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A PROJECT REPORT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF TECHNOLOGY IN OPERATIONS MANAGEMENT in
THE FACULTY OF ENGINEERING AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT
DEPARTMENT OF QUALITY AND OPERATIONS MANAGEMENT

THE IMPACT OF SERVICE QUALITY ON FFO1, FFO2 AND FFO3 FAST FOOD OUTLETS IN JOHANNESBURG CENTRAL, SOUTH AFRICA

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September 2016
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I would like to express my most profound appreciation to all that were involved in making this dissertation a win and a reality. Also, I would like to specifically address my most noteworthy thanks to Dr A. Vermeulen and Dr N. Sukdeo, for being accessible at all times with guidance, consolation, inspiration, motivation and tolerance throughout this research.

I would like to humbly dedicate the achievement of this work to my mother, Antoinette Obagayele, who is always beside me for my success, and also to my late father, Basile Akilimalissiga.

A warm devotion of this work is further sent to a woman close to my heart, Zibuyile Gumbi, for her understanding of me during challenging periods when I could not give her the time she deserved. The accomplishment of this study required a lot of concentration.

Lastly, special thanks to all respondents for offering answers to the questionnaires and to the individuals who gave additional information in improving the quality of this work. Most importantly, I thank the Almighty God, for giving the entire group the strength and knowledge to accomplish this work.
ABSTRACT

This study focuses on and explores the concept of service quality and its impact on the repurchasing behaviour of customers in FFO1, FFO2 and FFO3 fast food outlets in Johannesburg Central. Service quality, customer satisfaction and retention are viewed as important concepts that fast food outlets in particular need to comprehend in order to compete with other fast food brands in the fast food industry. However, these fast food outlets permanently fall short of meeting customers’ requirements and understanding their behaviour after service delivery. It is therefore vital for these fast food outlets to know how to measure service quality from their customers’ perspective, since it is essential to customer satisfaction and consequently to repeat purchases.

Objective/purpose – the research investigated the impact that service quality has on the behaviour of customers for future purchases in regard to perceived service from FFO1, FFO2 and FFO3 fast food outlets. Purposefully, the study tracked down how customers perceive service quality and whether they are satisfied or not, and evaluated the effect of that result to determine customer behaviour for future purchases.

Research question – the research was undertaken in accordance with two research questions: How do customers perceive service quality in FFO1, FFO2 and FFO3 outlets? Additionally, does satisfaction inspire customers to repeat purchases?

Methodology/design/approach – A self-completion questionnaire was established from both SERVQUAL (Perceptions vs Expectations) and repurchasing behaviour concepts. The research required a quota sampling. Thus, a total of 119 questionnaires were distributed to respondents, with 47 questionnaires in FFO1, 38 questionnaires in FFO2 and 34 questionnaires in FFO3 outlets in Johannesburg Central. Data obtained was analysed with Statkon’s consultancy and statistical tools were applied to analyse whether perceived service quality leads to repeating purchases.

Findings – Composite analysis indicated a disparity between customers’ perceptions and expectations. The overall service quality of the three combined fast food outlets using the SERVQUAL instrument resulted in a negative gap average of -0.6174, which indicates that customers’ expectations exceed perceptions. This suggests that customers are not satisfied with the service received. This result was also linked to the
concept of repurchasing behaviour and it showed that customers were not willing to repeat purchases from FFO1, FFO2 and FFO3 outlets in the future.

**Value/implications** – this research contributes to the significance of previous studies in a similar field. The research motivates core management of the fast food outlets to gauge customers’ expectations and perceptions. It additionally encourages management to identify areas of service delivery that have weaknesses and then improve on them not only to create satisfaction in customers but also to inspire customers to revisit these fast food outlets regularly and in this way sustain competition.

**Keywords**: Service quality, SERVQUAL, expectations, perceptions, customer satisfaction, repurchasing behaviour.

For purposes of confidentiality in this study FFO1= KFC, FFO2= Chicken Licken and FFO3= Nando’s.
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CHAPTER 1:
INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

Food consumption forms part of people’s day-to-day life and significantly affects their survival. Fast food utilisation is not only a part of the South African way of life, but also a visible pattern around the world (Clayton and Tom, 2009, 49-55). Food consumed at home or away from home could be bought from diversified ranges of food outlets. Individuals are motivated by different reasons for choosing fast food outlets to eat at or to purchase food from; these reasons explain the uniqueness of human nature. Johnson, Mayer and Champaner (2004, 1-10) claim that people involuntarily or purposefully look at different attributes when picking a fast food outlet from which to buy food.

According to Walker (2011, 126-132), fast food outlets are commonly referred to as “quick service restaurants” since customers order food at the counter. These food outlets serve beverages right after the customer has paid while food is served last. The absolute objective of the management of these fast food outlets is to arrange frontline employees in a way that gets food prepared and served within a constrained measure of time standard in order to serve a great number of customers (Law, Hui and Zhao, 2004, 545-563). In this context there is a need to evaluate the effect of the implementation of service quality aspects on customers.

Despite the emphasis on “quick service”, service quality has a significant effect on customer satisfaction and repurchasing behaviour. It acts as a driving force for the success of any fast food outlet in particular and any organisation in general. According to Mohammad, Abdullah and Ataur (2011, 1-11), service quality is an approach to managing fast food outlets’ processes in order to ensure full satisfaction of the customers, which will help to increase competitiveness and effectiveness of the service industry. Service is perceived to be good when aspects of quality are incorporated in it.
The adjunction of both quality and service is critical, particularly for the improvement and success of the fast food outlet in the service industry.

According to Jeske, Chimusoro and Karodia (2015, 1-34), customers are becoming more demanding as their requirements and wants evolve over time. The majority of well-known fast food brands are striving by every means they can to remain in competition. Thus, they put much effort into developing distinctive procedures for enhancing service quality, with the specific end goal of building their levels of customer satisfaction. This effort is expected to contribute to repurchasing behaviour of customers, which, in turn, is likely to lead to customer loyalty. According to Qin and Prybutok (2008, 35-50), both repurchasing behaviour of customers and customer loyalty play an important role in the existence of any fast food brand. When customers’ expectations are met or exceeded in regard to the service received from a fast food outlet, they are most likely to be satisfied. However, meeting service quality principles is a challenging procedure since fast food outlets have to match their business goals to customer requirements in order to deliver high quality services to customers. In this manner, service quality needs to be repeatedly measured with respect to a standard timeframe in order to track down how customers perceive the service offered to them (Gilbert, Veloutsou, Good and Moutinho, 2004, 371-383).

This research focused on three fast food outlets: FFO1, FFO2 and FFO3, in which aspects of service quality are employed on a daily basis, and these fast food outlets are well known in South Africa, where they are also the pillars of the processed chicken outlets.

1.2 Problem statement

Gilbert et al. (2004, 371-383) write that fast food outlets often fall short of understanding the behaviour of customers based on the quality of the service delivered to these customers because service quality attributes are not assured. According to Zwikael and Tilchin (2007, 23-25), managing customer requirements is a delicate process in any fast food outlet, especially when these requirements keep changing over time. Customer satisfaction has become the ultimate challenge experienced by the service industry, in
particular fast food outlets. In spite of attracting customers, these fast food outlets are consistently unable to keep their current customers (Buttle and Burton, 2002, 217-227).

This study focused on FFO1, FFO2 and FFO3 outlets, which deal with sales of fast food and offer services to their customers to satisfy their needs. These fast food outlets provide similar products and services to their customers since their activities are based in the processed chicken industry. Also, this industry is known as being highly competitive (Walt and Kotze, 2014, 149-157). This makes it crucial for FFO1, FFO2 and FFO3 to get a better understanding of their customers in order to offer products and services that meet their expectations by constantly measuring the quality of the services offered to customers. In addition, the quality of the services provided by fast food outlets is fundamental for persuading customers to repurchase and for retaining customers as it enhances the fast food outlets’ competitiveness (Njoku, Kalu and Okeke, 2015, 523-535). The magnitude of the competition in this industry motivates these fast food outlets to always measure the importance of the services as perceived by their customers on a daily basis to anticipate potential repurchasing behaviour.

1.3 Purpose of the study

The principal purpose of this study was to investigate the service quality dimensions and then determine how customers perceive service quality in FFO1, FFO2 and FFO3 outlets in Johannesburg Central. The purpose of the study was also to investigate whether service quality has a significant impact (negative or positive) on customer repurchasing behaviour.

1.4 Main research question

What is the impact of service quality on customer repurchasing behaviour in the three fast food outlets?

1.4.1 Sub-research questions

- How do customers perceive service quality in these fast food outlets?
- What are customer expectation and perception levels of the service quality?
1.4.2 Does satisfaction inspire customers to repeat purchases in the future?

- How do customers behave following current perceived service?

1.4.3 What can core management do to continuously improve and promote satisfaction levels through service quality dimensions?

- How can customer satisfaction be assured relative to each SERVQUAL dimension?

1.5 Justification of the study

Regardless of the size of any fast food outlet, customers are its most vital asset. The success of a fast food outlet is determined by the number of customers it is capable of satisfying. Customers that are satisfied with the service provided will likely increase in number and patronise that specific fast food outlet quite regularly (Ying-Feng, Chi-Ming and Wei-Jaw, 2009, 887-896). However, the fast food industry is considered to be an industry marked by extreme and continuous competition (Walt and Kotze, 2014, 149-157). According to Maumbe (2012, 147-166) and Euromonitor International (2005, 14-26), the South African fast food industry is on the rise, which makes this environment even more challenging and competitive. From this perspective, it is believed that FFO1, FFO2 and FFO3 are under tremendous competition, as these fast food outlets offer similar services and products to their customers. In this competitive environment, it is important for fast food outlets to understand the customers of this industry better to remain competitive. This means that service quality needs to be assured and measured at particular timeframe intervals if fast food outlets aim to keep their customers satisfied at all times. This study focuses only on these three fast food outlets because their activities are based in the chicken sector and chicken meat is believed to be among the most consumed meat not only in South Africa but also worldwide, as Torry and Esterhuizen (2015) report in their review.

After numerous study reports had been intensively examined in line with the use of the SERVQUAL Model (an instrument which assesses quality of services in order to monitor customer expectations and perceptions; the instrument is well explored in
Sections 2.11.1 to 2.11.3 below), it was apparent that a large number of exploring studies had been completed in distinctive service sectors; for instance: telecommunication, shopping centres, banking, education, medicinal services, and so forth (Chingang and Lukong, 2010, 27-46). However, a restricted number of practical studies were found that had applied the SERVQUAL Model to evaluating service quality in a combined way; for example, by including three or more fast food outlets that process chicken meals.

This study sought to use its findings to put forward to the top management of each of the three fast food outlets details of the immediate impact that service quality could have on customer satisfaction and also on the repurchasing behaviour of their customers in the face of increased competition.

1.6 Main objective

The main objective of this study was to explore the impact that service quality has on customer behaviour within the three competing fast food outlets.

1.6.1 Sub-objectives

- To assess the quality of the service delivered by FFO1, FFO2 and FFO3 as perceived by their customers.
- To identify the service quality dimensions which have or do not have a significant impact on customer satisfaction.
- To explore whether the SERVQUAL Model results could be linked to customer repurchasing behaviour.

1.7 Scope and general characteristics

The research was limited to the above-mentioned objectives, focusing on the chicken food processed by the three fast food outlets: FFO1, FFO2 and FFO3 located in the Johannesburg Central suburbs of Auckland Park, Braamfontein, Randburg, Fordsburg, Newtown and Sophia town / Newlands. The research specifically assessed how customers perceive service quality in these fast food outlets. Since quality is viewed as the antecedent of customer satisfaction in service industry (Parasuraman, Zeithaml and
Berry, 1985, 41-50), the study is also interested in evaluating customer behaviour according to the service they perceive, to predict whether they are inspired to repeat purchases in the future. The study was limited to the areas mentioned because the sample was drawn from the populations living in those areas and their surrounds and who had frequented FFO1, FFO2 or FFO3 outlets at least once. These areas are highly concentrated in terms of workers, students and residents. In this study, the “drive-through” facility was not taken into account because it was considered almost impossible to request driving customers to fill out questionnaires while focusing not only on driving but also on moving to the next spot to collect their orders. It is believed that collecting information from the drive-through customers is not often useful since the chance of getting incomplete information is high in most situations. According to Borchgrevink, Sciarini, and Susskind (2007, 37-46), drive-through is often quicker than walk-in in terms of service delivery, but extremely hazardous when handling hot meals and focusing on driving and probably filling out questionnaires. Therefore, the use of walk-in seems to be safer, more accurate and more representative for collection of the information required.

**1.7.1 Theoretical framework of the study**

This study was structured following the theoretical framework set out below (Figure 1 – Theoretical framework). This framework was developed on the basis of the concept that service quality is the antecedent of customer satisfaction and therefore of customer repurchasing behaviour (Negi, 2009, 33-37). It is a clear representation of the theory of this study.
In this study, service quality was assessed on the basis of five dimensions (tangibles, reliability, assurance, responsiveness and empathy) to evaluate customer satisfaction and customer repurchasing behaviour. In this theoretical framework, customer satisfaction is the important middle determinant which translates perceived service quality into whether repeat purchases are made or not. The outcome of the service quality was primarily described and aligned with satisfaction and described customer behaviour for future purchases.

1.8 Methodology

“Methodology” in research is used to refer to a systematic and organised plan of activities that need to be followed in order to achieve the research objectives (Myers, 2013, 89-93). The quantitative approach was used in this study to analyse the information collected from customers visiting FFO1, FFO2 and FFO3 fast food outlets. The information obtained was generated from customers who were familiar with these fast food outlets.

1.8.1 Sampling

As the researcher’s safety could not be ensured in certain areas where the fast food outlets were present, the research was restricted to FFO1, FFO2 and FFO3 outlets in the Johannesburg Central areas of Auckland Park, Braamfontein, Randburg, Fordsburg, Newtown and Sophia town / Newlands. These areas were chosen so that the sample would be representative of the entire customer spectrum since offices and their employees (also universities and their students) who would be expected to frequent these fast food outlets are spread throughout these areas.

The sampling method used in this research was Quota Sampling because in this method, data-collection areas are geographically chosen to represent the entire base of customers of interest. Quota Sampling is considered a non-probability sampling technique where location is the main factor used to classify customers from the entire
population (Denscombe, 2010, 36-41). No customers from non-selected sub-groups or locations are included in the sample. In other words, it is certain that all important sub-groups are included in the sample of the larger population.

1.8.2 Sample size

This research focused on customers who had frequented one of these fast food outlets at least once. Therefore, the size was determined on the basis of the estimated number of customers who potentially could purchase from each of these fast food outlets on a daily basis. The sample size arrived at for this research was 119 customers.

1.8.3 Data-collection methods

The data collected for this research was generated entirely from five-point Likert scale questionnaires since the interest was in customer views of the quality of service provided by the fast food outlets being researched. A total of 119 questionnaires was distributed to customers in the enclosure or outside (closer to the main entrance) of the selected fast food outlet during lunch peak hours (from 11h30 to 13h30), depending on the particular fast food outlet regulation. The researcher established a personal objective of distributing roughly 10 questionnaires per day for three days a week (excluding weekends). The researcher approached any convenient or available customers or group of customers and helped them fill in the questionnaires. The questionnaires were then immediately collected to avoid missing questionnaires.

1.8.4 Data-analysis technique

The data obtained from the questionnaires was thoroughly inspected to ascertain that all questionnaires had been correctly answered by the customers. The data was analysed using the SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) package with the help of Statkon consultancy. This allowed the data collected to be transformed into meaningful information using descriptive statistics and One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and reliability analysis.
1.9 Summary of chapters

This section outlines the general purpose of each chapter and the ideas related to the thesis that are developed in each of the chapters.

Chapter 1 – Introduction and Background

This chapter is considered as the main focus of the research. It provides the overall guidance for the study by introducing the background surrounding the subject. The chapter also lays down a foundation for this study by setting out the purpose and by identifying the research problems. Additionally, it provides guidelines and delimits the research aim by means of research questions.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

In this chapter, literature from a variety of sources was reviewed. The chapter presents a discussion of the concepts related to the topic, which include the impact of service quality on the fast food industry in Johannesburg Central. Service quality is discussed as an essential concept in determining a fast food outlet’s success in the service industry. The chapter examines the five dimensions of service quality and explains the differences among them. The issues around the application of the SERVQUAL method are also put into perspective. Along with studies on service quality, literature regarding the importance of employees in creating satisfied customers in service industry is reviewed. Finally, customer satisfaction is described and the extent to which customer behaviour may be affected by customer satisfaction evaluated.

Chapter 3 – Research Methodology

The chapter describes the research design used by the study. The target population from which the sample was chosen is described and the sampling method outlined. As discussed in the chapter, the quantitative approach was used to measure the impact of service quality. A self-completion questionnaire was used to collect data.
The target population consisted of people living around the areas of interest to draw a convenient sample size for all three fast food outlets. The questionnaires were distributed in the closure or outside the fast food outlet, depending on the policy of each of the fast food outlets, and the self-completion procedure was applied to give respondents the maximum freedom to complete the questionnaire. The chapter presents the data-analysis process and instruments, with SPSS software used to test for reliability and provide descriptive statistics and ANOVA. The analysis allowed the research questions to be answered.

**Chapter 4 – Data Analysis**

Chapter 4 describes the results of the data collected from the field that provide answers to the research questions of the study. The information collected was largely based on customer expectations and expectations of respondents from FFO1, FFO2 and FFO3. In this chapter customer expectations are compared with their perceptions to determine the possible service quality gaps using the following equation: Perceptions (P) minus expectations (E) = (P-E). The three fast food outlets are also compared in terms of their customer expectations and perceptions. Finally the chapter describes customer satisfaction to see whether it has a significant effect on customers’ repurchasing behaviour regarding the level of service quality perceived.

**Chapter 5 – Discussion of Findings**

A detailed discussion of the findings is presented in this chapter. The results from the analysis of data are debated and compared to the findings of studies presented in the literature review regarding the impact of service quality. Particularly, the meanings of the findings regarding customer expectations and perceptions and then customer behaviour are related to the findings of other various studies in the service industry. The use of theory in this chapter allows the researcher to come up with evidence capable of answering the research questions of the study.
Chapter 6 – Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter is the final chapter of the project report. It strives to provide answers to the research questions of the study by summing up the findings obtained from the analysis and discussion chapters. This chapter not only deals with theoretical and policy implications of the study but also highlights the study limitations and provides recommendations for future research.

1.10 Conclusion

To sum up, this chapter has given a structured overview of the research by providing some understanding related to the topic and some insight into what to expect in each chapter that makes up the whole research. Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature related to the topic of this study and of earlier studies conducted in similar fields to support the research concepts developed.
CHAPTER 2:  
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

According to Yashvir (2015), the South African fast food industry was originally surrounded by other business systems that used to prevent the industry from participating in the rising of the commodity prices, market saturation and omnipresent sales. Yet despite this, the South African fast food industry is currently experiencing exponential growth, with local consumers (16+ years old) increasing from 66% in 2009 to 80% in 2014. Within this statistic it is reported that the number of individuals who have purchased fast food over a given month period has risen by close to 10 million within the last 5 years (Insight Survey, 2015). Van Zyl, Steyn and Marais (2010, 124-130) report that South African young adults (aged 19 to 30) represent the buying power of the fast food consumption, with an amount of money spent of more than R200 per month per young adult.

However, this fast food industry is a multifaceted sector as the industry requires market dynamics to encompass arrays of competitive strategies underpinned by progressive fast food outlet judgement and customer-centricity (Essam, 2012, 224-227). According to Maumbe (2012, 147-166), the aggressive penetration of chained global players into the local market as part of their systematic continental expansion strategies explains the expansion of this industry in South Africa. This goes along with the growth of global and local franchise food outlets. For instance, a net growth of 134 outlets in 2014, with the top 10 franchises having a national footprint of 3 643 fast food outlets, significantly aided positive market performance. The annual turnover of the fast food industry in 2014 was estimated at R302 billion (Insight Survey, 2015).

Therefore, recognising the importance of assuring service quality in this sector is crucial in order to maintain the trends of growth and competitiveness. Fast food outlets that aim
to improve their business performances, reinforce core competencies and inspire customers to revisit usually need to place themselves strategically in the food marketplace (Cronin and Taylor, 1992, 55-68; Jain and Gupta, 2004, 25-37). This study seeks to assess FFO1, FFO2 and FFO3 fast food outlets’ service quality through the assessment of customer expectations and perceptions and the identification of customers who are likely to repurchase from the same fast food outlet in the future. This chapter reviews meaningful concepts around service quality, customer satisfaction and aspects of repurchasing behaviour and also reviews guidelines on how FFO1, FFO2 and FFO3’s managements can create satisfied customers. The chapter describes factors that influence customer satisfaction and impact on customer patronage. Additionally, the SERVQUAL instrument is reviewed in this chapter in order to understand its usefulness for this research.

2.2 Quality

Quality has been defined as fitness for use (Juran, in Foster, 2010, 175-179). Indeed, for Feigenbaum (1999, 376-383), quality is the overall combination of the service or product attributes of marketing, engineering, maintenance and manufacturing. David Garvin states, in a review compiled by Foster (2010, 132-138), that there are several characteristics of quality, but the most comprehensive ones are the following:

- **Transcendent** – Quality is something such as elegance, beauty and affection, which are naturally seen and understood, but mostly difficult to spread. This means that high quality perception is something that the customer learns to recognise over time.
- **Product based** – Quality is encountered in the characteristics and constituents of a product or service. For instance, an airline that offers the free on-board lunch is judged to be of higher quality than one that does not (Machado and Diggines, 2012, 40-56).
- **User based** – In this case, quality is viewed from the user or the customer’s perspective. If a customer is satisfied, the product or service can be said to be of good quality. This is clearly subjective because each customer may perceive the
same service differently and at the end each may have a different opinion (low or high) about quality.

- **Manufacturing based** – Here quality is viewed from the supplier’s perspective. If the product conforms to design specifications, it has good quality. This means that the supplier assesses quality based on the extent to which it conforms to specific performance requirements established.

- **Value based** – A service or product is accepted as being of good quality only if the price matches the value. In other words, quality is evaluated in accordance with the price paid and the value perceived.

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**Figure 2 – Definitions of quality (adapted from Chandrupatla, 2009, and Foster, 2010)**

Gryna, Chua and Defeo (2009, 211-241) acknowledge that the accomplishment of reaching a high level of quality requires a fast food outlet to perform various tasks that take quality attributes into consideration. Certain practical tasks analyse quality requirements to fulfil customer requirements. Examples of these tasks are design review, product/service testing and analysis of customer complaints (Evans and Lindsay, 2008, 12-19). For instance, in competitive fast food outlets, strategic employees are identified in order to perform all these important tasks for quality
achievement. Among these quality tasks, some are performed within a significant timeframe, which means that the responsible division needs to be properly identified to control the effectiveness of carrying out each activity required for each task. In the opinion of Summers (2009, 222), internal and external partnerships are good grounds on which a fast food outlet can build its business functions to ensure that high quality is incorporated into the product or service.

According to Gryna et al. (2009, 211-241), all activities related to quality need to be attempted to expose quality issues or nonconformities sufficiently early to allow remedial actions to be taken without involving cost. The efforts have to be put into prevention of defects instead of correction of quality problems or defects.

2.3 Quality as a competitive advantage

Powell, Rahman and Starbuck (2010, 313-335) identify competitive advantage as an asset that a fast food outlet has over its competitors, allowing it to produce better returns or margins and create a greater customer retention circle than its rivals. These authors identify four comprehensive attributes of a strong competitive advantage:

- The first attribute of a strong competitive advantage is that it is driven by customer requirements as they become more demanding over time.
- The food outlet has better value and continues to add value year after year. In other words, a strong competitive advantage significantly contributes to the fast food outlet’s success.
- A strong competitive advantage is also good as the fast food outlet’s assets are provided with opportunities in the fast food environment. It is almost impossible to have different fast food outlets managing their assets in a similar way. That is to say that an effective strategy utilises the fast food outlet’s particular resources efficiently for it to stand up to competition and to meet or exceed its customer needs.
- Since a strong competitive advantage is long-lasting, it is nearly impossible for competitors to duplicate. It determines any room for potential improvement and inspires the entire fast food chain to adapt to business change.
Evans and Lindsay (2008) acknowledge that quality is clearly an indispensable foundation for any fast food outlet that is striving to be or remain competitive in the marketplace. According to Crosby (1979, 262-279), “Quality is not only free; it is an honest-to-everything profit maker.” For the smallest amount of money that is spent on producing high quality products or services is likely to become a huge amount down the line to allow remedial actions to be taken. Nowadays, no individual is capable of predicting with effective accuracy how fast food outlet will perform in the future. If a fast food outlet invests in the aim to produce high quality products and services, that fast food outlet is certain to increase its profitability by equal to or more than 5 per cent of its overall sales. This could be regarded as “a lot of money for free” (Crosby, 1979, 262-279).

Ying-Feng et al. (2009, 887-896) report that quality is conjoined to consistency. When a customer is delighted with their first purchase experience, they are likely to revisit the same fast food outlet in the future. As customers are the existence of fast food outlets; in other words, fast food outlets do not exist without customers (Qin, Victor and Prybutok, 2009, 78-95), it is vital that customers consistently visit the fast food outlets. Customer retention in fast food outlets is strongly achieved by supplying customers with products or services that meet or exceed their needs. In order to offer excellent customer service, a culture of satisfying the customer must spread through the fast food outlet. When all the employees take into account that making satisfied customers is associated with the fast food outlet’s success, they will then carry their actions forward to create a greater customer experience (Law et al., 2004, 545-563).

In addition, customers talk about their experiences (positive and negative) of the fast food outlets visited. Thus, delighted or happy customers share their experiences with friends and colleagues, which increases revenues over time and that is also why quality is crucial for a fast food outlet’s ability to compete (Festus, Maxwell and Godwin, 2006, 59-72).
2.4 Services

The distinction between services and manufacturing depends on numerous characteristics. According to Foster (2007, 175-179), services are generally seen as tangibles. In simple terms, services are impossible to store for a very long period of time. Service production and consumption happen simultaneously. However, services display certain tangible aspects that are sometimes difficult to quantify. Services’ outputs are different as well, which indicates that it is nearly impossible for fast food outlets to have, for example, two services that are exactly the same. “Service” is a wide term. It covers a number of business sectors such as hospitals, financial services, prison services, hotel services and so forth. On the other hand, Gryna et al. (2009, 201-206) acknowledge the existence of similar attributes across some service industries. Similar attributes include, for example, a service has to be delivered when a customer’s requirements are transmitted to the service provider and its completion time is very important. However, the difference in service sectors is a factor that makes it a challenge for service sectors to reach general goals regarding quality.

According to Machado and Diggines (2012, 31-34), both external and internal services have characteristics that somehow affect the quality of these services. Thus, external services are considered as services that customers require and pay for while the internal services are considered as services which are in-house produced and delivered between the fast food branches within the same fast food brand.

In accordance with Gadrey’s (2000, 369-387) view, another way in which services differ from products is in being involuntary or voluntary. “Voluntary” refers to services that consumers actively look for and engage of their own acceptance. “Involuntary”, on the other hand, refers to services that do not involve customer agreement or are services that the public does not pick out.

2.5 Customer service quality in fast food outlets

“Service quality” expresses a distinct understanding to distinct individuals in various circumstances (Huddleston, Whipple, Mattick and Lee, 2009, 63-80). Different authors or quality specialists define service quality in different ways. According to Machado and
Diggines (2012, 60-63), customer service quality is viewed as being the overall judgements of the relative inferiority or superiority of a fast food outlet’s services. Using a similar outlook, Boshoff and du Plessis (2009, 321-325) describe customer service quality as being the customer’s appraisal impressions regarding the level of a performance’s superiority.

2.5.1 Conceptualisation of customer service quality

Customer service quality is critical; therefore, regardless of the fast food outlet’s size or what the fast food outlet offers, it has to be customer driven. According to Evans and Lindsay (2008, 91-99), in order to ensure the success of a product or service, an interrogation of “why” a customer would make the decision to purchase and repurchase the product or service should be undertaken and the answer uncovered by the interrogation will help evaluate the success of the product or service.

In Jeske, Chimusoro and Karodia (2015, 1-34)’s view, the achievement of customer service quality requires the fast food outlet to take particular actions forward to its service delivery. This means that the fast food outlet’s management team needs to review and put into practice the principles of “Quality Management” throughout the stages of the establishment of service delivery, as outlined by William (2009, 13-35).

In the fast food sector, customer service quality is used to evaluate how satisfying a service is, which also concerns customer satisfaction (Heider and Moeller, 2012, 313-324). Thus, customer satisfaction is achieved by comparing customer expectations with their perceptions (of the service currently being delivered) through the use of SERVQUAL Model methods (see Sections 2.11.1 to 2.11.3 for more details on this model) or other evaluation instruments.

Service quality is displayed in customers’ appraised perception of an encountered service (Cronin and Taylor, 1992, 55-68). Cronin and Taylor (1992, 55-68) claim that there are intrinsic difficulties in the application of the disapproval patterns to keep track of service quality. Precisely, they debate the case in which service quality is associated with an attitude, as suggested by Parasuraman et al. (1985, 41-50). The operationalisation of “service quality” could be better spoken of using an attitude-based
conceptualisation. Zeithaml and Bitner (2000, 140-146) emphasise that customers evaluate the quality of a service they receive on the basis of their perceptions of the current outcome, the condition in which and procedure by which the outcome is provided, and also the appearance related to the physical surrounding environment in which the service production is in process. That is to say, an adequate application of these facets will result in the high quality of the service delivery, which also implies increased customer satisfaction. Moreover, a service is differentiated from a product on the basis of a number of dimensions (see Figure 3 – The dimensions of service quality) that have effects on the quality of service offered to customers.

**Figure 3 – The dimensions of service quality (adapted from Machado and Diggines, 2012)**

Foster (2010) provides illustrations of these dimensions as outlined below.

**Tangibles** – this dimension relates to the physical appearance of the fast food outlet, more specifically the physical environment of the fast food outlet, the equipment being utilised to deliver services, and also the fast food outlet’s products that are consumed by customers. In addition, it includes the display of the facility’s physical layout (for instance, a hygienic environment with an attractive decoration of the facility). One of the positive aspects of a quick service or fast food outlet is that the unit’s physical plant and décor should be regularly upgraded and offer convenience to the customer (Clayton and Tom, 2009, 61-70). A customer, in the absence of the ability to touch the service physically, uses the physical evidence of the surroundings to make service quality judgements. Also, overpromising or miscommunicating in terms of the physical evidence creates incorrect expectations and risks the customer’s expecting a different service quality level.

This dimension also includes the safety and health generated by the service provider’s environment. According to Dundes and Tamiko (2008, 153-161), most well-known fast food outlets have occupational, health and safety certificates but usually fall short in
applying regulations correctly. Service facilities are expected to be free of any potential incident that could harm not only employees who are interacting with customers but, most importantly, the customers themselves. According to Granerud (2011, 109-122), service facilities or offices are becoming more hazardous. Several health and safety risks surround both the customer and employee at service facilities, such as falling, slipping on dripped food oil or tripping over soft drink containers blocking the passage, oily tables, and food boxes all over the eating areas that usually attract flies. A service provider’s management should be cautious of the risk represented by these hazards because, without appropriate measures in place, the health and safety of customers and employees could be permanently in danger even though the fast food outlet is health and safety regulated. That is the reason this service quality dimension implicitly induces awareness of health and safety measures.

**Service reliability** – differs from product reliability in the sense that it refers to the capability of the fast food outlets regularly to execute the promised high quality service reliably and precisely. In terms of operations, this implies keeping promises, providing guarantees in transactions and also being efficient while dealing with the process recovery in the case of any defect (Hensley and Utley, 2011, 587-598). A key issue when evaluating service quality is the capability of the fast food outlet to offer the required services as needed at the time it promises to do so.

**Responsiveness** – is the desire of the fast food outlet to be helpful and inspired to provide services. Key indicators here include how quickly staff members respond to queries or how quickly they respond to problems and inform the customer when the service is going to be performed.

**Assurance** – includes the knowledge and the politeness that employees have to have to bring about confidence and trust. Apart from these qualities, assurance includes three principal features. These are: (1) Courtesy, which refers to the consideration, politeness and good manners of the fast food outlet employees; (2) Trustworthiness, which refers to the credibility and the tenacity that employees need to have to assure confidence in customers; and, lastly, (3) Safety, which includes security, protection and safeguarding. Employees must convey a sense of protection to assure safe exchanges with
customers (Festus et al., 2006, 59-72). This assurance helps customers to convince themselves that they are making the correct choice.

**Empathy** – the customer desires caring, individualised attention from the service firm. According to Saghier and Nathan (2013, 1-13), there are various elements in this dimension, which are, although not limited to, (1) Access: approachability and simplicity of liaison; (2) Communication: keeping customers informed in languages they can clearly understand and listen to, for example, to market new service ranges; and, lastly, (3) Understanding Customers: trying to know customers and their requirements further.

The attention to service quality has shown its influence in significantly contributing to the improvement of the fast food industry services in particular and other general services. With these dimensions in mind we can now look at customer satisfaction, which is one of the determinants of customer service quality.

### 2.6 Customer satisfaction

The aim of any competitive fast food outlet is to ensure that customers that purchase its products or services are satisfied. A customer is only likely to be satisfied if his/her needs and expectations are met (Machado and Diggines, 2012, 29-40). With this in mind, customer satisfaction can be best defined as the extent to which a fast food outlet product or service performance meets or exceeds customer expectations. A customer is satisfied when the product/service performance meets or exceeds their expectations. However, when performance does not match the expectations, then the customer is not satisfied. Machado and Diggines (2012, 29-40) report that customer satisfaction is the customer’s fulfilling reaction, which is described as a judgemental decision that a service or product attribute, or a service/product itself, provides a delightful degree of related consumption. Thus, to ensure that the fast food outlet meets or exceeds the needs and wants of its principal targeted markets, the fast food outlet needs to make “customers” its central focus.

For a fast food outlet to be successful, customer satisfaction has to be seen as the main concern, which must be taken into account in every activity. Satisfaction can be mathematically described as a function of perceptions minus expectations (\( \text{Satisfaction} = \text{Perceptions} - \text{Expectations} \))
= perceptions – expectations) (Fen and Meillian, 2005, 60-73). Both customer expectations and perceptions are the constituents of interest in satisfaction. The expectations are generally derived from the customer’s individual experience. Gryna et al. (2009, 102-177) report that the usefulness (value) of a service mainly measures the effectiveness of the system of the service provider, but it is not the only measure. In the case of fast food industry, “The Moment-Of-Truth” is where the quality perception of a service is achieved. The Moment-Of-Truth is practically achieved when the personnel of the service provider and customers appear together for the delivering and receiving of the service. Consequently, customers significantly participate in the high quality delivery process of a given service (Coye, 2004, 54-71). In simple terms, the interaction between the customer and service provider is of the critical importance since it allows the evaluation of the degree of customer satisfaction.

It is also clear from the definitions that satisfaction is a customer’s own subjective evaluation of perceptions; it is irrelevant whether the service provider thinks they have delivered a satisfactory service – it is all about what their customers think.

2.7 Customer satisfaction versus customer loyalty

Foster (2007, 242-259) observes that customer satisfaction is an influential determinant of customer loyalty or retention. Accordingly, customer loyalty is described just as the possibility of previous customers coming back to experience more services from a particular fast food outlet. The increased loyalty or retention of customers is a significant indication of how well the fast food outlet is operating toward customer satisfaction. It is also an indication for marketing to pay attention to promotion and other business tools that ease collection and to analysis of information to determine satisfaction and loyalty. In reference to Davis, Lockwood, Pantelidis and Alcott (2008, 302-324), when customers are provided with high perceived value, this will result in increased loyalty on the part of the customers, who are motivated to consume the same services regularly for long periods of time and are likely to recommend the service to other individuals. This is a substantial indicator that every company should employ. In the service field where customers are considered as a direct input to the process, diversion could be lessened by steadily keeping a group of customers who have a good understanding of
how the business processes work. Customer loyalty could be inculcated by providing customers with different high quality services not available from the competition. This could be achieved by including high customer contact or advanced technology.

Gryna et al. (2009, 61-73) outline the disparity between the two concepts: satisfaction and loyalty. They state that when a customer is satisfied, that customer is likely to buy from the fast food outlet, but also from competitors in the industry. However, a loyal customer is likely to purchase primarily from the fast food outlet. A customer that is not satisfied with the perceived service is nearly impossible to make loyal, but unexpectedly a satisfied customer is not necessarily loyal. This allows us to conclude that there is an important difference between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty although the two concepts have common aspects of meaning. (See Table 1 – Customer satisfaction versus customer loyalty, below, for explicitly related differences.)

Table 1 – Customer satisfaction versus customer loyalty (adapted from Gryna et al., 2009)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Customer satisfaction</th>
<th>Customer loyalty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What customers say – judgement about a product or service</td>
<td>What customers do – buying judgement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer thinks of purchasing from various fast food outlets in the future</td>
<td>Customer thinks of purchasing primarily from one or two suppliers in the future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company commits to bringing satisfaction to a significant number of customers</td>
<td>Company identifies strategic customers and “brings satisfaction to them”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company evaluates customer satisfaction basically with the product or service for a spectrum of customers</td>
<td>Company measures satisfaction with all aspects of interaction with strategic customers and also their intentions to post-purchase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company evaluates satisfaction primarily for current customers</td>
<td>Company analyses and learns the reasons behind customers’ defections (loss)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company focuses on maintaining competitive levels in quality for a spectrum of customers</td>
<td>Company continuously adds value by creating new products or services based on evolving needs of key customers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additionally, satisfaction relates to what customers say – their impressions about a product or service. Customer loyalty, however, relates to what customers do – their purchasing decision or intentions.
Mackay, Mostert and Petzer (2015, 45-59) and Gryna et al. (2009, 61-73) assert that loyal customers not only offer long-term business but also contribute to other benefits such as:

- Bringing fresh revenue to the firm by referring other potential customers
- Joining forces in the development of new products
- Paying a price premium
- Purchasing other products from the fast food outlets

Brink and Berndt (2004, 58-89) write that customer loyalty reveals Customer Relationship Management (CRM) strength, which includes having a spectrum of customers who are repurchasing and then being happy with their experiences. Thus, loyalty implies that customers are attached to purchasing products and services from the same fast food outlet and they are able to withstand the activities of the competition striving to attract their support. Customer loyalty forms an association between the fast food outlet and its customers and the positive impression of the business explains the association. Consequently, by ensuring a high degree of customer loyalty, the firm can greatly attain reduced customer loss rates, which possibly inspire favourable rates of customer loyalty. Brink and Berndt (2004, 58-89) suggest the following guidelines for building customer loyalty:

- Keeping ongoing communication with customers by means of email promotions and notes to say thanks
- Reserving special and appropriate treatment for the company’s personnel to expect them to treat customers likewise
- Revealing that the company prioritises care and remembers the preferences related to what customers appreciate and do not appreciate
- Building loyalty by rewarding customers for choosing the company over its competitors
- Building loyalty by compensating customers for buying from the fast food outlet rather than its competitors
In short, a firm builds up customer loyalty by treating individuals the way they like to be treated. The more customers become loyal, the longer they continue to purchase from the same supplier. This also explains the repurchasing behaviour/decision of the customers in the future.

Furthermore, Persson (2013, 857–876) asserts that the increase in profitability related to customer loyalty effort happens because of the following:

- The costs of procurement emerge right toward the initiative face of the relationship, which means that the more extensive the relationship, the lower the optimised costs.
- Account up-keeping cost decreases as a percentage rate of the aggregate (total) costs.
- Long-term customers have the tendency to be more resistant to deviating and are less price sensitive. This can bring about stable unit sales volumes and increments in revenues.
- Long-term customers have a tendency to be fulfilled by their association with the fast food outlet and are less inclined to switch to competitors.
- Long-term customers are likely to buy subordinate items and high-edge complimental items.
- Recurrent customers seem less costly to benefit on the ground where they are acquainted with the procedures included; they require fewer “instructions” and also are steady in their request arrangements.
- Excellent results in customer retention or loyalty are testimony to the fast food outlet itself regarding work well done. Besides, employees who are happy with their different tasks reversely translate that happiness into customer satisfaction, which in return promotes loyalty.

Fast food outlets that consistently satisfy their customers are able to achieve high levels of retention and profitability owing to high levels of customer loyalty. So a good
understanding of expectations and perceptions of service by customers is vital to the success of a fast food outlet.

2.8 Customer satisfaction and long-term fast food outlet success

Marketing experts and management consider customer service quality to be necessary to the success of a fast food outlet (Kristensen, Dahlgaard and Kanji, 1992, 123-128; McColl-Kennedy and Schneider, 2000, 883-896; Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman, 1996, 31-46). In the food industry, fast food outlets that are competitive in the industry are those that offer high service quality as assessed through surveys based on customer satisfaction. In addition they further perceive higher economic returns than competitors that are less service-oriented. Long-term success of a fast food outlet is significantly explained by satisfied customers and the relationship that connects customer satisfaction and customer repurchasing behaviour.

When customers are satisfied, the degree of customer loyalty also rises, which, in turn, contributes further to the fast food outlet’s revenue (Mohsan, Muhammad, Sarfraz and Shaukat, 2011, 45-61). For instance, Coelho and Henseler (2012, 331–356) and Jones and Sasser (2006, 88-99), in reporting on Xerox Corporation’s feasibility analysis, demonstrated that when its customers were fully satisfied, these customers were six times more likely to repurchase Xerox items than were its “merely satisfied” customers. From the same perspective, the research undertaken by O’Guinn, Allen and Semenik (2006, 171-187) showed that about 65 per cent of the standard service providers’ revenues come from its present satisfied customers and that 91 per cent of customers who are not satisfied will under no circumstances buy again from the service provider that disappointed them. Service quality is a combination of logical processes that are linked to customer repurchasing behaviour and profitability (Emery and Barker, 2007, 90-101). In addition, the higher customer satisfaction is, the lower customer complaints are, and the higher customer loyalty is as well. This indicates that customers are motivated to come back for more services.

Anderson and Fornell (2000, 869-883) assume that the mission of any fast food outlet is to strive continually to compete in creating highly delighted customers. Financial
specialists are interested in fast food outlets that provide high quality products or services to their customers. It is extremely difficult or nearly impossible to sustain fast food outlet success with low customer satisfaction. It is not the quantity of products and/or services that a fast food outlet is able to provide that directs its success, but rather how efficient the fast food outlet is in satisfying its customers.

Customer satisfaction is necessary for long-term success of organisations in general and fast food outlets in particular. Customers who are not satisfied with these same fast food outlets may not only go elsewhere but also turn to engaged champions and convince others to go elsewhere too (Tarofder, Nikhashemi and Azam, 2016, 516-535). That is to say, for fast food outlets to be efficient, they need to provide timely, consistent, quality meals and services that directly satisfy their customers from the general public and in the hospitality industry as well.

In addition, the aim of any fast food outlet is to increase or improve its profitability levels. So the increased customer satisfaction also explains the increase in the value of a fast food outlet’s customer assets and future revenue (Mohsan et al., 2011, 45-61). According to Garvin in Foster (2010, 26-39), customer satisfaction is a driving force for reducing price agitations for current customers. When customers are happy regarding the goods or services they receive, they are willing or motivated to pay for the gains they receive and are likely to be broad-minded if prices increase. This demonstrates once again the importance of loyal customers as discussed in Section 2.7 (Customer satisfaction versus customer loyalty). Inadequate customer satisfaction leads to significant turnover of customer base and attracting new customers who may be satisfied by competitors is a hard, costly and resource-consuming task to undertake.

Furthermore, high customer satisfaction establishes a good relationship between the customer and the supplier and also lowers the costs of providing the service or the product. For instance, a fast food outlet does not need to use a great number of resources to attract new customers where it has high levels of customer satisfaction. Highly satisfied customers are potentially expected to purchase more frequently and in significant quantity and are also likely to buy other products and services provided by the fast food outlet (Reichheld and Sasser, 2001, 105-111). So consistently providing
products and services that please customers should enable the fast food outlet to increase its profitability, which implies long-term fast food outlet success.

The aim of this study included the assessment of customer satisfaction in FFO1, FFO2 and FFO3 fast food outlets and the identification of customers that are highly satisfied with the service they receive. The study also aimed to find out whether these customers are likely to come back to the same fast food outlet in the future.

2.9 Creating satisfied customers

In order to gain satisfied customers, a firm needs to understand the dimensions of quality discussed in Section 2.5.1 (Conceptualisation of customer service quality), which are: Reliability, Assurance, Tangibles, Empathy and Responsiveness. In any industry, before buying goods or receiving a service, customers have a certain degree of quality in mind (Zeithaml, Parasuraman and Berry, 1990, 61-72). This assumption is used to assess the quality of the current service or product and the expected outcome will lead to dissatisfied or satisfied customers. The setting up of satisfied customers follows the process outlined in Figure 4 below.
In certain instances, marketing and bad experiences could change customers’ views of perceived quality. However, as indicated by Goodman, Ward and Broetzmann (2002, 73-78), a great number of reasons for customer disappointment are not traceable to production, to employees’ errors and/or to service defects. Thus, the effective utilisation of the product or service by customers may require an understanding that could match or exceed their specific expectations. This could somehow be the responsibility of marketing efforts, to keep customers informed.

A fast food outlet must put in place a system of measurement of satisfaction in order to better understand its customers. This helps the fast food outlet in always obtaining feedback regarding its products or services and also helps better meet customers’
expectations. Additionally, it will also enable the fast food outlet to get a better understanding of its customers and foresee its customers’ requirements to deliver outcomes that exceed expectations. Without satisfied customers, fast food outlets cannot be successful (O’Guinn et al., 2006, 171-187).

2.9.1 Employees’ role in creating satisfied customers

According to Ahmad, Wasay and Malik (2012, 531-539), a fast food outlet’s customers define quality according to the way they are treated by its workforce. They write that setting up satisfied customers occurs through the staff’s excellent service delivery during the Moment-Of-Truth, also known as “customer-employee contacts”. Every employee in contact with customers presents a fast food outlet with an opportunity to create a positive impression in the mind of its customers. While management thinks about the quality of goods and services in the marketplace in terms of the Moment-Of-Truth as an instance that gives the firm the opportunity to leave a great impression (quality) in the mind of its customers, it is clear that management is not in control of quality as managers cannot be present at all Moments-Of-Truth to supervise employees and make sure that they handle customers in the way they want or expect (Löfgren, Witell and Gustafsson, 2008, 463-474). This implies that managers must rely on the workforce to handle the Moment-Of-Truth effectively and in this way improve customer satisfaction levels. Thus, the creation of customer satisfaction is obtained through the employees that represent the fast food outlet.

No matter how good the primary service and how brilliant the marketing plan are, they amount to nothing if there is a breakdown at the most critical interface: the point where the employee of the fast food outlet interacts with a customer (the Moment-Of-Truth). The dedicated employee in fast food outlets is committed to delivering great service and responding to consumer concerns. According to Leo (2012, 414-420), the procedure of interaction carries the voice of the customer deep down the fast food outlet; this suggests that a consumer whose voice is understood deep down the fast food outlet drives revenues by becoming a repeat customer and spreading positive news about the fast food outlet through word of mouth (WOM).
However, for fast food outlets such as the three investigated in this study to be on top of the competition in the food industry by creating satisfied customers, these fast food outlets need to be better than the food competition in terms of identifying and managing the process of service delivery.

2.10 Effect of perceived value on customer satisfaction

Perceived value includes the benefit that a product or service displays in the customer’s mind. It is not necessarily influenced by the market price of the product and depends on the capability of the service or product to fulfil customer needs and wants (Business Dictionary Android, 2014). Kotler and Keller (2009, 242-248) view perceived value as the distinction between the potential customer’s examination of the total advantages and the total costs of providing. Perceived value significantly affects customer satisfaction from a business perspective because of its ability to “pull in” or attract customers. Perceived value, as a consequence, is seen as a component of customer satisfaction.

Scholars have established ideal structures for integrating customer perceived value and customer satisfaction (Flores and Parraga, 2015, 15-25). The suggested junction between perceived value and customer satisfaction is clearly strengthened by value-confirmation experiences. Once a unique acquisition of a service or product is executed, a customer generally expects less cost against greater value. In simple terms, a customer constantly expects to perceive high value. If anything goes wrong after the billing process, that unexpected situation will reduce or increase the cost suffered or benefit perceived. In that case, the perceived value has undergone modifications or alternatively the perceived value is adjusted. The customer is then likely to become either satisfied or dissatisfied and that extensively acts on customer expectations of perceived value, their purchasing behaviour and overall customer satisfaction (Flores and Parraga, 2015, 15-25). So the overall high service value perceived by customers has a positive impact on the degree of customer satisfaction.

In addition, the suggested association between perceived value and customer satisfaction is endorsed by the fact that in circumstances where a fast food outlet
displays a multi-choice of options, customers not only consume value but they also select options that create value for themselves and then increase their overall service or product satisfaction.

![Perceived value: Customer satisfaction (adapted from Flores and Parraga, 2015)](image)

**Figure 5 – Perceived value: Customer satisfaction (adapted from Flores and Parraga, 2015)**

Referring to Figure 5 (Perceived value: Customer satisfaction), perceived benefits or advantages represent the product, for instance the flavour of a burger, and include the service that the customer encounters along the purchasing process. Perceived benefits also provide the link between the supplier (service provider) and the customer, which is not shown in Figure 5. Machado and Diggines (2012, 23-26) suggest that customers are often inspired to deal with service providers with whom they have developed close relationships. Customers evaluate the importance of these relationships to finally value the usefulness of interacting with trustworthy partners.

Perceived sacrifice (on the right of the figure) is identified with the full expenses related to the acquisition of the product. This is seen not only as monetary costs, but also costs
in terms of the energy and time required to accomplish the purchasing process. The psychological sacrifice (which is not mentioned in Figure 5) is also important in cases where customers start wondering after the purchase of a specific product whether they have made the right decision.

Thus, perceived value not only contributes to perceived benefits and perceived sacrifice (seen as negative from a customer perspective) but also has a significant influence on customer satisfaction, meaning the higher the perceived value is the greater satisfaction levels are.

2.11 Measuring customer satisfaction

As outlined in Section 2.9, feedback from customers is crucial to a fast food outlet's performance. Customer feedback accomplishes the customer-driven quality process depicted in Figure 4 (The process of creating a satisfied customer, in Section 2.9) above. Narasimhan (2006, 321-336) declares that the collection of information about customer satisfaction gives an opportunity to apprehend customer perceptions related to how well the fast food outlet is doing in meeting or exceeding customer expectations. This information also enables the identification of sources of low satisfaction and drivers of satisfaction. It also allows the fast food outlet to proceed with a benchmarking analysis against its competitors regarding its performance, to assist planning and create more excellent strategic opening moves.

Furthermore, the benchmarking analysis facilitates the disclosure of areas that require improvement; for example, in the design and delivery of services and products and areas for potential training and adjustment of employees (Hockey and Hyesung, 2013, 212-232). It enables fast food outlets to pursue trends and then establish whether mutations currently undertaken turn into improvements. In addition, measuring customer satisfaction enables the fast food outlet to identify customers who are likely to purchase from it again because a satisfied customer is likely to revisit the firm sooner or later, but a dissatisfied customer is extremely difficult to entice back to the same firm.

Nevertheless, measuring customer satisfaction is not that easy because customer satisfaction is a subjective frame of mind (Evans and Lindsay, 2008, 42-45). Customer
satisfaction is obviously associated with customer attitudes but every single one of them is unequal and exclusive in their specific personal manner, which means that they have divergent expectations over time.

Various methods of assessing customer satisfaction have been developed and implemented to keep track of customer satisfaction in many mass-production (manufacturing) and service sectors. In this study, the measure that was implemented is the **SERVQUAL Model**.

### 2.11.1 SERVQUAL Model

SERVQUAL illustrates service quality on the basis of the discordance between customers’ expectations of the service provider and customers’ perceptions of the service actually received (Chingang and Lukong, 2010, 41-44). It does this by requiring respondents to provide answers to questions related to their different expectations and perceptions (Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, 1988, 12-40).

The SERVQUAL Model has been used by numerous sectors (ranging from manufacturing to service sectors) and it is an “off-the-shelf” application that can be used in various service circumstances. The SERVQUAL Model is an instrument that has several advantages (Foster, 2007, 76-85). Among these are the following:

- The SERVQUAL instrument had been approved as a worldwide measurement in evaluating distinctive elements related to service quality.
- Research outcomes have shown that it is substantial in solving issues in the service sector and specifically in the fast food industry.
- It has proven to be trustworthy and provides consistent final outcomes. In simple terms, its interpretation strives to be consistent to different researchers.
- The SERVQUAL instrument is generally restricted to 22 statements for each perception and expectation, which are easily and quickly completed by a fast food outlet’s employees and/or customers.
- Lastly, the analysis of procedures and results of the instrument are standardised in order to standardise improvement procedures as well.
In addition, the application of service expected as opposed to current service perceived makes the SERVQUAL instrument a psychological measure that is associated with satisfaction (Parasuraman et al., 1988, 12-40). The discrepancy between expectations and perceptions is known as a “gap” and described as the interpreting indicator of a customer’s perception levels of service quality, as displayed in Figure 6 – Measuring service quality using the SERVQUAL Model, below.

**SERVQUAL Dimensions**

- Tangibles
- Reliability
- Responsiveness
- Assurance
- Empathy

**External Factors influencing expectation**

**Expectation** (Expected Service)

**Perception** (Perceived Service)

**Perceived Service Quality**

**Gap 5**

*Figure 6 – Measuring service quality using the SERVQUAL Model (adapted from Kumar, Kee and Charles, 2010)*

As depicted in the diagram above, customers’ expectations greatly depend on external factors and these factors are under the control of the service provider. In accordance with Kumar et al.’s (2010, 351-377) study, *Gap 5* shown in Figure 6 indicates the difference between expectations and perceptions.

This study focuses on this gap; both expectations and perceptions are seen from the fast food outlets’ perspective. The gap is identified and analysed in the study to help the researcher to assess customer satisfaction and afterwards predict customers who are or not likely to revisit FFO1, FFO2 and FFO3 outlets in the future.
2.11.2 Criticisms of the SERVQUAL Model

Regardless of the worldwide use of the SERVQUAL method as an instrument for tracking down service quality, aspects of the instrument have been subject to numerous criticisms. According to AbuKhalifeh and Som (2012, 135-141), three main concerns related to the use of the SERVQUAL Model have been brought up since it was initially presented. The first of these is the psychometric characteristics of the measurement. This measurement assesses an individual's capacity to think, particularly with the specific end goal of deciding how acceptable they are for specific activities. The second concern is the association of quality and satisfaction and the third concern is the application of the gap analysis (difference scores) to determine how customers perceive service quality. A synopsis of these criticisms is presented in the paragraphs below.

Regarding the psychometric characteristics of the SERVQUAL Model, a number of researchers have come up with corresponding Cronbach’s alpha reliability coefficients for the five dimensions that make up the SERVQUAL instrument (AbuKhalifeh and Som, 2012, 135-141) and are almost as identically high as Parasuraman et al.’s (1988, 12-40) results for Cronbach’s alpha. These results substantiate the internal reliability or cohesiveness of the scale items that make up each dimension. Nevertheless, the validity of the method has created major concerns as well. Nearly all studies report on the significant overlap among the SERVQUAL dimension statements, particularly among the responsiveness, assurance and empathy dimensions (Lee-Ross, 2008, 46-61). Convergent validity has also been cross-examined because none of the factor-loading patterns in the study reports correspond to those accomplished by Parasuraman et al. (1988, 12-40).

Harmonious validity has been subject to questioning as well and some fascinating results have been documented. AbuKhalifeh and Som (2012, 135-141) discovered that the scores regarding perception are more strongly related to other dependent standards (overall quality) than are the current SERVQUAL scores known as the differences of perception minus expectation scores.
According to O’Connor, Shewchuk and Carney (2003, 32-39), with regard to the linkage between the instrument and satisfaction, a study conducted in a health care sector declared that certain dimensions of the initial SERVQUAL measurement were not clearly and properly used as adequate predictors of customer satisfaction.

Coming to the application of the gap analysis to evaluate quality, Gounaris (2005, 125-135) reports two potential issues regarding discerning validity that are directly related to the application of difference scores. Difference score measures appear to be normally less reliable than non-difference score measures. Thus, they seem to have discerning validity because such measures are not regularly certain. Empirical investigations by well-known researchers have shown that the expectations related to a service’s performance could be revised right after the instrument is first used. Consequently, that is liable to reduce the reliability of difference scores based on such measures.

Furthermore, when difference scores are used to foretell certain end results about a phenomenon such as customer satisfaction, it is accepted that the elements of the difference scores have similar, but different impacts on the measure of variables.

In short, the application of the SERVQUAL Model is certain in service industry, but it also has a downside that needs to be taken into consideration in order to achieve reliable objectives.

2.11.3 Utilisation of the SERVQUAL Model

Despite superficial concerns regarding the SERVQUAL Model, various researchers and practitioners continue to recognise the usefulness of the instrument for managing and assessing quality of services (Ladhari, 2009, 172-198), which makes it particularly useful for the current study. Moreover, Pitt, Watson and Kavan (2008, 173-187) report: “Practitioners need a standard model which provides the potentiality for cross-industry and cross-functional comparisons.” In this regard the instrument is the preferred instrument for the current study since the focus is on customers only.
Nevertheless, it is critically important to remember that the instrument scale should not be applied as it is in every circumstance. According to Ladhari (2009, 172-198), researchers should at all times:

- Adjust the SERVQUAL method to establish their own instrument that explains or is related to the context in which the study is being undertaken
- Double-evaluate and/or analyse the SERVQUAL instrument following the collection of data by determining its validity and reliability

The assessment of service quality in FFO1, FFO2 and FFO3 is potentially a good indicator of different areas where customers are not satisfied. This assessment then allows the researcher to determine whether the patronage of these customers will be probable in the future after the service has been received.

2.12 Factors that influence customer satisfaction in fast food outlets

Customer satisfaction is viewed differently across a number of industry functions, over various regional characteristics, and for institutions and/or individuals (Center for the Study of Social Policy, 2007). The conception of an approach is completely distinct when it comes to services and products. The approach of this literature review has been to demonstrate the importance of quality in services and products, in satisfaction and extensively in customer behaviour, all in the areas of support and regarding the utility’s (that is, the service or product) accomplishing the original objective for which it was made and then purchased.

According to Sahin, Demir, Celik and Teke (2006, 15-21), in a study that investigated whether customers were delighted with the food service delivery in the military hospital in Turkey (Eurasia), particular regional backgrounds were not of significant importance in influencing the patients’ satisfaction, but the physical appearance and taste of the food were of significant importance. A study conducted by Sahin et al. (2006, 15-21) in Jiangsu Province (China) that attempted to determine the variation in food first-choices between students of distinct socio-regional characteristics and backgrounds found that social and cultural factors as well as environmental and indigenous factors motivated the students’ food preferences. These factors led to different appreciations of food
quality by the students, who did not appreciate food quality for the reasons that they were not familiar with the food, they did not exhaustively appreciate the food and/or they had certain cultural beliefs regarding food related to their different regional backgrounds. While this is somehow restricted, it demonstrates the trends of the intricacies in the aspects surrounding the concept of satisfaction, which some scholars still try to define definitively.

Baileyt and Pearson (2008) conducted a study to identify certain factors that affected customer satisfaction with computers that had been designed to meet the computer users’ needs (customisation). These factors were found to be: quality of the product, reliability, flexibility, specification of preferences, expectations and security. In another study, a survey related to an online education system revealed that transparency and communication aptitudes were the core factors that affected (positively) students' satisfaction and contributed to their learning performance (Brady and Cronin, 2001, 34-49).

However, quality of services and products is determined by what the customer is familiar with and is also considered among the essential components of customer satisfaction (Yarmen and Sumaedi, 2015, 119-131). Thus, each customer will call for several degrees and combinations of these variables.

Matzler and Sauerwein (2002, 314-332) classify factors that influence consumer satisfaction into three categories as outlined below.

**Primary factors**: these are the basic requirements that are needed in a service or a product to keep customers from being disappointed (Sabir, Ghafoor, Hafeez, Akhtar and Rehman, 2014, 869-876). They do not absolutely add value to the fulfilment of satisfaction; however, they contribute to disappointment if they are not present. These factors are likely to participate in the prompt achievement of the basic requirements of the production of a product and/or delivery of a service. Besides, they are part of the fundamental dimensions of a service or product. They do not greatly affect satisfaction, however, despite the fact that they are basically a prerequisite in achieving satisfaction.
**Performance factors**: these factors directly result in satisfaction if fulfilled and can also result in disappointment (dissatisfaction) if their performance is low. These factors admit reliability and friendliness and result in the characteristics of the performance and overall satisfaction being aligned and well balanced. Specifically, these factors are immediately linked to definite needs and wants of customers, so a fast food outlet should strive to incorporate them to compete (Yonela, 2009, 62-68).

**Excitement factors**: these factors increase the degree of customer satisfaction if delivered, although they do not contribute to dissatisfaction/disappointment if they are not present. These factors amaze customers and give rise to *excitement* (Yonela, 2009, 62-68).

By identifying these categories of factors, a fast food outlet can positively separate itself from its competitors.

### 2.13 Customer repurchasing behaviour/decision

Repurchasing behaviour is defined as the likelihood of revisiting a service provider in the future on the basis of past experience (Coelho and Henseler, 2012, 331-356; Tarofder et al., 2016, 516-535). Jones, Mothersbaugh and Beatty (2003, 701-712) describe the “repurchasing decision” as “customer behavioural intentions” that determine the tendency to keep on or not purchasing the quantity of services from the same supplier. Andres and Yogesh (2009, 555-565) suggest that a preliminary analysis can take into consideration that the function of service performance in the fast food sector can have a significant impact on customer repurchasing frequency. Thus, in order for a fast food outlet to determine the propensity of the behaviour of their current customers regarding the same service/product, they have to conduct a few surveys. These surveys are able to help the fast food outlet to collect relevant data and interpret it as meaningful information to explain customer repurchasing behaviour.

Customers make comparisons of services according to their expectations and are therefore satisfied or dissatisfied. This, in turn, can substantially influence the decision-making process for a corresponding purchase from the same fast food outlet in the future. If customers are delighted with the service received, they are likely to revisit the
service provider in the future. In consideration of whether they are being satisfied or not, customers are keen to disseminate positive or negative feedback about the service they have received.

To evaluate the likelihood of customers coming back, Zeithaml et al. (1996, 31-46) used the variables loyalty, switch, pay more, external response, and internal responses to accomplish their assessment study. Olaru, Purchase and Peterson (2008, 554-565) made use of repurchasing intention and WOM to assess the customers’ overall repurchasing decisions, WOM being a procedure by which customers who have used a service before communicate their experiences (positive/negative) to other customers who intend to buy the products (File and Prince, 2011, 25-29).

Customers who have not yet experienced or completely appreciated the characteristics of a sure service might typically rely on WOM to gain more insight. When external marketing strategy is put in line with WOM, it is clear that WOM is a driving force for the customer’s state of mind and behaviour.

Earlier studies mainly explored repurchasing intentions because the researchers needed to stimulate service quality (Cronin and Taylor, 1992, 55-68), which was considered as substantially important for a customer’s repurchasing decision. This suggests that outstanding service quality is likely to lead to positive repurchasing intentions of customers. According to Ying-Feng et al. (2009, 887-896), in the research of website and online shopping, the service quality experienced by online users was found to be positively associated with continuing use and referral.

In the previous decade, collaborative management leaders and marketing leaders used service perception to assess customers’ repurchasing intentions (Eggert and Ulaga, 2002, 107-118). In the investigation of the impact of perceived service on repurchasing intentions of customers, scholars (Eggert and Ulaga, 2002, 107-118) believe that perceived service has direct effects on the repurchasing intention/decision.

Szymanski and Henard (2001, 16-35) conclude that one of the positive consequences of customer satisfaction is repeat purchasing, referred to in the current study as “repurchasing behaviour”. They also discuss loyalty as an outcome of customer
satisfaction and suggest three stages of customer loyalty: cognitive (cognitive loyalty is directed toward the brand/store/service because of the information with respect to product attributes); affective (loyalty indicates the commitment to and liking of the brand/store/service); and conative (this reflects the intention of rebuying or repurchasing).

2.14 Conclusion

This chapter explored the literature related to the assurance of service quality and how it helps shape perceived service not only in the service sector in general but also in the fast food industry in particular. The chapter highlighted the impact of service quality on fast food outlets and mostly on customers, who are the primary asset of any fast food outlet. The review of the literature demonstrated that once customers are satisfied with the service received there is a greater chance of these customers patronising the service provider in the future. In other words, service quality well sustained represents a competitive advantage that enables the provider to resist increased competition that results from the fact that the service sector is on the rise. This chapter also discussed means that could be used to evaluate whether customers are satisfied or not with the perceived service on a regular basis in order for a fast food outlet to keep track of its customer spectrum.
3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the overall methodology choices in line with the study research questions and objectives. The chapter discusses the type of the research under consideration. It also explains the procedures undertaken for data collection and the design of the data-collection instrument. Finally, the tools and methods used to analyse data are described in this chapter.

3.2 Methodology

Myers (2013, 123-146) regards research methodology as a systematic and organised investigation that starts from fundamental assumptions of the thesis under consideration and progresses to the research design. The phenomenological approach has been adopted by this study because the emphasis is on gathering deep information about the phenomenon and representing it from the perspective of the research participants. Collis and Hussey (2009, 289-295) describe the phenomenological approach as the understanding of human behaviour from the respondents’ own perspective; and that reflects the aim of this research.

The methodology that was used in this study is the quantitative method. It is conventionally used by physical scientists and educational researchers, although financial specialists and social scientists have made use of this style of research as well (Babbie, 2013, 141-160). As illustrated by Creswell (2003, 23-36), a quantitative approach is objective in that it searches for descriptive principles and it also quantifies what it considers to be a stationary certainty in order to establish general laws.

The quantitative approach is used in this research to elicit a description of service quality across a number of fast food outlets through the establishment of questionnaires in regard to the five dimensions of service quality and aspects of customer behaviour.
The choice of using questionnaires is justified by the fact that the research deals with customers who are in a hurry waiting for their food and approaching available customers does not require an appointment as an interview would. Thus, questionnaires were distributed to a sample of respondents from these three fast food outlets: FFO1, FFO2 and FFO3. This approach surveys a large number of customers’ views and applies statistical techniques to recognise the overall patterns of customer expectations and perceptions of dimensions of service quality delivery towards potential repeat purchases.

A largely quantitative research strategy was chosen because it allows the adequate evaluation of variables that arise from the SERVQUAL dimensions of “tangibles”, “responsiveness”, “reliability”, “assurance” and “empathy” and because the literature reviewed often reveals significant disparities between customers’ behaviour concerning their expectations and perceptions of service quality encountered. This strategy was also a good ground for the researcher to identify these disparities and then stipulate the degree of the relationship among SERVQUAL dimensions. It would also give the study findings adequate reliability and validity. At a later stage the researcher was able to predict customer repeat purchasing intentions by looking at the results of service quality and customer satisfaction. Figure 7 (The process map of the activities of the research methodology) below presents the research methodology and the important activities undertaken as spelt out in this chapter.
3.3 Research approach

Bryman and Bell (2007, 248-67) explain that a research approach that establishes the relationship between theory and data is considered as both inductive and deductive.

In this study, the inductive style was predominantly employed. The study collected data regarding the respondents’ views about the research topic from three fast food outlets in Johannesburg Central. A system of ideas was then established to elaborate on the outcome of the analysis, based on the research strategy, with the aim of drawing up
general laws. The deductive style was applied on a lesser scale. It was based on the current theory behind the SERVQUAL method, which was used to assess the difference between service expectations and perceptions of customers regarding the fast food outlets being studied. SERVQUAL prioritises customer expectations and perceptions on the basis of five dimensions (tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy) of service quality. It was essential to the study to ascertain how FFO1, FFO2 and FFO3 customers appraise the service quality that they receive on a daily basis. SERVQUAL was also used to establish customer repurchasing behaviour patterns. The concern was to investigate whether SERVQUAL is reliable in demonstrating the importance of service quality in the fast food outlets. The choice behind the use of this instrument is explained in the literature review Section 2.11.1, which indicates that this instrument has demonstrated its usefulness when it comes to evaluating service quality through customer expectations and perceptions. Therefore, the use of SERVQUAL for this study is a good ground for further evaluating its reliability in the fast food sector.

In this study, the SERVQUAL method is mainly used to measure service quality and customer satisfaction, and a customer is motivated to revisit in the future if he/she is satisfied. This means that the method can be used to establish the impacts of being aware of how consumers perceive service quality in the fast food outlet and also of factors that could likely influence the current perceptions. The researcher is able to come up with findings and conclusions on service quality perceptions and to identify the dimensions that significantly influence satisfaction or dissatisfaction, and the repurchase intentions of customers.

### 3.4 Research design

Research design is described as an arrangement or system of strategies utilised by a researcher to achieve his or her end objectives (Mouton and Babbie, 2001, 150-169). Research design stipulates a structure for collecting and analysing data as elaborated on in the sections below. According to Bryman and Bell (2007, 322-341), there are several distinctive styles of research design that research can adopt to align with the aims of the study under consideration. Among these styles, the current research strategically adopted the “social survey” style, which consists of the collection of
significant quantitative information regarding a social issue (service quality in this case) at a single point in time and permits the development of different relationships, in this case between customer opinions of service quality dimensions within FFO1, FFO2 and FFO3. In other words, social survey content is social or related to human habits. The type of information it derives is systematic, organised and based on the outcomes of the dimensions. The strategy of the investigation depends on differentiations across fast food outlets. This type of design is therefore a good fit for the current research.

### 3.4.1 Questionnaire design

A questionnaire was chosen as the measuring instrument of the research. A questionnaire consists of a sequence of questions and other prompts for the purpose of collecting meaningful information from respondents of the population of interest (Brace, 2008, 15-28). A questionnaire should clearly express the overall philosophy of the research without any unnecessary words or ambiguity from the respondents’ perspective. Geoff (2014) emphasises the following principles for a questionnaire to be compliant with the study:

- Be clear and accurate
- Response decisions should not overlap and should be exhaustive
- Use a natural and familiar language
- Avoid the utilisation of words or phrases that show bias
- Avoid double-barrelled questions
- Specify explicit alternatives
- Questions should meet the criteria of validity and reliability

The dimensions of the SERVQUAL method theoretically used to measure service quality in the three fast food outlets were significantly employed to perform the survey. A Likert scale was used in this study. In simple terms, a five-point scale (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree) was employed to quantify the opinions of respondents. The options in the five-point scale were used to specify their levels of agreement with the statements mostly in Sections B and C of the questionnaire (Leedy and Ormrod, 2013, 42-88).
The questionnaire was designed in such a manner that more general questions related to the topic were initially asked, followed by the more specific questions in order to create a flowing effect. All the questions were closed questions and multiple-choice questions. This facilitated tabulating and comparing findings easily.

The questionnaire was divided into three subsections:

**Section A** of the questionnaire contained questions aimed at obtaining general information about the respondents regarding demographical details, monthly average expenditure, age and gender.

**Section B** of the questionnaire contained questions regarding customer perceived service quality. This section was based on the SERVQUAL measuring instrument developed by Parasuraman et al. (1985, 41-50) as discussed in Chapter 2 (literature review). The instrument was used to measure the service quality of the three targeted fast food outlets: FFO1, FFO2 and FFO3, based on the five quality dimensions. The dimensions are subdivided into 22 statements. Since quality is considered as the antecedent of customer satisfaction, this section was considered essential in determining customer satisfaction (Cronin and Taylor, 1992, 55-68). It was also expected to provide a primary indication of customer intentions for further visits in the future.

In line with the SERVQUAL Model, the statements were split off into two parts; the first part focused on the expectations of customers and the second part sought to evaluate their perceptions. The reason for choosing this instrument is that customer perceptions and expectations have been found to be reliably measured by this instrument (Zeithaml et al., 1990, 102-113) as also applied by other authors in previous studies in this fast food industry. The development of a new instrument was not necessary since a reputable way of using the SERVQUAL instrument was already available.

**Section C.** This section aimed to predict customer behaviour/repeat purchases of customers and the likelihood of previous/current customers continuing to buy from the three fast food outlets being studied. In other words, the section extended the impacts of customer satisfaction to the future patronage or not of these customers, and therefore
elicited a detailed description of customer intentions in relation to the service experienced in FFO1, FFO2 and FFO3. This section also established a link between SERVQUAL findings and findings of customer behaviour in order to understand the impact of the service quality in these fast food outlets. Additionally, the design of a questionnaire regarding repurchasing behaviour was motivated by the fact that customer satisfaction is essential for future purchases. This suggests that the design is suitable for testing that potential conjunction (Ying-Feng et al., 2009, 887-896). Thus, these questions have been designed to elicit customer attitude after service perception.

The ease of use of this questionnaire lay in its ability to be completed in approximately 10 minutes by any given respondent. (A copy of the questionnaire with instructions is attached in Appendix 1 – Questionnaire.)

3.5 Target population

In the opinion of Leedy and Ormrod (2013, 214-216), a population consists of the collection of elements (people, organisations) with similar characteristics and all these elements are relevant to the problem under consideration. The study is based on three fast food outlets: FFO1, FFO2 and FFO3. The fast food outlets examined were located in Johannesburg Central precisely around the geographical locations of Auckland Park, Braamfontein, the Randburg area, Fordsburg, Newtown and Sophia town / Newlands. In total the researcher identified 19 fast food outlets in these areas. The reason behind the choice of these areas is that these areas are surrounded by a lot of offices and a good number of colleges and universities. This means that the fast food outlets in these areas are patronised by workers and students. In addition these areas were considered some of the safest in Johannesburg Central. Some areas such as Inner Parktown and Inner Hillbrow were excluded for safety reasons. However, after a short observation undertaken by the researcher in Campus Square shopping centre and the suburb of Melville, areas where the three fast food outlets were located were considered representative of the fast food outlets investigated. The researcher estimated that a minimum of 15 customers per day visited each fast food outlet. As the interest of the study was in customers, so the population of interest was N= 285 (19 x 15) individuals around the said areas who had frequented one of the three fast food outlets at least
once. This population number was chosen because, after an observation undertaken in the fast food outlets in Auckland Park, it was clear that the number of customers that visited anyone of these fast food outlets per day was greater than 15. Hence, 15 customers per day was chosen in order to be more accurate regarding the margin of customers per day.

3.6 Sampling method

Hair, Bush and Ortinau (2012, 211-216) describe sampling as the characteristic in which the researcher makes a deliberate selection of a number of participants from a large population of interest with the expectation that the information gathered is necessary to reach an effective conclusion about the large group. The samples are then drawn in a manner that is representative of all the potential respondents of the entire population.

The appropriate sampling technique for this study is “quota sampling”, which is considered as a non-probability sampling technique in which the accumulated sample requires the similar proportions of individuals from the entire population with respect to known attributes and traits (Denscombe, 2010, 24-26). Quota sampling operates similarly to the stratified sampling technique by creating groups or classes (strata) that are used in the representation of the larger population in a larger geographical area (Babbie, 2013, 71-78). To achieve this, the population was primarily divided into sub-geographical locations that were located around a specific fast food outlet of interest. The researcher established the proportions of these sub-groups in the given population and in this way respondents were selected to represent the entire population. So no respondents from non-selected sub-groups were included in the sample. This is important because it not only helps the researcher understand the characteristics of each sub-group but also has the advantage of making certain that all the important categories that exist in the larger population are included in the sample.

3.7 Sample size

The basic rule in estimating a sample size is to choose as large a sample as possible from a larger population of interest. A large sample size maximises the feasibility that all
the statistical variables of interest in the population are truly estimated. Leedy and Ormrod (2013, 206-217) have established guidelines for choosing the size of a sample:

- For smaller populations (N=100 or fewer), the researcher should examine the entire population.
- If the size of the population is around 500, 50% should be surveyed.
- If the size of the population is around 1 500, 20% should be surveyed.
- Beyond a certain point, for instance N = 5 000, the population of size is almost irrelevant and a sample size of 400 will be acceptable.

In line with the guidelines above, the researcher adopted the second option, meaning that the adequate sample size for this study was considered to be approximately 150 customers (approximately 50 per cent of the 285 customers). However, 119 questionnaires were filled in owing to low responses from customers and management resistance (as clearly explained in Section 3.8. Data-collection method: questionnaires). Thus, samples were taken from all the geographical groups mentioned in Section 3.5 (Target population) with regard to each fast food outlet. The selection of the sample size was motivated by the objective of achieving a 95 per cent confidence level, with the assumption that a 5 per cent margin of error rate would be achieved.

3.8 Data-collection method: questionnaires

The data for this study was generated entirely from questionnaires. According to Harris and Brown (2010, 1-19), a questionnaire is merely a means of gathering and recording information related to a given problem. Questionnaires are extremely important in data collection. Table 2 – Advantage of the questionnaire, below, presents some general advantages about the use of questionnaires in the process of collecting data.
Table 2 – Advantages of the questionnaire (adapted from Mohammad et al., 2011)

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<tr>
<td>1-</td>
<td>This technique is cost and time effective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-</td>
<td>Respondent feels a great sense of anonymity (for self-administration)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-</td>
<td>The arrangement is standard for all participants and it does not depend on the mood of the interviewer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-</td>
<td>Substantial samples can be identified to cover large geographical areas and to compensate for the expected loss of respondents/questionnaires</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-</td>
<td>A more prominent measure of information over an expansive scope of subjects may be gathered</td>
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The primary target was for the researcher to administer a total of 150 questionnaires, with at least 10 questionnaires administered per day during lunch time peak hours from 11h30 to 13h30 – three days a week (from Monday to Friday) depending on the researcher’s availability. The researcher encountered numerous challenges on the ground, such as little cooperation or support from owners and managers of certain fast food outlets, who argued that distributing questionnaires in the fast food enclosure while customers were eating could be disturbing to the customers. Consequently, the number of questionnaires administered was cut down to 119 for all the fast food outlets combined. The researcher was located inside the fast food outlet dining area or sometimes outside closer to the main entrance, depending on the rules and regulations of each fast food outlet. The researcher approached at that point any person or group of customers that he judged convenient and available in or outside the fast food outlet, depending on the circumstances. He verbally explained to the respondents the purpose of the questionnaire and what the research aimed to achieve so that the respondents would have a clear understanding of the current situation and what it would mean to be involved in the study. There was also an enclosed covering letter attached to the
questionnaire which was hand-delivered to respondents by the researcher himself. At this point, the researcher politely proposed to help the respondent fill in the questionnaire, which was collected right after completion to avoid questionnaires being mislaid.

The advantage of distributing questionnaires in the fast food outlet’s enclosure or nearer was that customer views were up-to-date because he/she had just received or was in the process of receiving the service. It was considered one of the important aspects of this study that the respondents’ views were obtained before and after eating. This suggests that for this type of research it is important to be in the surrounding area of the fast food outlet being investigated in that specific period.

3.9 Data-analysis methods

As explained in Section 3.8, the quantitative data for this study was obtained by means of questionnaires. The acquired data was thoroughly inspected to ensure that all questions had been fully completed to prevent any incomplete data entering the analysis process. The quantitative information was analysed by using one of the most common tools in the research field: SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) version 22.0 as used by Chingang and Lukong (2010, 23-25). In reference to the research question and objectives, three types of statistical analysis were carried out with the SPSS program. These are outlined below.

Reliability analysis. According to Pallant (2013, 86-101), reliability is the extent to which the data analysis instrument is free from error and an accurate representation of the entire population of interest is assured. If the study can be carried out under these circumstances, then the research instrument is accepted as being reliable. In particular, reliability of the SERVQUAL instrument was conducted based, on one side, on respondents’ expectations and, on the other side, on respondents’ perceptions. This clearly gave a good indication of how the questionnaire operated in collecting information from customers.

Descriptive statistics describe quantitative data in a summarised fashion, specifically in the form of custom tables, bar graphs and histograms (Blanche, Durrheim and
Painter, 2006, 123-130). This form was helpful for the understanding of customer behaviour and for getting an overall understanding of the study. Descriptive statistics were used not only to assess measures of central tendency but also to assess measures of dispersion and to examine customers’ general choices. This allowed a better understanding of the differences between dimensions of service quality.

One way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to determine whether there were any significant differences among the means of expectations and perceptions of FFO1, FFO2 and FFO3 (cf. Zikmund and Babin, 2010, 36-42). ANOVA is useful in revealing the different levels of service quality as perceived by customers of these three fast food outlets through the five dimensions. For this reason the researcher used ANOVA to determine any differences in the scores of service quality dimensions (Tangibles, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance and Empathy) in order to assess comparisons between expectations and perceptions among FFO1, FFO2 and FFO3. Thus, the homogeneity tests were conducted; in case the test of homogeneity was found to be low, the robust or post hoc tests (which are the supplementary tests for ANOVA) were applied to determine the differences between the means of fast food outlets. In other terms, by determining the differences between different means it was possible to indicate the fast food outlets that recorded the highest expectation and perception rates in all five dimensions. Also, it helped determine the fast food outlet that was worst in terms of service quality and relative customer satisfaction.

While other statistical packages for analysis of data are available such as SAS (Statistical Analysis System Packages), SPSS was chosen for this study because of its user-friendly nature and wide use in studies in the fast food sector (Collis and Hussey, 2009, 289-295).

3.10 Measurement

The SERVQUAL Model was used to assess customer perceptions and expectations in regard to service quality in FFO1, FFO2 and FFO3 fast food outlets in Johannesburg Central. As previously stated, the measurement took the form of a Likert scale. This choice of scale meant that both perceptions and expectations were measured using a
five-point scale with 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree, where the higher numbers indicated higher expectations or perceptions. Perceptions were based on the actual service perceived and expectations on the anticipation of receiving services. For Fen and Meillian (2005, 60-73), service quality and satisfaction are collectively dealt with as a function of perceptions and expectations. As the central focus of this study was to demonstrate the impacts (negative or positive) of service quality on customer repurchasing behaviour, this meant that the resulting scores of differences between perceptions and expectations, also called the “gap”, would be interpreted following Parasuraman et al. (1988, 12-40) and Parasuraman et al. (1991,420-450): higher positive numbers lead to greater levels of customer satisfaction, which, in turn, could lead to a positive level of repurchasing behaviour of customers. On the other hand, negative difference scores were considered signs of underperformance of service quality, which leads to a low level of customer satisfaction, which, in turn, could lead to negative levels of repurchasing behaviour. In most cases, when perceptions are equal to expectations (P-E=0), service quality is considered as satisfactory and repurchasing is mostly predictable (Chingang and Lukong, 2010, 56). Section C of the questionnaire provided accurate guidance for the researcher to ensure the linkage of the results of the SERVQUAL instrument and repurchasing behaviour of the respondents.

3.10.1 Coding

The main variables used in this study were from the SERVQUAL items. Demographic information on respondents was collected along with information on repurchasing behaviour. To ease the process of data analysis, the researcher coded the different questions as follows:

**Demographic (DM)**

**DM1** – Specify your gender, please (male, female)

**DM2** – Specify your age range please

**DM3** – Ethnicity (population group)
DM4 – How much do you spend in this fast food outlet monthly?

SERVQUAL items

Tangibles (TA)

TA1 – This fast food outlet has modern-looking equipment.

TA2 – The venue appearance of this fast food outlet is attractive.

TA3 – This outlet’s employees are neat-appearing.

TA4 – The dining areas of this fast food outlet are perfectly clean.

Reliability (RL)

RL1 – When this outlet promises to do something by a certain time, they do so.

RL2 – When a customer has a problem, this fast food outlet shows a sincere interest in solving it.

RL3 – This fast food outlet performs the service right the first time.

RL4 – This fast food outlet provides its services at the time it promises to do so.

RL5 – This fast food outlet insists on accurate billing.

Responsiveness (RN)

RN1 – This fast food outlet serves my food exactly as I order it.

RN2 – In this fast food outlet, during busy time, employees are re-assigned if necessary in order to maintain quality service.

RN3 – In this fast food outlet, employees provide prompt and quick service to customers.

RN4 – In this fast food outlet, employees are never too busy to respond to customer requests.

Assurance (AS)
AS1 – The behaviour of employees in this fast food outlet inspires confidence in customers.

AS2 – Customers of this fast food outlet feel safe in their transactions.

AS3 – Employees in this fast food outlet are consistently courteous (respectful) with customers.

AS4 – This fast food outlet has personnel who can give accurate information about menu items, ingredients and preparation.

Empathy (EM)

EM1 – This fast food outlet gives customers individual attention.

EM2 – The employees of this fast food outlet understand the specific needs of their customers.

EM3 – Employees of this fast food outlet give customers personal attention.

EM4 – This fast food outlet has trading hours convenient to all its customers.

EM5 – This fast food outlet has its customer’s best interests at heart.

Recoding

TA – average gap score for tangible items = \((TA1+TA2+TA3+TA4)/4\)

RL – average gap score for reliability items = \((RL1+RL2+RL3+RL4+RL5)/5\)

RN – average gap score for responsiveness items = \((RN1+RN2+RN3+RN4)/4\)

AS – average gap score for assurance items = \((AS1+AS2+AS3+AS4)/4\)

EM – average gap score for empathy items = \((EM1+EM2+EM3+EM4+EM5)/5\)

OSQ – overall service quality = \((TA+RL+RN+AS+EM)/5\)
Repurchasing behaviour (RB)

RB1 – How often do you purchase from this fast food outlet?

RB2 – I will repurchase from this fast food outlet in the future.

RB3 – I will be a customer of this fast food outlet as long as it offers the best service to me.

RB4 – I will recommend this outlet to someone else/friend.

RB5 – I buy food from competitors of this fast food outlet.

3.11 Pilot test of the questionnaire

Leedy and Ormrod (2013, 195-200) state that conducting one or more brief test(s) on a small population helps the researcher determine the validity of the questionnaire by ensuring that the questions are clear and unambiguous and that they will effectively solicit the desired information. This type of test therefore helps determine the feasibility of the steps that need to be completed as part of the main study.

To accomplish this questionnaire test, the researcher selected customers on the basis of group locations. The nearest geographical location where the three fast food outlets were located was Campus Square shopping centre in the suburb of Auckland Park. A sample of nine customers was chosen, with three customers from each fast food outlet, and these customers were approached in the enclosure of a specific fast food outlet in order to fill in the questionnaires. From the administration of the questionnaires, the following aspects arose and were addressed:

1. It took the researcher almost four days to get the nine questionnaires filled in. This gave the researcher the idea about monitoring the length of time that it would take to administer the 119 questionnaires.

2. The test revealed that a budget would need to be drawn up as the study was based in the five main areas previously outlined in Section 3.5 (Target population) and access to the different locations for the collection of the data collection had to be achieved. This issue was handed over to the academic supervisor of the
researcher and the limited and necessary funding was provided by the researcher himself afterwards.

3. All respondents reported that they did not have any trouble in answering the questionnaire. However, the researcher noticed one common comment from four respondents, who reported the clarity and the importance to them of Statement 9: “The fast food outlet should keep its records accurately”. The researcher with the assistance of his academic supervisor and Statkon accordingly made the necessary changes and Statement 9 became: “Excellent fast food outlets will insist on accurate billing.” (See Appendix 1.)

3.12 Conclusion

This chapter presented the research methodology or instructions that need to be followed in order to come up with evidence capable of answering the research questions of the study and also reaching the objectives set out in Chapter 1. The chapter also presented and discussed the tools and techniques used in the data collection and analysis. The questionnaire was designed mainly around the SERVQUAL instrument and the information was analysed through the use of the SPSS package. The next chapter presents data analysed and interpreted into meaningful information related to the subject of this research.
CHAPTER 4:

PRESENTATION OF DATA ANALYSIS

This chapter introduces and describes the results of the analysis of the data obtained from the questionnaires. It presents substantial elements to answer the overall research question of finding out how customers perceive the service quality in FFO1, FFO2 and FFO3 outlets and whether they are satisfied with the service quality or not. Assessing service quality from the customers’ perspective allows a prediction of whether customers are willing to repeat purchases from these three categories of fast food outlets in the areas of interest. This facilitates the gathering of evidence to achieve the objective of the study.

The analysis of data for this research was carried out in two phases. The first phase consists of descriptive statistics and frequency measures from the first section (Section A) of the survey, which is related to demographic information. The findings are summarised in tables to allow a better understanding of the evidence.

The second phase of the analysis (main analysis) comprises Sections B and C of the survey, which are respectively named “SERVQUAL” and “Repurchasing behaviour”. Regarding Section B, the reliability analysis was applied to determine whether the data collected through the use of the SERVQUAL instrument was suitable for the study and also to determine the existence of consistency and the correlations of scores among the service quality dimensions of expectations and perceptions from the three fast food outlets. The perception minus expectation score for each item for each dimension was calculated in order to pinpoint potential service quality gaps. The analysis of variance was also applied for comparing means of each dimension in order to determine customer repurchasing behaviour in the future.
4.1 Realisation rate

The “realisation rate” refers to the subtotals of respondents who participated in the data-collection process for each fast food outlet and these subtotals make up the main total of the questionnaires administered.

Table 3 – Response rate by fast food outlet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Valid Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FFO1</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>39.5</td>
<td>39.5</td>
<td>39.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FFO2</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>31.9</td>
<td>31.9</td>
<td>71.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FFO3</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As explained in Chapter 3 (Research methodology) under Section 3.7 (Sample size), the first objective of the data-collection process was for the research to target a maximum of 150 respondents. The researcher was confronted with different major challenges and only managed to get a total of 119 participants involved in the survey, with 47 (39.5%), 38 (31.9%) and 34 (28.6%) respondents respectively from FFO1, FFO2 and FFO3 with a sample frame of people residing in Auckland Park, Braamfontein, the Randburg area, Fordsburg / Mayfair / Brixton, Newtown and Sophiatown / Newlands (as illustrated in Table 3 above).

4.2 Section A – demographic details of the respondents

In order to validate the statistical integrity of the survey, demographic details (Section A of the questionnaire) of the respondents were collected, such as gender, age, ethnicity and monthly average expenditure. In this section the analysis was conducted question-by-question to relate the outcome of each question to the results of the main analysis. The purpose of the demographic information was to find out whether gender, age, ethnicity and average expenditure had a significant influence on how respondents perceive service quality from FFO1, FFO2 and FFO3.
4.2.1 Question 1 (DM1): Gender

The respondents were asked to reveal their gender (male or female). The purpose of this question was to determine whether purchasing food from these fast food outlets is characteristic of males or females. The results for Question 1 are illustrated in Table 4 – Gender frequency, below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Valid Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>49.6</td>
<td>49.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>50.4</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>119</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 1 (DM1) was answered by 119 respondents from the three fast food outlets (FFO1, FFO2 and FFO3). The results show that out of 119 respondents, there were 59 males, representing a percentage of 49.6. There were 60 females, representing a percentage of 50.4. Statistically, the proportions of male and female in this study are approximately equal. Gender alone does not have a significant impact on the idea about purchasing food from FFO1, FFO2 and FFO3. Hence, both males and females are interested in buying from these fast food outlets. Therefore, the aspect of gender does not have an impact on choosing which fast food outlet to buy food from.

4.2.2 Question 2 (DM2): Age in years

Respondents were required to indicate their age (in years). No interval restriction of ages was provided in this question; only raw ages were put down by respondents. The focus is on the statistical descriptive variables as shown in Table 5 – Descriptive statistics for age, below. The purpose of this question was to determine whether there is a specific age range of customers that constantly or usually purchase from FFO1, FFO2 and FFO3. A histogram was also drawn to display and understand the results better (see Figure 8 – Description of customers’ ages, below).
This question was answered by 119 respondents and the analysis was undertaken at a 95 per cent confidence interval surrounding the average age. In other words, we can be 95 per cent confident that the true average age value of the respondents falls within this range.

The output in Table 5 above shows an average age of 28.58 in the respondents, with a standard deviation of approximately 11.42, which was not relevant in this case because the focus was not on the consistency of ages among respondents. As shown in Table 5 above, out of the 119 respondents, the eldest respondent was 73 years old and the youngest respondent 15 years old. This explains that these fast food outlets are visited by all people from the age of 15 to 73.

Table 5 and Figure 8 both show that the distribution of age is positively skewed (shaped), with a positive coefficient of 1.453. As presented by this study and looking at the display of the histogram below, we are able to conclude that approximately 59 (49.58%) of the customers visiting FFO1, FFO2 and FFO3 are roughly aged 20 (see Figure 8 – Description of customers’ ages), with a median age of 23 (Table 5 –
Descriptive statistics for age). This result describes the fact that young adults or young workers were greatly representative of the people who patronised these fast food outlets and were involved in the data collection of this study, because during the data-collection process, most students or young adults approached were often available and willing to help. From Table 5 and Figure 8 it can be clearly seen that respondents around the age of 28 were mainly involved in this study.

Figure 8 – Description of customers’ ages

4.2.3 Question 3 (DM3): Which population group do you belong to?

In this question, respondents were requested to indicate their population group, which is an important variable in such a study. The purpose was to find out whether different population groups are attracted by particular fast food outlets.
Table 6 – Population groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Valid Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid Black</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>64.7</td>
<td>64.7</td>
<td>64.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>79.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coloured</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>90.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>98.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6 – Population groups, above, shows that out of the 119 who answered this question, 77 (64.7%) of the respondents were black, 18 (15.1%) of the respondents were white, 13 (10.9%) of the respondents were coloured, 9 (7.6%) of the respondents were Indian and 2 (1.7%) of the respondents were from other population groups which were not revealed by the respondents.

We can conclude that the black group was greatly involved in this survey, with a percentage of 64.7, compared to other population groups, which grouped together made up a total of only 35.3. The involvement of the black community in this research is probably due to the concentration of black people in the areas from which the data was collected. Thus, the black community purchases from or eats at FFO1, FFO2 and FFO3 more often than other communities in these areas.

4.2.4 Question 4 (DM4): How much do you spend at this fast food outlet monthly?

This question was asked because the researcher wanted to find the amount range that customers spend at these fast food outlets on a monthly basis. The purpose was to assess the frequency of amounts spent at these fast food outlets, especially during lunch hours, in order to know how often customers visit them.
The output presented in Table 7 – Descriptive statistics for monthly expenditure, above, is given at the 95% confidence level, which indicates that we are 95% confident that the true average monthly expenditure of the 119 respondents, which is R852.22, falls within this range. The highest amount (Maximum) versus the least amount (Minimum) spent by a respondent in this survey is R7000 and R43 respectively. The positive skewness value: +2.737 provides an indication that the distribution of different amounts of money spent by respondents is positively skewed (amounts of money are clustered to the left at low values) as displayed in the histogram below (Figure 9 – Description of monthly expenditure).
As illustrated in Figure 9 – Description of monthly expenditure, above, approximately 63 (52.94%) respondents out of 119 spend roughly R300 per month.

The information provided from the answers to this question suggests that people are spending fairly large amounts of money in this fast food outlet, especially between 11h30 and 13h30 (time when the data was being collected). That is to say people visit these food outlets quite often as well. In reference to question 2 (Age in years), it is clear that young adults are representative in terms of fast food consumption (amount spent) at these three fast food restaurants for this study. In other words, young adults form the majority of people who consume fast food at these three fast food restaurants in terms of amount spent.
4.3 Section B – SERVQUAL

This section forms part of the main analysis. The customer expectations and perceptions are measured and assessed in all three fast food outlets in an analysis referred to as the “composite analysis”. The purpose of this section included finding out how customers perceive service quality delivered to them on a daily basis by FFO1, FFO2 and FFO3.

4.3.1 Reliability analysis for expectations

The reliability analysis of a scale indicates how free the scale is from random error (Devellis, 2012, 182-185). In other words, other things being equal, a respondent should fill in a questionnaire in a similar way at two different points in time (test retest) and the correlations between the two scores obtained can be calculated (Devellis, 2012, 190-191). In the case of the current study, reliability concerns the combined expectations of the three fast food outlets. That is to say, the expectations were measured at three different stages. The internal consistency, which is the degree to which the items that make up the scale are all likely to measure the same dimension, was assessed (Pallant, 2013, 86-101). The Cronbach Alpha coefficient was examined, which is one of the main standard indicators used for the measurement of internal consistency. Ideally the Cronbach Alpha coefficient of a scale should be above or equal to 0.7 to indicate the acceptable reliability for each dimension.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Number of Items</th>
<th>Cronbach Alpha for dimensions</th>
<th>Cronbach Alpha if Item Deleted</th>
<th>Item Code</th>
<th>TA1</th>
<th>TA2</th>
<th>TA3</th>
<th>TA4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tangibles (TA)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.841</td>
<td>0.845</td>
<td></td>
<td>TA1</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.538</td>
<td>0.498</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.791</td>
<td>0.538</td>
<td>TA2</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.609</td>
<td>0.595</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.768</td>
<td>0.498</td>
<td>TA3</td>
<td>0.609</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.733</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.784</td>
<td>0.442</td>
<td>TA4</td>
<td>0.595</td>
<td>0.733</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliability (RL)</td>
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<td>0.887</td>
<td>0.852</td>
<td></td>
<td>RL1</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.656</td>
<td>0.704</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.866</td>
<td>0.656</td>
<td>RL2</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.638</td>
<td>0.657</td>
<td>0.469</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.854</td>
<td>0.638</td>
<td>RL3</td>
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<td>0.705</td>
<td>0.518</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.846</td>
<td>0.705</td>
<td>RL4</td>
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<td>0.705</td>
<td>0.518</td>
<td>0.562</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.894</td>
<td>0.518</td>
<td>RL5</td>
<td>0.562</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Responsiveness</td>
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<td>0.860</td>
<td></td>
<td>RN1</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.550</td>
<td>0.613</td>
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<tr>
<td>(RN)</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.826</td>
<td>0.550</td>
<td>RN2</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.673</td>
<td>0.656</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.805</td>
<td>0.613</td>
<td>RN3</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.696</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.825</td>
<td>0.539</td>
<td>RN4</td>
<td>0.696</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assurance (AS)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.827</td>
<td>0.794</td>
<td></td>
<td>AS1</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.606</td>
<td>0.536</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.770</td>
<td>0.606</td>
<td>AS2</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.547</td>
<td>0.613</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.781</td>
<td>0.536</td>
<td>AS3</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.567</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.785</td>
<td>0.483</td>
<td>AS4</td>
<td>0.567</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy (EM)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.851</td>
<td>0.827</td>
<td></td>
<td>EM1</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.626</td>
<td>0.636</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.794</td>
<td>0.626</td>
<td>EM2</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.720</td>
<td>0.461</td>
<td>0.589</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.784</td>
<td>0.636</td>
<td>EM3</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.518</td>
<td>0.591</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.863</td>
<td>0.297</td>
<td>EM4</td>
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<td>0.518</td>
<td>0.402</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.825</td>
<td>0.505</td>
<td>EM5</td>
<td>0.591</td>
<td>0.402</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The reason for conducting this reliability test based on the Cronbach’s alpha was to determine the consistency of the scale’s answers for each service quality dimension. The Inter-Item Correlation Matrix complements Cronbach’s alpha by ensuring that the measurement of the items of the same dimension does not overlap. The technique applies for both expectations and perceptions.

Firstly, referring to the column Inter-Item Correlation Matrix in Table 8 above, all the values are positive, which indicates that the items of the five dimensions are measuring the same underlying service quality dimensions (test retest reliability). Secondly, looking at the Cronbach Alpha coefficients corresponding to Tangibles: 0.841, Reliability: 0.887, Responsiveness: 0.867, Assurance: 0.827, and Empathy: 0.851, all the values are greater than 0.7. This suggests a very good internal consistency reliability for the scale and also suggests a true measure of service quality with a sample of 119 respondents because the Cronbach Alpha coefficient should ideally be above or equal to 0.7. The total reliability scale for each dimension, as shown above, indicates an overall reliability factor not far from that of Parasuraman et al.’s (1988, 12-40) study, which was 0.92. The reliability of the current study is substantial if the alternative is considered, which states that the highest possible reliability that can be obtained is 1.0. This is, therefore, good ground to suggest that the elements of the five dimensions of the SERVQUAL Model are reliable and acceptable for the analysis.

4.3.2 Reliability analysis for perceptions

The same procedure was followed for perceptions as for expectations, as discussed in Section 4.3.1 (Reliability analysis for expectations).
Table 9 – Reliability coefficient (Cronbach’s Alphas) and Inter-Item Correlation Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Number of Items</th>
<th>Cronbach Alpha for dimensions</th>
<th>Cronbach Alpha if Item Deleted</th>
<th>Item Code</th>
<th>TA1</th>
<th>TA2</th>
<th>TA3</th>
<th>TA4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tangibles</td>
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<td>0.847</td>
<td>0.839</td>
<td>TA1</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.588</td>
<td>0.511</td>
<td>0.490</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(TA)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>TA2</td>
<td>0.588</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.675</td>
<td>0.604</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>TA3</td>
<td>0.511</td>
<td>0.675</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.646</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>TA4</td>
<td>0.490</td>
<td>0.604</td>
<td>0.646</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.876</td>
<td>0.861</td>
<td>RL1</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.665</td>
<td>0.568</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>(RL)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>RL2</td>
<td>0.665</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.655</td>
<td>0.677</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>RL3</td>
<td>0.568</td>
<td>0.655</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.736</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>RL4</td>
<td>0.614</td>
<td>0.677</td>
<td>0.736</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>RL5</td>
<td>0.373</td>
<td>0.577</td>
<td>0.475</td>
<td>0.515</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsiveness</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.815</td>
<td>0.835</td>
<td>RN1</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.521</td>
<td>0.377</td>
<td>0.355</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(RN)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>RN2</td>
<td>0.521</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.589</td>
<td>0.647</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>RN3</td>
<td>0.377</td>
<td>0.589</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.646</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>RN4</td>
<td>0.355</td>
<td>0.647</td>
<td>0.646</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assurance</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.824</td>
<td>0.755</td>
<td>AS1</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.668</td>
<td>0.570</td>
<td>0.505</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(AS)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>AS2</td>
<td>0.668</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.642</td>
<td>0.457</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>AS3</td>
<td>0.570</td>
<td>0.642</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.459</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>AS4</td>
<td>0.505</td>
<td>0.457</td>
<td>0.459</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.864</td>
<td>0.840</td>
<td>EM1</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.698</td>
<td>0.656</td>
<td>0.280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(EM)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>EM2</td>
<td>0.698</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.696</td>
<td>0.501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>EM3</td>
<td>0.656</td>
<td>0.696</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.430</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>EM4</td>
<td>0.280</td>
<td>0.501</td>
<td>0.430</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>EM5</td>
<td>0.594</td>
<td>0.658</td>
<td>0.650</td>
<td>0.532</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Referring in Table 9 to the column **Inter-Item Correlation Matrix** for the output above, all the values are positive, which indicates that the items of the five dimensions are measuring the same underlying service quality dimensions. Also, looking at the Cronbach Alpha coefficients displayed for Tangibles: 0.847, Reliability: 0.876, Responsiveness: 0.815, Assurance: 0.824, and Empathy: 0.864, all the values are greater than 0.7. This suggests a very good internal consistency reliability for the scale and also suggests a true measure of service quality with a sample of 119 respondents because the Cronbach Alpha coefficient should ideally be above or equal to 0.7. The total reliability scale for each dimension, as stated above, indicates an overall reliability factor not far from that of Parasuraman et al.’s (1988, 12-40) study, which was 0.92. This reliability is substantial taking into account the fact that the highest possible reliability obtainable is 1.0. This indicates that the items that make up the five dimensions of the SERVQUAL Model are considered reliable and acceptable for the process of analysis.

**4.3.3 Expectations versus perceptions**

Expectations and perceptions were both measured using the five-point Likert scale to match respondents’ views accurately to the measuring scale.
In this study, the expectations and perceptions of customers of the three fast food outlets were combined to establish a composite display. Figure 10 – Expectation scores vs perception scores, above, depicts the overall comparison, based on the 22 statements of SERVQUAL instrument. Figure 10 shows that customer expectation scores exceed perception scores. According to Parasuraman et al. (1988, 12-40), it is, however, usual for customers’ expectations to exceed their actual perceptions. This demonstrates the extent to which there is always room for improvement. Out of the 22 statements, the highest expectation score was recorded for Item 4 with a score of 4.622 and the lowest was recorded for item 21 at 4.193. The perception scores showed the highest score of 4.095 for Item 3 and the least value was recorded for Item 5 at 3.428. (See Appendix 2 – Expectations versus Perceptions and Section 4.3.5 – Expectations and perceptions discussed by dimension, below, for the exact values of this overall differentiation.)
4.3.4 Comparison of means of FFO1, FFO2 and FFO3 expectations and perceptions by dimension

The questionnaires of this study were filled in at three fast food outlets of FFO1, FFO2 and FFO3, with the sample sizes of 47, 38 and 34 respectively. This section presents the mean scores of these three fast food outlets according to the perceptions and expectations expressed for each dimension. The ANOVA technique has been used to compare the variability between the three fast food outlets. In simple terms, the ANOVA technique indicates whether there are significant differences between the mean scores of expectations and perceptions across the three fast food outlets. The post hoc tests were used to indicate where the differences lay and to identify the fast food outlet from which customers expect more quality services.

4.3.4.1 Expectations

Table 10 – Comparisons of dimensions – Expectations provides comparisons between the mean values of FFO1, FFO2 and FFO3 customer expectations under each dimension.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TANGIBLES</th>
<th>Post Hoc Tests</th>
<th>ANOVA</th>
<th>Homogeneity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(I)Outlet</td>
<td>(J)Outlet</td>
<td>Mean Difference (I-J)</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FFO1</td>
<td>FFO2</td>
<td>-0.37570*</td>
<td>0.14578</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FFO3</td>
<td>-0.18414</td>
<td>0.15045</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FFO2</td>
<td>FFO1</td>
<td>0.37570*</td>
<td>0.14578</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FFO3</td>
<td>0.19156</td>
<td>0.15775</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FFO3</td>
<td>FFO1</td>
<td>0.18414</td>
<td>0.15045</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FFO2</td>
<td>-0.19156</td>
<td>0.15775</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FFO1</td>
<td>FFO2</td>
<td>FFO3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FFO2</td>
<td>-0.45812*</td>
<td>0.16703</td>
<td>0.019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FFO3</td>
<td>-0.09186</td>
<td>0.17237</td>
<td>0.855</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FFO3</td>
<td>0.45812*</td>
<td>0.16703</td>
<td>0.019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.36625</td>
<td>0.18074</td>
<td>0.110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.09186</td>
<td>0.18843</td>
<td>0.947</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-0.36625</td>
<td>0.15296</td>
<td>0.059</td>
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</table>

**RESPONSIVENESS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FFO1</th>
<th>FFO2</th>
<th>FFO3</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FFO2</td>
<td>-0.42315*</td>
<td>0.16371</td>
<td>0.035</td>
<td>3.053</td>
<td>0.051</td>
<td>0.017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FFO3</td>
<td>-0.14800</td>
<td>0.19336</td>
<td>0.828</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FFO3</td>
<td>0.42315*</td>
<td>0.16371</td>
<td>0.035</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.27515</td>
<td>0.15441</td>
<td>0.220</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.14800</td>
<td>0.19336</td>
<td>0.828</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-0.27515</td>
<td>0.15441</td>
<td>0.220</td>
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<td></td>
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</table>

**ASSURANCE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FFO1</th>
<th>FFO2</th>
<th>FFO3</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FFO2</td>
<td>-0.45479*</td>
<td>0.16956</td>
<td>0.023</td>
<td>3.775</td>
<td>0.026</td>
<td>0.014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FFO3</td>
<td>-0.10920</td>
<td>0.17499</td>
<td>0.807</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0.45479*</td>
<td>0.16956</td>
<td>0.023</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.34559*</td>
<td>0.18348</td>
<td>0.148</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.10920</td>
<td>0.18024</td>
<td>0.905</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-0.34559*</td>
<td>0.13368</td>
<td>0.035</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

**EMPATHY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FFO1</th>
<th>FFO2</th>
<th>FFO3</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FFO2</td>
<td>-0.50403*</td>
<td>0.16688</td>
<td>0.009</td>
<td>4.679</td>
<td>0.011</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FFO3</td>
<td>-0.30063</td>
<td>0.17222</td>
<td>0.193</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FFO3</td>
<td>0.50403*</td>
<td>0.16688</td>
<td>0.009</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.20341</td>
<td>0.18058</td>
<td>0.500</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.30063</td>
<td>0.18285</td>
<td>0.279</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-0.20341</td>
<td>0.14686</td>
<td>0.427</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

75
From this multiple one-way analysis of variances conducted to explore the differences between customer expectations of the three fast food outlets for the five SERVQUAL dimensions, we have the following results.

**Tangibles**: The homogeneity of variances was assessed for the tangibles dimension, which revealed a value of $0.116 > 0.05$ (standard value). This indicates that the study in this dimension does not violate the assumption of homogeneity. When looking at the ANOVA values in the tangibles section, it revealed a p-value of $0.039$, which is smaller than 0.05, indicating significant differences somewhere among the mean scores of tangible statements regarding the three fast food outlets. Furthermore, the comparisons of the mean difference column of Table 10 display the mean difference values with an asterisk next to them. This indicates that the mean scores of the tangible statements of FFO1 and FFO2 were significantly different from each other, with FFO2 customers' expectations higher than FFO1's customers' expectations. However, there was no significant difference between the mean scores of FFO1 versus FFO3, and FFO2 versus FFO3. In other words, their customers' expectations are similar in this SERVQUAL dimension.

**Reliability**: The test of homogeneity of variances showed the significance value of $0.013$, which is smaller than the criterion of 0.05, explaining that the assumption of homogeneity of variance was fully assumed. This explains the diverse answers to questions in this dimension by customers of the three fast food outlets. However, looking at the ANOVA values for reliability, a p-value of $0.020$ was obtained, which is smaller than the criterion of 0.05, indicating significant differences somewhere among the mean scores of reliability. Thus, the comparisons of the mean differences display the mean difference values with asterisks next to them. We can conclude that the mean scores of FFO1 and FFO2 for reliability statements were significantly different, with FFO2 customers having the highest expectations in this dimension. However, statistically there was not much difference between customer expectations of FFO1 versus FFO3, and customer expectations of FFO3 versus FFO2.

**Responsiveness**: A significance value of 0.017 for the homogeneity test was obtained, which is smaller than the criterion of 0.05; this suggests that the assumption of
homogeneity of variance was not taken into account. The ANOVA values, on the other hand, revealed a p-value of 0.05, which is similar to the standard p-value of 0.05, indicating significant differences somewhere among the mean scores of responsiveness statements regarding the three fast food outlets. Therefore, the comparisons display the mean difference values with asterisks next to them. This explains the fact that mean scores of FFO1 and FFO2 for the responsiveness statements were significantly different, with FFO2 customers showing the highest expectations at the p=0.05 level. However, statistically there was not much difference between customer expectations of FFO1 versus FFO3, and customer expectations of FFO3 versus FFO2.

**Assurance:** The test of homogeneity of variances revealed a significance value of **0.014**, which is smaller than the standard value of 0.05, implying that the assumption of homogeneity of variances was not fully respected. Nevertheless, when it comes to the ANOVA p-value of **0.026**, this value is smaller than the criterion of 0.05. This indicates significant differences somewhere among the mean scores of assurance statements regarding the three fast food outlets. Thus, the comparisons of the mean differences display the mean difference values with asterisks next to them at the p < 0.05 level. This shows that mean scores of FFO1 and FFO2 for assurance statements were significantly different, with FFO2 customers displaying the highest expectations. There was also a significant difference between mean scores of FFO3 and FFO2, with customers expecting more from FFO2 than FFO3. Statistically, customers expect similar service quality from FFO3 and FFO1 outlets.

**Empathy:** The test of homogeneity of variances revealed a significance value of 0.05, which is similar to the criterion of 0.05, indicating that the assumption of homogeneity of variances was under consideration. However, when looking at the ANOVA values, the value obtained was p = 0.011, which is smaller than the criterion of 0.05, implying significant differences somewhere among the mean scores of empathy statements. Hence, the comparisons of the mean differences indicate the mean difference values with asterisks next to them at the p < 0.05 level. The values show that the mean scores of FFO1 and FFO2 for empathy statements were significantly different, with FFO2 customers having the highest expectations. However, statistically there was not much
difference between customer expectations of FFO1 versus FFO3, and customer expectations of FFO3 versus FFO2.

4.3.4.2 Perceptions

The same one-way analysis of variances as conducted for expectations was conducted among the perceptions of FFO1, FFO2 and FFO3, based on each of the five dimensions. The assessment was performed to compare the mean scores of the three fast food outlets for each dimension. Where a significant difference does exist, the fast food with the highest customer perception scores needs to be indicated.

Table 11 – Comparisons of dimensions – Perceptions: ANOVA and Homogeneity test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>TANGIBLES</th>
<th>RELIABILITY</th>
<th>RESPONSIVENESS</th>
<th>ASSURANCE</th>
<th>EMPATHY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ANOVA</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2,347</td>
<td>0,054</td>
<td>0,105</td>
<td>0,724</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>0,100</td>
<td>0,948</td>
<td>0,900</td>
<td>0,487</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homogeneity</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>0,91</td>
<td>0,49</td>
<td>0,43</td>
<td>0,90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The homogeneity test was also performed for each dimension to measure whether the variability of the perception data-values changed across these five dimensions. Values that were greater than the criterion of 0.05 were obtained in all dimensions with tangibles (0.91), reliability (0.49), responsiveness (0.43), assurance (0.90) and empathy (0.25). These values indicated that the assumptions of homogeneity were met. When looking at the output as shown in Table 11 above, it revealed p-values > 0.05 in all dimensions with tangibles (0.100), reliability (0.948), responsiveness (0.9), assurance (0.487) and empathy (0.288). This suggests that there were no significant differences between the mean scores of FFO1, FFO2 and FFO3 in each of the five dimensions of the SERVQUAL instrument. In simple terms, customers perceive a similar degree of quality services in each of the five SERVQUAL dimensions from these three fast food outlets.
4.3.5 Expectations and perceptions discussed by dimension

This section evaluates the expectations and perceptions of customers under the five dimensions of the service quality provided in the three fast food outlets.

4.3.5.1 Tangibles (TA)

The tangibles dimension of the SERVQUAL instrument includes the physical appearance of the three fast food outlets, more precisely the physical appearance or environment of the combined three fast food outlets and the equipment used to provide services to customers. These aspects of the dimension were translated into four meaningful statements and the averages are shown in Table 12 – Scores and averages, below.

As the scale used is the five-point Likert scale, it is necessary to take into account results with the highest/lowest decimals to give explicit meaning to the scores and averages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perception Average</th>
<th>Perception score</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Expectation score</th>
<th>Expectation Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tangibles</strong> (1-4)</td>
<td>4.009</td>
<td>TA1</td>
<td>4.387</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.008</td>
<td>TA2</td>
<td>4.378</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.095</td>
<td>TA3</td>
<td>4.538</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.916</td>
<td>TA4</td>
<td>4.622</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tangibles</strong> (1-4)</td>
<td>4.481</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The tangible dimension of the SERVQUAL instrument comprises the four first questions 1-4, which assess the appearance (materials, physical facility and employees) of FFO1, FFO2 and FFO3 combined together. When looking at each of the four statements that make up the tangible dimension in Table 12 above, it is clear that the items with the highest scores for perception of actual service received were TA3: This outlet’s employees are neat-appearing (4.095), TA1: This fast food outlet has modern-looking equipment (4.017) and TA2: The venue appearance of this fast food outlet is attractive.
(4.008). The least rated item was **TA4**: The dining areas of this fast food outlet are perfectly clean (3.916). These four items then lead to the final average of **4.009** for the tangible dimension. However, there is not much difference among the perception scores.

When it comes to expectations, the items with the highest expectation scores were **TA4**: The dining areas of this fast food outlet are perfectly clean (4.622) and **TA3**: This outlet’s employees are neat-appearing (4.538). The four items result in a final average of **4.481** for the tangible dimension. The expectation scores are not very different from each other, but are comparatively greater than the perception scores and this implies that customers expect high levels of service quality in the tangible dimension.

### 4.3.5.2 Reliability (RL)

**Table 13 – Scores and averages**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perception Average</th>
<th>Perception Score</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Expectation Score</th>
<th>Expectation Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reliability: (5-9)</td>
<td>3.621</td>
<td>RL1</td>
<td>4.403</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.428</td>
<td>RL2</td>
<td>4.336</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.630</td>
<td>RL3</td>
<td>4.420</td>
<td>4.351</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.723</td>
<td>RL4</td>
<td>4.403</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.542</td>
<td>RL5</td>
<td>4.193</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.781</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The reliability dimension of the SERVQUAL instrument consists of questions 5-9, which assess reliability aspects of how to perform tasks right the first time. When looking at each of the statements that make up the reliability dimension in Table 13 above, the items with the highest perception scores for the actual service received were **RL5**: This fast food outlet insists on accurate billing (3.781), and **RL3**: This fast food outlet performs the service right the first time (3.723), and the lowest score recorded was **RL2**: When a customer has a problem, they show a sincere interest in solving it (3.428). The reliability dimension then results in a score of **3.621** on average for perception. On the other hand, the expectation scores have the highest scores for items **RL3**: This fast
food outlet performs the service right the first time (4.420), **RL4**: This fast food outlet provides its services at the time it promises to do so (4.403), and **RL1**: When this outlet promises to do something by a certain time, they do so (4.403). The lowest score among the four statements is **RL2**: When a customer has a problem, this fast food outlet shows a sincere interest in solving it (4.336). Statistically, there are no significant differences among the expectation scores; for that reason an expectation average of **4.351** was obtained for the reliability dimension.

### 4.3.5.3 Responsiveness (RN)

#### Table 14 – Scores and averages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perception Average</th>
<th>Perception Score</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Expectation Score</th>
<th>Expectation Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responsiveness: (10-13)</td>
<td>3.658</td>
<td>RN1</td>
<td>4.550</td>
<td>4.351</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.975</td>
<td>RN2</td>
<td>4.243</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.563</td>
<td>RN3</td>
<td>4.411</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.621</td>
<td>RN4</td>
<td>4.201</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.471</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The responsiveness dimension of the SERVQUAL instrument consists of questions 10-13, which evaluate the FFO1, FFO2 and FFO3 combined responsiveness in terms of how helpful and prompt they are in providing services to customers on a daily basis. The output shown in Table 14 above indicates the perception and expectation scores of the four statements that make up the responsiveness dimension. When referring to the perception scores, it is noticeable that the item with the highest perception score is **RN1**: This fast food outlet serves my food exactly as I order it (3.975) and the least value is evident for item **RN4**: In this fast food outlet, employees are never too busy to respond to customers' requests (3.471). With these values a score of **3.658** on average was obtained for the perception scores in the responsiveness dimension. When referring to the expectation scores, the item **RN1**: This fast food outlet serves my food exactly as I order it (4.550), displays the highest score as it does for perception. The responsiveness dimension obtains **4.351** as an average for the expectation scores.
4.3.5.4 Assurance (AS)

Table 15 – Scores and averages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perception Average</th>
<th>Perception score</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Expectation score</th>
<th>Expectation Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assurance:</strong> (14-17)</td>
<td>3.719</td>
<td>3.622</td>
<td>AS1</td>
<td>4.268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.882</td>
<td>AS2</td>
<td>4.504</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.857</td>
<td>AS3</td>
<td>4.437</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.513</td>
<td>AS4</td>
<td>4.176</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The assurance dimension of the SERVQUAL instrument contains questions 14-17, which measure the three fast food outlets' combined assurance regarding the knowledge and courtesy of their employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence in customers. When taking a look at each of the four items that make up the substantial measurement for the assurance dimension, we see that the items with the most elevated perception scores are **AS2**: Customers of this fast food outlet feel safe in their transactions (3.882) and **AS3**: Employees in this fast food outlet are consistently courteous (respectful) with customers (3.857). There is not much difference among the perception scores; thus, from these four perception scores the assurance average of **3.719** was derived, as displayed in Table 15 above. The expectation scores show the highest values for **AS2**: Customers of this fast food outlet feel safe in their transactions (4.504) and **AS3**: Employees in this fast food outlet are consistently courteous (respectful) with customers (4.437). Consequently, the expectation scores of the four items lead to an average score of **4.332** for the assurance dimension.
4.3.5.5 Empathy (EM)

The empathy dimension of the SERVQUAL instrument comprises five meaningful questions from 18-22. These questions track the fast food outlets’ degree of caring and individualised attention exhibited to their customers on a daily basis. The output shown in Table 16 above provides first the perception scores for this dimension. Statistically these scores are not significantly different and, in a descending order, they lie as follows: 

**EM1**: This fast food outlets gives customers individual attention (3.824), **EM2**: The employees of this fast food outlet understand the specific needs of their customers (3.723), **EM5**: This fast food outlet has its customer’s best in terest at heart (3.705), **EM3**: Employees of this fast food outlet give customers personal attention (3.689) and **EM4**: This fast food outlet has trading hours convenient to all its customers (3.644). This gives a final average of 3.717 for the empathy dimension.

Secondly, when looking at the expectation scores individually, it is noticeable that **EM5**: with a score of 4.403, has the highest score, followed by **EM2**: with a score of 4.328. The four statement scores lead to a score of 4.264 on average for this SERVQUAL dimension.
4.3.6 Description of dimensions using analysis of gap averages (P-E)

The analysis of the gap averages gives us an opportunity to disclose how customers perceived service quality in FFO1, FFO2 and FFO3 and to indicate which service quality dimensions bring satisfaction to their customers.

According to Parasuraman et al. (1985, 41-50), the higher (more positive) the gap average is, the higher the customer satisfaction. The results are obtained by solving the equation: (P) perceptions minus (E) expectations = (P-E). As the study uses a five-point Likert scale, the higher and lower decimal results are taken into consideration to better clarify the difference.

The analysis of differences and the descriptive analysis of the five dimensions of the SERVQUAL instrument were conducted and summaries are displayed in Table 17 – Dimensions’ differences and Table 18 – Descriptive statistics for the five dimensions, below.

Table 17 – Dimensions’ differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Perception Average (P)</th>
<th>Expectation Average (E)</th>
<th>Gap (P-E)</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tangibles</td>
<td>4,009</td>
<td>4,513</td>
<td>-0,504</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>3,621</td>
<td>4,351</td>
<td>-0,730</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsiveness</td>
<td>3,658</td>
<td>4,351</td>
<td>-0,693</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assurance</td>
<td>3,719</td>
<td>4,332</td>
<td>-0,613</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>3,717</td>
<td>4,264</td>
<td>-0,547</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 18 – Descriptive statistics for the five dimensions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>TA—Gap average for tangibles</th>
<th>RL—Gap average for reliability</th>
<th>RN—Gap average for responsiveness</th>
<th>AS—Gap average for assurance</th>
<th>EM—Gap average for empathy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean (Gap average)</td>
<td>-0.504</td>
<td>-0.730</td>
<td>-0.693</td>
<td>-0.613</td>
<td>-0.547</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Gap:</td>
<td>-0.2500</td>
<td>-0.6000</td>
<td>-0.5000</td>
<td>-0.5000</td>
<td>-0.4000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Deviation:</td>
<td>0.87609</td>
<td>1.09367</td>
<td>1.03342</td>
<td>0.93534</td>
<td>0.72753</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skewness:</td>
<td>0.015</td>
<td>0.089</td>
<td>0.383</td>
<td>-0.191</td>
<td>-0.305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurtosis:</td>
<td>2.520</td>
<td>0.251</td>
<td>0.958</td>
<td>-0.473</td>
<td>-0.504</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TA-Tangibles**

Table 17 – Dimensions’ differences, above, shows that the perception average is lower than the expectation average for the tangibles dimension. Consequently, this leads to a negative gap average of -0.504, which is the lowest amongst all the five dimensions and also visible in Table 18 – Descriptive statistics for the five dimensions. This suggests that customers are not satisfied with the quality of services delivered by the three fast food outlets in the tangible dimension. However, when referring to Table 18 – Descriptive statistics for the five dimensions, solely, we obtain a median gap of -0.2500 and a standard deviation of 0.87609, which explain the fact that responses of this dimension are close to the mean or average. The distribution is moderately normal with a skewness of 0.015, which demonstrates that figures are mostly centred. The kurtosis value is 2.520, which indicates a clustering somewhere in the centre closer to the mean/average.

In Chapter 2 (Literature review) under Section 2.5.1 (Conceptualisation of customer service quality), the safety and health aspects associated with this dimension are discussed. Since customers are not satisfied with the quality of the service delivered by these fast food outlets under this dimension, this suggests that safety and health measures in the service facility are not also assured from the customer perspective; for
instance, the equipment used is not up to date, the cleanliness of the facility is inadequate and could lead to safety problems (e.g. dripped food or oil and empty food boxes attract flies, which could be hazardous for customer health).

**RL-Reliability**

The output displayed in Table 17 – Dimensions’ differences, above, shows that the perception average is lower than the expectation average for the reliability dimension. This reveals a negative gap average of **-0.730**, which is also the highest negative average amongst all the five dimensions’ means/gap averages. This explains the fact that customers of the three fast food outlets are not satisfied with the quality of services received under the reliability dimension. The standard deviation is 1.09367 (see Table 18), which explains that the gap scores are spread away from the mean, and with a mean gap of -0.6000. The distribution is fairly positively skewed with a coefficient of 0.089; in other words, gap scores are clustered to the left at low values. The kurtosis of this dimension is 0.251, which reveals a very moderate peak away from the mean/average.

**RN-Responsiveness**

In reference to Table 17 – Dimensions’ differences, the negative gap average for this dimension is **-0.693**, which introduces the fact that customers were not satisfied with the way these three fast food outlets delivered their services during the period of data collection or on a daily basis by extension. The output displayed in Table 18 – Descriptive statistics for the five dimensions indicates that the standard deviation is 1.03342, which suggests that the gap figures are spread away from the mean. The skewness value of 0.383 indicates that the gap scores are positively skewed, with figures forming a peak (away from the mean) from the right hand inside of the distribution and with a kurtosis of 0.958.

**AS-Assurance**

On average it appears that customers are not satisfied with the assurance of the services provided by FFO1, FFO2 and FFO3 as a negative gap average of **-0.613** exists
for the assurance dimension, with the expectation average exceeding the perception average (as shown in Table 17 – Dimensions’ differences). Table 18 – Descriptive statistics for the five dimensions shows that the standard deviation for the assurance dimension is 0.93534, which suggests that the scores of the gap average do not deviate from the gap average very widely, with a median gap of -0.5000. There is fair deviation to the left of the distribution following a negative skewness of -0.191. The gap scores are also clustered at a point similar to the mean/average of the distribution since the kurtosis shows a meaningful value of -0.473.

**EM-Empathy**

The results illustrated in Table 17 – Dimensions’ differences show the gap average of the empathy dimension to be **-0.547**. This can be considered as indicating a movement towards negative 1. This suggests that customers of these three fast food outlets are not satisfied with the quality of the services they receive in terms of this dimension. The standard deviation is 0.72753, the lowest compared to the standard deviations of other dimensions (shown in Table 18 – Descriptive statistics for the five dimensions). This demonstrates that gap figures are not mostly spread away from the mean, with a median gap of -0.4000. The skewness value of -0.305 implies that some figures moderately range towards the left of the distribution. There is a very small peak observed to the right inside of the distribution, which is indicated by the kurtosis value of -0.504.

Figure 11 – Differences for dimensions, below, provides a summary of the differences of the five dimensions. Looking at each dimension individually, it is clear that expectation averages exceed perception averages and that this results in negative gap averages or differences.
4.3.7 Overall perceived service quality (OSQ)

This section describes the overall service quality (OSQ) of the FFO1, FFO2 and FFO3 outlets on the basis of the five dimensions of the SERVQUAL instrument.

**Table 19 – The overall gap average**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>TA—Gap average for tangibles</th>
<th>RL—Gap average for reliability</th>
<th>RN—Gap average for responsiveness</th>
<th>AS—Gap average for assurance</th>
<th>EM—Gap average for empathy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean (Gap average)</td>
<td>-0.504</td>
<td>-0.730</td>
<td>-0.693</td>
<td>-0.613</td>
<td>-0.547</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OQS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.6174</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The gap averages of the five dimensions were summed up and then divided by the number of dimensions (5). This produced a negative gap average for the overall service quality, which is \(-0.6174\) as displayed in Table 19 – The overall gap average, above. This provides evidence that customer expectations exceed their perceptions of these three fast food outlets. In short, the overall perceived service quality is fairly low and suggests that the level of service quality as perceived by their customers is lower than what they expect. This means that their customers are not satisfied. However, this raises the question: what do these fast food outlets expect when there is no satisfaction? The section below is used to demonstrate whether these customers will repurchase from these fast food outlets in the future.

4.4 Section C – Repurchasing behaviour (RB)

This section analyses the sense of repurchasing behaviour of customers and aims to predict the likelihood of previous/current customers continuing to buy from these fast food outlets. In other words, it establishes whether repurchasing behaviour extends service quality to customer future patronage or not, and provides a detailed description of customer intentions regarding the service experienced in FFO1, FFO2 and FFO3. Basic aspects of customer loyalty are also looked at in this section. Table 20 to Table 24 (The frequencies and descriptive statistics – RB1 to RB5), below, provide a summary of the repurchasing behaviour analysis regarding the frequencies and descriptive statistics based on five essential questions/statements.

RB1 – How often do you purchase from this fast food outlet?

Table 20 – Frequencies and descriptive statistics – RB1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Seldom</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RB1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>0.852</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Row N %</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
<td>34.5%</td>
<td>43.7%</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From the output above (Table 20 – Frequencies and descriptive statistics – RB1), an average score of 3.51 was obtained for this question, which indicates that customers sometimes purchase from these fast food outlets. In other words, customers visit these fast food outlets when they have an opportunity to do so. The standard deviation is 0.852, suggesting that the answers for this question are quite consistent with the mean. Out of the 119 respondents, there was only 1 (0.8%) person who was purchasing at one of these fast food outlets for the first time (considered as the lowest rated). On the other hand, the highest occurrence was that 52 (43.7%) customers often purchase from these fast food outlets. Also, there were only 12 (12.1%) customers out of the 119 who have recurrent patterns of always buying from these fast food outlets. By extension, it can be said that the majority of customers are not willing to be loyal, but loyalty is an ideal achievement for these fast food outlets. Additionally customers sometimes repurchase from these fast food outlets (as the results revealed) because of their well-known images and also the option of choosing a food outlet is sometimes limited to them in certain areas.

RB2 – I will repurchase from this fast food outlet in the future.

Table 21, below, indicates customers who have the intention of revisiting the fast food outlets in the future according to the service perceived.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequencies</th>
<th>Descriptive statistics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RB2 Count</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Row N %</td>
<td>29.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This statement recorded 2.00 as an average. This explicitly suggests that customers permanently disagree with the idea of constantly repurchasing from these fast food outlets.
outlets in the future. This statement substantially reflects the SERVQUAL findings. Most responses to this statement are fairly consistent and are not spread away from the mean because the standard deviation is low (0.828). There was only 1 (0.8%) person who strongly agreed with repurchasing from FFO1, FFO2 or FFO3 in the future if he or she had the opportunity to do so. It is acceptable to suggest that such a customer (1 / 0.8%) is likely to become loyal to one of these fast food outlets. The highest rated option was “disagree”, with 58 (48.7%) people choosing this option. This option is also the option that explains the general choice of respondents not to repeat purchases from these fast food outlets. When looking at the results from the demographic section, which revealed that customers averagely spend fairly large amounts at these fast food outlets, the explanation behind the antagonistic attitude to repurchasing revealed by the survey is that customers who spend large amounts are visiting FFO1, FFO2 and FFO3 for the first time since customers expect a high service quality level. Also, there are some areas where the choice of fast food outlets is largely restricted to FFO1, FFO2 and FFO3. This means that, during peak lunch hours, customers who choose to patronise fast food outlets are obliged to head to these same fast food outlets due to lack of other options. The results suggest that the amounts that are going to be spent after the first purchases could be predicted to decrease.
RB3 – I will be a customer of this fast food outlet as long as it offers the best service to me.

This statement is a subjective (hypothetical) situation which illustrates the importance of service quality in fast food outlets once all aspects are assured.

Table 22 – Frequencies and descriptive statistics – RB3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequencies</th>
<th>Descriptive statistics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RB3</strong></td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Row N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This hypothetical statement was filled in by the same 119 respondents to find out if they are really influenced by the high or low quality of services they may receive from these three fast food outlets (Table 22 – Frequencies and descriptive statistics – RB3). The result revealed an average score of 4.18, which indicates that customers are willing to be loyal to FFO1, FFO2 and FFO3 as the outcome of “agree” (42.0%) and “strongly agree” (39.5%) entails. But this is achievable only on the condition that customers are satisfied with their different services. In simple terms, as long as these customers are satisfied with the services they may receive, they are likely to continue to repeat purchases from these fast food outlets. The scores of this statement (RB3) are clustered around the mean with a standard deviation of 0.802, which was also the lowest compared to the other statements' standard deviations. Only 1 (0.8%) person strongly disagreed and 1 other person (0.8%) disagreed with being loyal customers even if the best services were offered to them. The “agree” option was the highest rated and indicates the general choice of the respondents.
RB4 – I will recommend this fast food outlet to someone else/friend.

This statement determines whether customers would recommend the fast food outlet to someone else according to the service experienced.

Table 23 – Frequencies and descriptive statistics – RB4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequencies</th>
<th>Descriptive statistics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RB4 Count</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Row N %</td>
<td>27.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When it comes to this statement, an average score of 2.00 was obtained, which demonstrates that customers permanently “disagree” with recommending to any other people that they purchase from FFO1, FFO2 or FFO3. This once again reflects a direct link with the SERVQUAL findings above. The standard deviation is 0.854, suggesting that most of the scores are clustered somewhere around the mean. However, the highest rated option for this statement is “disagree” with a total response rate of 63 (52.90%). The lowest rated option is “agree”, with only 2 (1.7%) responses, which means that these 2 customers agree to recommend these fast food outlets to anybody else. The results of this statement explain once more the extent to which customers are sensitive to all aspects of service quality, especially during the Moment-Of-Truth.
RB5 – I buy food from competitors of this fast food outlet.

Table 24, below, describes how often customers of these three fast food outlets purchase from their competitors.

**Table 24 – Frequencies and descriptive statistics – RB5**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequencies</th>
<th>Descriptive statistics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RB5 Count</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Row N %</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The idea behind this statement was to determine if customers of these fast food outlets buy from them exclusively. In simple terms, the statement measures how loyal these customers are. The average for this statement is 4.13, implying that customers “agree” with buying food from competitors of FFO1, FFO2 and FFO3. This indicates that customers buying from these three fast food outlets are not considered to be loyal. The standard deviation is 1.062, which explains the fact that scores are spread away from the mean. It is also the highest standard deviation recorded amongst all the five statements of this section. Nevertheless, the option that recorded the highest responses is “strongly agree” with 55 (46.2%) responses which confirm the general choice of customers and the lowest response rates are found in the option “strongly disagree” and “disagree” with 5 (4.2%) responses each. This puts forward the assumption that only 10 customers out of 119 do not buy from the competitors of FFO1, FFO2 and FFO3. Therefore, customer loyalty is still an ideal situation for these food outlets to achieve.

**4.5 Conclusion**

In short, the SERVQUAL findings revealed that customers are not satisfied with the quality of services they receive from the three fast food outlets of FFO1, FFO2 and
FFO3. The immediate consequence is that customers are not of the opinion that they will repeat purchases in the future. The chapter demonstrated the link between the findings of the SERVQUAL instrument (negative gaps for all the service quality dimensions) and customer behaviour (behaviour in relation to the perceived poor service). These results are only applicable to the sample used and the three fast food outlets researched, however.
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings presented in Chapter 4 under the main concepts of the research question, which are expectations and perceptions of service quality, customer satisfaction regarding the service received from FFO1, FFO2 and FFO3 and the prediction of potential patronage and loyalty by extension.

The questions from each section of the questionnaire as they relate to the general themes are discussed and put into perspective to establish a flow map in the discussion, with the understanding that the results obtained in this study are applicable to the sample used only.

5.2 Customer service quality

Service quality was discussed in terms of expectations and perceptions, and repurchasing behaviour was also discussed afterwards as follows.

5.2.1 Service quality expected and perceived

Table 25 – Overall average of expectations and perceptions, below, presents the overall average for perception (resulted from the perception (P) average) and overall average for expectation (resulted from the expectation (E) average) in order to make appropriate comparisons.
Table 25 – Overall average of expectations and perceptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Perception Average (P)</th>
<th>Expectation Average (E)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tangibles</td>
<td>4.009</td>
<td>4.513</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>3.621</td>
<td>4.351</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsiveness</td>
<td>3.658</td>
<td>4.351</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assurance</td>
<td>3.719</td>
<td>4.332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>3.717</td>
<td>4.264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall average</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.745</strong></td>
<td><strong>4.362</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chapter 4 explored the differentiation between expectations and perceptions of customers from the three fast food outlets under study (FFO1, FFO2 and FFO3) for service quality. The overall expectation average of respondents using the Likert scale from 1 to 5 was found to be 4.362 (see Table 25 – Overall average of expectations and perceptions, above), corresponding to the fact that respondents agree with the statements of expectation throughout the five dimensions of the SERVQUAL instrument. This implies that customers of these three fast food outlets expect a lot from them. In addition, when looking at the individual dimensions, it is clear that customers expect more when it comes to the service aspects of each dimension. The scores of each dimension are not significantly different from each other, with tangibles: 4.513, reliability: 4.351, responsiveness: 4.351, assurance: 4.332 and empathy: 4.264. This suggests that customers are very sensitive when it comes to all aspects of service quality. That means that fast food outlets should take into consideration every single aspect of the processes put in place to interact with customers while delivering their services, in order to be in line with their customer expectations.
Expectation

Under Chapter 4 – Presentation of data analysis, the analysis revealed that customers’ expectations differ across the fast food outlets on the basis of each dimension. FFO2 was found to have the highest-rated expectations overall compared to FFO1 and FFO3 in all five dimensions. This explains the fact that respondents in this study expect a lot from FFO2 compared to FFO1 and FFO3. On the other hand, FFO1 had the lowest-rated expectation scores throughout the five dimensions. This could be explained by the scandal that happened at the FFO1 Braamfontein outlet in early 2015 when the study was being conducted, with employees reportedly filmed by an outsider while they were cleaning chicken pieces on the floor.

Perception

Looking at the individual dimensions, it is apparent that customer perceptions of the quality delivered through the physical appearance of the fast food outlets, the equipment and personnel (tangibles: 4.009) reveal a slight difference from the rest of the dimensions, which, however, show similar scores – reliability: 3.621, responsiveness: 3.658, assurance: 3.719 and empathy: 3.717.

Regarding the comparison of the perceptions of the three fast food outlets, the results confirm that the quality of the services as perceived by the respondents is similar in all aspects of the five dimensions. It was concluded that none of the dimensions show great disparities among their means.

According to Parasuraman et al. (1985, 41-50), when service quality is perceived as high, this will bring about increased customer satisfaction. These authors provide support for their theory by stating that service quality stimulates customer satisfaction and this accords with the views of Saravanan and Rao (2007, 435-449) and Yulisetiarini (2014, 1-10), who affirm that customer satisfaction is based on the degree of service quality provided by the service provider. From the same perspective, Zeithaml and Bitner (2000, 125-129) also acknowledge that customers evaluate quality of services according to their perceptions of the current services received and when their perceptions are satisfactory customer satisfaction will become one of the immediate
consequences. The results of this study provide a good opportunity for the three fast food outlets to find out whether their customers are satisfied by conducting a gap analysis.

5.2.2 Perceptions minus expectations = Gap

Parasuraman et al. (1988, 12-40) brought in the gap score as a model that can demonstrate differences in customers’ perceptions that can have a detrimental effect on their perceptions, in order to measure service quality as the antecedent of customer satisfaction. Assessing service quality gaps can help the managers and frontline cashiers of FFO1, FFO2 and FFO3 to diagnose where performance improvement can best be targeted. The service quality gaps for this study were narrowed down to one main single gap: perceptions and expectations of customers, as demonstrated by Kumar et al. (2010, 351-377) and Parasuraman et al. (1988, 12-40). Thus, it was possible to assess the gap between the perceptions and expectations of customers of the three fast food outlets to demonstrate how customers perceive service quality. The study then unveiled that the perception averages of each of the five SERVQUAL dimensions are lower than the expectation averages respectively. This leads to a negative gap average for each dimension but also to a negative average for the overall service quality. Consequently, it can be taken that customers experience poor service and are then not satisfied. In addition, customers expect more quality services from the three fast food outlets, especially FFO2, which showed the highest customer expectations in all five dimensions of the SERVQUAL instrument. Also, since FFO2 recorded the highest expectation scores while its perception scores were similar to those of the other fast food outlets assessed, it can be reported that FFO2 has the poorest service. Consequently, its customers are likely to switch to FFO1, FFO3 or other rivals in the same industry for better service because these three fast food outlets are known to be competitors (competition was mentioned in Section 1.5/page 4 as the main justification for this study).

Huddleston et al. (2009, 63-80) acknowledge that since service quality is described as the antecedent of customer satisfaction, if customers report a perception of poor service quality then it can be concluded that customers are not satisfied. This lack of
satisfaction could be explained under the reliability dimension by the delay in the billing process during peak hours due to high demand. Another reason could be the limited number of frontline employees who interact with customers during lunch time or employees being too busy with other duties to respond to customer requests. This reason is covered under the responsiveness dimension. Lastly, it could be the poor behaviour of the three fast food outlets’ employees (cashiers) while interacting with customers and this reason is considered under the assurance and empathy dimensions. Similarly, Lamprini, George and Avlonitis (2015, 304-326) identified the main reason hidden behind customers not being satisfied as the poor interaction between customers and the service provider because “nowadays customers are becoming more and more unmanageable and demanding”. This indicates the evolution in their needs and the multiple choices that the sector of fast food outlets offers them. That means that if a particular fast food outlet does not meet an individual customer’s needs, he or she may find similar or better service elsewhere. Since the demographic results revealed that black people were greatly represented in this study, this suggests that the needs of people from the black community are expanding. Hence, it is becoming relatively difficult for the fast food industry to satisfy their needs.

In short, customers expect more quality of services from the three fast food outlets. As they become demanding over time, this expectation results in their perceptions falling short of their expectations in all the service quality dimensions, which then leads to a negative gap average. In this regard, customers are not satisfied with their experiences at FFO1, FFO2 and FFO3. However, the focus should be more on FFO2 outlets because their customer expectations are much greater.

### 5.2.3 Customer repurchasing behaviour

Having established that customers of FFO1, FFO2 and FFO3 (combined) are not satisfied with the overall quality of the services they receive on a daily basis, the next stage of the study is to examine whether this result will lead to a positive sense of repurchasing behaviour or not.
Syed (2010, 52-64) reports that repurchasing behaviour is generally a form of loyalty and satisfied customers tend to repurchase from the same service provider. The results of the current study demonstrate that customers of the three fast food outlets have a negative sense of repurchasing behaviour since the overall score revealed a general disagreement with the statement regarding repeating purchases from these three fast food outlets in the future. This confirms the evidence that customers have had a poor service experience as confirmed by the gap analysis. (The only customers who are likely to spend large amounts of money are those who visit these fast food outlets for the first time.) This is linked to the findings of Andres and Yogesh (2009, 555-565), and Ying-Feng et al. (2009, 887-896), who affirm that when customers are delighted with the service received, they are likely to revisit and repurchase from the same service provider in the future. Therefore, one of the immediate consequences of customers not being satisfied with the service perceived from the fast food outlets is the discontinuation of dealing with that same service provider to avoid further disappointment since customers are becoming more demanding. As declared by Byung, Chul-Ho and Deuk (2007, 27–39), the percentage of customers who experienced poor services and would stop their repurchasing was more than the average (average number of customers visiting the service provider). However, this study revealed that customers spend large amounts. This can be explained by the fact that customers expect a high level of service quality at these fast food outlets the first time they visit them and are willing to spend more in order to get the service they expect. But since they are not satisfied with the service they receive, the amount they spend is likely to decrease. Most of the time, they visit these outlets again because the options of switching to other fast food outlets are restricted in certain areas. Besides this, the current study also shows that customers are not willing to recommend FFO1, FFO2 and FFO3 to anybody else, particularly their friends. This means that customers try by all means to tell of the poor service received to a maximum number of friends in order for these friends not to experience the same disappointment, especially during lunch hours. Byung et al. (2007, 27–39) add that customers who are not satisfied are more than willing to spread their bad service experience to other customers via Word-Of-Mouth
(WOM) and such negative WOM would destroy the fast food outlet’s customer relationship.

When it comes to a discussion of the aspects of customer loyalty, Foster (2010, 242-259) and Gryna et al. (2009, 61-73) remind us of customer loyalty as an influential indicator of customer satisfaction. Thus, services that are perceived as high will result in loyal customers who will use the fast food outlet consistently over long periods of time and also will recommend the fast food outlet to anyone else or their friends. Customers of these three fast food outlets do not intend to engage in consistent patronage to become loyal customers. This suggests the extent to which customers express their dissatisfaction in regard to poor services received from FFO1, FFO2 or FFO3. In simple terms, the failure in customer loyalty is a direct consequence of customers having a bad experience of the services they encountered while visiting the fast food outlets.

From the hypothetical statement (RB3 – I will be a customer of this fast food outlet as long as it offers the best service to me), it is apparent that customers intend to buy repeatedly, as long as they are satisfied with the quality of services they receive from each one of the three fast food outlets. This engages the positive impact of customer satisfaction regardless of the size and the type of company. Sivadas, Jamie and Baker (2010, 73-82) endorse the fact that customer satisfaction is an antecedent of loyalty (relative attitude). The reason they give is that customers will have a good attitude toward a fast food outlet only if there is satisfaction in transactions. Where there is no satisfaction, customers are easily inspired to switch to other fast food brands (competitors) available. The study revealed that customers of FFO1, FFO2 and FFO3 also buy from their competitors in the fast food industry. This result reflects the general subjective attitude of customers who are not satisfied, as satisfied customers are generally motivated to repeat purchases. On the other hand, Mohsan et al. (2011, 45-61) deplore the attitude of satisfied customers because they believe that customer satisfaction does not necessarily guarantee repeat purchases from the customers’ perspective, although it still takes significant work on the part of the service provider to ensure customer loyalty or retention. But, in the current study, service quality and
customer satisfaction were found to be related to repeat repurchases from the assessment of the customer’s perspective.

This is the main reason that these fast food outlets need to work very hard to transform customers who are not satisfied into satisfied ones. Being satisfied, they will be inspired to recommend the fast food outlets to their friends or anyone else. Lastly, the fast food outlets have to build strong relationships to be able to convert their satisfied customers to a loyalty spectrum.
CHAPTER 6:
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapters 4 and 5 respectively present the analysis of the data collected and a discussion of the findings. This last chapter strives to provide answers to the research questions of the study by summing up the findings obtained from the analysis and discussion chapters. This chapter deals with theoretical and policy implications of the study and also highlights the study limitations and provides directions and areas for future research.

6.1 Summary of findings

The study set out to provide answers to the research questions on the topic of how customers perceive service quality by identifying dimensions of service quality provided by FFO1, FFO2 and FFO3 outlets that bring satisfaction to customers. The study also explored how customers behaved according to whether they were satisfied. The study also sought to find out whether satisfaction encourages repeat purchases from the customer perspective and the study provides insight into how management can drive service quality to persuade customers to repeat purchases in the future.

Two points stood out in the study. First, out of the 119 respondents, the study confirmed that the customers were on average 28 years old. This indicates that the areas where data was collected are inhabited by students or young workers and these are the main customers of these three fast food outlets. But elders were also represented in the study. In addition, people spend fairly large amounts of money on a daily basis in these fast food outlets.

Secondly, the reliability analysis revealed that there was a good fit of data collected using the SERVQUAL instrument both for the expectation scores and for the perception scores. Since the Inter-Item Correlation Matrix values of perceptions and expectations were individually loaded positively in all the SERVQUAL dimensions, with all displaying
Cronbach Alpha values of greater than the criterion 0.7, this shows that the study results are substantially reliable because the greatest reliability that is obtainable is 1. This is a good indication that SERVQUAL is a fitting instrument for measuring service quality in fast food outlets.

For this research to make sense of the findings, the research questions need to be answered.

1. *How do customers perceive service quality in the fast food outlets and are customers satisfied with the services offered?*

The gap analysis of the SERVQUAL dimensions revealed that the service quality as perceived by customers is low and hence customers receive little satisfaction from it. Customer expectations are higher than their perceptions. In other words, customers expect more than they currently receive from FFO1, FFO2 and FFO3. The overall service quality also revealed a negative gap average, which is a confirmation of customer expectations exceeding perceptions. This means that customers are not satisfied with the quality of the services received from these three fast food outlets. In fact, the assessment of service quality dimensions individually showed that no dimension brings satisfaction because the average gaps were found to be negative across all five dimensions. However, customers were found to be more critical when it comes to how service quality is delivered through factors relating to the reliability dimension since this dimension showed the greatest negative gap.

Also, from the comparisons of the means, it was found that customers’ expectations differ among the three fast food outlets on the basis of each dimension. FFO2 showed the highest expectations of all, explaining the fact that customers expect more service quality from its fast food outlets. On the other hand, a comparison of the means regarding customers’ perceptions showed no significant differences among the means of the five dimensions.

From the findings pointed out above, it is clear that FFO2 is the fast food outlet where customers experience the worst levels of service quality.
2. *Would customers repeat purchases from these fast food outlets despite lack of satisfaction?*

From the analysis of their repurchasing behaviour, it was found that customers of the three fast food outlets are not willing to repeat purchases from FFO1, FFO2 or FFO3 in the future. This substantiates the fact that customers have had a poor purchase experience as confirmed by the gap analysis from the service quality findings. One of the immediate consequences of no satisfaction is the termination of the interaction with that specific service provider as proven in the current study. Andres and Yogesh (2009, 555-565) and Ying-Feng et al. (2009, 887-896) affirm that when customers are not satisfied with the service received, they are likely not to revisit and repurchase from the same service provider in the future, especially if various other fast food outlets are available. It is also evident that customers are not loyal to a particular fast outlet because loyalty arises as a result of satisfaction.

3. *What can core management do to fulfil satisfaction requirements in order to drive repurchasing behaviour?*

As revealed by the results of the study in relation to the above questions, core management needs to put more effort into customer service operations to be in a favourable position to promote the satisfaction objectives at all levels of their respective fast food outlet units. The results reveal that these fast food outlets are still far from providing service quality excellence; this means that basic activities such as employee training need to be considered. Core management should make customer satisfaction its ultimate objective to achieve service quality. The interaction between fast food outlets’ frontline employees and customers needs to be assured because it is considered as the Moment-Of-Truth where fast food outlet employees currently present the image of the entire fast food outlet. It is also where service quality aspects of the fast food outlet are perceived by customers. The appropriate way of driving repurchasing behaviour is to make sure that each dimension of service quality is properly taken into account. See Section 6.3 – Recommendations for future research,
below, which (by presenting causes of dissatisfaction and possible resolutions) provides effective ways for management to achieve greater levels of service quality and satisfaction and in this way drive customer repurchasing frequency ultimately.

In short, the three fast food outlets failed to assure service quality for their customers, with the immediate impact that customers intended not to repurchase from them in the future. The evidence from the study shows that FFO1, FFO2 and FFO3 management needs to put more effort into improving their respective performances in the five dimensions of service quality to increase customer satisfaction as customers expect far more than is currently provided. Improved service quality is likely to enable these fast food outlets to retain customers and inspire them to make further purchases. In this way the fast food outlets will also maintain a high level of competitiveness in the fast food industry.

6.2 Implications of the study

The purpose of this study was to explore how customers perceive service quality in FFO1, FFO2 and FFO3 by examining all dimensions of service quality and then deducing how customers are likely to behave with regard to making further purchases in the future. An associated purpose of the study was to present these findings to management.

The SERVQUAL instrument used to analyse the study data showed an acceptable reliability for all five dimensions (tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy). This a good ground for confirming the reliability and validity of the findings of the study.

From the SERVQUAL analysis, it is clear that customers expect more than what is actually offered from these fast food outlets, which leads to no satisfaction and therefore to a negative sense of repeating purchases from the customers’ perspective. This study presents management of these three fast food outlets (regarded as the chicken industry as well) with the evidence that service quality is important for the fast food outlets to be competitive in the fast food industry. This study gives management an opportunity to
establish new processes to improve and sustain their service performances on the basis of each of the five dimensions used to measure service quality.

By reason of customers not being satisfied with the service provided to them, they do not intend to repurchase from these fast food outlets. This is also a good indication to management that the loss of customers is immediate if actions are not taken to enhance current customers’ purchase experience. Regardless of the size of the fast food outlet, if there are no customers to enable business flow then the fast food outlet is likely to close down. In addition, the analysis of repurchasing behaviour revealed that customers are not willing to be loyal to these fast food outlets. Once more, this proves to top management the importance of assuring service quality, which is an antecedent of satisfaction, which in turn is essential for customer loyalty (Saravanan and Rao, 2007, 435-449).

Nevertheless, it is also important to notify management that these findings are applicable to the three fast food outlets on the basis of the sample used. FFO2 top management should be more concerned since FFO2 experiences a significantly higher level of poor service quality than FFO1 and FFO3 in the areas considered. Also, young black adults or students with an average age of 28 are strongly present in these areas and their needs change from time to time. In addition, despite the large amounts of money they spend at these fast food outlets, these customers are not consistent in buying from the same fast food outlet. In other words, they can switch to another fast food outlet as soon as one becomes available in the area.

In short, the implication of the study findings for management of these fast food outlets is that they should be concerned about all dimensions (and features) of service quality and put in extra efforts to improve service handling, in order to create an adequate performance that would result in higher levels of perceived service quality, customer satisfaction and then repeat purchases.

6.3 Recommendations for future research

There is a need for more regular studies to be carried out to better appreciate all aspects of service quality that lead to repeat purchases in fast food outlets in the
chicken industry. The current study concluded that customers are not satisfied with the quality of the service they receive from FFO1, FFO2 and FFO3; consequently, they are not willing to repurchase from them again. The study presents top management of these fast food outlets with causes of the lack of satisfaction in each dimension as well as directions on how to tackle the issues. By restoring satisfaction in customers, these fast food outlets’ top management should be able to retain their customers through repeat purchases and by building a strong relationship with them. Following the findings obtained under each dimension of service quality, it is believed that high levels of customer satisfaction and a good sense of repurchasing behaviour originate from excellent service quality. This led to the identification of the causes of a lack of customer satisfaction and provision of well-thought out resolutions that would be useful for the management of FFO1, FFO2 and FFO3 to take into account. These causes are relatively common to these three fast food outlets, but specific in some instances. These causes were identified during the data-collection process and then with the findings of the analysis (five dimensions of service quality) summarised in the form of a table (see Table 26 – Causes and resolutions).

Table 26, below, shows the causes of the lack of customer satisfaction and possible resolutions on the basis of each service quality dimension that could serve as an ideal way of promoting service quality, satisfaction and potential loyalty.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Cause</th>
<th>Suggested resolution</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tangibles</td>
<td>1. <em>Limited operating tills:</em> These fast food outlets have limited tills operating during lunch time when the demand is very high and some machines have been out of order for a long period of time without being fixed or replaced. This was observed at FFO2 particularly.</td>
<td>Broken machines should be fixed or replaced so that a maximum number of tills are in full function to serve customers in a decent way.</td>
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</table>
2. *The dining areas are not kept clean at all times, dripped oil and empty food boxes all over:* During data collection for this study, customers in the dining areas complained about unclean tables because dirt left by previous customers was not cleaned right after. Also, the food oil and empty food boxes could cause a fall which is harmful for anyone. Each of these three fast food outlets should hire new cleaners or train the existing cleaners to look after the dining areas at all times, so that new customers do not encounter the mess left by previous customers. Also, safety and health measures should be communicated to all employees and kept in mind at all times in order to avoid any incident in the service production environment.

| Reliability | 1. *Unavailability of certain items:* What upsets customers is the lack of certain items in these fast food outlets. Some customers have their unique meals that they enjoy when they are at one of these food outlets. However, the unavailability of the meal package leads to no satisfaction in customers and this is quite recurrent at FFO2 during peak lunch hours.  
2. *Not keeping promises:* This can also be described as “market overpromises”. Some of FFO1 and FFO2’s customers reported that they are fed up with the difference between the burger displayed in the photo and the burger in their hands. Consequently, customers are not happy.  
These fast food outlets should have frontline employees who are capable of using appropriate skills to suggest other ranges of meal packages that incorporate similar ingredients to the unique meal package that they regularly buy.  
These fast food outlets should avoid marketing what they cannot provide to their customers on a constant basis. They should remain consistent and truthful at all times in the service delivery in order to bring satisfaction to their customers. |
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Responsiveness</th>
<th>1. <strong>Slow service at the tills</strong>: With limited tills that are operating, frequently the service process comes to a point called “bottleneck”, which can be defined as “a point of congestion in a system process which occurs when service loads reach a specific point faster than that point can handle” (Heizer, Jay and Render, 2014, 223-225). The disruptions brought about by a bottleneck usually cause a queue and a lengthy total cycle time. This was mostly observed at certain FFO3 outlets during data collection.</th>
<th>These fast food outlets should properly train their employees to handle customers’ orders at the tills. They should train them particularly on speed and accuracy in order to avoid or reduce bottlenecks at the tills during peak hours.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Assurance</td>
<td>1. <strong>Unfriendly behaviour of employees or simply rude staff</strong>: The behaviour of employees in these three fast food outlets does not inspire confidence in customers. The way frontline employees communicate with customers is enough to turn the most mild-mannered of customers against the fast food outlet.</td>
<td>To be successful in dealing with this issue, employees should politely and respectfully smile at customers during the Moment-Of-Truth. This would certainly prove to customers that they are important and that employees are happy to give them the best service.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. <strong>Staff training</strong>: Employees (cashiers) of these three fast food outlets are not properly trained on giving accurate information about the menu items. This is very irritating to customers. As mentioned earlier in this suggested resolution, employees should undergo appropriate training on handling customers’ requirements in a decent way that builds confidence in employees while interacting with customers.</td>
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| Empathy | 1. **Lack of customer assistance**: These fast food outlets are not prepared to give customers personal attention. For instance, during data collection in FFO2, a situation was observed where a customer was kept for longer than expected by service representatives in order to replace his burger which he was not satisfied with. So it is very irritating to see service representatives putting little effort into resolving issues.  

2. **Not listening to customers**: One of the biggest mistakes these three fast food outlets make is not listening to their customers. It is also the reason customers complain.  

|  | Customers need individual attention. Thus, these fast food outlets should have employees capable of expressing any kind of empathy to customers, even when handling complaints. Employees should ask questions in a caring and concerned manner. This once again tells customers that they are important.  

Employees should bear in mind that customers are always right. Employees should listen carefully to what customers have to say and let them finish. |

A recommendation that relates to the study is that the SERVQUAL instrument should be customised to add the “image” dimension to the existing five dimensions. The reason for this inclusion is that some customers are inspired to buy according to the public perception of the fast food outlet.

The study presents results that are reliable and valid for the three fast food outlets: FFO1, FFO2 and FFO3 combined for the sample used. A further study might focus on each case (FFO1, FFO2 or FFO3) separately by using similar objectives and research questions in respect of equal sample sizes to continue to monitor customer satisfaction.
and behaviour. A comparison of the results should enable issues that relate specifically to a fast food outlet to be outlined.

6.4 Limitations of the study

The study focused on service quality and repurchasing behaviour because these are important factors that determine the performance excellence of a service provider. The study had two limitations. First, owing to financial constraints regarding travelling the long distances to the geographical locations of certain fast food outlets in Johannesburg Central, the study could be focused on the FFO1, FFO2 and FFO3 outlets in Auckland Park, Braamfontein, Randburg area, Fordsburg/Mayfair, Newtown and Sophia town only. The results obtained from these fast food outlets could be generalised to others outside the concerned areas, however, since their policies and structures are relatively similar for each of the three fast food outlets.

Secondly, at the beginning of the study, it was agreed to administer 150 questionnaires to FFO1, FFO2 and FFO3 customers, with 50 questionnaires per fast food outlet. However, ultimately only 119 questionnaires were completed by respondents owing to not only low responses from customers while waiting for their food but also the resistance of certain fast food outlets’ management to data collection taking place in the outlets’ enclosures.

6.5 Conclusion

The main objective of the study was to explore the impact that service quality has on customer behaviour within three competing fast food outlets in the industry of processed chicken.

Service quality was the main focus of the study and it was assessed through the evaluation of customers’ expectations and perceptions under the five quality dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, empathy and assurance. These five dimensions were explicitly expanded to detailed statements under the SERVQUAL instrument section of the questionnaire used to collect data. The SERVQUAL findings were linked
to repurchasing behaviour findings to support the achievement of the main objective of the study mentioned above.

It was demonstrated that customers are sensitive to all aspects of service quality as explained under each dimension in the study. It was found that the overall service quality of FFO1, FFO2 and FFO3 was low since customers' perceptions were lower than their expectations. According to Sivadas et al. (2010, 73-82), service quality is acknowledged as an antecedent of customer satisfaction and of loyalty (relative attitude); consequently, without satisfaction, customers will not hold a favourable attitude towards a brand as compared to other alternatives available.

The current study (whose findings were found to be reliable and valid) confirms that the aspects of service quality are not assured in these fast food outlets. This leads not only to no customer satisfaction but also to poor frequency of customers repurchasing from these same fast food outlets in the future. Thus, service quality, which forms part of a fast food outlet's competitive advantage, has a significant impact on fast food outlets' activities toward pleasing customers. The impact of service quality could be positive (if all aspects are assured) or negative as outlined in this study. In other words, if the quality of the service is perceived by customers to be poor, customers will not make repeat purchases in the future.


partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Bachelor of International Business, Kampar, Perak, Malaysia: University Tunku Abdul Rahman.


### Appendix 1: Questionnaire

#### SECTION B - RESEARCH QUESTIONS: SERVQUAL

**EXPECTATIONS:** I would like you to think about the ideal, perfect fast food outlet. This section deals with your opinion of such a fast food outlet. Please, show the extent to which you think an excellent fast food outlet ‘should’ possess the following features. We are interested in knowing your actual expectations of an excellent fast food outlet. **Mark the correct response with an “X”**

<p>| | | | | |</p>
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<tr>
<td>1. An excellent fast food outlet will have modern-looking equipment.</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Agree</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>2. The physical facilities at excellent fast food outlets will be visually appealing.</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Agree</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Employees at excellent fast food outlets will be neat-appearing.</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Agree</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. The dining areas of an excellent fast food outlet will be perfectly clean.</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Agree</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. When excellent fast food outlets promise to do something by a certain time, they should do so.</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Agree</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>When a customer has a problem, excellent fast food outlets will show a sincere interest in solving it.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Excellent fast food outlets will perform the service right the first time.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Excellent fast food outlets will provide their services at the time they promise to do so.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>9.</td>
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<td>22.</td>
<td>Excellent fast food outlets will have the customer’s best interests at heart.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**PERCEPTIONS:** The following statements deal with the perceptions of your experience of this fast food outlet. Please, show the extent to which these statements reflect your perception of service in this fast food outlet. **Mark the correct response “X”**

<p>| | | | | | |</p>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. This fast food outlet has modern-looking equipment.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. The venue appearance of this fast food outlet is attractive.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. This outlet employees are neat-appearing</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. The dining areas of this fast food outlet are perfectly clean.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. When this outlet promises to do something by a certain time, they do so.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. When a customer has a problem, this fast food outlet shows a sincere interest in solving it.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. This Fast food outlet performs the service right the first time.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. This fast food outlet provides its services at the time it promises to do so.</td>
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### SECTION C - RESEARCH QUESTIONS: REPURCHASING BEHAVIOUR

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How often do you purchase from this fast food outlet?</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>Always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>2. I will repurchase from this fast food outlet in the future</td>
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<td>3. I will be a customer of this fast food outlet as long as it offers the best service to me.</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>4. I will recommend this outlet to someone else/friend.</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>5. I buy food from competitors of this fast food outlet.</td>
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## Appendix 2: Expectations versus Perceptions

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