

**UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL**

**CONSUMER PERCEPTIONS OF SERVICE QUALITY WITHIN THE  
CUSTOMER SERVICE CENTRES AT ETHEKWINI MUNICIPALITY**

**by**

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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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**2010**

## DECLARATION

I, **Belinda Bulelwa MHLONGO**, declare that

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Firstly I would like to thank my Almighty God and Saviour for the gift of life and learning, without His guidance this would never have been possible.

Secondly I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to my beloved husband Bongani for having so much faith in me, for tolerating the long hours away from home, for the enduring support and prayers; my three children, Kholeka, Sechaba and Yandisa for your patience and for always being there for me. I am eternally grateful to you, I love you guys.

I wish to also thank the following people for their input and support, in making this research project a success:

- My supervisor, Dr T I Nzimakwe, for his guidance, encouragement and professional advise;
- My extended family my fathers, mothers, sisters and brothers for their support and prayers;
- The Management of Regional Centres, eThekweni Municipality
- My study group members for unselfishly sharing your skills, ideas, guys without your enduring support and encouragement this would not have been attainable;
- All the respondents of this research study without their input this study would not have been possible;
- To all those who I may have inadvertently missed out.

## ABSTRACT

eThekwini Municipality, as one of the public sector organisation, also subscribes to the *Batho Pele* approach. In improving the service quality, it has provided greater accessibility by introducing the Sizakala Customer Care Centres throughout its boundaries. In the public sector the endeavour should always be for actions which lead to the improvement of the quality of service rendered. Public sector institutions should constantly strive towards improving their service delivery.

The concept of the Sizakala Centres within eThekwini Municipality is to ensure that services are easily accessible to its customers. This study focuses on the customer expectations and evaluation of the Sizakala Customer Care Centres, using the SERVQUAL model. The Sizakala Customer Care programme is a special programme aimed at helping people gain equal access to municipal and government services. It forms an important part of the city's Integrated Development Plan (IDP), and shows the municipality's commitment to ensuring service delivery and a better quality of life for all its citizens.

The research aims to investigate customer perceptions on service quality in the Sizakala Customer Services Centres of eThekwini Municipality. Questionnaires will be used as a data collection tool for this study, and will be self-administered. These will be administered to the community which get services from these centres and officials working for the municipality. The collected data will be statistically analysed to obtain meaning, using SPSS. The empirical data will be the responses from community members who visit the Sizakala Customer Service centres and people who are responsible for the functioning of these centres.

The findings of this study showed that the tangibility dimension achieved the highest average score (3.78) in the perceptions section and the assurance

dimension achieved the highest average score (4.38) in the expectations section.

When comparing the customers 'expectations of service quality in the Sizakala Customer Centre to customer perceptions of service quality, it was evident that that gaps occurred in all 5 of the service quality dimensions. It was found that Sizakala Customer Centre needed to improve most on their responsiveness dimension which had the highest (-0.73) average gap score, in order to enhance the quality of service that they provided. It was indicated from the results obtained in this study that the major recommendations for improvement were with regards to Sizakala Customer centres insisting on providing error free service and ensuring that the centres' service levels are kept at the same standard all the time.

<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b>	<b>Page</b>
TITLE PAGE	i
SUPERVISOR'S PERMISSION TO SUBMIT	ii
DECLARATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
ABSTRACT	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vii
LIST OF TABLES	xi
LIST OF FIGURES/GRAPHS	xiii

## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

1.1	Introduction	1
1.2	Motivation and background of the study	2
1.3	Value of the research	3
1.4	Statement of the problem	3
1.5	Objectives of the study	5
1.6	Key research questions	5
1.7	Research methodology	6
1.8	Limitations of the study	7
1.9	Structure of the dissertation	7
1.11	Conclusion	9

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

2.1	Introduction	10
2.2	Characteristics of services	13
2.2.1	Intangibility in services	13
2.2.2	Inseparability of services	14
2.2.3	Heterogeneity of services	14
2.2.4	Perishability of services	14
2.3	The causes of service problems	15
2.3.1	Overlapping production and consumption of services	15
2.3.2	Inadequate services to "Intermediate Customers"	15

2.3.3	Communication shortfalls	16
2.3.4	View of customers as statistics	17
2.3.5	Short-run view of business	17
2.3.6	Service proliferation and complexity	17
2.4	What is service quality	18
2.5	Dimensions of service quality	21
2.6	Aspects of service quality	23
2.6.1	Quality of process and result	24
2.6.2	Search and experienced qualities	24
2.6.3	Reality and perception	25
2.6.4	Expectations and satisfaction	25
2.7	Factors influencing customer expectations of service	27
2.8	Monitoring service quality	27
2.8.1	Internal performance analysis	28
2.8.2	Customer satisfaction analysis	28
2.8.3	Specialist market research	28
2.9	Models of service quality gaps	29
2.10	Service quality models	35
2.10.1	GRÖNROOS' model	35
2.10.2	BRADY AND CRONIN'S multidimensional and hierarchical (BCM)	36
2.10.4	PARASURAMAN, ZEITHAML AND BERRY'S MODEL (SERVQUAL)	36
2.11	Potential use of SERVQUAL	38
2.12	Conclusion	40

### **CHAPTER 3: ETHEKWINI MUNICIPALITY AND SIZAKALA CUSTOMER CENTRES**

3.1	Introduction	41
3.2	Regional centres unit	43
3.3	Sizakala customer services centres	45
3.4	Customer care policy	48
3.5	Conclusion	49

## **CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

4.1	Introduction	50
4.2	Research objectives	50
4.3	Research design	50
4.4	Data collection	52
4.5	Question types	53
4.6	Research instrument design	54
4.7	Generalisability and reliability	55
4.8	Statistical analysis	58
4.9	Conclusion	61

## **CHAPTER 5: PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

5.1	Introduction	62
5.2	Reliability of the instrument	62
5.3	Sample profile	63
5.3.1	Gender	63
5.3.2	Age Range	64
5.3.3	Level of Education	66
5.3.4	Frequency of centre visits	67
5.4	Perceptions	68
5.4.1	Perception Reliability	68
5.4.2	Perception Responsiveness	70
5.4.3	Perception Assurance	71
5.4.4	Perception Empathy	73
5.4.5	Perception Tangibility	74
5.5	Expectations	75
5.5.1	Expectation Reliability	76
5.5.2	Expectation Responsiveness	77
5.5.3	Expectation Assurance	79
5.5.4	Expectation Empathy	80
5.5.5	Expectation Tangibility	81
5.6	Gap analysis	83



5.7	The SERVQUAL Index	85
5.8	Correlation and Chi-Square tests	86
5.9	Discussion of results	97
5.9.1	How customers perceive the service quality at eThekweni Municipality's Sizakala Centres	97
5.9.2	Evaluate and measure the current level of customer Satisfaction with regards to service quality in the Sizakala customer's service of eThekweni Municipality	99
5.9.3	Investigate possible gaps in the process of service delivery in meeting customer expectations using the SERVQUAL model	100
5.10	Areas where management can target performance improvement in terms customer service	103
5.11	Conclusion	104
<b>CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS</b>		
6.1	Introduction	105
6.2	Research objectives	105
6.3	Specific recommendations relevant to the study	106
6.4	Recommendations for future research	109
6.5	Conclusion	109
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>		<b>111</b>
<b>APPENDIX</b>		<b>117</b>

## LIST OF TABLES

<b>Table</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Page</b>
5.2	Reliability Statistics, Cronbach's Alpha	63
5.3.1	Gender	63
5.3.2	Age Range	65
5.3.3	Level of Education	66
5.3.4	Frequency of Centre visits	67
5.5	Gap Analysis	84
5.7	Average SERVQUAL Score	85
5.8.1	Correlation between Perception 1 and Perception 2	86
5.8.2	Chi-Square Test Results for visually appealing facilities and visually appealing material statements	87
5.8.3	Correlation between Perception 6 and Perception 3	88
5.8.4	Chi-Square Test results for Sizakala Customer Centre keeping same service standards all the time and Sizakala Customer Centre keeping to its promised time	88
5.8.5	Correlation between Expectation 1 and Expectation 2	89
5.8.6	Chi-Square test results for facilities in the Sizakala Customer Centre being visually appealing and materials associated with the service being visually appealing	90
5.8.7	Correlation between Expectation 3 and Expectation 5	91
5.8.8	Chi- Square Results for Sizakala Customer Centre keeping to its promised time and Sizakala Customer Centre performing service right the first time	91
5.8.9	Correlation between Expectation 5 and Expectation 6	92
5.8.10	Chi-Square test results for Sizakala Customer Centre performing service right the first time and Sizakala Customer Centre keeping same service standards all the time	93
5.8.11	Correlation between Expectation 6 and Expectation 7	93
5.8.12	Chi-Square test results for Sizakala Customer Centre keeping same service standards all the time and Sizakala Customer	

Centre insisting on error free service	94
5.8.13 Correlation between Expectation 7 and Expectation 10	95
5.8.14 Chi-Square test results Sizakala Customer Centre insisting on error free service and staff at Sizakala Customer Centre being knowledgeable	95
5.8.15 Correlation between Expectation 9 and Expectation 10	96
5.8.16 Chi-Square test results for Sizakala Customer Care giving prompt Service and the staff at Sizakala Customer Centre being knowledgeable	97
5.9.1 Average mean score for the FIVE dimensions	98
5.9.2 Average SERVQUAL scores	100

## LIST OF GRAPHS/FIGURES

<b>Figure</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Page</b>
2.5	Dimensions of service quality	22
2.6.4	Consumer driven	26
2.9	Different gaps in service quality	34
2.10.3	Conceptual model linking service quality, service performance, and customer satisfaction	38
3.1	Approved organogram of the eThekweni Municipality	42
3.2	Customer service Help Line	44
3.3	Sizakala Customer Centres	47
4.8	Flow chart of data analyses process	59
	The strength and direction of the Coefficient of Correlation	60
5.3.1	Frequency and Gender	64
5.3.2	Age Range	65
5.3.3	Level of Education	66
5.3.4	Frequency of centre visits	67
5.4.1.1	Reliability Perception 3	69
5.4.1.2	Reliability Perception 5	70
5.4.2.1	Responsiveness Perception 7	71
5.4.2.2	Responsiveness Perception 9	71
5.4.3.1	Assurance Perception 8	72
5.4.3.2	Assurance Perception 10	73
5.4.4.2	Empathy Perception 6	74
5.4.5.1	Tangibility Perception 1	75
5.4.5.2	Tangibility Perception 2	75
5.5.1.1	Reliability Expectation 3	76
5.5.1.2	Reliability Expectation 5	77
5.5.2.1	Responsiveness Expectation 7	78
5.5.2.2	Responsiveness Expectation 9	78
5.5.3.1	Assurance Expectation 8	79

5.5.3.2 Assurance Expectation 10	80
5.5.4.1 Empathy Expectation 4	81
5.5.4.2 Empathy Expectation 6	81
5.5.5.1 Tangibility Expectation 1	82
5.5.5.2 Tangibility Expectation 2	83