngivuma	1.Umeluleki unika umlimi ngamunye
----------	----------	----------	----------	---------	-----------------------------------



nhlobo	ngingavumi	futhi angiphiki	ngivume	kakhulu	ngamunye isikhathi sakhe.
angivumi nhlobo	ngingase ngingavumi	angivumi futhi angiphiki	ngingase ngivume	ngivuma kakhulu	2.Umeluleki wamukela izinkinga zomlimi njengezakhe.
angivumi nhlobo	ngingase ngingavumi	angivumi futhi angiphiki	ngingase ngivume	ngivuma kakhulu	3.Umeluleki uyaziqonda izidingo zomlimi njengoba zinjalo.
angivumi nhlobo	ngingase ngingavumi	angivumi futhi angiphiki	ngingase ngivume	ngivuma kakhulu	4 .Izikhathi zabeluleki zokusebenza ziyahambisana nezabalimi
angivumi nhlobo	ngingase ngingavumi	angivumi futhi angiphiki	ngingase ngivume	ngivuma kakhulu	5. Umeluleki uyamlalela umlimi aphinde amnike ulwazi olumsizayo.
angivumi nhlobo	ngingase ngingavumi	angivumi futhi angiphiki	ngingase ngivume	ngivuma kakhulu	6 .Umeluleki uyashesha ukuxazulula izinkinga zomlimi.
angivumi nhlobo	ngingase ngingavumi	angivumi futhi angiphiki	ngingase ngivume	ngivuma kakhulu	7. Abeluleki banesifiso nothando lokukusiza.
angivumi nhlobo	ngingase ngingavumi	angivumi futhi angiphiki	ngingase ngivume	ngivuma kakhulu	8. Umeluleki ukunika ulwazi oluyilonalona futhi olusezingeni
angivumi nhlobo	ngingase ngingavumi	angivumi futhi angiphiki	ngingase ngivume	ngivuma kakhulu	9 . Ukwelulekwa kukusiza ekuthatheni izinqumo eziphusile.
angivumi nhlobo	ngingase ngingavumi	angivumi futhi angiphiki	ngingase ngivume	ngivuma kakhulu	10. Abeluleki banolwazi olunzulu ngomsebenzi wabo
angivumi nhlobo	ngingase ngingavumi	angivumi futhi angiphiki	ngingase ngivume	ngivuma kakhulu	11. Ukwelulekwa kukunikeza ulwazi olusha njalo.
angivumi nhlobo	ngingase ngingavumi	angivumi futhi angiphiki	ngingase ngivume	ngivuma kakhulu	12. Ukwelulekwa kuyasiza ekuxazululeni izinkinga.

angivumi nhlobo	ngingase ngingavumi	angivumi futhi angiphiki	ngingase ngivume	ngivuma kakhulu	13. Ukwelulekwa kusiza ngokuletha izindlela ezintsha zokuzithuthukisa.
angivumi nhlobo	ngingase ngingavumi	angivumi futhi angiphiki	ngingase ngivume	ngivuma kakhulu	14. Abeluleki banobungani nobuntu
angivumi nhlobo	ngingase ngingavumi	angivumi futhi angiphiki	ngingase ngivume	ngivuma kakhulu	15. Ulwazi olulethwa Abeluleki luyindlela enhle yokulondoloza imali kahulumeni.
angivumi nhlobo	ngingase ngingavumi	angivumi futhi angiphiki	ngingase ngivume	ngivuma kakhulu	16. . Ulwazi engilunikiwe luqondakala kalula
angivumi nhlobo	ngingase ngingavumi	angivumi futhi angiphiki	ngingase ngivume	ngivuma kakhulu	17. Abeluleki bakunika ulwazi ngesikhathi abakuthembise ngaso.
angivumi nhlobo	ngingase ngingavumi	angivumi futhi angiphiki	ngingase ngivume	ngivuma kakhulu	18. Uma unenkinga, umeluleki ukulalela ngesineke.
angivumi nhlobo	ngingase ngingavumi	angivumi futhi angiphiki	ngingase ngivume	ngivuma kakhulu	19. . Ihhovisi labeluleki livulelekele wonke umuntu.
angivumi nhlobo	ngingase ngingavumi	angivumi futhi angiphiki	ngingase ngivume	ngivuma kakhulu	20. Abeluleki basebenzisa izindlela zokufundisa ezise zingeni labalimi.
angivumi nhlobo	ngingase ngingavumi	angivumi futhi angiphiki	ngingase ngivume	ngivuma kakhulu	21. Izinsizakusebenza zabeluleki (ibhodi elinezithombe) ziyakugququzela ukuba ulalele.
angivumi nhlobo	ngingase ngingavumi	angivumi futhi angiphiki	ngingase ngivume	ngivuma kakhulu	22 . Abeluleki babonakala kalula emphakathini

Okunye ofisa

ukusho.....

### ISIGABA B

Lesigaba sifuna ukwazi ukuthi ikuphi esingakwenza ukuze umsebenzi wethu ufinyelele ezingeni elingcono neligculisayo.

Ngokwakho, sitshele ukuthi ulindele umsebenzi wokululeka ube njani.

Phendula lemibuzo elandelayo ngokukhetha okukodwa okuhambisana nemizwa yakho.

1	Angivumi nhlobo
2	Ngingase ngingavumi
3	Angivumi futhi angiphiki
4	Ngingase ngivume
5	Ngivuma kakhulu

angivumi nhlobo	ngingase ngingavumi	angivumi futhi angiphiki	ngingase ngivume	ngivuma kakhulu	1.Umeluleki okhuthalele kufanele anika umlimi ngamunye ngamunye isikhathi sakhe.
angivumi nhlobo	ngingase ngingavumi	angivumi futhi angiphiki	ngingase ngivume	ngivuma kakhulu	2.Umeluleki okhuthalele kufanele amukela izinkinga zomlimi njengezakhe.
angivumi nhlobo	ngingase ngingavumi	angivumi futhi angiphiki	ngingase ngivume	ngivuma kakhulu	3.Umeluleki okhuthalele kufanele aziqonde izidingo zomlimi njengoba zinjalo.
angivumi nhlobo	ngingase ngingavumi	angivumi futhi angiphiki	ngingase ngivume	ngivuma kakhulu	4 . Izikhathi zabeluleki zokusebenza kufanele siyahambisana nezabalimi
angivumi nhlobo	ngingase ngingavumi	angivumi futhi angiphiki	ngingase ngivume	ngivuma kakhulu	5. Umeluleki okhuthalele kufanele amlalele umlimi aphinde amnike ulwazi olumsizayo.
angivumi nhlobo	ngingase ngingavumi	angivumi futhi	ngingase ngivume	ngivuma kakhulu	6.Umeluleki okhuthalele kufanele ashesha ukuxazulula izinkinga zomlimi.

		angiphiki			
angivumi nhlobo	ngingase ngingavumi	angivumi futhi angiphiki	ngingase ngivume	ngivuma kakhulu	7. Abeluleki abakhuthele kufanele babenesifiso nothando lokukusiza.
angivumi nhlobo	ngingase ngingavumi	angivumi futhi angiphiki	ngingase ngivume	ngivuma kakhulu	8. Umeluleki okhuthele kufanele anike ulwazi oluyilona futhi olusezingeni
angivumi nhlobo	ngingase ngingavumi	angivumi futhi angiphiki	ngingase ngivume	ngivuma kakhulu	9 . Ukwelulekwa kufanele kukusize ekuthatheni izinqumo eziphusile.
angivumi nhlobo	ngingase ngingavumi	angivumi futhi angiphiki	ngingase ngivume	ngivuma kakhulu	10. Abeluleki abakhuthele kufanele babenolwazi olunzulu ngomsebenzi wabo.
angivumi nhlobo	ngingase ngingavumi	angivumi futhi angiphiki	ngingase ngivume	ngivuma kakhulu	11. Ukwelulekwa kufanele kukunikeze ulwazi olusha njalo.
angivumi nhlobo	ngingase ngingavumi	angivumi futhi angiphiki	ngingase ngivume	ngivuma kakhulu	12. Ukwelulekwa kufanele kukusize ekuxazululeni izinkinga.
angivumi nhlobo	ngingase ngingavumi	angivumi futhi angiphiki	ngingase ngivume	ngivuma kakhulu	13. Ukwelulekwa okuseqopheleni eliphezulu kufanele kusize ekuletheni izindlela ezintsha zokuzithuthukisa
angivumi nhlobo	ngingase ngingavumi	angivumi futhi angiphiki	ngingase ngivume	ngivuma kakhulu	14 . Abeluleki abakhuthalele umphakathi kufanele babenobungani nobuntu.
angivumi nhlobo	ngingase ngingavumi	angivumi futhi angiphiki	ngingase ngivume	ngivuma kakhulu	15 . Ulwazi olulethwa Abeluleki kufanele lubeyindlela enhle yokulondoloza imali kahulumeni.
angivumi nhlobo	ngingase ngingavumi	angivumi futhi angiphiki	ngingase ngivume	ngivuma kakhulu	16. Abeluleki abakhuthele kufanele babengabanesifiso nothando lokukusiza.

angivumi nhlobo	ngingase ngingavumi	angivumi futhi angiphiki	ngingase ngivume	ngivuma kakhulu	17. Abeluleki abakhuthele kufanele kube abazokunika ulwazi ngesikhathi abakuthembise ngaso.
angivumi nhlobo	ngingase ngingavumi	angivumi futhi angiphiki	ngingase ngivume	ngivuma kakhulu	18. Uma unenkinga, umeluleki okhuthele kufanele akulalele futhi abenesineke.
angivumi nhlobo	ngingase ngingavumi	angivumi futhi angiphiki	ngingase ngivume	ngivuma kakhulu	19. Ihhovisi labeluleki elikhuthalele umphakathi kufanele livulekele wonke umuntu.
angivumi nhlobo	ngingase ngingavumi	angivumi futhi angiphiki	ngingase ngivume	ngivuma kakhulu	20. Abeluleki abakhuthele kufanele bahlale njalo besebenzisa izindlela zokufundisa ezisezingeni labalimi.
angivumi nhlobo	ngingase ngingavumi	angivumi futhi angiphiki	ngingase ngivume	ngivuma kakhulu	21. Izinsizakusebenza zabaluleki kufanele kube ezigququzela ukulalela.
angivumi nhlobo	ngingase ngingavumi	angivumi futhi angiphiki	ngingase ngivume	ngivuma kakhulu	22 . Abeluleki kufanele babonakale kalula emphakathini

Iyaphela imibuzo.

Siyabonga



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To whom it may concern

**Re: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH**

**This is to notify that Miss Lamulile Ndlovu has been granted a permission to conduct her research on extension services under Department of Agriculture and Environmental Affairs , uMngungundlovu District ,in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MBA.**

Yours faithfully

**Daya Chetty  
Deputy Director : uMngungundlovu District**

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **1. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

#### **1. 1 Introduction**

The agricultural sector is crucial to rural development and has a significant impact on reducing poverty. For this reason there is a great need for strong extension and advisory services, led by government's operations working hand- in- hand with relevant role -players.

The Agricultural Extension Services are the most important link in the chain of development between the Department of Agriculture and Environmental Affairs, (hereafter, the DAEA) and farming communities. As such, the extension services have a key role to play in increasing agricultural production, which is the basis of rural development. This study investigates the farming community's perceptions and expectations of quality of extension services rendered by the DAEA within the uMngungundlovu District Municipality.

#### **1.2 Background and Motivation for the Research**

In the rural areas of KZN unemployment reaches 74% and this is where the extensive agricultural potential exists ( KZN Agric Report, 2002). Small- scale farmers who reside in these areas cannot be ignored as they have the potential of becoming a source of stability. With the help of extension services, the small-scale farmers manage to produce food for home consumption and to sell the surplus.

The DAEA offers an extension service to all those involved in agricultural production in the province, from large-scale commercial, to small-scale farmers, as well as those who are aspiring to enter the field of agriculture. The aim of agricultural extension is to empower all farmers for success, regardless of the scale on which they operate (KZN Agric Report, 2002). Extensionists are involved in providing services such as assessment of soil types, production of crops and livestock, veld assessments, land husbandry and responding to the requests of the farmers, as they arise.

Achieving client satisfaction is a key priority for any good service provider (Kiran 2003:1) The KwaZulu-Natal DAEA is no different. The DAEA makes farmers more knowledgeable through extension services. Extension services keep the farmers informed of the latest developments in the agricultural sector. Many KZN farmers come from disadvantaged background and lack capacity to compete with commercial farmers. Extension services play a big role in capacitating and transforming small-scale farmers into commercial farmers.

The DAEA has the objective of ensuring that farming communities receive the best extension services. The aim of the study is identifying aspects of extension service delivery needing performance improvement. The researcher is one of more than three hundred extensionists employed by the Department. The researcher provides assistance predominantly to small-scale farmers within Umgungundlovu District Municipality.

### **1.3 Problem Statement**

Public sectors are delivering services in a new climate of accountability. Funders and decision makers want more than disclosure of information on service costs and summary on what was done with their appropriations. They want information that stipulates value of the programs (Rennekamp 2001:1). More attention is being paid to customer satisfaction as funding decisions are made. Even when an organisation meets its goals, few taxpayers want to fund an organisation if its programs are seen as irrelevant or officials are perceived as unresponsive.

In light of the above discussion, it is essential for the Department of Agriculture and Environmental Affairs (DAEA) to be aware of perceptions and expectations of the quality of extension service delivery within the Umgungundlovu District Municipality.

### **1.4 Research Objectives**

A research objective is a statement, in as precise terminology as possible, of what information is needed (Aaker, Day and Kumar , 2002 : 52). The major objective of this study is measure the farming community perceptions and expectations of quality of the extension services provided by the DAEA within the UMngungundlovu District Municipality.

Specific objectives are :

1. To determine the service perceptions of the farming communities with regards to extension service delivery.
2. To determine service expectations of the farming communities with regard to extension service delivery.

3. To determine SERVQUAL gaps which impair the extent of service quality delivery.

### **1.5 Research Questions**

The research will specifically aim at answering the following questions :

1. What are farmers' perceptions with regards to extension service delivery ?
2. What are farmers' expectations with regards to extension service delivery ?
3. What are the service quality gaps that impair extension service delivery ?

### **1.6 Value of the study**

The study is aimed at providing feedback to the DAEA on how the farmers view the extension services and identifying the gaps that need to be filled. This will contribute a great deal, because the DAEA will understand better what the farming community wants.

### **1.7 Literature Review**

Literature study will focus on what customers evaluate when judging service quality. It is divided into five parts, namely service, service quality, relationship marketing, customer satisfaction and extension services in agriculture.

## **1.8 Limitation of the study**

The study was conducted in the uMngungundlovu District Municipality. Therefore the findings of the study cannot be generalised to the needs of other farming communities in the province.

## **1.9 Research Methodology**

Primary data was collected for this study. This was achieved by the use of the SERVQUAL questionnaire (Parasuraman, Berry, Zeithaml 1997 :25). SERVQUAL questionnaires “is a concise multiple-item scale with good reliability and validity” that organisations can use to better understand the service expectations and perceptions of consumers and thereby enhance service quality.

Secondary data was also used to gather relevant literature information pertaining service quality, customer satisfaction and Extension services in the Department of Agriculture .

## **1.10 Chapter Layout**

Chapter one: Background of the study

The chapter serves as an introduction to the study and it contains background information of the study, motivation for conducting study, what will the study focus on, the problem that the study will be investigating, the purpose of the study, questions, value of the study, limitation of the study as well as outline of the study.

Chapter two : Service marketing, service quality, customer satisfaction and agricultural extension in KZN.

This chapter reviews the literature, which relates to service marketing, agricultural extension and provides a theoretical basis of the study.

Chapter three : Research Methodology

This chapter reviews research objectives and discusses the research methodology used to collect and analyse the data.

Chapter four : Data Presentation

The results of the SERVQUAL questionnaire are presented in this chapter. Bar graph and tables are used to display results.

Chapter five : Discussion of Data, Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter discusses the relevant findings in relation to the research objectives. Relevant reference is made to the literature. The chapter also suggests recommendations for the department to enable it to design strategies to close service quality gap, which have been identified. The limitations encountered during the research are highlighted and areas for future research are suggested.

## **1.11 Conclusion**

This chapter focused on the background of the study and elaborated on the research objectives, the research questions, the value of the study and relevant literature information in the area of service quality. The study aimed at providing feedback to the

DAEA and gaps that need to be filled. This will be achieved by the use of the SERVQUAL questionnaires. The next chapter as highlighted in the chapter outline, will present the theoretical review of the literature.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This chapter focuses on what the customers evaluate when judging service quality. The chapter is divided into five parts, namely service, service quality, relationship marketing, customer satisfaction and extension services in agriculture.

#### **2.1 What is service?**

Zeithaml and Bitner (2006:4) define service as “deeds , processes, and performances” whilst Blem (1995:6) explains that service refers to all the activities which create bonds between organizations and their customers. .

Services are an important part of the future of government and a Batho Pele (people first) programme has been instituted. This programme is based on 11 principles such as courtesy, access, service standard, consultation, value for money, redress, openness, transparency , information encouraging innovation and rewarding excellence, customer impact and leadership and strategic direction (Batho Pele, 2007).

#### **2.1.1 Characteristics of services**

All products have a characteristic that defines the nature of the offering. The special characteristics for services are intangibility, heterogeneity, inseparability and perishability (Gabbott and Hogg, 1998:26 ).

#### **2.1.2 Intangibility**

Services are performance that cannot be seen, smelled, tasted or touched (Zeithaml and Bitner 2006:22). This makes the perception of a service highly subjective and an abstract concept for the customer. The inability to inspect or touch service means that in



any pre-purchase situation the product remains abstract until it has been consumed. Services are difficult to patent, resulting in new service concepts being easily copied. The lack of tangible a product makes advertising difficult.

### **2.1.3 Inseparability**

Service is sold first, then produced and consumed simultaneously, whereas goods are produced first, then sold and consumed (Zeithaml and Bitner 2006:23). Gabbott and Hogg (1998:22) states that there are equipment based and people based services. Equipment based services ,such as ATM and telephone, deliver the same service to whoever consumes them. The opposite is true of people based service, where an involvement of a human service provider inevitably means that individual customer experience a variation in service delivery. The result of this variation is that people-based services tend to be less standardized than equipment based services.

### **2.1.4 Variability**

Variability is a function of human involvement in the delivery and consumption processes (Gabbott and Hogg 1998:28). It refers to services that are delivered by humans and no two services are exactly the same. This depends on the service provider, as well as on when and how services are provided.

The implication of variability is that service delivery and meeting the need of the customer depend on the actions of the employee. There is no knowledge if the service which was delivered is what was planned and promoted (Zeithaml and Bitner 2006:23).

### **2.1.5 Perishability**

Perishability describes the real-time nature of the product (Gabbott and Hogg 1998:28). Kotler (1996:60) states that perishability of the service is a problem when demand is steady. The main challenge is that when the service is improperly performed, it cannot be returned. As a result, strong strategies are necessary in case something goes wrong. For example, if the service cannot be repeated then apologies are the only means of recourse for customer satisfaction.

### **2.2 Service Marketing Mix**

Marketing mix are sets of tools that the organizations can utilize to shape the nature of the offering to customers (Baker 2003:598).

Zeitmal and Bitner (2006: 25) define the marketing mix as the elements an organization controls that can be used to satisfy or communicate with the customer.

The key to long-term profitability for any professional firm is the creation of a service that satisfies the needs and wants of the clients and facilitates the exchange of those services in such a manner that provides value and satisfaction to the client. Marketing mix is a set of tools that can be used to create these services (Kotler 2000:9). Traditional marketing mix consist of four Ps : product, price, promotion and place.

The notion of the mix means that all the variables are interrelated and depend on each other to some extent (Zeitmal and Bitner 2006 : 25). Because of the nature of services, modification of the four Ps is necessary. Services are usually produced and consumed at the same time, customers often interact directly with the firm's personnel and are directly part of the service production process. Because services are intangible , customers often use people attributes such as attitudes of staff to help them understand the nature of the service experience. The three Ps added to traditional marketing mix , are people, physical evidence and process as summarized in Table 2.1.

**Table 2.1 Expanded Marketing Mix for services**

<b>Product</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>Promotion</b>	<b>Price</b>
Physical good features Quality level Accessories Packaging Warranties Product lines Branding	Channel type Exposure Intermediaries Outlet Locations Transportation Storage Managing channels	Promotion blend Salespeople Selection Training Incentives Advertising Media types Types of ads Sales promotion Publicity Internet	Flexibility Price level Terms Differentiation Discounts Allowances
<b>People</b>	<b>Physical Evidence</b>	<b>Process</b>	
Employee Recruiting Training Motivation Rewards Teamwork Customers Education	Facility design Equipment Signage Employee dress Other tangibles Reports Business cards Statements	Flow of activities Standardized Customized Number of steps Simple Complex Customer involvement	

**Source** : Zietmal and Bitner 2006:26).

### **2.2.1 Product**

Product is an organization's offering to potential customers and can be either tangible or intangible (Jobber 1995:625). Product definition in the marketing mix covers items such as brand name, packages, quality design, features, sizes, product variety and warranties (Kotler 2000:10).

Product decisions for services are not the same as goods, due to the fact that services are intangible. Palmer (2005:20) mentioned that the customer does not buy the product, they actually buy the benefits that the product provides. As a result, people, physical evidence, processes and elements play a vital role in influencing the customers' perception of service quality.

Service customers suffer a higher perceived risk in their decision-making. The more intangible the service the more it needs to be defined in terms of the process descriptions rather than a tangible description of outcome (McColl-Kennedy, Kiel, Lusch 1998:19).

### **2.2.2 Price**

Price is the sum of money the customer has to pay to obtain the product, along with non-financial costs such as time, trouble and inconvenience (Kotler 2000:10). It is influenced by four factors :

- 1.The cost of producing a service.
- 2.The amount customers are willing to pay.
- 3.The price that competitors are charging and
4. The regulations imposed by the government which affect pricing (Mc Coll-Kennedy *et.al.*,1998: 333).

The price that customers are willing to pay has the greatest impact on sales. When customers buy a product they exchange something of value to receive something of value. If the price is high, it could be perceived as high quality or high risk (Kotler 2000 : 351).

Price is also a key marketing tool, for three reasons :

1. It acts as an indicator of perceived quality, since it is difficult to evaluate a service before purchase.
2. It is an important tool in controlling demand, since matching demand and supply is critical for services, as they cannot be stored.
3. Price sensitivity is an important segment variable that can be used with services, since some customers are willing to pay higher prices than others (Jobber 1995:678).

### **2.2.3 Place**

Place means everything that the organization does to make its services available to target customers (Zietmal and Bitner 2006:27). Distribution channels for services are more direct than those for physical goods, since services are consumed at the point of production (Jobber 1995:658). Due to increase in technology, changes in distribution channels have made it possible to meet customer demands. For example, telephone or internet banking allows customers to conduct their business at their homes, 24 hours a day (Woodruffe 1995:331).

### **2.2.4 Promotion**

Promotion is a tool used as an ongoing process of communication between the organization and the customers. It consist of four elements : advertising, personal selling, sales promotion and public relations (Kotler 1996: 471).

Promotion adds significance to the services. There are a number of distinctive promotional needs to be considered (Baker 2003:602) :

1. Because of the intangible nature of the services, the promotion elements of the marketing mix will need to overcome customers' perceptions of high risk

level during the buying process .

2. Since customers cannot sensibly evaluate intangible, high risk services without knowing the identity of the service provider, it is important to promote the service provider.

3. Where service production processes are inseparable from their consumption, visible production processes such as people are becoming part of the promotion effort.

4. Promotion of services is generally more constrained by the legal controls because there is a higher possibility of fraud due to the intangibility of the services.

### **2.2.5 People**

People are human actors who play a vital role in service delivery and thus influence the buyer's perceptions (Zeitmal and Bitner 2006: 26). According to Jobber (1995:679), how people conduct themselves, their personal appearance and attitudes have an impact on the customer's perceptions. For professional services such as extension services, the provider is the service. That is why it is critical for organizations to set standards to improve the quality of the services provided by their employees and have measurement criteria to assess their performance, as training and control procedures aid in reducing the variability of the quality of the service.

### **2.2.6 Physical evidence**

Physical evidence refers to the environment in which the service is delivered and where the firm and customer interact, as well as any tangible components that facilitate performance or communication of the service (Zeitmal and Bitner 2006 :27).

Physical evidence sends a strong message about the organizational purpose and the nature of the service.

The service's nature means that customers cannot judge a service before it is consumed and this increases risk of purchase decision. Customers tend to look for clues to the likely quality of the service by inspecting tangible evidence such as brochures, letterheads, business cards and report formats (Baker 2003:605).

### **2.2.7 Process**

Process refers to actual procedures, mechanisms, and flow of activities by which the service is delivered (Zeitmal and Bitner 2006: 27). The direct involvement of customers in the production of most services, and the perishability of these services, places a greater emphasis on the process of the transaction for the services, for example menus, promptness of service and waiting to pay the bill (Jobber 1995 : 678).

The task for service marketers is that they must examine the processes involved in the service delivery to identify ways in which service may be better provided to a customer. This could include the removing of bottlenecks in order to streamline the service delivery process (McCull-Kennedy *et. al.*,1998:22).

It is important for organizations to understand the service chain, since all aspects of the service mix are part of the service encounters. Service chain are elements which affect the customer experience and finally the customer satisfaction. All elements of the marketing mix are equally important and the organization needs to have a proper marketing mix to ensure or achieve a competitive edge.

### **2.3 Department of Agriculture and Environmental Affairs (DAEA) extension service marketing mix**

The marketing mix is a set of tools available to an organisation to shape the nature of its offer to customers (Palmer 2005:10). The four Ps of product, price, promotion and place have been found to be too limited in their application to services. As a result, seven Ps were proposed, with people, process and physical evidence being added.

### **2.3.1 Product**

Lamb, Joseph, Carl and Christo, (2004 :222) explain that “a product is anything, both favourable and unfavourable that a person receives in an exchange- normally for money. It can be tangible ( a pair of shoes), a service (a haircut), an idea ( “do not litter”) or any combination of these three. The DAEA extension services teach farmers about new farming ideas in their own farming needs and problems.

### **2.3.2 Price**

The DAEA is a public sector organisation . Services are delivered to farmers without a price being charged. The cost of providing the services is borne by the DAEA.

### **2.3.3 Promotion**

The DAEA uses a combination of public relations, advertising and personal selling in creating a positive word of mouth message for its services. Events such as Imbizo, the Sunday slot on Radio Ukhozi, where the Ministry announces success stories are means to convey a positive message about the department.

### **2.3.4 Place**

There are more than 300 extension officers situated in the regional and district offices throughout the province. The extension staff visit farmers in their wards on a daily basis and farmers are welcome to call the districts office for assistance.

### **2.3.5 People**

Extension staff act as messengers between the Department and the farming communities. Extension staff have a high level of contact with farmers. The extension staff work



closely together with Departmental scientists in ensuring that up-to-date information is transferred to farmers.

### **2.3.6 Physical evidence**

Due to the nature of the extension services, the only physical evidence that most of the farmers are exposed to is contact with the extension staff, pamphlets and KZN motor vehicles.

### **2.3.7 Process**

“ No two service providers are the same “ ; service delivery can be varied because of the heterogeneity of the service (Mclean 1994 :199). In this context , the Department produces the various training manuals that are written in IsiZulu and English, to assist in the transfer of technology to farmers. Ad hoc services are available, responding to the requests of farmers as they arise.

## **2.4 Relationship marketing**

Relationship marketing is a philosophy of carrying out business and strategic orientation that focuses on keeping and improving relationships with the current customers rather than on acquiring new ones (Zeithaml and Bitner 2006:177). The purpose of relationship marketing is to build a long -term relationship or connection between the organization and its customers, as well as developing brand and firm loyalty (Kurt 1998:151)). A relationship marketing and service marketing mix can be used a tool to shape the nature of the service offered to customers. Customer relationship is important, because it is cheaper to keep current customers than to attract new ones (Zeithaml and Bitner 2006:178).

The following are the factors that influence the development of strong customer relationships :

1. The customer's overall evaluation of the quality of a firm's core service offering.
2. The switching barriers that the customer encounters in leaving the relationship.
3. The relationship bonds established with customers by the firm.

By establishing strong relationships with customers and by focusing on factors that have an impact on customer relationships, the organization will accurately understand customers' expectations over time (Zeithmal and Bitner 2006:207).

## **2.5 Service quality**

According to Zeithmal and Bitner (2006:108), service quality is a focused evaluation that reflects a customer's perception of reliability, responsiveness, empathy, assurance and tangibles.

Why do customers prefer one organisation over another ? It is because the one organisation meets their needs in some way : ease of use or ability to do what it promises to do. Service quality is considered as a viable strategy for marketers who want to differentiate their service offerings, develop customer values and satisfy customer needs (Ozment and Morash 1994:352).

If all other factors are constant, price is the deciding factor. If there is little difference in price, quality will decide and if price and quality are the same, service quality wins (Morea 1996 :18).

### **2.5.1 Service quality dimensions**

Research indicates that customers judge service quality using many criteria . There are five dimensions of service quality.

#### **2.5.1.1 Reliability**

Reliability is defined as the ability to deliver the service as promised. This means that organization honours its promises, delivers the service right first time, keeps records

accurately, bills accurately and delivers timeously. Reliability is the most important dimension to the customers. All organizations need to be aware of customers' expectation of reliability (Zeithaml and Bitner 2006:117).

### **2.5.1.2 Responsiveness**

Responsiveness is the willingness or the readiness of the employees to provide the service. It involves :

Promptness in dealing with the customers' requests or complains.

Calling the customer back immediately.

Assisting in solving the customers' problems.

Organizations are advised to view the process of service delivery and deal with the request from the customers, rather than from the organizations point of view. By doing this the organization will excel as the provider of quality service and responsiveness (Zeithaml and Bitner 2006:117).

### **2.5.1.3 Assurance**

Assurance is defined as the employees' knowledge and courtesy and their ability to inspire trust and confidence. It is a critical driver of quality, especially of services which customers perceive as high risk, such as insurance, medical and legal services (Zeithaml and Bitner 2006:118).

### **2.5.1.4 Empathy**

Empathy is defined as the caring , individualized attention that the organization provides its customers. Organizations who value empathy, call their customers by name and establish a relationship that reflects their personal knowledge of the customer's requirements (Zeithaml and Bitner 2006:120).

### **2.5.1.5 Tangibles**

This is the appearance of the physical facilities, equipment and staff. Tangibles provide an image of the services, especially to first time users. Tangibles can be used by the organization to:

- Enhance their image.

- Provide continuity.

- Signal quality to customers.

Tangibles can be used with another dimension, for example providing efficient service and comfort (Zeithaml and Bitner 2006:120).

## **2.6 Measuring service quality**

One of the first measures to be developed to measure service quality is the SERVQUAL instrument . SERVQUAL scale consist of 21 service attributes, grouped into the five service quality dimensions as discussed above (Zeithaml and Bitner 2006 : 153).

The instrument ask customers two different ratings for each attribute, one representing corresponding expectation and the other representing corresponding perception.

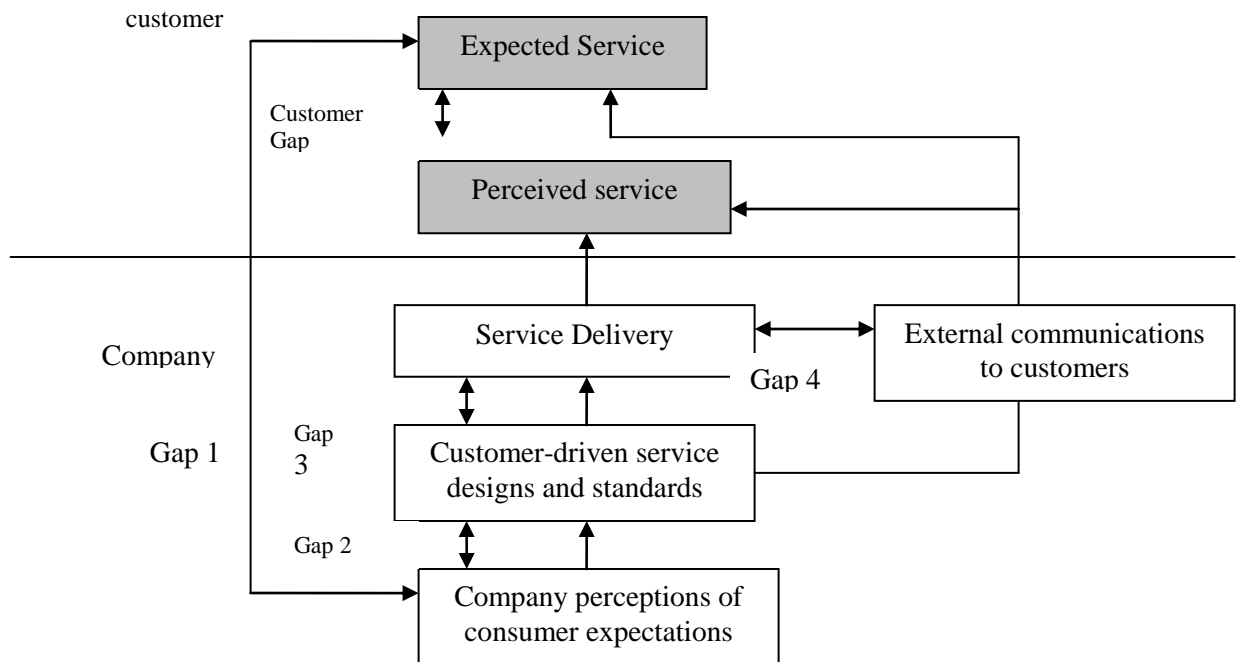
Negative differences between the expectation and perception inform the organization about their deficiencies and identify areas that need improvements, whereas positive differences indicate that the organization is exceeding customer expectations.

The SERVQUAL instrument can be used in commercial and public sector organizations (Parasuraman, Berry and Zeithmal 1988: 167). The relative importance of each dimension to customers can be limited to industry, individual business unit, branch and department.

## 2.7 The Gaps Model of Service Quality

The gaps model of service quality serves as a framework for service organizations attempting to improve the quality of service and service marketing. The gaps model is based on the idea that customers evaluate services by comparing their expectations of what will happen during the service delivery with their perception of the performance of the service. Zeithmal and Bitner (2006:33) have identified four potential gaps where areas of service quality can occur (Fig 1).

**Figure 1. Gaps Model of Service Quality**



**Source :** Zeithmal and Bitner (2006:33)

Gap 1 : Not knowing what customers expect

This gap is between the customer's expectation of superior service and the management's perception of customer's expectation ( Gabbott and Hogg 1998:106).

The main cause of this gap is that management lacks accurate understanding of what the customers expect. This occurs when there is :

Lack of interaction between management and customers.

Inadequate use of market research.

Lack of encouragement to listen to customer complaints.

Gap 1 can be minimized by implementation of multiple market research strategy with an aim of understanding customers needs and by building a long-term customer relationship (Zeithaml and Bitner 2006:201).

Gap 2 : Not having the right service quality designs and standards

This is the difference between the organization understanding of customer expectations and development of customer driven service design and standards (Zeithaml and Bitner 2006:38). Causes of this gap could be:

Poor service design.

Lack of customer-driven service standard.

Failure to develop tangibles in line with customer expectations.

Gap2 can be minimized by designing services without oversimplification, incompleteness, subjectivity and bias.

Gap 3 : Not delivering to service designs and standards

This gap is between the service quality specification and service delivery (Gabbott and Hogg 1998:106). Even when guidelines for performing services exist, high-quality service performance is not guaranteed. It is crucial that standards be backed by appropriate resources, viz. people, system and technology. The human error and mechanical breakdown cannot be ignored. Adequately trained staff are needed to deliver the quality that is necessary.

Gap 4: Not matching performance to promises

This is between the service delivered and the service provider's external communications (Zeithaml and Bitner 2006:42). When service quality is not delivered as promised, broken promises occur. The causes of broken promises could be :

Absence of a strong internal marketing programme

Over-promising in advertising

Differences in policies and procedures across business units.

Gap 4 can be minimized by increasing horizontal communication by opening channels of communication between the human resource and operation, to promote understanding between the relevant business units.

Organizations should develop communications that deal with the quality dimension and features that are most crucial to the customer and accurately reflect what customers actually receive in the service encounter (Zeithaml and Bitner 2006:43).

## **2.8 Customer satisfaction**

Moreo (1996:17) explains customer satisfaction as a “means of meeting not only the wants and needs of our customer, but the customer expectation as well” .

Palmer (2005:43) describe customer satisfaction as “the degree to which an organization’s product or service performance matches up to the expectations of the customer “.

### **2.8.1 Factors that shape customer satisfaction**

The factors that shape customer satisfaction are product or service features, perceptions of the products or service quality and price. Personal factors such as customer’s mood or emotional state and situational factors such as family member opinions will also shape satisfaction (Zeithaml and Bitner 1996:111).

#### **2.8.1.1 Product and service features**

The customer’s evaluation of the product or service features has a significant impact on customer satisfaction. For example, important features in a hotel include room comfort and cleanliness, friendliness of staff, access to golf facilities, beaches, mountains,

room price etc. Zithaml and Bitner (1996:111) stated that customers will make trade-offs among different service features, for instance price compared with courtesy of staff compared with customization depending on the kind and the nature of service being evaluated.

During a customer satisfaction survey, most organisations will determine, through focus groups, what the dominant features and attributes are for their services and then measure these features, as well as overall service satisfaction.

#### 2.8.1.2 Customer emotions

A positive (happy) or negative (sad) state of mind has an impact on how one feels or responds to the services you experienced. The customer can either overreact or respond badly to any minor problem. The point is, positive emotions can develop customer satisfaction, whereas the negative emotions can destroy customer satisfaction. According to Naidoo (1998: 56), a study of the hospitality industry was conducted and found that negative emotion had a greater influence on the customer satisfaction and customer repeat visit intentions than positive emotions.

#### 2.8.1.3 Attributions for service success or failure

Attribution theory means how people explain things. This theory suggests that when an outcome is not as expected, people tend to look for reasons. Their assessments on why things turn out this way can influence their satisfaction, for example, if a farmer has planted a new maize cultivar and it has disappointed him by achieving a lower yield than expected. The farmer may think that the cultivar that was recommended by extension officer was not suitable for his climatic conditions. The farmer makes many external attributions (Zithaml and Bitner 2006:112).



#### 2.8.1.4 Perceptions of equity or fairness

There are questions that arise in customers' minds regarding fairness or equity. "Have I been treated fairly compared with other customers? Did the other customers get a better attention, a better price or superior service quality?" Notions of fairness are central to customers' perceptions of satisfaction with products or services (Ziethaml Bitner 2006:112).

#### 2.8.1.5 Reference group, family members and co-workers

Customer satisfaction is often influenced by other people. For instance, with a new maize cultivar on the market, farmers will be influenced not only by individuals' personal experiences with the new seed itself, but also by what other farmers say about it on Farmers' Day, how others feel about it and how widely it is adopted by the organization.

#### 2.8.1.8 Steps to attain customer satisfaction

There are five steps that assist in the attainment of customer satisfaction (Walker and Baker 2000: 428 ):

- communicate with your customer
- manage the overall experience
- handle difficult situations with empathy and in a dignified manner
- cultivate a service culture with employees and task teams and
- learn how to implement and control service processes.

## **2.9 Difference between service perception and service expectation**

Service perceptions are generated during and after exposure to the service whereas service, expectation is usually generated at the beginning of the services (Merlin 1994:43). Expectation changes from person to person and culture to culture, meaning what is expected today is not the same as what is expected in the future. This influences the perceptions of the customers. Customers perceive services in terms of the quality of the service provided and the level of the satisfaction attained. Organizations can differentiate themselves with respect to service quality and improved customer satisfaction.

## **2. 10. Extension service in agriculture**

The Department of Agriculture and Environmental Affairs in KZN is mandated to respond to urgent, high - priority issues such (KZN Agri Report, 2009) :

- Food security
- Poverty alleviation
- Food safety
- Economic growth and
- Environmental conservation.

## **2.11 Agriculture's role in poverty reduction**

Agriculture plays an important role in the lives of the poor, as their main source of livelihood. Agricultural production growth is particularly important for poverty reduction and food security, especially in developing countries.

According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO, 2005 : 60), poverty is concentrated in rural areas. It suggests that two-thirds of the poor live in rural areas. In general, the more remote the location, the greater is the incidence of poverty. While migration trends are shifting poverty balance towards urban areas , the majority of the

poor will continue to live in the rural areas. No sustainable reduction in poverty is possible without the development of rural areas.

The Governmental Extension Service in South Africa is well positioned to assist people living in rural areas. The main objective of agricultural development in KZN is food security which is part of poverty alleviation. The community gardens that are supported by the KZN DAESA give opportunities to people to produce food. The primary aim of these community gardens is to provide household food security to participants and their families with the secondary aim of producing a surplus for sale (KZN Agric Report 2002). The Department provides once-off infrastructure support in the form of land preparation, fencing and irrigation. Ongoing extension service is offered, with advice given on the cultivar choice, planting time, pest and disease control, fertilization and marketing. A modular poster series is presented to participants to build their agricultural knowledge base. These posters are largely pictorial in nature and are suited for use by those with low a level of formal education. Topics include production planning, irrigation, liming and specific modules on a variety of crops.

## **2.12 Economic importance of agriculture**

Agriculture represents a larger share of the economy in countries with the highest percentage of poor and undernourished people in their populations. FAO (2005 :61) presents the percentage share of agriculture in the total GDP for developing countries grouped according to the prevalence of poverty. For countries where more than one-third of the population is undernourished, the share is almost 25%. This share decreases with declining levels of undernourishment in the population.

## **2.13 Agriculture and unemployment**

According to the FAO (2005:61), most of the income-earning opportunities for rural people are directly or indirectly related to agriculture. Agriculture accounts for about

55% of employment in developing countries. The rural poor face a diverse set of challenges, with an equally diverse set of solutions. Many of the solutions are linked to an expanding agriculture sector, where the poor can find jobs related to producing, processing, supplying, reselling inputs, services and products.

“Agricultural sectors play a crucial role in rural development and contribute significantly to any initiatives to alleviate poverty. Therefore there is great a need for strong extension services (Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme 2004).”

#### **2.14 What is extension ?**

According to Duvel (1982:4), the word extension has different meanings and varies from country to country. In the Netherlands the word is “Voorlichting”, in Germany it is “Beratung” and the Americans called it “Extension”, as we do here in South Africa. Duvel concluded by stating that the word could mean advising, dissemination of information or conveying of a message.

Farquhar ( 1976), cited by Rossouw (1990:74), described extension as a service or system which, through educational procedures, helps rural people in improving productive efficiency and income, bettering their levels of living and lifting the social, educational and environmental standards of rural life.

The latter interpretation implies that extension has educational characteristics. Farmers are trained to solve future problems on their own. They are taught *how* to think and not *what* to think. For an extension officer to capacitate his farmers to the level where they operate on their own he has to work *with* them and not *for* them.

#### **2.15 Agricultural extension services in South Africa**

Duvel (2004 :1) indicates that there has been a drastic change in agricultural extension during the past ten years. The drastic change is from a dualistic service (separate

services for commercial and for small scale farmers) to a single amalgamated service, focusing on the needs of both the previously disadvantaged small-scale farmers and the large-scale, commercial farmers.

- In 1994 government made a commitment to bring about a “ better life for all” , characterised by equality, justice, prosperity, freedom and democracy. The democratisation of South Africa introduced fundamental changes in the policy, administrative and delivery mechanisms and systems for government services to conform to the new Constitution. This process led to the development of the White Paper on Agriculture (1995), which represented the strategic transformation imperatives through the captivating simple acronym of BATAT (Broadening Access to Agriculture) for previously disadvantaged farmers in terms of their financial services, technology development and market services (Norms and Standards, 2005). BATAT is a guiding perspective for the agricultural sector. It is the foundation of a vision of equitable access and participation in a globally competitive sector that contributes to :
  - Income generation
  - Employment creation
  - Food security
  - A better life for all in a sustainable manner.

The need for the total orientation of agricultural Extension services was recognised by the realization that :

1. The delivery system is the key to the transformation of the small scale disadvantaged agricultural sector in South Africa.
2. Appropriate advice must be offered to farmers regularly, efficiently and effectively.

## **2.16 Extension structures in KZN**

The extension services are decentralised into regions, to allow the Department to be near its clients (van Rooyen 1999). Two Extension Regions that is South and North, are functioning as independent directorates. Each directorate consists of the District

Services, Professional Services, Engineering and Soil conservation Services and administration components. The extension officers fall under District Services and they provide frontline advisory and development service to clients. District Services are subdivided into wards which are further divided into subwards. The support services, which provide effective agricultural development are the Professional Services, Engineering and Soil Conservation Services.

### **2.17 Project implementation**

- Ward level - The community identifies the project and communicates with the local extension officer .
- District level - Technical investigations and project proposals are completed.
- Regional level - At this stage projects are approved and finance is provided.

The Department offers an extension service to all those involved in agricultural production in the province of KZN from large-scale commercial to subsistence agriculture, as well as those aspiring to enter the field of agriculture. There are more than three hundred extensionists situated in the regional and district offices throughout the province. These comprise extension technicians, working predominantly with small scale farmers, and extension and specialist-scientists, who work with both small-scale and commercial farmers (KZN Agric Report, 2002).

A programmed approach to extension is adopted, based on annual needs assessments.

These programmes can be broadly classified into three categories :

- Training
- Assessments and farm planning
- Demonstrations, research and study groups.

### **2.18 Training**

Training opportunities offered by extensionists include courses such as veld management and land assessment. Training can be built on modular poster series which can be presented in the field at rural Farmers' Days. These posters are largely pictorial in nature

and suitable for use by those with a low level of formal education. Extension staff are encouraged to attend courses on an ongoing basis, to improve their capacity for service delivery.

### **2.19 Assessment and planning**

Extension Officers are involved daily with on-farm assessments of soil type, veld condition and other natural resources. All such work is written in reports such as feasibility studies and farm plans, with recommendations based on sound agricultural environmental and economic principles. Technologies employed include GPS (Global Positioning System) survey techniques and GIS (Geographical Information System) mapping. Land reform and new farmer settlement schemes are facilitated through the compilation of preliminary agricultural reports.

### **2.20 Demonstration and research groups**

New technologies are transferred to farmers through on-farm demonstrations, farmers' day and study groups. Study groups are facilitated by extensionists and involve traditional enterprises such as dairy, beef, maize and alternate crops such as deciduous fruit in the southern Drakensberg.

Departmental extensionists are actively involved in on-farm research, for example planting cultivar strip trials.

Extension services of the Department provides *ad hoc* service, responding to requests from clients as they arise. According to Redhakrishna (2000), the aim of agricultural extension is to empower all farmers for success, regardless of the scale on which they operate.

### **2.21 Clients**

The client base for agricultural extension is outlined in the Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme (CASP) summarised in Table 2 .2.

**Table 2.2 Clients and support needed**

<b>Category of clients</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Support needed</b>
The hungry	Primarily the responsibility of the Department of Social Development	Provision of starter packs and advice during food emergencies disasters.
Subsistence and household food producers	Mainly produce for own consumption, may produce small marketable surplus	Support under six pillars of CASP
Smale-scale farmers and ELRAD beneficiaries	Some produce markatable surplus; some have access to own land or production rights in communal areas (arable and grazing); some are land reform beneficiaries.	Support under six pillars of CASP
Commercial farmers	Have full access to goods and services (land, information, inputs, markets) to farm effectively.	Specialized advisory services.private sector support.

**Source :** Norms and Standards (2005 :3)

### **2.22 Agricultural Extension ;Philosophy; Principles and Strategy**

To help people assist themselves is the basic philosophy of agricultural extension, agricultural extension teaches farmers about new farming ideas relevant to their own farming needs and problems. It also assists the rural people to develop leadership and organisational skills.

It is important that the action has to come from farmers. The extension officer starts where the farmer is prepared to receive advice and information. Extension objectives are achieved by teaching or assisting farmers to acquire knowledge and inspiring them to



action, “but it must be their own action out of their knowledge and convictions” (Rossouw 1990:48).

### **2.23 Importance of service delivery**

Abedian (2007:3) stated that the public service in South Africa contributes 40% to the economy. Growing the economy is a collective challenge that all have to deal with and play their parts effectively, by delivering the necessary services to citizens, to attract foreign investment and effectively compete with other countries Abedian (2007 :1). A programme called Batho Pele, meaning “People First”, has been introduced to emphasise the importance of service delivery.

This programme stresses not only the commitment of all the public service to work toward achieving government’s goal but also satisfying the aspiration of the members of the public for access to quality services and a better life for all, (Department of Public Service and Administration 1995). Batho Pele is not an “add-on” activity. It is a way of delivering services by putting people first in planning and operations. Batho Pele calls for consultation, meaning farmers should be consulted about the level and the quality of public services they receive. The services rendered should be of high standard and farmers should be told what level and quality of service they will receive so that they are aware of what to expect. There should be equal access to the services to which farmers are entitled. Another pillar of Batho Pele is courtesy, meaning farmers should be treated with courtesy and consideration. Farmers should be given full, accurate information about public services. Openness and transparency when rendering services to farmers is critical. Extension services should be provided economically and efficiently in order to give farmers the best possible value for money. Batho Pele principles also show the intent by the government to identify and meet the people’s needs ( Department of Public Service , 2007)

## 2.24 Challenges of Extension Services

- There are about 2210 extension and advisory personnel providing services to farmers in South Africa. Of these 73% are male and 27% are females. Within the services males occupy more than 80% of all the management-related positions in agricultural extension and advisory services. This is against Government policy, which advocates a balance both inside and outside Government service ( Monde 2008 :1).
- The majority of public service extension personnel lack access to information and communication technology (ICT). The Department of Agriculture, in collaboration with the Agricultural Research Council has developed a Web- based agricultural information database, known as AGIS, as a tool to assist farmers and extension officers with relevant information. The challenge is that extension officers are either unaware or unable to access the information from AGIS. The big dilemma is that emergent farmers lack the skills to operate and download information that is readily available. The challenge is what can be done to transform the extension service to assist South African farmers to cope with the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- Delivery of extension services to farmers is hampered by disjointed and disintegrated approaches by different role players, notably poor linkages between the research fraternity with training and extension cohort. Farmers do not influence research, extension and market sufficiently. Research and development is not relevant to farmers' needs.
- The language barrier is a challenge. Where farmers speak different languages from that of the researcher, effective communication is hampered.
- Another challenge is the lack of understanding among farmers about the exact role of extension and advisory services. Therefore there is a need for role clarity between extension services and farmers. This will require developing instruments for measuring performance of extension, particularly at the local level.

## **2.25 Conclusion**

This chapter explained that customer satisfaction is the customer's fulfilment response. It is a judgement that the product or service feature, or service itself, provides a pleasurable level of consumption-related fulfilment. Customer satisfaction is influenced by specific service features, price, perceptions of the service and service quality. In addition the customers' mood and opinions of family members will influence satisfaction.

The survey on customer satisfaction is critical in an organisation because it provides understanding of what customers' service quality expectations are. Models such SERVQUAL and GAP assist the organisation in identification of gaps that impair satisfaction of customers.. Dimensions of service quality are discussed in detail as researchers suggested that customers judge quality using multiple factors.

The latter part of the chapter explained the economic importance of agriculture, the role of extension services in the communities and the importance of service delivery. Agriculture plays a crucial role in the lives of the poor as the main source of food and income . The extension service, through educational procedures, helps poor people to improve productive efficiency and income, bettering their levels of living and lifting social, educational and environmental standards of rural life.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The chapter 2 provided brief background information on the history of the extension service in South Africa, importance of agriculture in the alleviation of poverty. It was noted that agricultural extension services are the most important link in the chain of rural development between the DAESA and farming communities.

This chapter focus on the research methodology and the design to be used to collect and analyse the data from the questionnaires.

The problem statement, research objectives and research questions were discussed in chapter one (1.3, 1.4 and 1.5) .

#### **3.2 Research Design**

A descriptive study was undertaken to measure extension service quality delivery within the uMngungundlovu District. Descriptive research occurs where a specific situation is studied either to see if it gives rise to any theories or to see if existing general theories are borne out by the specific solution.

The advantages of descriptive research is that it provides information about the relevant characteristics of the study group and allows associations among those characteristics (Parasuraman 1991: 135).

#### **3.3. Research Instrument**

According to Kotler (1994:41), most business companies conduct customer satisfaction surveys using questionnaires. Zeithaml and Bitner (2003:135) stated that service quality is generally abstract and thus dimensions of services are best captured by surveys that measure customer evaluation of services. One such survey instrument developed to measure service quality is SERVQUAL scale (Zeithaml and Bitner, 2003:135).The SERVQUAL scale was first developed in 1988 and has since undergone numerous

improvements. There are now different formats widely in use in commercial and public sector organizations. It consists of 21 service attributes, which are grouped into the five service quality dimensions (i.e. reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangibles) (Zeithaml and Bitner, 2003:135, 138).

The SERQUAL survey questionnaire is structured in such a way that two different ratings are required to be provided for each attribute or dimension of service quality. One rating reflects the level of service clients would expect from service providers in the sector and the other reflects their perception of the service delivered by a specific service provider within that sector. The difference between the expectation and perception ratings constitutes a quantified measure of service quality. The SERVQUAL predetermined survey questionnaire was used for collecting and analyzing the primary data for this study.

### **3.4 Discussion of the questionnaire**

The SERVQUAL questionnaire has two sets of 22 questions each. Section A deals with the customers' expectations of the quality of the extension service that best organisations should offer. Section B deals with the customer service perception received from uMngungundlovu District Extension Services. A five-point Likert format, ranging from 1 to 5, was used :

1	Strongly disagree
2	Somewhat disagree
3	Undecided
4	Somewhat agree
5	Strongly agree

There are five dimensions of service quality being measured :

- Empathy- the provision of caring individual attention (statements 1-4)

- Responsiveness – the willingness to help the customer (statements 5-9)
- Assurance – the knowledge and courtesy of the employees (statements 10-14)
- Reliability – the ability to perform the promised service reliably and accurately (statements 15-18)
- Tangibles –the appearance of physical facilities, equipment, communication materials (19-22)

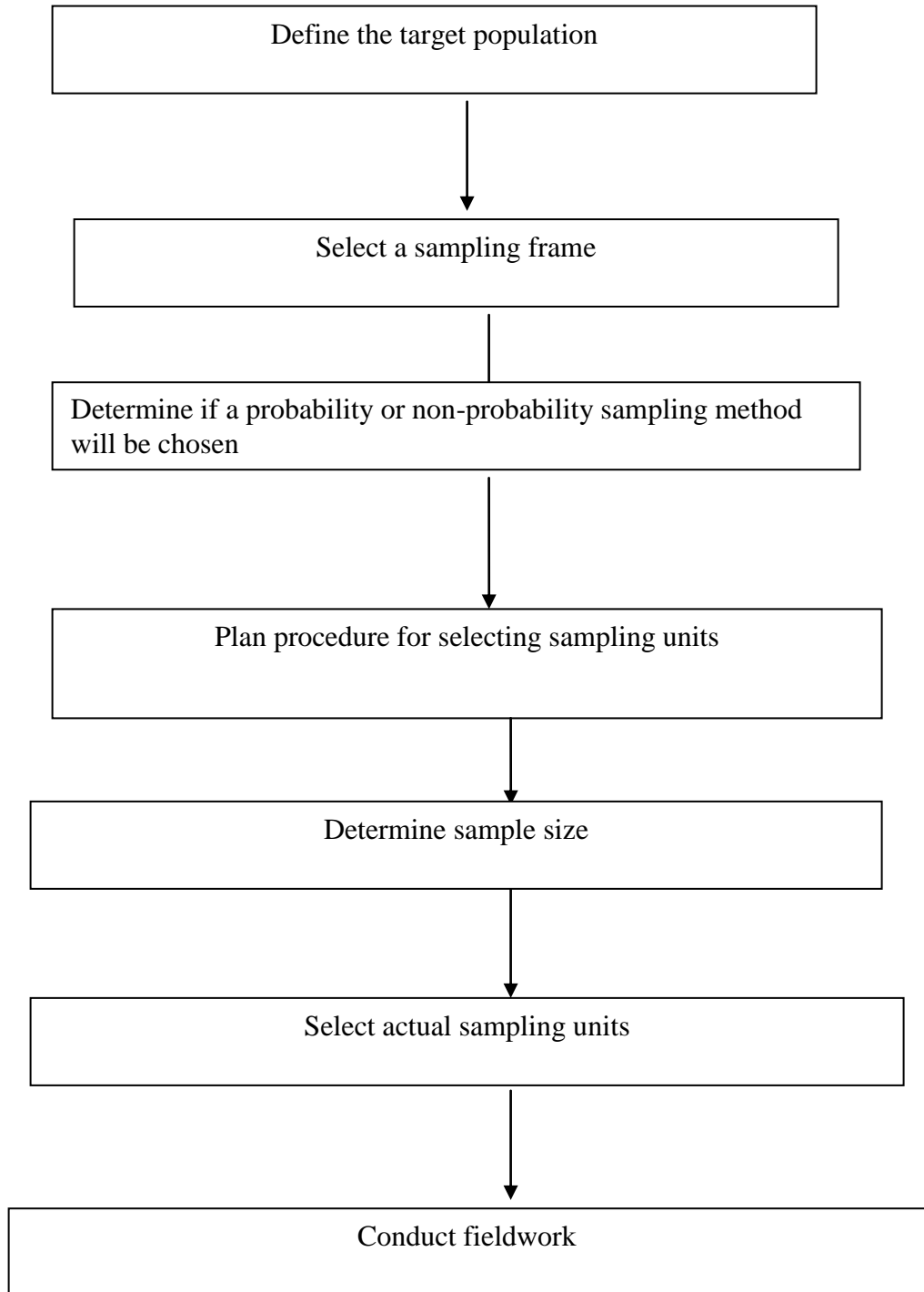
Questions 1-5 define background information of a customer.

### 3.5 Sample Design

The process of selecting a sample involves seven stages Zikmund (1995 :417 )

These are shown in the figure below:

**Figure 3.1 Stages in the Selection of the Sample (Zikmund 1995 :417 )**



### **3.5.1 Defining the target population**

Zikmund (1995 :417) states that it is vital to carefully define the target population, so that the proper sources from which the data are to be collected can be identified. The target population for this research were farming communities in the uMngungundlovu District Municipality. Since it is impractical to obtain information from the entire target population a specific sample was selected to actually participate in the survey.

### **3.5.2 Select a sampling Frame**

According to Zikmund (1995 :418), the “sampling frame is a list of elements from which the sample may be drawn.” The present research focused on the farming community that have received extension services from the DAEA under uMngungundlovu District Municipality for the pass five years. The uMngungundlovu District Municipality consists of seven local municipalities :

- Richmond
- uMshwati
- Camperdown
- uMngeni
- uMsunduzi
- Impendle
- Impofana

The above local municipalities were believed to be representative of the farming communities living in the uMngungundlovu District Municipality.



### **3.5.3 Determine if a probability or non -probability sampling method will be chosen**

There are two types of sampling method, probability and non - probability sampling methods. Probability sampling is a sampling technique in which every member of the population will have a known, non-zero probability of selection . Non - probability sampling is a sampling technique where the probability of any particular member of the population being chosen is unknown ( Zikmund 1995 :423).

Non- probability sampling method was selected for the purpose of this study. There are four types of non-probability samples : convenience sampling, judgment or purposive sampling, quota sampling and snowball sampling (Zikmund 1995 :424).

Respondents were selected purposively by extension officials in the areas where they performed their duties. With purposive sampling, the sample obtained is regarded as non-representative of the relevant population, but was typical and ensured that the research issues were addressed from different perspectives. Purposive sampling is also less complicated and more economical in terms of finance and time spent (Welman and Kruger ,2001).

### **3. 5.4 Sampling Size**

With the help of Extension Officers from the KZN Department of Agriculture and Environmental Affairs, farmers who received extension services were identified. Farmers were selected purposively by Extension Officials who knew the areas where they performed their duties.

To gain entry to the local municipalities, the researcher contacted the District Heads where the research was conducted and requested that the Extension Officers be part of research.

The research was carried out by interviewing 160 participants at seven local municipalities (Representative sample = 160, population = 280)Refer Table 4.1 . This sample was found to provide adequate representation of Umngungundlovu farming communities.

**Table 3.1 Determining sample size**

Population (N)	Representative sample(n)
40	36
80	66
120	92
160	113
200	132
240	148
280	162

**Source :** Krejcie and Morgan 1970: 608

### **3.5.5 Data collection**

In order to collect the data the researcher met with the extension officers from seven municipalities. The aim of the meeting was to introduce the study and help Extension Officers gain a clear understanding of their responsibilities within the study. Extension staff were responsible for inviting farmers to participate and introducing the researcher in their wards. The researcher handed out the questionnaire which were translated in Zulu to the farmers. Farmers who could not read and write were assisted by the researcher and extension officers. The questionnaire was to be completed by farming community which had received agricultural services from the DAEA.

According to Brislin (1970), cited by Shanahan (1998:20), described the following as the guidelines in reducing translation errors and were used by the researcher to ensure the no loss of the meaning.

1. Use short, simple sentences of less than 16 words.
2. Employ the active rather than passive voice.
3. Repeat nouns instead of using pronouns.
4. Avoid adverbs and preposition telling where or when.

5. Avoid words indicating vagueness (e.g probably, frequently).
6. Use wording familiar to the translators where possible.
7. Avoid sentences containing two different verbs if the verbs suggest different actions.

### **3.6 Data Analysis**

Data was collected using questionnaires. The tool used for the research was quantitative and allowed the researcher to collect a large quantity of data from a sizeable population. Data was collected and coded, entered into a spreadsheet (Microsoft Excel) and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The SPSS was used to generate the relevant graphs, chart and tables that enabled the researcher to interpret the results into concrete facts and figures.

### **3.7 Conclusion**

This chapter concentrated on the research methodology and the survey technique employing questionnaire as the data collection method.

The data was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences computer programme (SPSS). The findings are presented in Chapter 4.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings that emerged from the survey with the use of the SERVQUAL questionnaires. The purpose of the study is to measure farming community perceptions and expectations of the quality of extension services supplied by DAEA under uMngungundlovu District municipality. The summary result of gap scores per each service quality dimensions is discussed.

The sample size was 160 . Three questionnaires were destroyed due to incomplete information. The researcher used pie charts and bar graphs to display the respondents each of the 22 questions. The results were as follows:

#### 4.2 Profile of the sample

**Table 4.1 Statement for gender of the respondents**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	69	43.9	44.5	44.5
	Female	86	54.8	55.5	100.0
	Total	155	98.7	100.0	
Missing	System	2	1.3		
Total		157	100.0		

A total of 157 individuals participated in the survey; 54.8 % participants were female and 43.9 % were male.

**Table 4.2 Statement for farming category of the respondents**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Commercial farmer	3	1.9	2.2	2.2
	LRAD farmer	22	14.0	16.2	18.4
	Communal land Small scale farmer	109	69.4	80.1	98.5
	Other, specify	2	1.3	1.5	100.0
	Total	136	86.6	100.0	
Missing	System	21	13.4		
Total		157	100.0		

69.4 % of the respondents are communal land small scale farmers; 14% LRAD farmers; 1.9% commercial farmers and 1.3% are just doing farming as a hobby.

**Table 4.3 Statement for farming enterprise**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Crop	91	58.0	60.3	60.3
	Livestock	16	10.2	10.6	70.9
	Sugarcane	35	22.3	23.2	94.0
	Other, specify	9	5.7	6.0	100.0
	Total	151	96.2	100.0	
Missing	System	6	3.8		
Total		157	100.0		

58% of the respondents are crop producers; 22.3% sugarcane farmers; 10.2% livestock farmers and 5.7 % are doing mixed farming.

**Table 4.4 Statement for years of using the Extension Services**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	<1	4	2.5	2.7	2.7
	1-5	20	12.7	13.6	16.3
	6-10	53	33.8	36.1	52.4
	11-15	42	26.8	28.6	81.0
	>16	28	17.8	19.0	100.0
	Total	147	93.6	100.0	
Missing	System	10	6.4		
Total		157	100.0		

33.8 % of the total respondents, indicated that they have been using the extension information for more than 5 years; 26.8 % for over 10 years ;17.8 % for more than 15 years and 2.5 % for less than 5 years.

### 4.3 Perceptions

Perception is our sensory experience of the world around us and involves both the recognition of environmental stimuli and actions in response to these stimuli. Through the perceptual process, information is gained about properties and elements of the environment that are critical to survival. Perception not only creates experience of the world around us; it allows us to act within our environment (van Wagner, 2008 :1). It is important for service organizations to try to create a positive perception as services are intangible.

The following section presents the respondents' perceptions in relating to the five service quality dimensions, namely :

- Empathy- the provision of caring individual attention (table 4.1-4.7 and figure 4.1)
- Responsiveness – the willingness to help the customer (table 4.8-4.9 and figure 4.3-4.4)
- Assurance – the knowledge and courtesy of the employees (table 4.10-4.12 and figure 4.5- 4.6 )

- Reliability – the ability to perform the promised service reliably and accurately (table 4.13-4.14 and figure 4.7-4.8)
- Tangibles –the appearance of physical facilities, equipment, communication materials (table 4.15-4.4.16 and figure 4.9-4.10)

**Table 4.5 Statement about the individual attention to farmers**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	3	1.9	1.9	1.9
	Somewhat disagree	1	.6	.6	2.6
	Undecided	6	3.8	3.8	6.4
	Somewhat agree	13	8.3	8.3	14.7
	Strongly agree	133	84.7	85.3	100.0
	Total	156	99.4	100.0	
Missing	System	1	.6		
	Total	157	100.0		

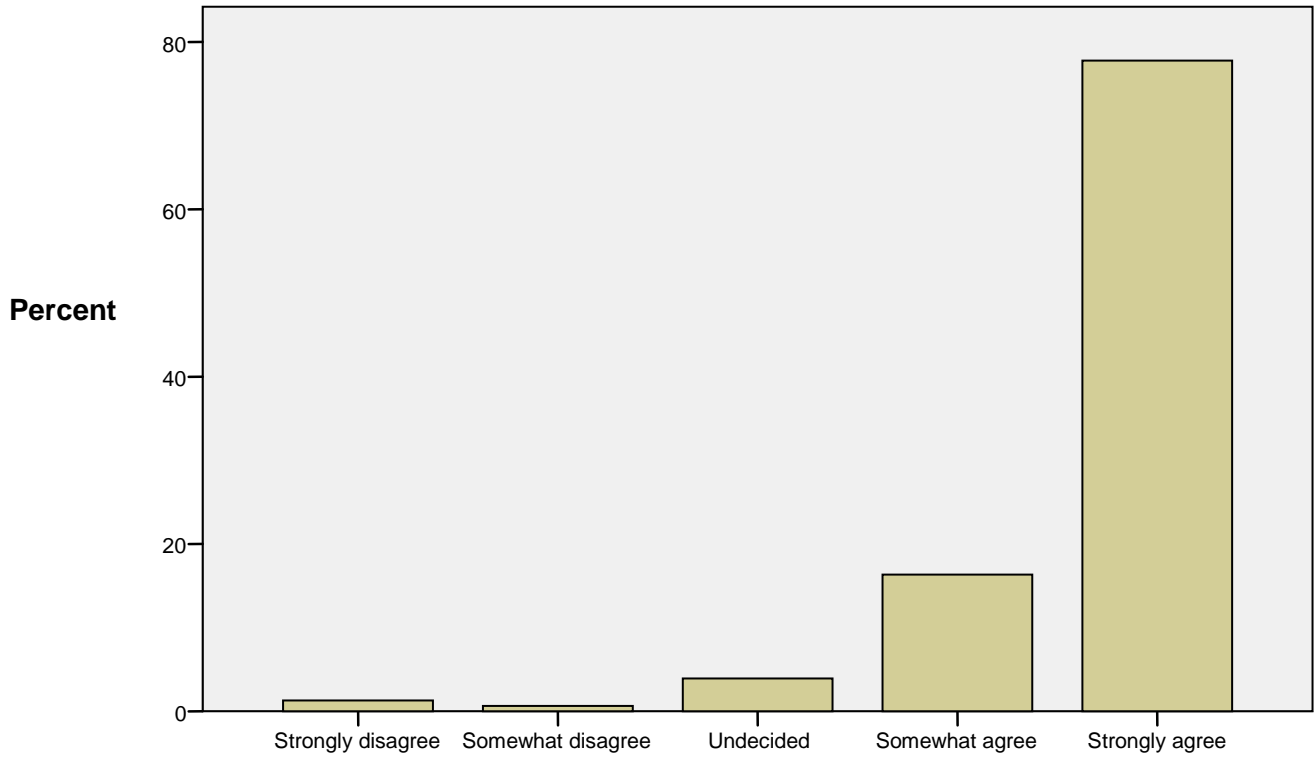
84.7 % of the respondents felt that extension services officers gives farmers individual attention; 3.8 % were undecided and 1.9 % strongly disagreed with the statement.

**Table 4.6 Extension Officers having farmers’ best interest at heart**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	2	1.3	1.3	1.3
	Undecided	2	1.3	1.3	2.6
	Somewhat agree	32	20.4	20.8	23.4
	Strongly agree	118	75.2	76.6	100.0
	Total	154	98.1	100.0	
Missing	System	3	1.9		
	Total	157	100.0		

The majority (95.6 %) of the respondents agreed with the statement that the extension officers have their best interests at heart. A small percentage (1.3%) of the respondents remained undecided in this regard, while 1.3% of the respondents disagreed with the statement.

**Figure 4.1 Graph on statements that Extension Officer understands specific needs**



The majority of the respondents (91.7%) agreed that Extension Officers understand customers' specific needs, while 3.8% remained neutral and only 1.3% disagreed with the statement.

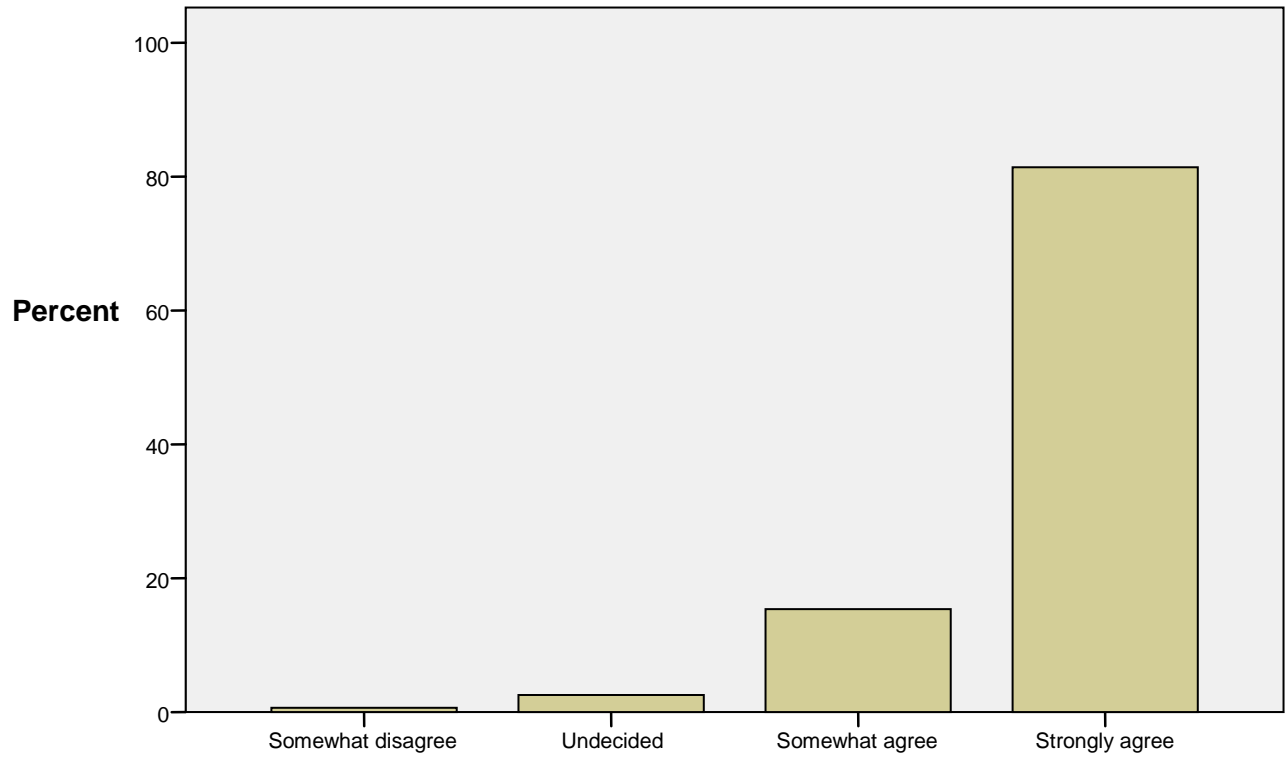


**Table 4.7 Statements that extension business hours are convenient**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	5	3.2	3.2	3.2
	Somewhat disagree	6	3.8	3.9	7.1
	Undecided	26	16.6	16.9	24.0
	Somewhat agree	41	26.1	26.6	50.6
	Strongly agree	76	48.4	49.4	100.0
	Total	154	98.1	100.0	
Missing	System	3	1.9		
Total		157	100.0		

48.4% of the respondents strongly agreed that extension hours are convenient. A small number of respondents (7 %) disagreed with the statement. They suggested that the DAEA should look seriously at the office hours and adjust them to meet the needs of working customers. Others suggestions included using the internet to disseminate information to customers. However, participants were not willing to give up the personalized service and access to agents afforded by having an Extension Officer in each tribal ward.

**Figure 4.2 Graph on statements that Extension Officers listen to you and keep you informed**



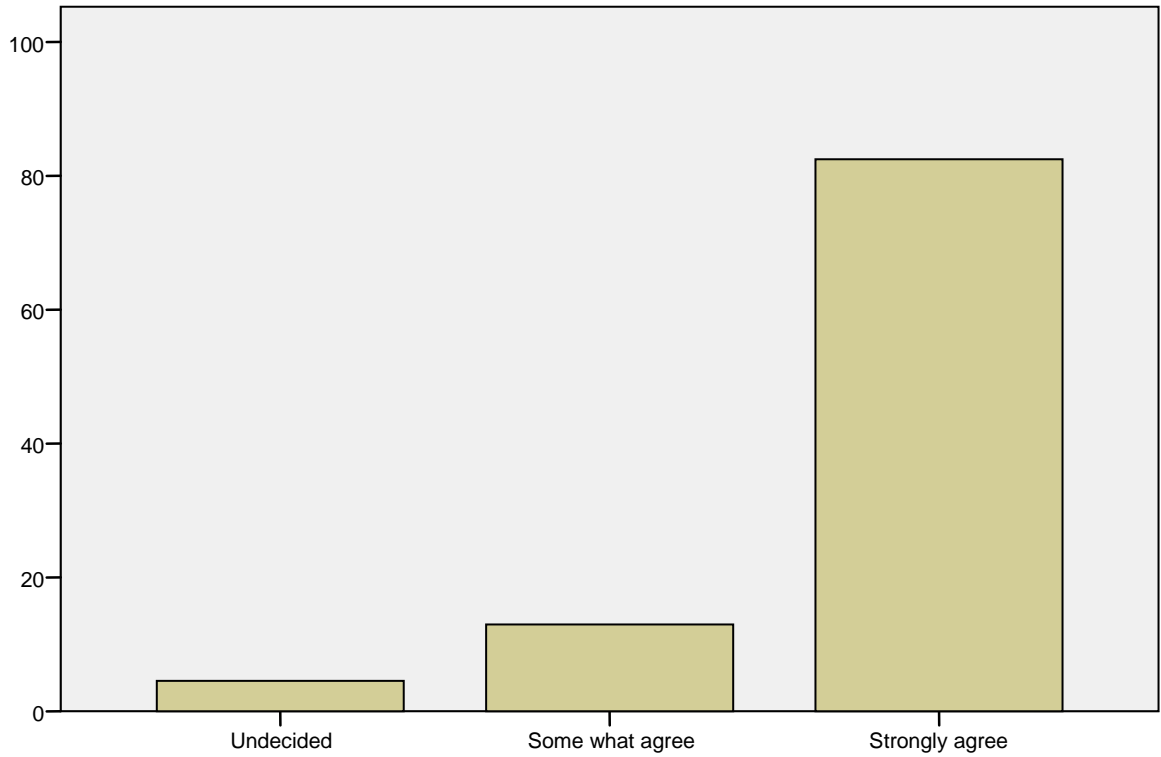
The majority of the respondents (80.9%) strongly agreed and 15.3% agreed that the extension officers listen and keep them informed. Only 0.6% of the respondents disagreed with the statement and 2.5% remained neutral.

**Table 4.8 Statements that Extension Officers are quick to respond to issues**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Somewhat disagree	4	2.5	2.6	2.6
	Undecided	25	15.9	16.6	19.2
	Somewhat agree	27	17.2	17.9	37.1
	Strongly agree	95	60.5	62.9	100.0
	Total	151	96.2	100.0	
Missing	System	6	3.8		
Total		157	100.0		

77.7 % of the respondents agreed that Extension Officers are quick to respond to customer request; 15.9 % of the respondents remain undecided and 2.5 % do not feel that they get quick response to their requests. Respondents liked the fact that extension services are free to all. However, they suggested that for the extension service to be more effective, it must not only disseminate information, but assist people in using the information to make decisions. They like having an Extension Officer help them interpret soil sample results. Respondents raised concerns on the delays in the funding of projects.

**Figure 4.3 Graph on statements that Extension Officers are always willing to help**



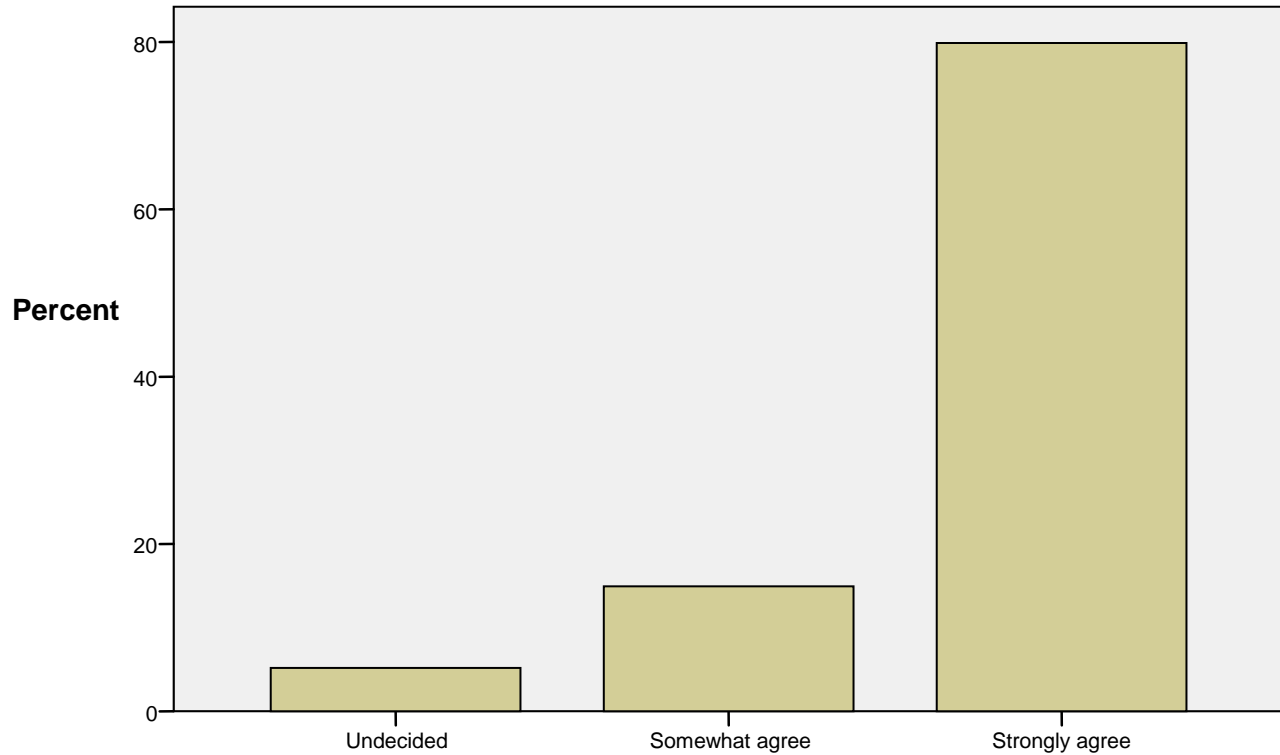
93.4% of the respondents agreed that the extension staff find out what is important to the customers and attend to their needs; 4.5 % remained undecided in this regard.

**Table 4.9 Statement that Extension Officers provides accurate and up to date information**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Somewhat disagree	2	1.3	1.3	1.3
	Undecided	7	4.5	4.5	5.8
	Somewhat agree	26	16.6	16.8	22.6
	Strongly agree	120	76.4	77.4	100.0
Total		155	98.7	100.0	
Missing	System	2	1.3		
Total		157	100.0		

76 % of the respondents strongly agreed and 16.6 % agreed that they receive accurate information; 4.5 % remain undecided and only 1.3 % disagreed with the statements, saying they do not feel they receive accurate information.

**Figure 4.4 Graph on Extension helps make informed decision**



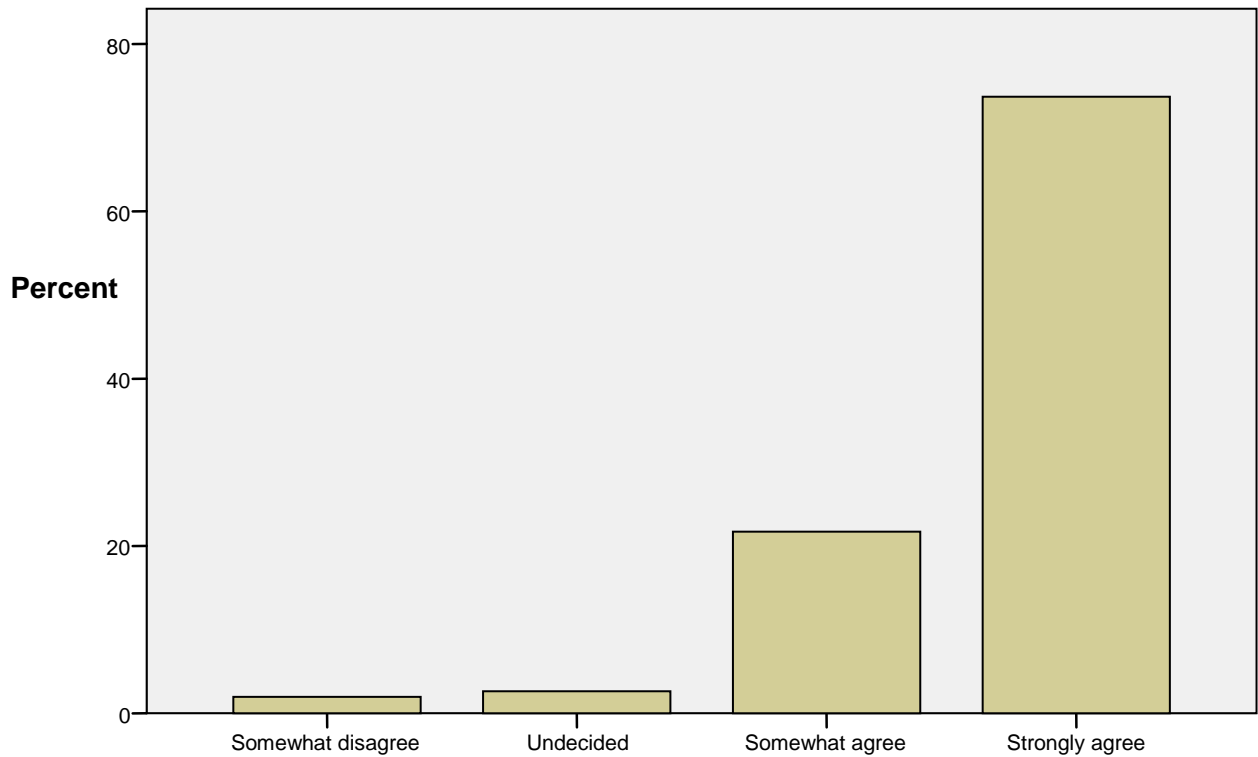
92.9% of the respondents agreed that extension information helps them make informed decisions; 5.1 % remain undecided and none disagreed with the statement.

**Table 4.10 Extension Officers are knowledgeable of their subjects**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Undecided	6	3.8	3.9	3.9
	Somewhat agree	12	7.6	7.9	11.8
	Strongly agree	134	85.4	88.2	100.0
	Total	152	96.8	100.0	
Missing	System	5	3.2		
Total		157	100.0		

The majority (93%) of the respondents strongly agreed that Extension Officers are knowledgeable of their subjects and 3.8 % remain undecided.

**Figure 4.5 Graph on the statement that Extension provides new information**



71.3% of the respondents strongly agreed and 21% agreed that Extension services provides new information, while 2.5% remained undecided and 1.9 disagreed with the statement. The respondents suggested that they liked having an extension officer assist them interpret and apply information in their particular setting.

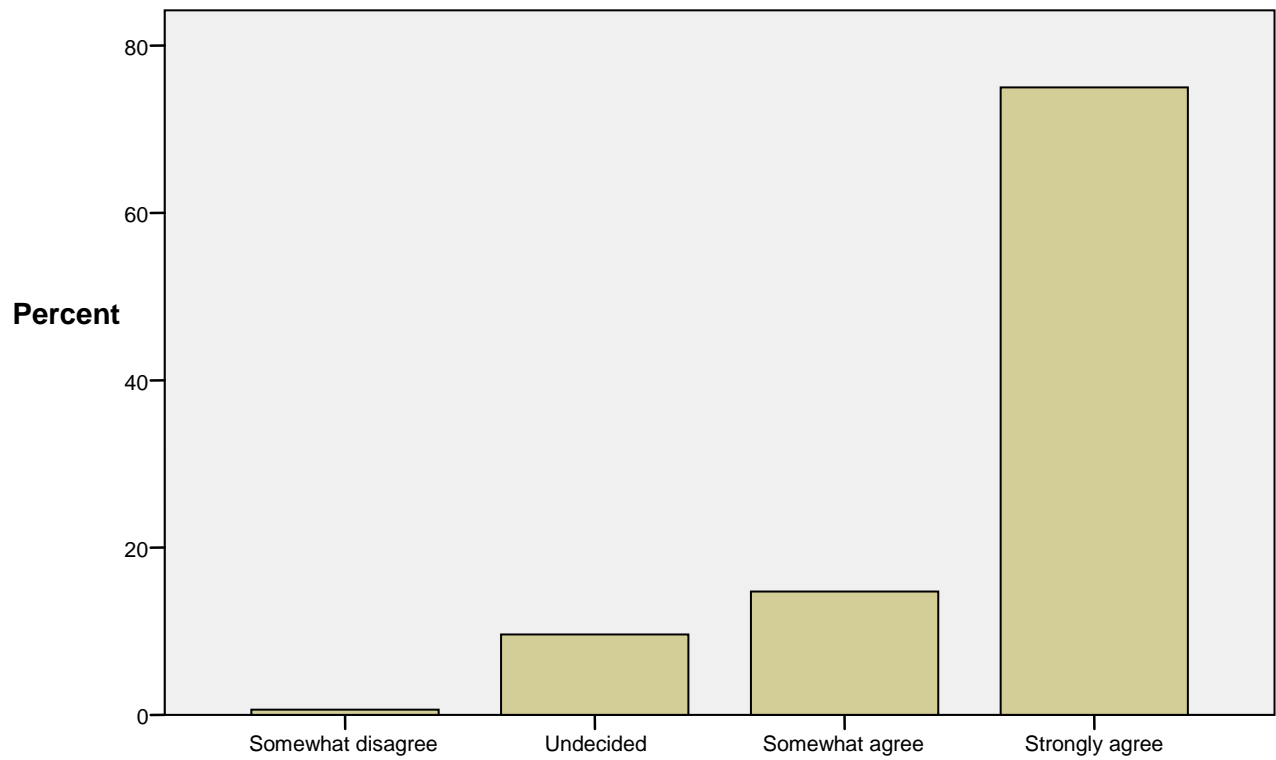
**Table 4.11 Statement that Extension helps solve problems**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Somewhat disagree	1	.6	.6	.6
	Undecided	13	8.3	8.4	9.1
	Somewhat agree	26	16.6	16.9	26.0
	Strongly agree	114	72.6	74.0	100.0
	Total	154	98.1	100.0	
Missing	System	3	1.9		
Total		157	100.0		

89.2% of the respondents agreed that extension service helps solve problem, while 8.3 % remain undecided and only 0.6 % disagreed. One respondent, having followed Extensions' instructions on planting maize for the first time, said he “ did not expect cobs to be as big as your arm “.



**Figure 4.6 Graph on statement that Extension helps in development of new practice**



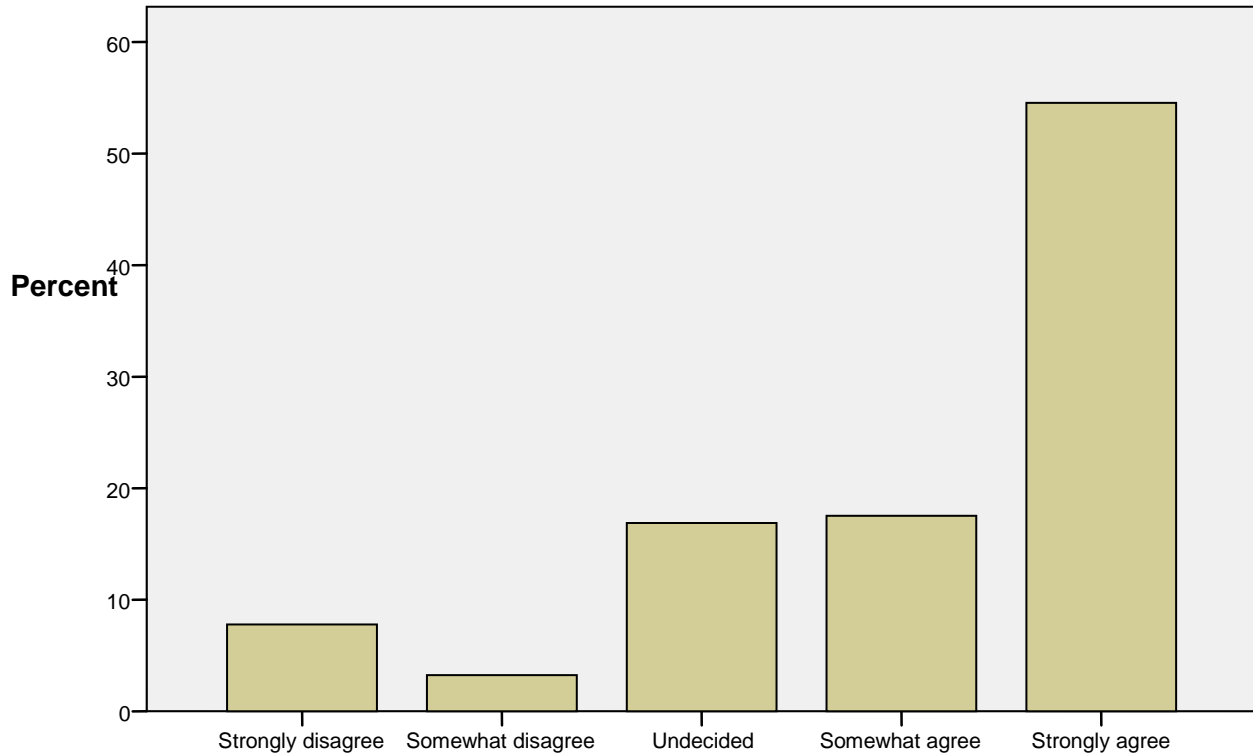
The majority (89.1%) of the respondents agreed that Extension helps in the development of new practices, while 9.6 % remained undecided and 0.6 % disagreed with the statement.

**Table 4.12 Statement that Extension officers are friendly and courteous**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	2	1.3	1.3	1.3
	Somewhat disagree	1	.6	.6	1.9
	Undecided	4	2.5	2.6	4.5
	Somewhat agree	20	12.7	12.8	17.3
	Strongly agree	129	82.2	82.7	100.0
	Total	156	99.4	100.0	
Missing	System	1	.6		
Total		157	100.0		

Extension received high scores for the way Extension Officers interact with their customers, with 95.5% saying they agreed with the statement that extension officers are friendly and courteous. Only 1.3 % disagreed and 2.5 % remain undecided concerning the statement.

**Figure 4.7 Statement that extension is a good investment of public funds**



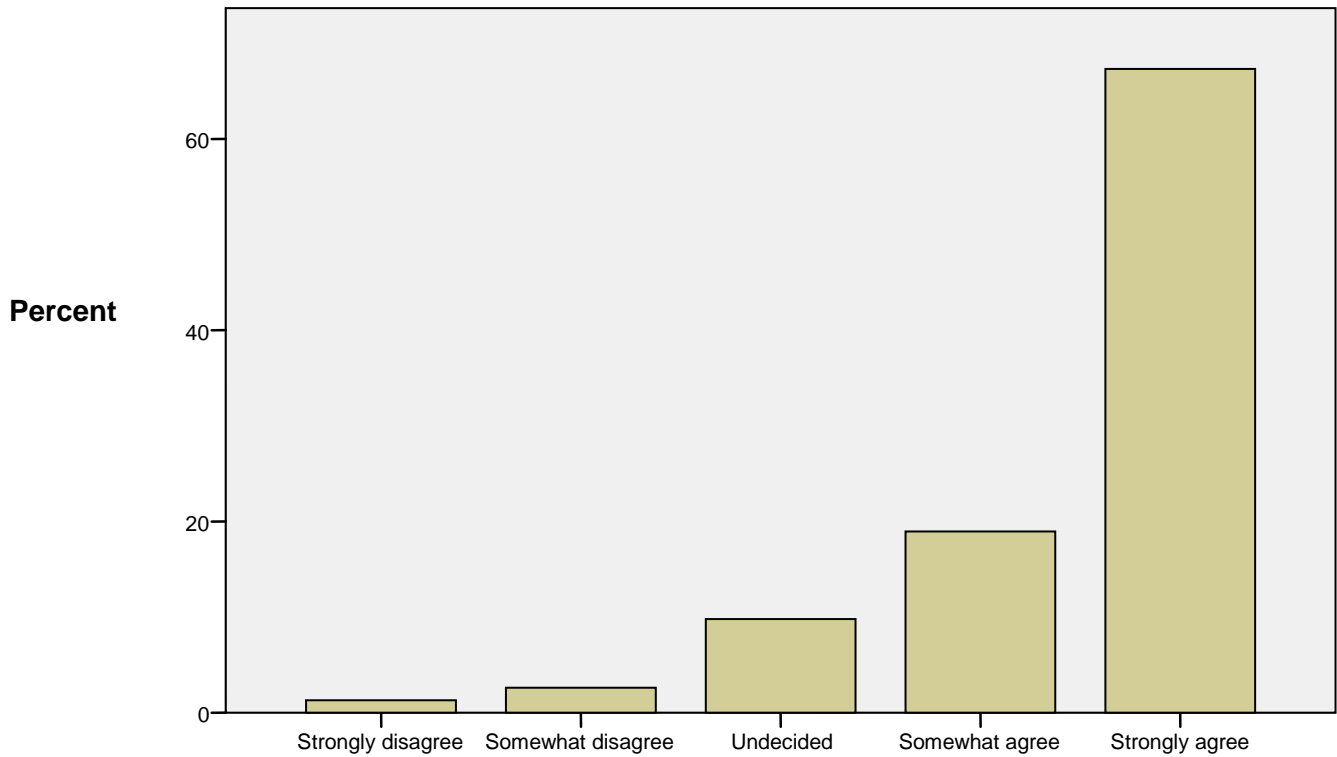
70.7 % of the respondents agreed that Extension is a good investment of public funds, while 7.6 % strong disagreed and 3.2% remained undecided.

**Table 4.13 Statement that the information provided is easy to understand**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Somewhat disagree	1	.6	.6	.6
	Undecided	7	4.5	4.5	5.2
	Somewhat agree	22	14.0	14.3	19.5
	Strongly agree	124	79.0	80.5	100.0
	Total	154	98.1	100.0	
Missing	System	3	1.9		
Total		157	100.0		

The majority (93%) of the respondents agreed that the information provided is easy to use and understand . Only 0.6 % disagreed with the statements, while 4.5% remained undecided.

**Figure 4.8 Graph on the statement that extension officers does keep the promise**



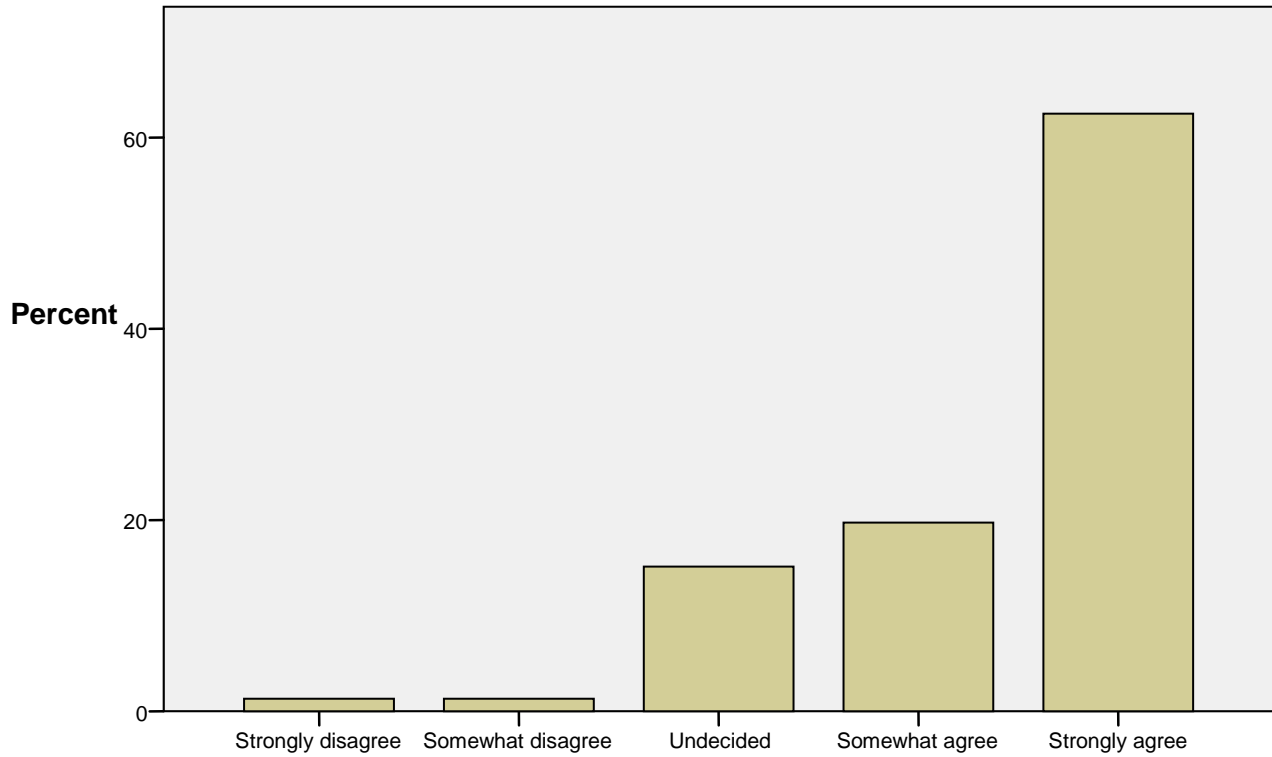
84.1% of the respondents agreed that the Extension Officers kept their promises, 9.6 % were undecided and 3.8 % disagreed with the statement that the Extension Officers fulfil their promises when dealing with customers.

**Table 4.14 Statement that when you have a problem the Extension Officer shows a sincere interest in solving it**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	2	1.3	1.3	1.3
	Somewhat disagree	2	1.3	1.3	2.6
	Undecided	8	5.1	5.2	7.8
	Somewhat agree	22	14.0	14.4	22.2
	Strongly agree	119	75.8	77.8	100.0
	Total	153	97.5	100.0	
Missing	System	4	2.5		
Total		157	100.0		

The majority (89.8 %) of the respondents felt that Extension Officers show a sincere interest in solving the problems of their customers; 1.3% remained undecided in this regard, while 1.3 % of the respondents disagreed with the statements. Looking at the large percentage of the respondents who agreed with the statement, it shows that in general Extension Officers do show a sincere interest in solving the problems of the customers.

**Figure 4.9 Graph on approachability of local extension office**



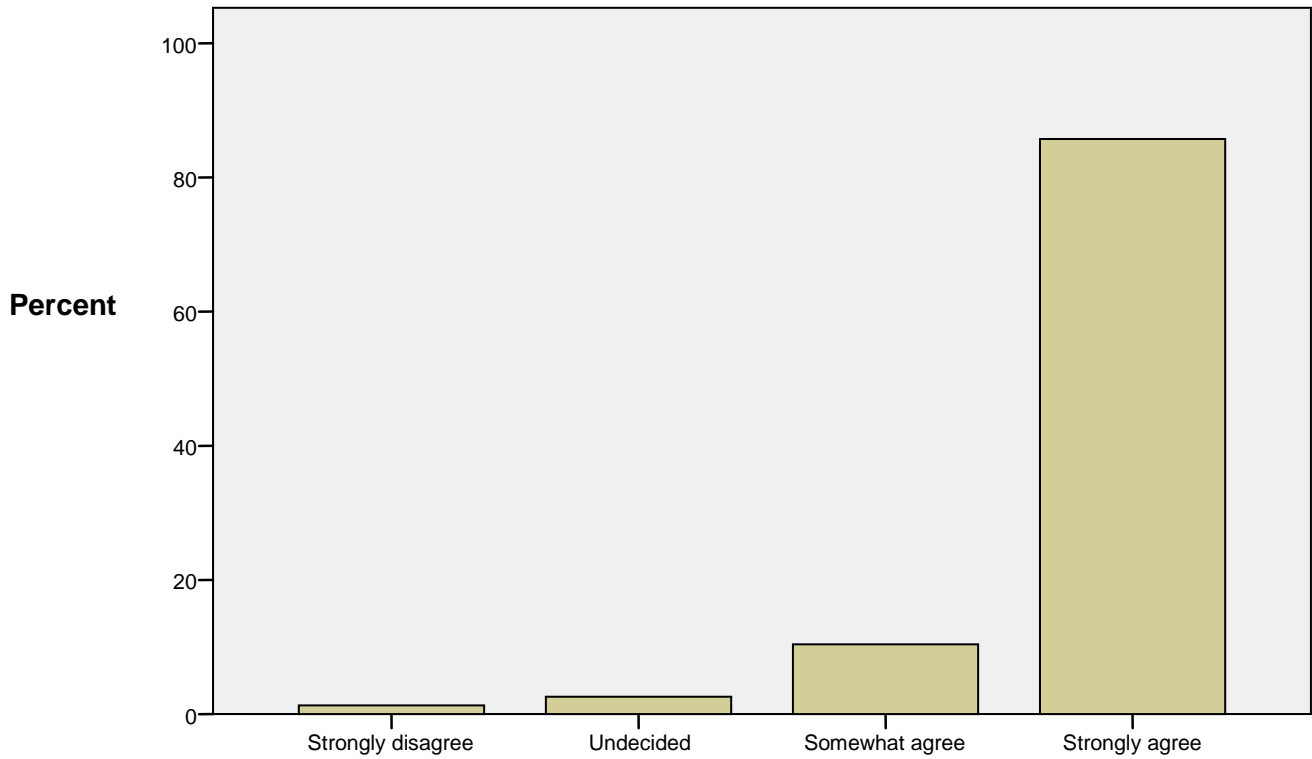
79.6% of the respondents agreed that the local extension office is approachable, 14.6 % remained undecided about the statement and 2.6% disagreed that local Extension Office is approachable. Some of the respondents have never been to the company's physical facilities, because Extension Officers use KZN and subsidize vehicles to see customers in their homes.

**Table 4.15 Statement that extension offices use appropriate teaching methods**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	1	.6	.6	.6
	Somewhat disagree	1	.6	.6	1.3
	Undecided	3	1.9	1.9	3.2
	Somewhat agree	23	14.6	14.9	18.2
	Strongly agree	126	80.3	81.8	100.0
	Total	154	98.1	100.0	
Missing	System	3	1.9		
Total		157	100.0		

The majority of respondents (94.9 %) agreed that training modules and videos that the Extension Officers used when training them are appropriate. A small percentage (1.2 %) disagreed with the statement and 1.9 % were neutral in this regard.

**Figure 4.10 Graph on extension materials which are associated with the service are visually appealing**



Most of the respondents (94.3%) agreed that the materials associated with the service are visually appealing; 20.5 % were undecided and 1.3% strongly agreed with the statements. One customer said “ they have big pictures which are easy to see and understand what is happening.”



**Table 4.16 Statement that Extension Officers are easily identifiable**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	8	5.1	5.2	5.2
	Somewhat disagree	2	1.3	1.3	6.5
	Undecided	20	12.7	13.1	19.6
	Somewhat agree	24	15.3	15.7	35.3
	Strongly agree	99	63.1	64.7	100.0
Total		153	97.5	100.0	
Missing	System	4	2.5		
Total		157	100.0		

78.4 % of the respondents agreed that extension officers are easily identifiable; 12.7% remain undecided and 6.4% of the respondents disagreed with the statement.

#### 4.4 Perceptions in terms of the service quality dimensions

**Table 4.17 Perceptions and expectation in terms of the service quality dimensions**

Service Quality Dimensions	Perception Average Dimension Scores	Expectation Average Dimension Scores	Gap Scores
Empathy	4.57	4.86	-0.23
Responsiveness	4.68	4.93	-0.25
Assurance	4.69	4.92	-0.23
Reliability	4.47	4.83	-0.36
Tangibles	4.58	4.89	-0.31

The present study summarised in Table 4.17, has shown that perception scores for each of the five dimensions of service quality are above 4 . This indicates that all service quality dimensions are performing reasonably well, although the average score for all

service quality dimensional statements are relatively lower than the corresponding expectation statements.

The highest average perception on empathy dimension was 4.74, related to extension officers giving farmers individual attention. The overall average for this dimension was 4.57.

The highest average perception on responsiveness dimension was 4.78, related to the willingness of the staff to help. The overall average for this dimension was 4.68

The highest average perception on assurance dimension was 4.77, related to knowledge the extension staff have. The overall average for this dimension was 4.69.

The highest average perception on reliability dimension was 4.75. This was recorded for the statement that information provided by the extension officer is easy to understand. The overall average for this dimension was 4.47.

The highest average perception on tangible dimension was 4.79. This was recorded for the statement that extension materials (training modules, pamphlets) which are associated with the service are visually appealing. The overall average for this dimension was 4.58.

In summary, looking at the scores of each perception statement as summarised in Table 4.17, assurance dimension is rated higher than the other dimensions. There is still room for improvement, as the average perception scores are all below corresponding average expectation scores.

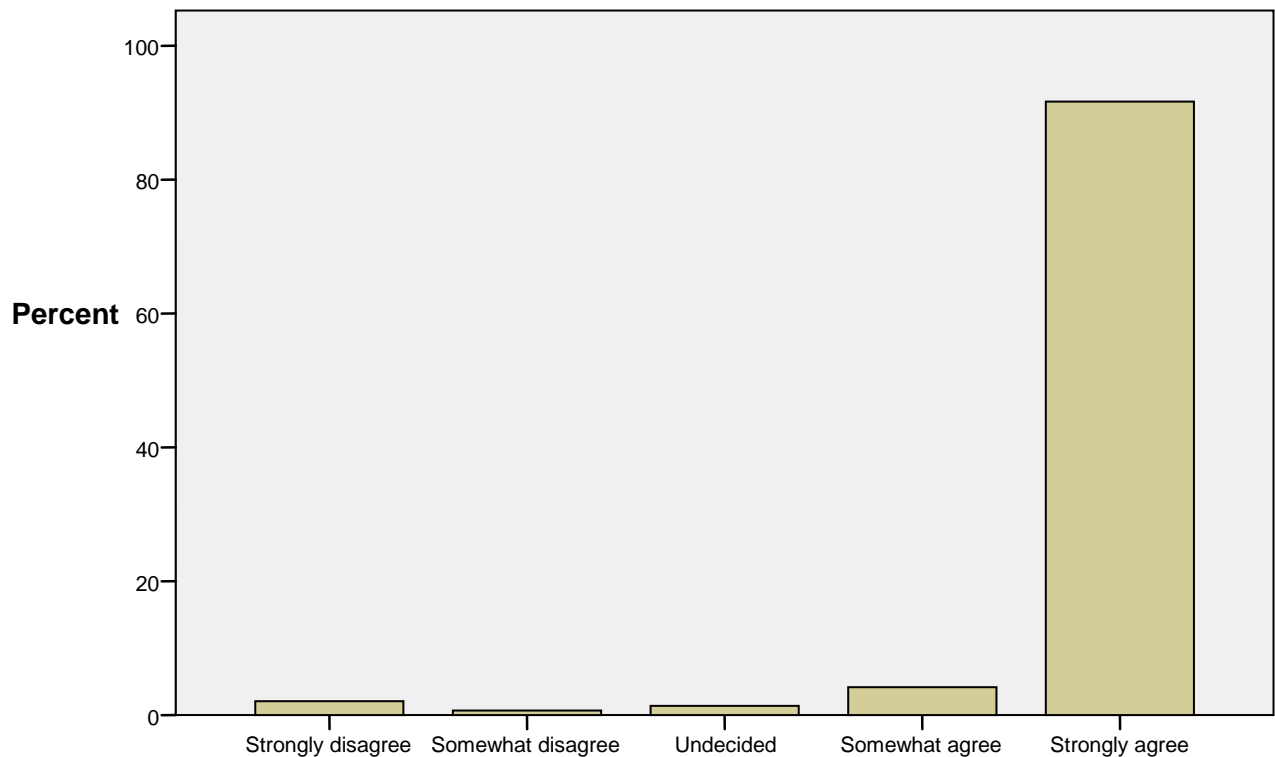
#### **4.5 Expectation**

The following are findings on respondents' expectations for each of the 22 questions, relating to the 5 service quality dimensions, namely :

- Empathy- the provision of caring individual attention (table 4.18 and figure 4.11 and 4.13 )
- Responsiveness – the willingness to help the customer (table 4.19-4.20 and figure 4.14 -4.16 )

- Assurance – the knowledge and courtesy of the employees (table 4.21-4.22 and figure 4.17-4.18 )
- Reliability – the ability to perform the promised service reliably and accurately (table 4.23-4.25 and figure 4.19-4.20 )
- Tangibles - the appearance of physical facilities, equipment, communication materials ( table 4.26-4.4.27 and figure 4.21-4.22)

**Figure 4.11 Graph on statement that the best Extension Officers will give their farmer individual attention**



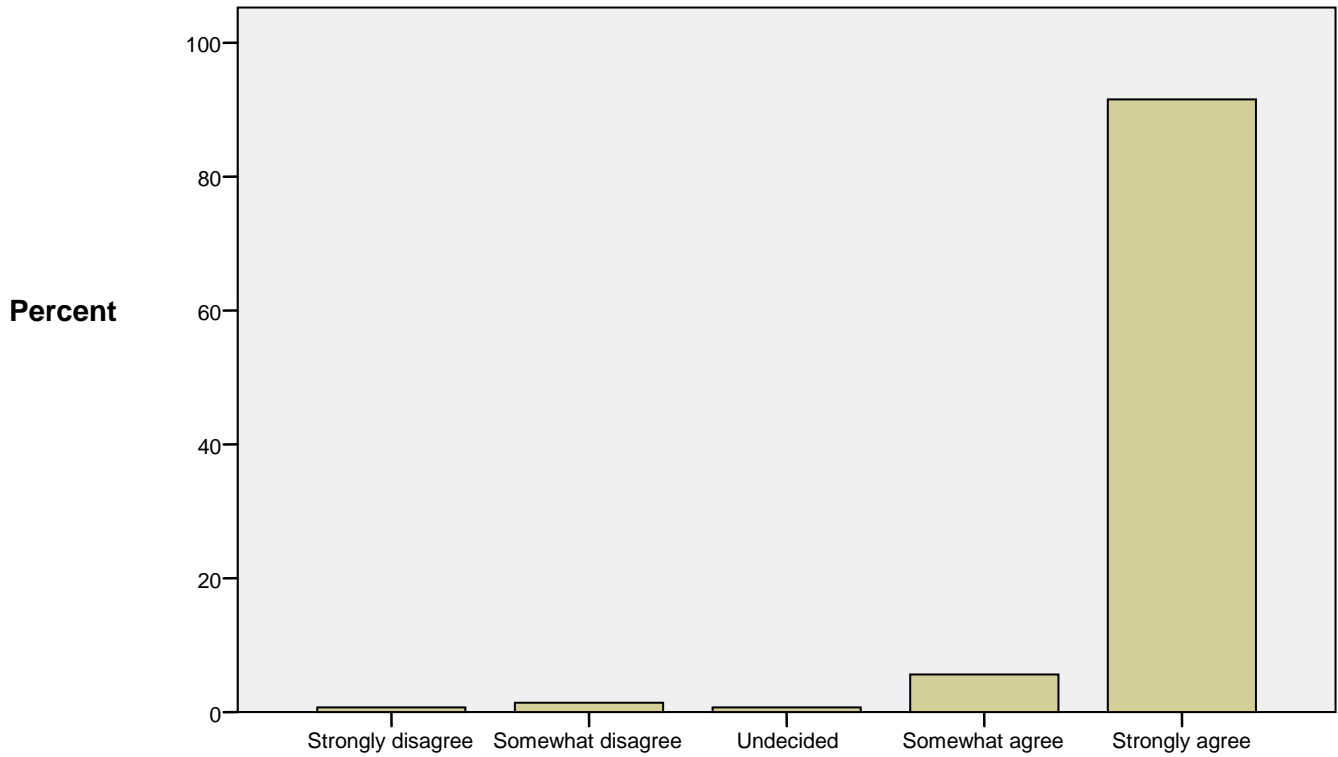
84.1 % of the respondents strongly agreed that the best Extension Officers give customers individual attention when dealing with them; 1.9% of the respondents disagreed; 1.3% remained undecided.

**Table 4.18 Statement that the best extension officers will have best interest at heart.**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Somewhat agree	4	2.5	2.8	2.8
	Strongly agree	138	87.9	97.2	100.0
	Total	142	90.4	100.0	
Missing	System	15	9.6		
Total		157	100.0		

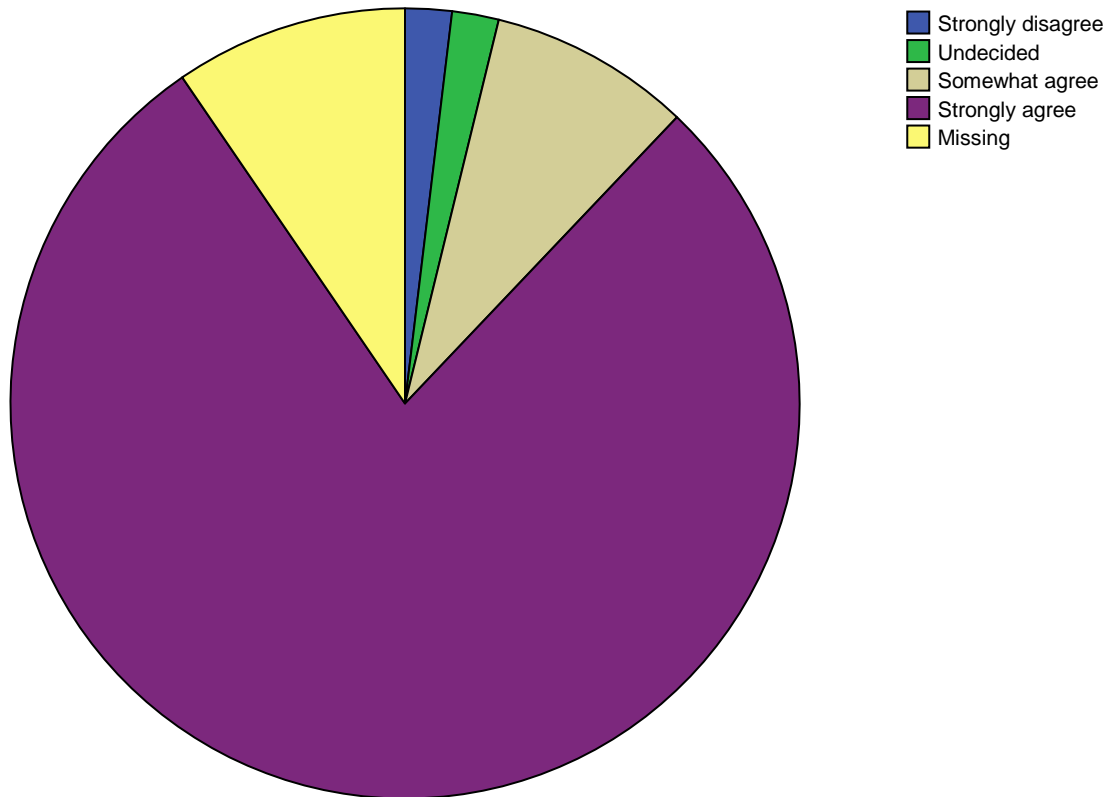
The majority of the respondents (87.9 %) strongly agreed that the best Extension Officer will put the customer's interest first. The respondents have high expectations in regard with the statements and only 2.5 % disagreed with the statement.

**Figure 4.12 Graph concerning the statement that best extension officers will understand your specific needs**



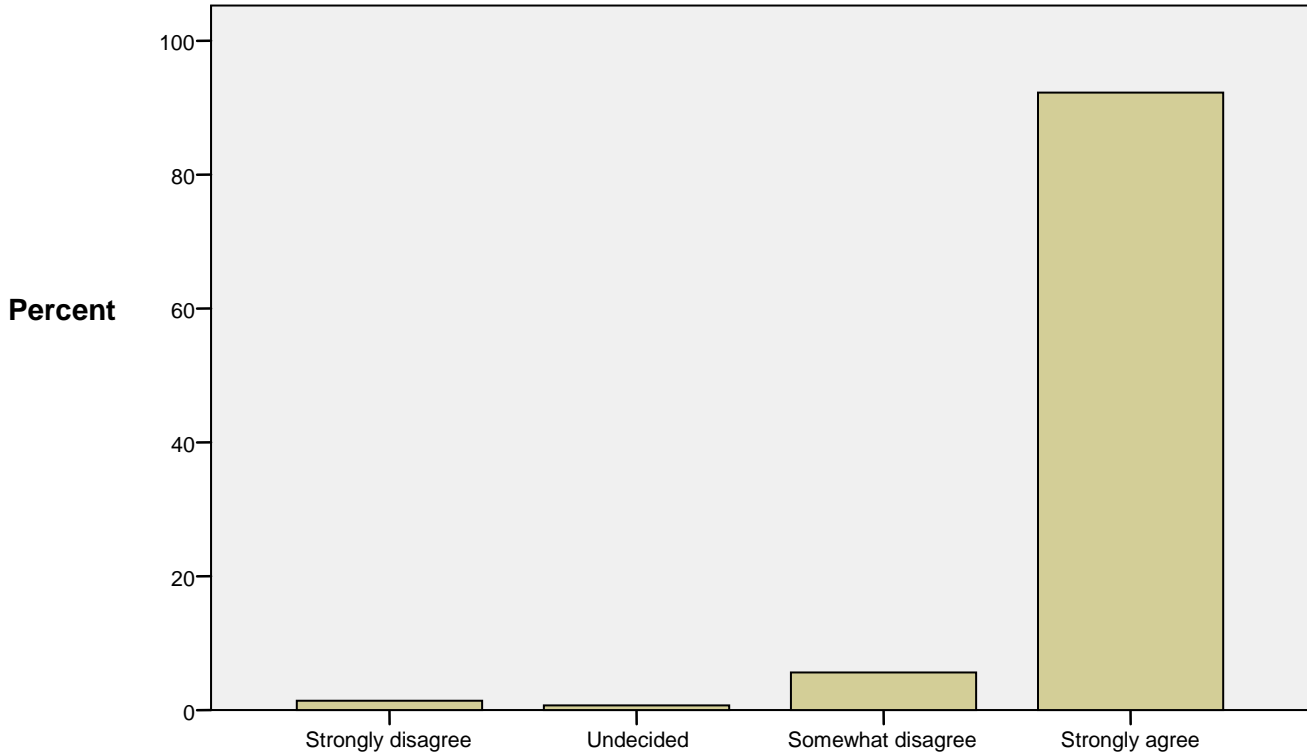
82.2% of the respondents agreed that the best extension officer should understand the customer's specific needs to improve their working condition. A small percentage (1.9 %) disagreed and 0.6 % remained undecided about the statement.

**Figure 4.13 Graph on statement that the best organization will have convenient business hours**



86.6 % of the respondents agreed that the best organization should have convenient business hours; 1.9 % remained undecided and 1.9% strongly disagreed with the statement.

**Figure 4.14 Graph on the statement that the best Extension Officers will listen to you and keep you informed**



83% of the respondents agreed with the statement and expect Extension Officers to tell the customers when the service will be performed. Customers rely on this information as they need to plan their activities, since the nature of work depends on the climatic conditions and only 7% disagreed with the statement.

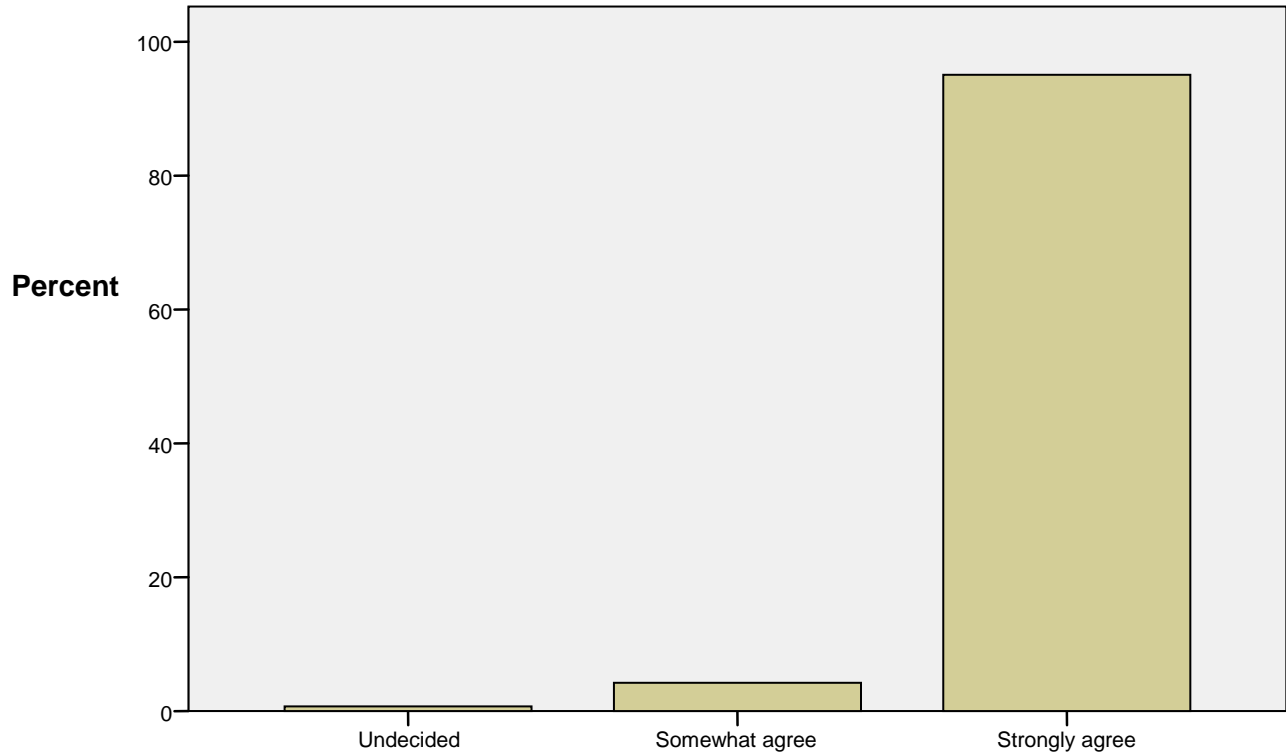
**Table 4.19 The best Extension Officers will be quick to respond to issues.**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Undecided	1	.6	.7	.7
	Somewhat agree	7	4.5	5.0	5.7
	Strongly agree	133	84.7	94.3	100.0
	Total	141	89.8	100.0	
Missing	System	16	10.2		
Total		157	100.0		

The majority of the customers (84.7 %) expect to deal with the staff that gives prompt response every time. 0.6% of the respondents were undecided and none disagreed with the statement.



**Figure 4.15** Graph on statement that the best Extension Officers will always be willing to help.



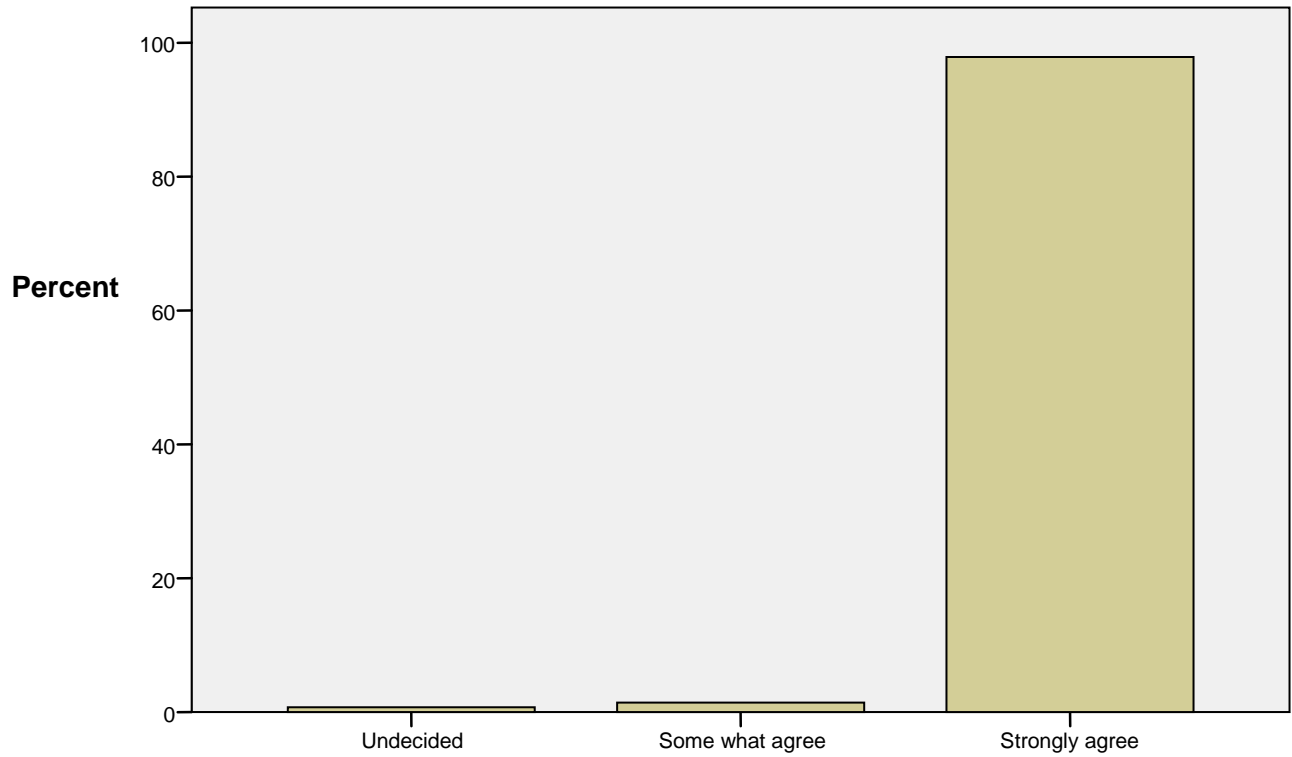
The majority of the respondents strongly agreed that the best extension officer will always show a willingness to help; 0.6 % of the respondents were undecided and none disagreed with the statement.

**Table 4.20 Statement that the best Extension Officers will provide accurate and up to date information**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Somewhat agree	5	3.2	3.5	3.5
	Strongly agree	137	87.3	96.5	100.0
	Total	142	90.4	100.0	
Missing	System	15	9.6		
Total		157	100.0		

87.3 % of the respondents strongly agreed and 3.2% of the respondents somewhat agreed that the best extension should provide accurate and up to date information. Respondents have a high expectation concerning these statement and none of the respondents disagreed with the statement.

**Figure 4.16 Graph on statement that the best Extension will help make the informed decision**



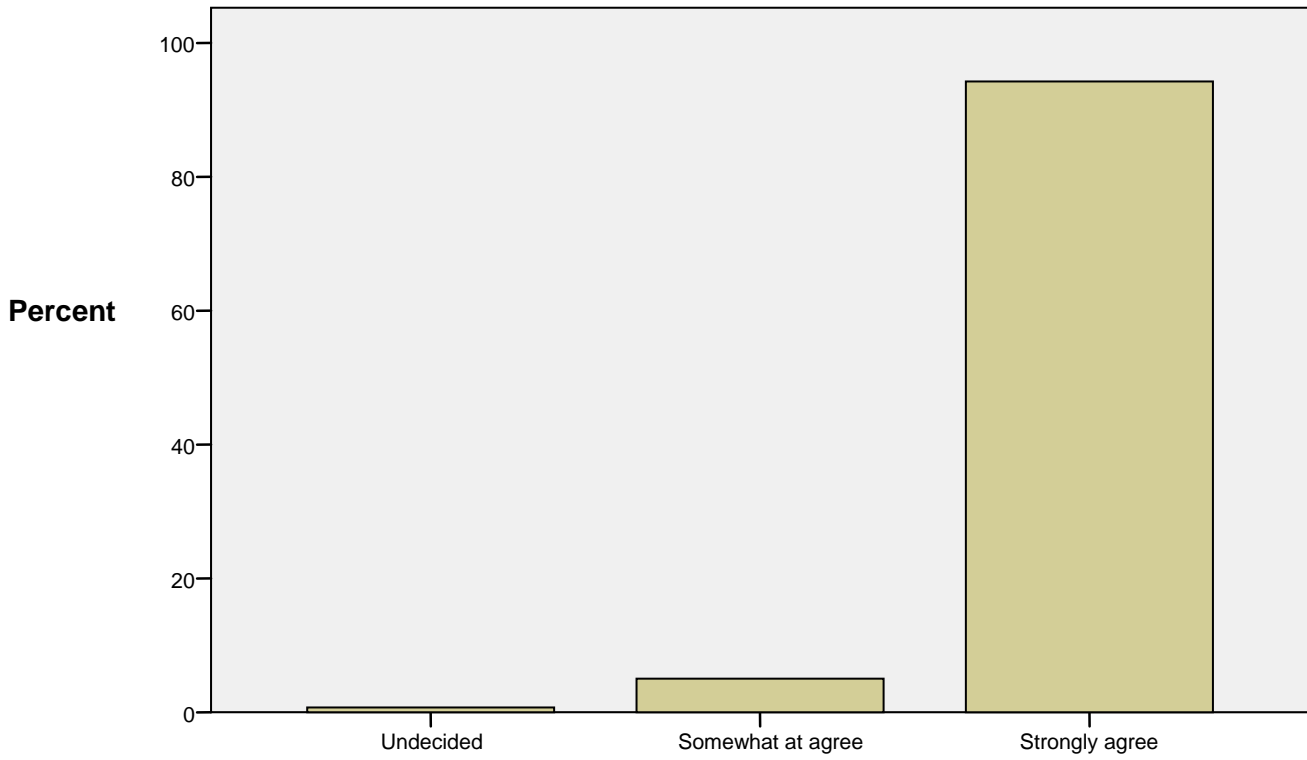
87.3% of the respondents strongly agreed that the best Extension Officer should assist the farmers in making informed decisions and only 0.6% of the of the respondents remained undecided.

**Table 4.21 The best extension officers will have knowledge to answer farmers question**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Undecided	1	.6	.7	.7
	Somewhat agree	7	4.5	5.0	5.8
	Strongly agree	131	83.4	94.2	100.0
	Total	139	88.5	100.0	
Missing	System	18	11.5		
Total		157	100.0		

83.5 % of the respondents strongly agreed that the best Extension Officers should have knowledge to assist farmers to get high returns on their production. 0.6% remained undecided and none disagreed with the statement.

**Figure 4.17 Graph on statement that the best Extension will provide new information**



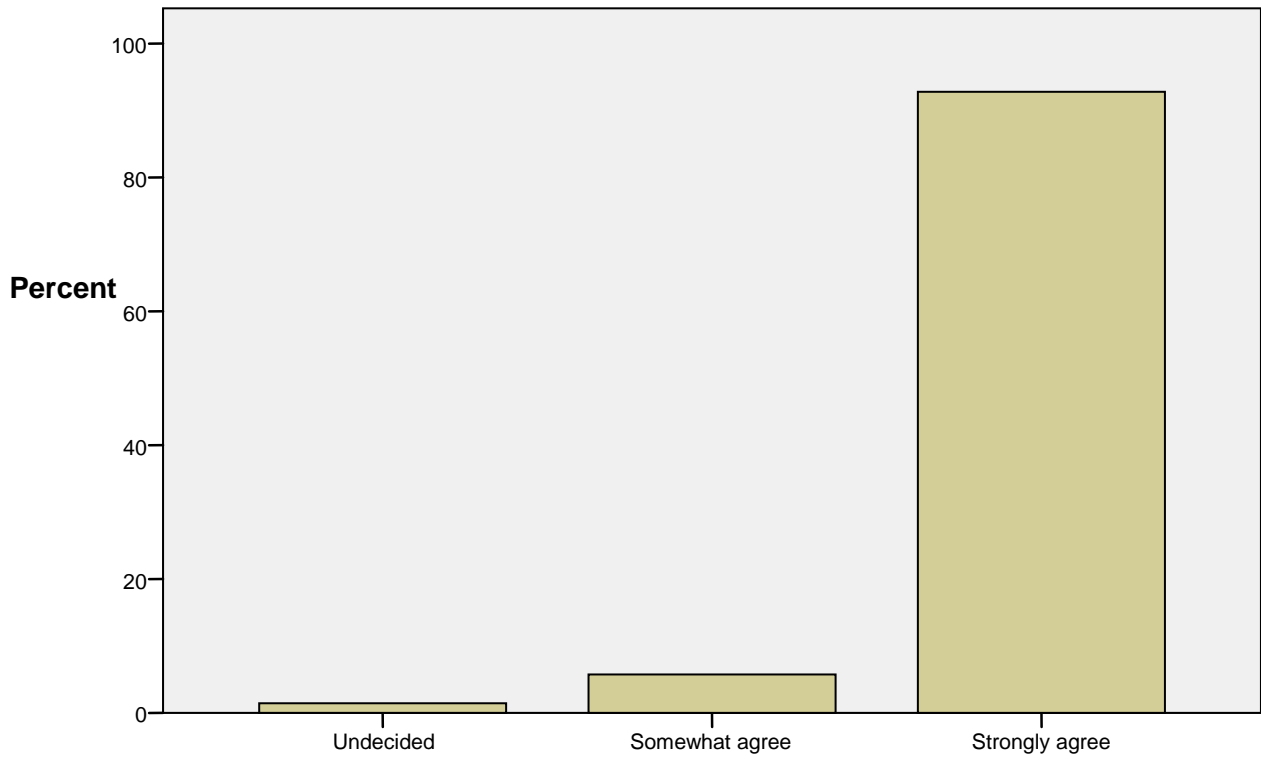
New information especially on market prices, is essential for farmers to maximise income. Extension Officers play a big role in giving farmers up to date information, as they have access to the internet (Makhaye 2004). 83.4 % of the respondents agreed and 0.6% remained undecided concerning the statement.

**Table 4.22 Statement that best extension will helps solve problem**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Undecided	1	.6	.7	.7
	Somewhat agree	6	3.8	4.3	5.0
	Strongly agree	132	84.1	95.0	100.0
	Total	139	88.5	100.0	
Missing	System	18	11.5		
Total		157	100.0		

The majority (87.9%) of the respondents agreed that the best Extension Officer will assist in solving problem and none of the respondents disagreed with the statement .

**Figure 4.18 Graph on statement that the best Extension Officer will help in the development of new practice.**



The majority of the respondents (82.2% ) strongly agreed that the best Extension Officer will help in the development of new practices. Only a small percentage (1.3 %) remained undecided and none disagreed with the statement.

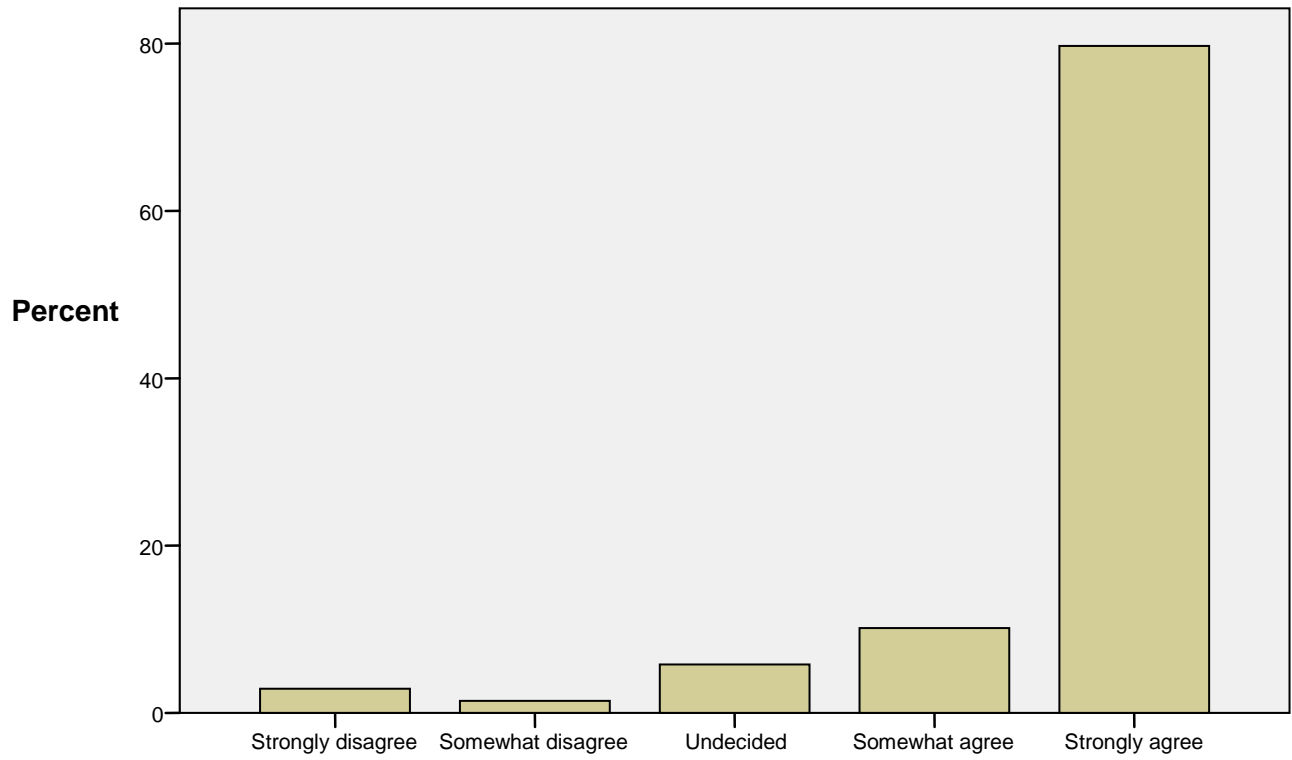
**Table 4.23 Statement that the best Extension Officers will be friendly and courteous**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Undecided	2	1.3	1.4	1.4
	Somewhat agree	9	5.7	6.5	8.0
	Strongly agree	127	80.9	92.0	100.0
	Total	138	87.9	100.0	
Missing	System	19	12.1		
Total		157	100.0		

86.6 % of the respondents agreed that the best Extension Officer should be friendly and polite when dealing with customers. None of the respondents disagreed with the statement and only 1.3% of respondents remained undecided.



**Figure 4.19 Graph on statement that the best extension service will be a valuable investment of the public funds**



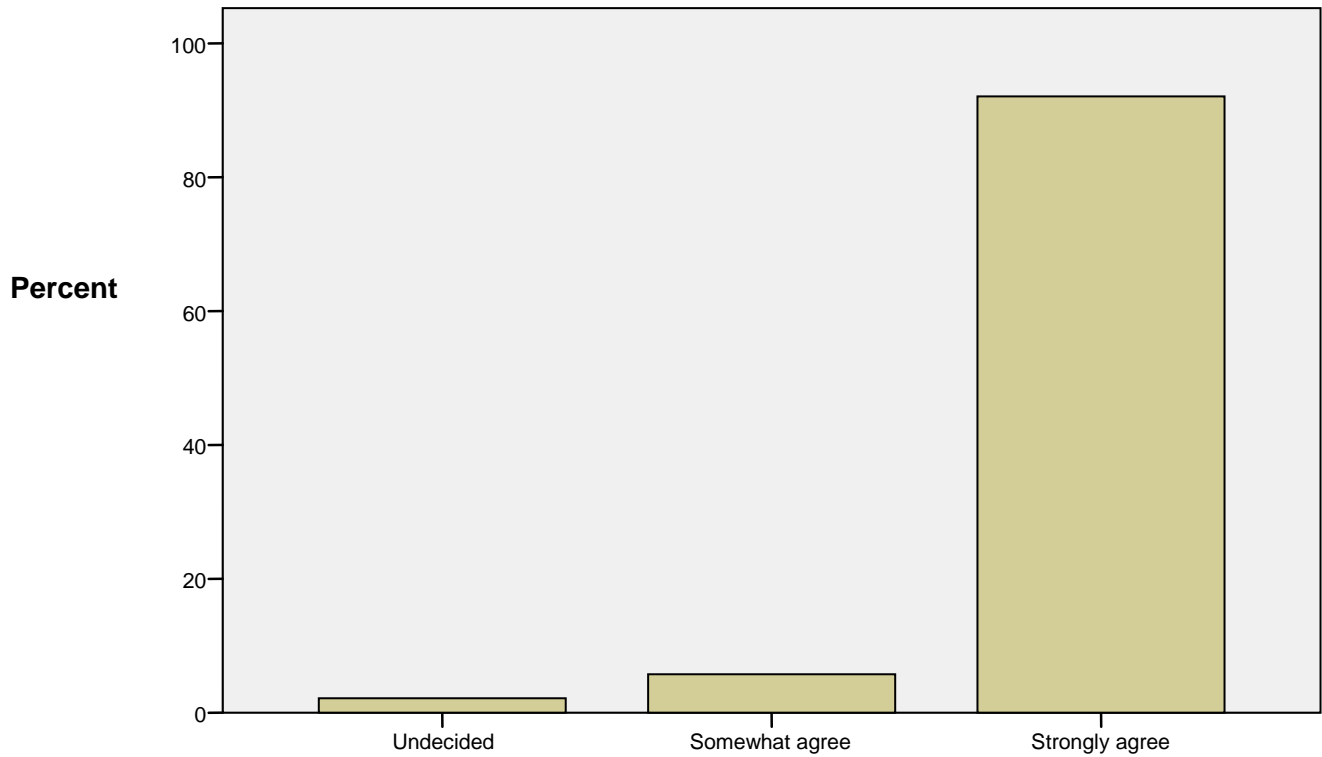
79% of the respondents agreed that the best extension service will be a valuable investment of public funds. Only 3.8 % of respondents disagreed and 5.1 % remained undecided concerning statement.

**Table 4.24 Statement that the best Extension Officers will always be willing to help**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	1	.6	.7	.7
	Undecided	2	1.3	1.4	2.2
	Somewhat agree	7	4.5	5.1	7.2
	Strongly agree	128	81.5	92.8	100.0
Total		138	87.9	100.0	
Missing	System	19	12.1		
Total		157	100.0		

86% of the respondents agreed that the best Extension Officer will always be willing to help; 1.3 % remained undecided and 0.6% of the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement.

**Figure 4.20 Graph on the information must be easy to understand and applicable**



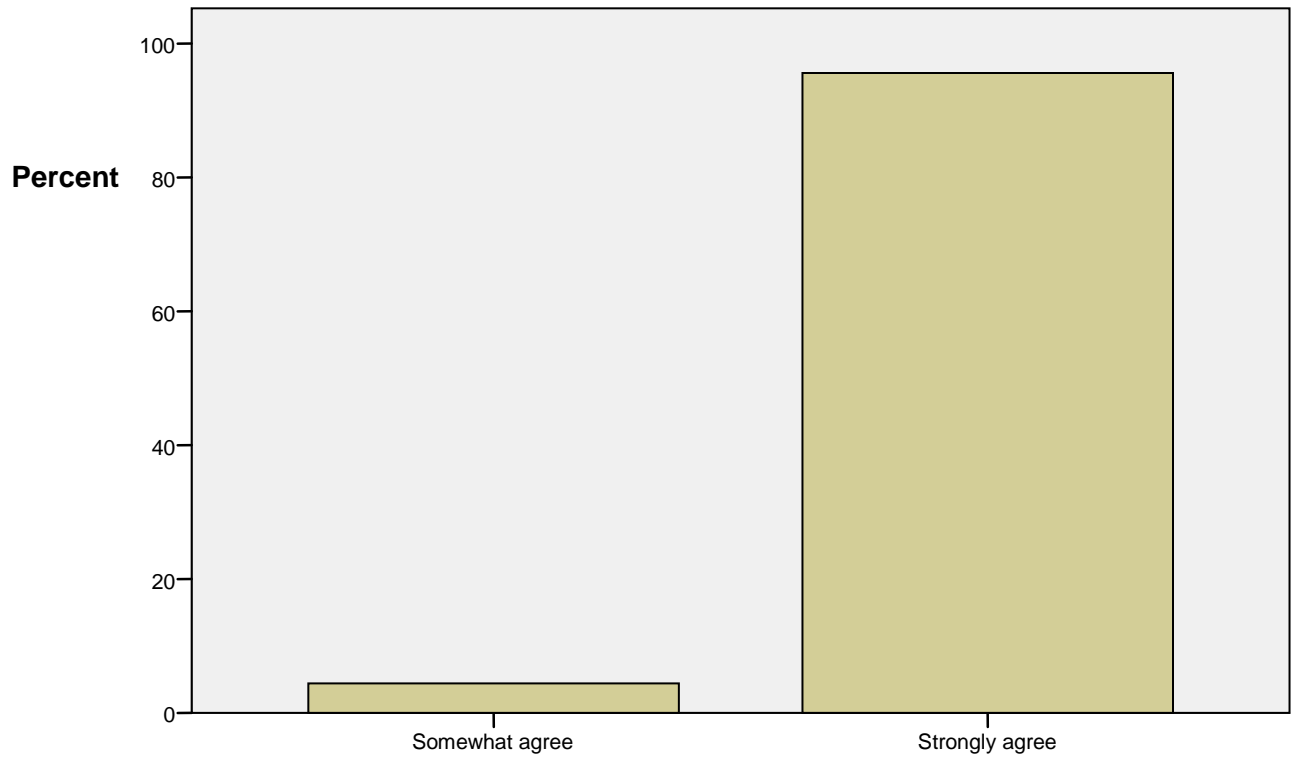
86.6% of the respondents agreed that the information provided should be easy to understand and be applicable. Only 1.9 % remained undecided and none disagreed with the statement.

**Table 4.25 Statement that the best Extension Office will never be too busy to solve problems**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	1	.6	.7	.7
	Undecided	1	.6	.7	1.4
	Somewhat agree	5	3.2	3.6	5.1
	Strongly agree	131	83.4	94.9	100.0
Total		138	87.9	100.0	
Missing	System	19	12.1		
Total		157	100.0		

86.6 % of the respondents agreed that the best Extension Officer will never be too busy to solve farmers' concerns; 0.6% of the respondents disagreed and the same percentage remained undecided concerning the statement.

**Figure 4.21 Graph on statement that the best local extension office will be approachable**



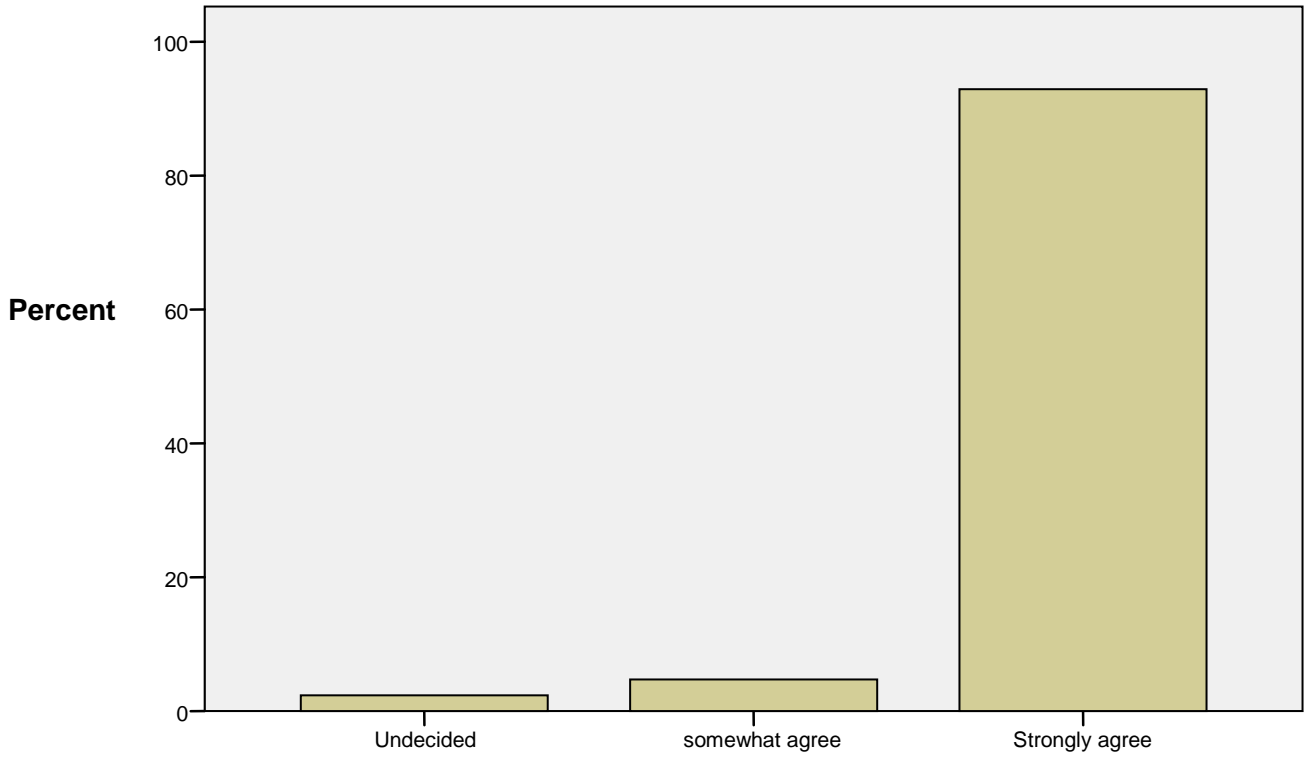
The majority (86.6 %) of the respondents agreed that the best local extension office will be approachable and accessible. None of the respondents disagreed with the statement.

**Table 4.26 Statement that the best extension officers will always use appropriate teaching methods**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Somewhat agree	8	5.1	5.8	5.8
	Strongly agree	131	83.4	94.2	100.0
	Total	139	88.5	100.0	
Missing	System	18	11.5		
Total		157	100.0		

The majority of the respondents (88.5 %) agreed with the statement that the best extension officer will always use appropriate teaching methods. None of the respondents disagreed with the statement.

**Figure 4.22 Graph on statement that extension material which is associated with the service will be visually appealing**



79 % of the respondents agreed that the extension materials associated with the service will be visually appealing. None of the respondent disagreed with the statement.

**Table 4.27 Statement that the best Extension Officers are easily identifiable and famous in their ward**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	1	.6	.8	.8
	Somewhat disagree	1	.6	.8	1.6
	Undecided	5	3.2	3.9	5.5
	Somewhat agree	16	10.2	12.6	18.1
	Strongly agree	104	66.2	81.9	100.0
	Total	127	80.9	100.0	
Missing	System	30	19.1		
Total		157	100.0		

76.4 % of the respondents agreed that the Extension Officer should be known in his ward. A small percentage (0.6 %) disagreed with the statement totally and 3.2% of the respondents remained undecided.



**Table 4.28 Gap analysis and means**

	Statements	Expectations	Perceptions	Difference	Average	Expect Dime Score
Empathy	1	4.83	4.74	0.09	0.23	4.8
	2	4.97	4.71	0.26		
	3	4.86	4.69	0.17		
	4	4.78	4.14	0.64		
Responsiveness	5	4.87	4.77	0.10	0.25	4.9
	6	4.93	4.41	0.52		
	7	4.94	4.78	0.16		
	8	4.96	4.70	0.26		
	9	4.97	4.75	0.22		
Assurance	10	4.93	4.77	0.16	0.23	4.9
	11	4.93	4.67	0.26		
	12	4.94	4.64	0.30		
	13	4.91	4.64	0.27		
Reliability	14	4.90	4.75	0.15	0.36	4.8
	15	4.62	4.00	0.62		
	16	4.89	4.75	0.14		
	17	4.90	4.48	0.42		
Tangibles	18	4.92	4.66	0.26	0.31	4.8
	19	4.96	4.41	0.55		
	20	4.94	4.77	0.17		
	21	4.91	4.79	0.12		
	22	4.74	4.33	0.41		

#### 4.6 Expectation in terms of the dimensions

The results of the study summarised in the Table 4.28 and Figure 4.23 have shown that all five expectation quality dimensions are higher than all five perception quality dimensions. This indicates that all quality dimensions are significantly important as far as extension work is concerned in the DAEA. The dimensions have shown an average of above 4.5 on the five-point Likert type rating scale.

The highest expectation on the empathy dimension was 4.97, related to staff having the farmers best interest at heart. The overall average score for this dimension was 4.86.

The highest expectation on the responsiveness dimension was 4.97, related to the ability of the extension service in helping customers to make informed decisions. The overall average score for this dimension was 4.93.

The highest expectation on the assurance dimension was 4.94, related to extension service helping in solving farmers' problem. The overall average score for this dimension was 4.92.

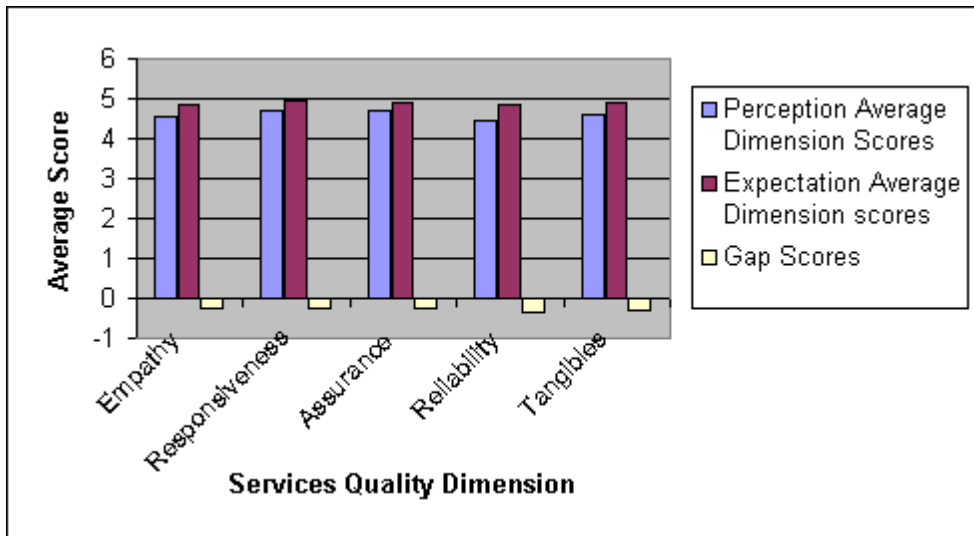
The highest expectation on the reliability dimension was 4.92, related to the best extension officer never being too busy to solve farmers problems. The overall average score for this dimension was 4.83.

The highest expectation on the tangible dimension was 4.96, related to Extension Office being approachable. The overall average score for this dimension was 4.89.

In summary, looking at the average dimension scores of each dimension mentioned in Table 4.28, the responsiveness dimension is rated higher than all dimensions with an average score of 4.93. This result indicates that customers are more concerned about the willingness of the extension officer to help. Although a score of 4.8 on a five-point scale represents relatively high, the score for the reliability dimension was the lowest of all five quality dimensions.

**Table 4.29 Gap Analysis**

Service Quality	Perception Average Dimension Scores	Expectation Average Dimension scores	Gap Scores
Empathy	4.57	4.86	-0.23
Responsiveness	4.68	4.93	-0.25
Assurance	4.69	4.92	-0.23
Reliability	4.47	4.83	-0.36
Tangibles	4.58	4.89	-0.31



**Figure 4.23 Graphical Depiction of the service quality gaps**

Gap 5 is the difference between expected and perceived service quality. This gap is considered to be the most crucial gap, as it indicates the difference between the customer's expectation of the service and the service that they actually receive (Zeithaml and Bitner 1996:37).

The average gap score between the extension service perception and expectation for each of the service quality dimensions summarised in Table 4.28 are empathy (-0.23), responsiveness (-0.25), assurance (-0.23), reliability (-0.36) and tangibles (-0.31).

There is a narrow gap between the extension services' perception and expectation for all five dimensions. The negative difference implies that the expectation scores have exceeded the perception scores. This calls for some level of improvement.

#### **4.8 Conclusion**

The findings have shown that customer expectations exceeded customer perceptions of the services received from extension staff. This has resulted in a gap in service delivery and the next chapter will draw conclusions.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **DISCUSSION OF RESULTS , CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The previous chapter dealt with the profile of the sample used and the results for each question in the survey. The results were summarised in various frequency tables , pie and bar charts in order to give a clear picture of the findings. This chapter discusses the findings in relation to research objective as well as the theory discussed in chapter 2.

#### **5.1 Determing the service perceptions of the farming communities with regards to extension service delivery.**

##### **5.1.1 Perception concerning empathy**

Giving the farmers individual attention has the highest score (4.74) in this dimension. This statement seems to be extension's strongest point and is probably the key to customer satisfaction. Solomon and Stuart (1997:380) state that people like to feel that they are receiving personal attention and this enhances the quality of the service in the customer's mind.

The lowest recorded value was 4.14 for the statements related to the business hours of the extension service. Respondents raised concerns that when they try to reach the extension service staff, especially during the weekend, their cellphones are off. The department needs to address this issue by providing the official with company phones.

The overall average score for this dimension is 4.57 and this represents the second lowest score of the five service quality dimensions.

##### **5.1.2 Perception concerning responsiveness**

The highest average perception on the responsiveness dimension was 4.78, related to the willingness of Extension Officers to help farmers. This indicates that customers regard extension service staff as being friendly and helpful.

The lowest average score of 4.41 was recorded for statements that the Extension Officers are quick to respond to issues. The Department needs to take this statement into consideration as the perception concerning responsiveness diminishes when customers wait for assistance. To excel in the responsiveness dimension, companies must be certain to view the process of service delivery from a customer's point of view (Zeithmal and Bitner 1996:121).

The overall average for this service quality dimension was 4.68 and represents the second highest score of the five service quality dimensions.

### **5.1.3 Perception concerning assurance**

Knowing the subject has the highest average perception score (4.77) in this dimension. This indicates that farmers have positive experiences when dealing with the extension service staff as far as knowledge and skill is concerned. Blem (1996:33) states that customers judge an organisation by its staff, therefore, staff needs to be trained continuously.

The overall average for this service quality dimension was 4.69 and this is the highest average of all dimensions.

### **5.1.4 Perception concerning reliability**

The highest average perception on the reliability dimension was 4.75. This was recorded for the statement that information provided by the Extension Officers are easy to understand. This indicates that the respondents like the fact that the extension information is easy to use .

The statement that received the lowest average score of all the 22 statements, is that extension service is a good investment of public funds.

The overall average for this service quality dimension was 4.47. It is the lowest average score of all five dimensions. The Department need to be aware of customers' expectations on reliability. Firms that do not provide the core service that customers think they are buying fail their customers in the most direct way. Of all the five service quality dimensions, reliability has shown to be the most important determinant of perceptions of service quality among U.S. customers (Zeithmal and Bitner 1996:119) .

### **5.1.5 Perception concerning tangibility**

The highest average perception score on the tangible dimension was 4.79. This was recorded for the statement that extension materials (training modules, pamphlets) which are associated with the service are visually appealing. This is the highest score of all 22 statements , indicating that farmers are satisfied with the extension service materials. The training modules are designed is such a way that even an illerate person can see and learn from them. These training modules are full of pictures. We know the saying that a picture is worth a thousand words. Tangibles are often used by service companies to enhance their image ( Zeithmal and Bitner 1996:122) . The overall average score for this dimension was 4.58.

## **5.2 Determinining the service expectations of the farming communities with regard to extension service delivery**

Zeithmaml and Bitner (996:76) explained that customer expectations are beliefs concerning service delivery that function as standards against which performance is judged.

Expected service is a critical component of the perceived service quality and is seen as being influenced by word of mouth communication, past experience with the business and by the personal beliefs, attitudes and values of the customer (Muller, Musker,Ngwenya and Sher 1994 :7). Figure 4.23 and Table 4.28 shows the expectation scores for each of the five dimensions.

### **5.2.1 Expectation concerning empathy**

The highest expectation score on the empathy dimension was 4.97, related to staff having the best interests of the customers at heart. This indicates that the customers' expect extension service staff to treat them as kings.

The overall average score for this dimension was 4.86 and is rated fourth highest of the average five dimensions.

### **5.2.2 Expectation concerning responsiveness**

Responsiveness is the willingness to help customers (Bergman and Klefsjo 1994:267). It concerns the readiness of the employees to provide service and involves timeous delivery of service, calling the customer back and giving prompt service (Parasuraman *et.al* 1985: 47).

The highest expectation score on the responsiveness dimension was 4.97, related to the ability of extension to help customers to make informed decisions.

The overall average score for this dimension was 4.93. This is the same as the expectation score related to the statement that the best Extension Officer will be quick to respond to issues. No business can afford to keep the customer waiting and farming community expects extention service officers to respond to their needs quickly.

### **5.2.3 Expectation concerning assurance**

The assurance dimension includes competence, courtesy, credibility and security (Bergman and Klefsjo 1994 : 269) :

- Competence is the possessing of the required skills and knowledge to perform the service.
- Courtesy refers to the supplier's behaviour, for example, consideration, politeness and kindness.

- Credibility means trustworthiness, honesty of the service provider.
- Security means freedom from danger, risk and doubt.

The highest expectation score on the assurance dimension was 4.94, related to extension service officers help in solving farmer's problems. This implies that farming communities have high expectations with regards to the ability of the extension staff to solve their problems.

The overall average score for this dimension was 4.92. This is the second highest score of all the five dimensions of service quality.

#### **5.2.4 Expectation concerning reliability**

Bergman and Klefsjo (1994 : 267) state that reliability involves the consistency of the performance and dependability, i.e. punctuality and the correctness of the service information and invoice procedures.

The highest expectation score on reliability dimension was 4.92, related to the best extension officer never being too busy to solve farmers problems.

The overall average score for this dimension was 4.83. Although this is the lowest score for all five service quality dimensions, it is still a high score.



### **5.2.5 Expectation concerning tangibility**

Tangibles refer to the physical environment in which the service is presented, i.e the organisation, the equipment , the personnel and their clothing (Bergman and Klefsjo 1994 : 267).

The highest expectation score on the tangible dimension was 4.96, related to extension office being approachable. Much of the service quality is realised when the farmer and the extension staff meet face to face. This is called “ the moment of truth” “or” “moment of possibilities”, since the supplier can convince the customer of service excellence. The Department of Agriculture must consider setting a dress code to ensure uniformity, as the employee’s image is part of the customer’s perception of the quality of the service.

The overall average score for this dimension was 4.89. This is the third highest score of the five dimensions and does not seem to be the most critical element for farming communities, the reason being very few farmers visit the local extension service office. The extension service staff visit farmers in their ward of operation, using KZN or subsidized transport.

### **5.3 Determining the SERVQUAL gaps that impair extension service delivery**

A good service quality is one which matches or exceeds customer expectations. Judgement of high and low service quality depend on how customers perceive the actual service performance in the context of what they expected (Bergman and Klefsjo 1994:274).

The average gap score between the extension service perception and expectation for each of the service quality dimensions are empathy (-0.23), responsiveness (-0.25), assurance (-0.23), reliability (-0.36) and tangibles (-0.31). There is a narrow gap between the extension services’ perception and expectation for all five dimensions. The negative difference implies that the expectation scores have exceeded the perception scores. This calls for some level of improvement.

The results have shown that the customers perceive that they receive superior service from the extension service staff. However the negative differences need to be eliminated to exceed the expectations of customers.

## **5.4 Conclusions**

The Department of Agriculture should consider all five quality dimensions, since they all have negative rating. The negative rating suggest that the extension service is not meeting or exceeding, some degree, the expectations of the farming community.

### **5.4.1 Reliability dimension**

In terms of the gap model, reliability was rated the biggest cause of customer dissatisfaction. The same dimension was seen as the most important determinant of perception of service in the U.S. ( Zeithmal and Bitner 1996:119).

Customers will do business with companies that keep their promises, regarding promises about core service attributes (Zeithmal and Bitner 1996:119).The Department of Agriculture must close this gap by honouring their promises to customers

The DAEA needs to consider that customers' expectations for service are likely to increase when service is not performed as promised. When service failure occurs , customers' tolerant zones are likely to shrink and their adequacy and desire levels are likely to rise (Zeithmal and Bitner 1996:119).

### **5.4.2 Tangibles dimension**

Tangibles are seen as the second worst dimension in the service quality delivery gap. Appearance of the physical facilities, equipment, staff and communication material represent physical environment in which the service is presented (Lovelock 2007:421). The DAEA should pay attention to the tangibles dimension of the service strategy, to avoid negation of the good strategy. Farmers seldom visit the physical facilities to receive assistance, as extension service staff visit farmers in their ward of operation. Therefore the Department needs to invest heavily in staff , since extension service staff are the “image” of the organisation.

### **5.4.3 Responsiveness dimension**

This is the third rated dimension that has an impact on the service quality gap. Responsiveness is communicated to customers by the length of time they have to wait for assistance, answers to questions or attention to problems. To excel in this dimension , the DAEA must view the service delivery process and handling of proposals from the farmer’s point of view, rather than from the company’s point of view (Zeithmal and Bitner 1996:121).

### **5.4.4 Empathy dimension**

The empathy and assurance dimensions rated fourth in the contribution to the service quality gap. The empathy dimension implies that customers want to feel understood by and important to the firm that provides service to them (Zeithmal and Bitner 1996:122). The DAEA needs to understand that the extension service programmes or activities must centre on the farmers themselves and must be done for their benefit and not for that of the Department. The DAEA must, therefore, believe that farmers are able to solve their own problems, provide they are fully aware of their situations and all the factors that obstruct or support their plans, including economic, cultural and social trappings that bind them. It is wrong for the Department to draft policies that will affect farmers without consulting

them. The farmers know best on what affects them. They know their areas, in terms of physical and social factors, better than the extension officer. They need assistance on economic factors, outside the local community, which may hinder or support their plans. The extension officer's task is to encourage farmers to consider their situations and make constructive plans, using extension knowledge of factors outside the local community, to support the farmer's excellent knowledge of the area. All this cannot be done without the extension officer's respect for the farmers and belief in their ability to develop themselves (Heim 1990: 40).

#### **5.4.5 Assurance dimension**

The DAEA should train staff and give them support, so that staff behaviour instils confidence in the customers. Regular in-service training, to keep the extension service staff up-to-date, is critical to develop technical competence, leadership and communication skills.

It is important to establish employee feedback mechanisms so that management can note and take action, on issues of concern that will strengthen the employee's perceptions of the DAEA. This will increase satisfaction and result in better client interaction. The DAEA should establish feedback mechanisms throughout the organisation, as well as to their customers, as this will keep the key role-players informed and give them the opportunity to take the necessary corrective actions in the event of problems arising with service delivery (Cottle 1992: 28).

### **5.5 Research limitations**

#### **5.5.1 Location constraints**

The study was conducted in the Umngungundlovu District Municipality. Therefore the finding cannot be generalised to the needs of other farming communities in the KZN.

### **5.5.2 Time constraints**

Time was a constraint, as it limited the researcher to specific areas. The researcher feels that more time would have allowed for gathering information from a bigger sample that would have been more representative of the population.

Knowledge of customers' perception and attitudes about the organisation's business will greatly enhance its opportunity to make better business decisions (Hayes 1991 :2).

### **5.5.3 Bias**

Questionnaires were completed by respondents in the presence of the researcher, whom they related to very well. They might have been biased when completing the perception questionnaires. Essentially, they could not reveal their true feelings about the delivery of extension services.

## **5.6 Future research**

5.6.1 Future research could be conducted to cover other municipality in the KZN, to provide a more realistic idea of the quality of the extension service delivery.

5.6.2 Other research, using a different service quality measuring model could provide useful and relevant information to the Department, especially when introducing new extension service programmes.

## **5.7 Conclusion**

This chapter discussed the findings of the survey in relation to the research objectives. The results have shown that the customer's expectations of the Department of Agriculture, Environmental Affairs and Rural Development exceed their perceptions of the services received from the extension. The Department needs to address all five SERVQUAL dimensions, as they all, in some degrees were found to impair the delivery of the quality service. A collaborative effort between management and extension service staff will reduce the service quality gaps.