

**THE INFLUENCE OF SERVICE QUALITY DIMENSIONS ON
CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AT ACCOMODATION
ESTABLISHMENT IN EASTERN CAPE.**

By

APHIWE DYASI

And

TARIRO SHUMBA

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By

APHIWE DYASI

And

TARIRO SHUMBA

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Supervisor: Prof. Sandra Perks

DECLARATION

We, Aphiwe Dyasi (216262445) and Tariro Shumba (216830710), hereby declare that the content of this treatise, entitled “Influence of service quality dimensions on customer satisfaction at accommodation establishments in Eastern Cape”, is our own original work; and that it has not previously been submitted for assessment of any postgraduate qualification at another university or for another qualification, and that all sources used or quoted have been acknowledged and indicated as complete references.

APHIWE DYASI

TARIRO SHUMBA

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Most importantly, none of this could have happened without our families. Our parents and siblings, who offered their support and encouragement in every way they possibly could, we are forever grateful.

ABSTRACT

Given the importance of accommodation establishments being able to provide quality services to achieve customer satisfaction, there is a lack of attention given to research on how each service quality dimension can have an influence on a guest's satisfaction. Thus, the primary objective of this study is to determine the influence of service quality on customer satisfaction.

A literature review was conducted on the influence of service quality dimensions on accommodation establishments in Eastern Cape. Thereafter, independent variables (Tangibles, Reliability, Empathy, Responsiveness, Assurance, Convenience and Complaint handling) were identified as possibly influencing the dependent variable (Customer Satisfaction). All seven independent variables were selected and used to construct a hypothetical model and research hypothesis. An empirical investigation was undertaken to be able to establish the influence of service quality dimensions on accommodation establishments in Eastern Cape. The measuring instrument used for this study, a questionnaire, was constructed from secondary literature sources. The opinions of the respondents on the questionnaire were obtained from using a 5-point Likert scale method. Snowball and convenience sampling was used to identify the respondents. The usable data that was gathered from the respondents were explored through statistical analyses. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was used to confirm the validity of the measuring instrument, while the calculation of Cronbach's alpha coefficients were used to confirm the reliability of the measuring instrument. Thereafter, descriptive and inferential statistics were calculated to summarise and allow interpretation of the data.

Based on the results of the empirical investigations, two statistically significant relationships were found among the independent variables (Reliability and Complaints handling) and the dependent variables (Customer satisfaction). This study revealed that accommodation establishments can achieve customer satisfaction by offering these service quality dimensions. Therefore, this study has made a contribution to the shortage of literature on the influence of service quality dimensions on customer satisfaction at accommodation establishments in Eastern Cape and about what guests ideally look for in an accommodation establishment. As a result, this study provides recommendations and suggestions for accommodation establishments on tangibles, reliability, information sharing, complimentary services and complaint handling service quality dimensions that guests' value and how to ensure service quality to achieve customer satisfaction.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Internationally, the travel and tourism sector play a pivotal role in enabling economic growth, increased exports and job creation (Giap, Gopalan & Ye, 2016:3). This fact has never been more evident with the contribution of travel and tourism towards the global GDP amounting to 9.3% in 2016 alone (Smith, 2017). The industry has been able to infiltrate the market and achieve gains through five key sub-sectors; food and beverages, cultural and recreational services, retail trade, accommodation and transportation services. Cooper, Fletcher, Fyall, Gilbert and Wanhill (2008:343) argue that the backbone of this vital industry depends mostly on the accommodation services subsector since individuals involved rely on the services as base of activity engagement. South Africa has been one of the countries where tourism has played a crucial role with accommodation contributing over R37, 9 billion in revenue and an average growth of 4.3% annually. Furthermore, the hotel accommodation revenue has grown to R16.629 billion with an increase of 55.59% since 2012 (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2019). It appears that the primary driver of this growth has been accommodation establishments, which immensely depend on the satisfaction of the customers just like any other services provided for revenue.

Accommodation establishments face intense competition and need to comprehensively develop quality and efficient models of services to satisfy customers thereby enabling loyalty or growth in customers (Guttentag, 2015:1192). Thus, accommodation establishments depend mostly on offering unique benefits and affordable offerings with added value for increased income and success. According to Mok, Sparks and Kadampully (2013:51) the provision of quality services and customer satisfaction is vital to an organisation's success within the tourism industry. Customers that experience unmitigated services are more likely to establish loyalty and give favourable reviews (Almsalam, 2014:81). Effectiveness, profitability, publicity and sustainability of accommodation establishments highly depend on customers' perceptions of services rendered (Nam, Ekinci & Whyatt, 2011:1009). Additionally, homogeneity of services offered in the accommodation establishments intensifies competition forcing organisations to adopt unique services centered on the customer.

Several studies on customer satisfaction have been undertaken with the inclusion of accommodation sector (Chi & Gursoy, 2009:245; Hasegawa, 2010:86; Suhartanto & Noor, 2012:6; Bernini & Cagnone, 2014:1). Unfortunately, most have not entirely focused just on the accommodation industry or within South African cities. This research aims to fill this gap by approaching two hundred participants to take part in a survey that will help to evaluate customer satisfaction across the accommodation industry in the Eastern Cape.

Eastern Cape is one of the provinces in South Africa with the potential to grow its tourism industry in terms of tourism attractions. The percentage share of tourists entering the Eastern Cape has increased from 3.2% in 2016 to 4% in 2017 and growth percentage has increased from 19.8% in 2016 to 26.8% in 2017; although the province still only ranks 8th in the country (Department of Tourism, 2017).

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

In light of the above, research into the area of accommodation establishment is required. Accommodation establishments are considered very important in the tourism, travel and hospitality industry. Apart from the local guests, accommodation establishments aid as a source of forex from international guests who travel for various reasons, among many, to visit tourist attractions and holiday sites in South Africa throughout the year. To maintain the standard for meeting customer satisfaction, service quality expectations must be realised. Service quality expectations are responsiveness, tangibility, empathy, assurance and reliability (Pantedilis, 2014:34).

To overcome low satisfaction ratings as shown by Visser (2017) it is very important to measure service quality dimensions to determine the satisfaction levels of customers. To beat stiff competition in the accommodation establishments' industry, it is important for accommodation establishments' management to give customers a reason to prefer their organisation to that of their competitors. Customer satisfaction and service quality are key elements in obtaining a competitive edge in the hospitality industry (Sumarjan, Radzi, Jamal, Chik & Bakhtiar, 2015:29).

Fick (2017:216) stresses how accommodation establishments' have closed and reopened, highlighting failure to cater for diverse expectations and ever evolving customer demands. Low customer satisfaction levels of accommodation establishments are usually due to, low levels of

customer service efficiency pegged against the accommodation costs, crime, lack of adequate tourism information and transport. Having customer satisfaction as the critical objective in accommodation establishments eradicates dissatisfaction. Customer satisfaction is central to effective marketing strategies if accommodation establishments are to achieve above average performance (Sumarian *et al.*, 2015:30).

Key measures of customer satisfaction in accommodation establishments include customer care, service quality, noting and acting based on customer reviews, accommodation product offering, quality assurance, which when put together create the ‘experience economy’, for customers resulting in high satisfaction levels. The outcomes of increased customer satisfaction levels include, loyalty, customer retention, word-of-mouth referrals, extended period of stay, repeat bookings, improved relationship with the accommodation establishments.

All these outcomes are important as the organisation will have a platform for building relationships with customers and in turn, increase profits (Solitriadis, 2018:193). Pantelidis (2014:33) emphasises on the difficulty management and staff face in fully understanding the expectations of individual customers. This challenge jeopardises service quality and negatively affects customer satisfaction. In as much as it can be a straining task for management to fulfil customer expectations, due to the diverse populations of customers they receive, different cultures, changing expectations, behaviour and lifestyles, it remains very important to ensure that customer satisfaction levels are improved. Staff performance can either positively or negatively affect customer satisfaction (Sotriadis, 2018:202).

Valuable insights to accommodation staff and management has been provided through various studies (Chen 2018, Pantelidis 2014, Wirtz 2012, Willemsen 2011) that were carried out on how to improve customer satisfaction, but practical implementation still lacks. Gaps in regard to customer expectations towards satisfaction fulfilment, before and during their visit still exist.

Given this background, further study and application on how to use the available information to improve and fully satisfy customers to enjoy maximal benefits of the efforts is still required. It is important to implement service quality dimensions for customer value in the accommodation industry to improve on customer satisfaction levels, given macro-environment factor changes taking place in the hospitality industry. The research therefore must answer the

question: Which service quality dimensions do customers value to ensure customer satisfaction in accommodation establishments?

1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Primary and secondary objectives will be provided below with the methodological research objectives and research questions.

1.3.1 Primary objective

The primary objective of this study is to determine the influence of service quality dimensions on customer satisfaction in accommodation establishments in the Eastern Cape.

1.3.2 Secondary objectives

To investigate the influence of service quality dimensions on customer satisfaction at accommodation establishments in Eastern Cape, the following secondary objectives have been formulated under methodological research objectives below.

1.3.3 Methodological research objectives

To achieve the primary objective of this study, the following secondary objectives have been formulated:

- To identify and describe the critical dimensions for measuring consumers satisfaction of accommodation establishments;
- To investigate which service quality dimensions are important for customer satisfaction;
- To empirically investigate the influence of service quality dimensions on customer satisfaction at accommodation establishments; and
- To provide recommendations to accommodation establishments about the level of impact each service quality dimension has towards customer satisfaction at accommodation establishments.

1.3.4 Research questions

Based on the problem statement and objectives of this study, the following research questions are presented to determine the influence of service quality dimensions on customer satisfaction at accommodation establishments in Eastern Cape:

- How is customer satisfaction ensured at accommodation establishments in Eastern Cape?

- What are the critical dimensions of service quality to achieve customer satisfaction in accommodation establishment in Eastern Cape?
- What is the influence of service quality dimensions on customer satisfaction at accommodation establishments in Eastern Cape?

1.4 BRIEF LITERATURE OVERVIEW

This section will include discussions on service quality dimensions and customer satisfaction. Furthermore, these two concepts will be discussed in relation to already existing literature on the apparent relationship that exists between them.

1.4.1 Customer satisfaction

The several studies on satisfaction have mainly pre-empted the development of nine main theories. These theories include assimilation-contrast, comparison level, expectancy disconfirmation, generalized negativity, assimilation, contrast, equity, value precept and attribution.

The studies across different industries have adopted these theories in empirical research including the tourism industry (Zehrer, Muskat & Muskat, 2014; Bilgihan; Okumus; Nusair & Bujisic, 2014:49). Several studies support the expectancy disconfirmation theory as developed by Oliver (1980:463) and regard it as accurate in explaining customer satisfaction. The theory implies customers have a presupposed expectation before purchasing a service and satisfaction depends on the outcome which either meets or doesn't meet such expectations. Lankton, Mcknight and Thatcher (2014:128) adopted and tested the model within user information technology (IT) satisfaction and proved that expectancy disconfirmation explains customer satisfaction fully. Piercy and Ellinger (2015:50) provided further evidence of applicability of disconfirmation theory in a demand and supply side relationship application research. Further modifications and arguments for better explanations of customer satisfaction have revolved around purely empirical assertions.

Chen, and Kao (2010:2081) identified two types of satisfaction based on experience which include process-oriented and outcome-oriented. Process-oriented satisfaction is more based on the actual experience during the timeline of stay whilst outcome-orientated depends on the end result. Gustafsson, Johnson and Roos (2005:212) argued that customer satisfaction is an

ongoing evaluation by the customer on service performance. Thus, customers give loyalty to an organisation but constantly re-evaluate their loyalty based on the growth and success of organisations to improve the needs of the customer (Yeung, Ramasamy, Chen & Paliwoda, 2013:416). Wu and Liang (2009:586) acknowledged that customer satisfaction arises from customers experiencing pleasant and entertaining experiences levelled by high quality services that meets their preconceived idea of satisfaction.

Given the competitive nature of the current market for retaining and satisfying customers. It is evident for organisations to adopt a customer-oriented platform. Organisations need to have a niche market and maximise their needs and wants thereby satisfying customers (Keiningham, Gupta, Aksoy & Buoye, 2014:37). According to Ograjensek and Gal (2012:107) organisations are prone to setting customer satisfaction goals with no clear understanding of what factors or end effects customers identify as satisfactory. Thus, evidence has shown organisations which have aimed to reorient themselves towards customers tend to gain a competitive advantage (Ryu, Lee, & Kim, 2012:200).

1.4.2 Measurement and dimensions models of service quality

Research on service quality has adopted different measurements and instruments of identifying the level of quality perceptions held by customers. This section reviews literature pertaining to the main models used as instruments of service quality measurements and dimensions this includes; Gronroos model, SERVQUAL and SERVPERF approach to service quality conceptualization.

1.4.2.1 Gronroos model

Service quality dimensional and measurement modelling has evolved over the years mostly originating from Gronroos (1982). The Gronroos model has ever since been extended and under-utilised due to its lack of practicality as a tool of measurement. Gronroos (1982) adopts a three-dimensional conceptualisation, where service quality is defined as satisfactory if perceived and expected quality are kept at a close range. Satisfaction and expected quality are both dependent on three factors:

- technical which includes the outcome of a service, specifically what the customer receives due to interaction with the organisation;

- functional factors which include the process leading to the service outcome such as communication and how a service is delivered by staff; and
- both technical and functional factors since it includes how the corporate brand is perceived by the customer.

1.4.2.2 SERVQUAL

Developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1985:41) the SERVQUAL instrument is the mostly used dimensional measurement of service quality within research. Following the five-dimensional components structure, the instrument relies on preconceived dimensions which are measured using the expectation-confirmation theory. This analysis constructs service quality as a five-dimensional aspect. These dimensions include; tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy (Adil, Ghaswyneh & Albkour, 2013:64). Criticism of the SERVQUAL model led to the development of the SERVPERF dimensions and measurement concept.

1.4.2.3 SERVPERF

This model takes the performance only based measurement of quality as opposed to perceived service quality within the context of SERVQUAL. Though, the model adopts the same dimensions as its origin, studies have relatively shown that it performs better in analysing service quality. Brochado (2009:174) tested the measurement capabilities of both the SERVQUAL and SERVPERF identifying the later as superior in measurement capabilities. According to Salazar, Costa and Rita (2010:389) in their study within the Portuguese hospitality industry the SERVPERF model is more robust and explains service quality better than the former. Further studies argue that the two metric measurement models differ in outcomes, hence, robust research should adopt both models (Rodrigues, Barkur, Varambally & Motlagh, 2011:629). Thus, service quality should be evaluated according to dimensions of both models whilst exploring the implications. This criticism of both models has led to a breakthrough in research focused on a multidimensional approach within service quality studies.

1.4.3 Service quality and customer satisfaction

Saleem and Raja (2014:708) adopted structural equation modelling to evaluate the impact of service quality on the customer satisfaction within accommodation establishments industry in

Pakistan. The study found that service quality enabled growth in customer satisfaction leading to increased probability of customer loyalty. The results identified that service quality played a critical role in how customers reacted to the outcome of their stay. Customers perceived high quality staff service, room quality, security and general amenities as important factors that influenced satisfaction. Zhou, Ye, Pearce and Wu (2014:1) identified similar results within Hangzhou an energy tourism city in China but argued that room quality was more important to customers. Thus, accommodation establishments with rooms that are comfortable and well fitted with extra edge experience higher customer satisfaction and gain loyalty.

Ren, Zhang and Ye (2015:45) used online reviews to identify the satisfaction of customers based on service quality. The results showed that focus on guestroom features such as shower room and quietness of the environment enabled customers to view service rendered as satisfactory. Additionally, Ren *et al.* (2015:57) argued that contact staff service played a crucial role in how customers reviewed accommodation establishments after their stay. According to Racherla, Connolly and Christodoulidou (2013:148) indicators of customer satisfaction and excellent quality service therefore depend intensively on the employees who give interactive service to customers. The more trustworthiness, honesty and ability to resolve issues with customers the more perceived satisfaction customers experienced. Clark, Hartline and Jones (2009:219) further argued the importance of employees in delivering quality service to impact customer satisfaction. Thus, training approaches of employees has over the years stayed an area of caution for the tourism industry.

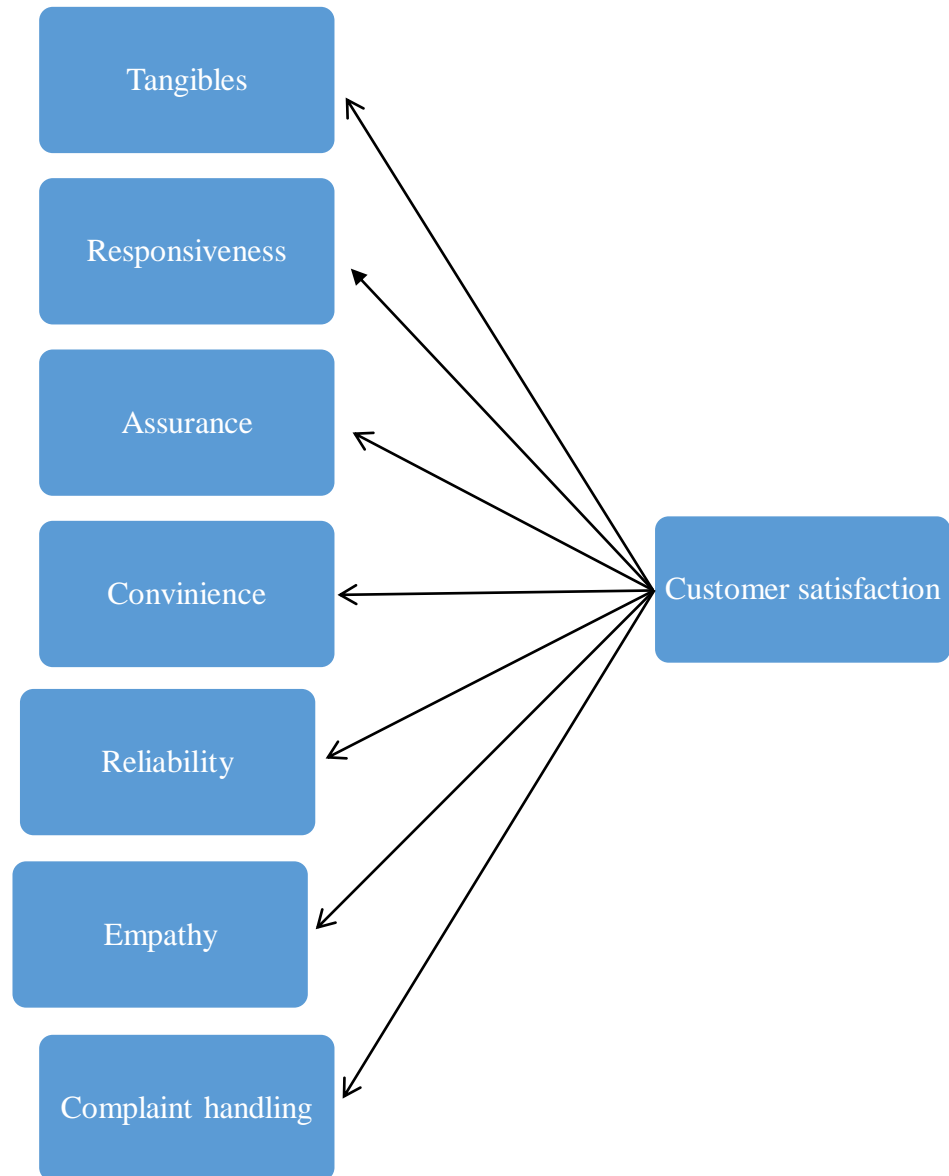
Bonn, Joseph-Mathews, Dai, Hayes, and Cave (2007:345) on the contrary identified that service quality affects customer satisfaction based on the environmental settings and proximity of environmental attractions such as museums. Wu (2013:365) identified three primary dimensions and 12 sub dimensions of service quality which directly influence satisfaction of customers in Taiwan. Thus, as customers experience higher quality based on their perceived cultural viewpoint they gain increased satisfaction (Wu, 2013:371).

1.5 PROPOSED MODEL AND HYPOTHESES

The following model was adopted for the use of this study as it represents all the service quality dimensions that influence customer satisfaction. The proposed model is illustrated in Figure1 which has been constructed using all the models discussed above. The model is strongly

dominated by the SERVQUAL instrument which is the mostly used dimensional measurement of service quality within research.

Figure 1.1: Influence of service quality dimensions on customer satisfaction



Source: Adapted from (Rahhal, 2015:83)

The proposed hypothesised model identifies the following service quality dimensions as the independent variables for this study, namely tangible; reliability, responsiveness, assurance, complaint handling and convenience, while customer satisfaction forms the dependent variable in this study.

1.5.1 Research hypotheses

Given the problem statement, primary objectives and secondary objectives of this study, numerous hypotheses relating to the service quality dimensions and customer satisfaction have been formulated:

- H1: Tangibles at accommodation establishments influence customer satisfaction.
- H2: Service reliability of accommodation establishments influences customer satisfaction.
- H3: Service responsiveness of accommodation establishments influences customer satisfaction.
- H4: Assurance given by accommodation establishments influences customer satisfaction.
- H5: Empathy displayed by accommodation establishments influences customer satisfaction.
- H6: Complaint handling of accommodation establishments influences customer satisfaction.
- H7: Convenience of accommodation establishments influences customer satisfaction.

The above hypotheses were investigated with the aim to provide an insight on the effect the service quality expectations (dimensions) have on customer satisfaction of accommodation establishments. A comprehensive analysis of the relationship between the service quality dimensions and customer satisfaction will serve as a basis to provide recommendations to accommodation establishments as to how to improve their service quality and ultimately enhance their customer satisfaction.

1.6 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The following section will discuss the research method that will be used, the research design and methodology, sampling techniques to be used and the relevant statistical methods to be used throughout the study. In order to successfully address the research objectives of this study, secondary and primary research are conducted.

1.6.1 Literature review (Secondary research)

To achieve the primary objective of this study, the secondary research of this study consists of an extensive literature review in order to identify and describe the nature and importance of customer satisfaction in general and meeting the service quality expectation (dimensions) of

customers at accommodation establishments. The secondary research of this study is conducted by consulting a variety of relevant textbooks and journal articles. In addition, the library facilities available at the Nelson Mandela University were used to access National and International databases, such as Emerald, EBSCOhost and Sabinet, which are consulted to identify preceding research on the service quality dimensions customers value which lead to satisfaction at accommodation establishments in Port Elizabeth. The relevant secondary sources obtained and utilised formed a basis for the proposed hypothesised framework shown in Figure 1.1.

1.6.2 Empirical investigation (Primary research)

The research paradigm that is used is positivistic in nature, whereby quantitative research was carried out through a designed questionnaire which is the basis of data collection. According to various researchers (Cooper & Schindler 2014:146; Struwig & Stead 2013:3) quantitative research involves the analysis of numerical data, even though the key role of quantitative research is to test specific hypotheses and examine specific relationships between the dependent and independent variables. The collected data was analysed after the three steps have been successfully completed.

1.6.2.1 Research methodology and design

Due to the study being quantitative in nature, a large sample was required, resulting in the researchers using a survey research method to collect data from two hundred respondents that stayed at accommodation establishments in Eastern Cape. The research population consists of all customers of accommodation establishments in Eastern Cape. After data collection, raw data was converted into useful information, to identify patterns, and apply statistical techniques (Cooper & Schindler 2014:86). Once primary data has been collected, it was analysed using several data analysis methods.

1.6.2.2 Sampling and data collection

The primary objective of this study is to research how accommodation establishments can fully meet service quality expectations and effectively enhance their customer satisfaction. The population frame for this research are guests of various accommodation establishments in Eastern Cape. This investigation was conducted by use of a non-probability sampling technique, following the convenience method so as to ensure willing and available customers can assist in completing the survey. The quantitative research methodology is followed,

whereby data was collected using questionnaires. Questionnaires were administered to available guests by use of drop off and collect later method.

1.6.2.3 Design of the measuring instrument

The questionnaires have three sections covering rating statements on service quality dimensions, general questions on how satisfied the guest was and lastly the guests demographics. The questionnaire was designed in English for easy read and understanding, again it is the only language common at a global level if researchers are to encounter international customers. For sections with questions examining critical service quality dimensions and customer satisfaction on a Likert type scale ranging from one (strongly disagree) to five (strongly agree) was utilised and to be selected as responses. Respondents were assured of anonymity and confidentiality for purposes of any information they provided.

1.6.2.4 Data analysis

Raw data collected by use of questionnaire research is summarised into useful information and used to interpret service quality dimensions and customer satisfaction at accommodation establishments. Primary data was captured in Microsoft Excel and analysed for interpretation. Conclusions derived from the quantitative research collection is analysed and attempted to solve the objectives of the study. The data is statistically tested for validity and reliability by use of Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and Cronbach Alpha co-efficient statistical methods respectively. Validity of the measuring instrument was to ensure if the instrument measures the intended purpose whilst Cronbach Alpha co-efficient assess the reliability of the research instrument.

1.7 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study focuses primarily on specific selected service quality dimensions towards meeting customer expectations and needs, therefore increasing the level of satisfaction. The literature review gives a detailed critical discussion on the specific service quality dimensions, that is, assurance, empathy, tangibles, responsiveness, convenience, complaint handling, and their impact on customer satisfaction. Specific attention is given to the relationship between service quality dimensions and customer satisfaction. The empirical investigation strictly focuses on accommodation establishments in Eastern Cape specifically hotels, Bed and Breakfast and lodges due to accessibility reasons.

1.8 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study will add value and expand on the limited body of knowledge that currently exists regarding the service quality that accommodation establishments can perform to achieve customer satisfaction. Given that the service quality dimensions could be key determinants in accommodation establishments' performance in the Eastern Cape, this study offers great potential such as assisting accommodation establishment owners with the execution of quality services and to recommend what other services they can offer to achieve consistent customer satisfaction in the Eastern Cape. Furthermore, this study will provide greater insight into the influence of specific service quality dimensions namely, tangibles; reliability, responsiveness, assurance, complaint handling and convenience and its influence on satisfaction at accommodation establishments in the Eastern Cape.

1.9 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

With the study focusing on the influence of service quality dimensions on customer satisfaction at accommodation establishments in Port Elizabeth, clear definitions of these terms are presented below.

1.9.1 Accommodation establishments

According to Statistics Finland (2019), accommodation establishments are viewed to be housing that offers day and night lodging in rooms or other units to customers such as, hotels, guest houses, resorts, camping sites and holiday villages. Accommodation establishments are set up structures operating as organisation for the sole purpose or partly for offering lodging services to different customers and are in the travel and tourism sector, provided with or without additional needs such as meals and recreational activities (Medlik, 2012:171). For the purposes of this study an accommodation establishment are those organisations that offer lodging in rooms or other units to customers in the travel and tourism industry.

1.9.2 Service quality

Service quality reflects the customer's overall impression of the varying levels of inferiority/superiority of the organisations and what it is capable to offer and is seen as being key to survival for organisations (Tamilselvi, 2019:29). Service quality is attached to a customer's personal perceptions of products and offerings, hence, when customers' needs, and expectations are met, service quality is achieved (Mok *et al.*, 2013:160).

1.9.3 Customer satisfaction

Angelova and Zekiri (2011:232) defines customer satisfaction as a measure of how the organisations product is performing in relation to the set of customer requirements. According to Howaniec and Waszkielewicz (2011:29) customer satisfaction is defined as the need to deliver valuable and unique terms to their customers to satisfy their needs. This satisfaction not only includes feelings linked with the purchasing process of services, but also the process before and after the purchase. For this study, customer satisfaction is the way organisations implement valuable and unique services to fully satisfy customers.

1.10 STRUCTURE OF THE RESEARCH

The study will be divided and structured in the following way:

- Chapter 1: Introduction and background to the study
- Chapter 2: Literature review
- Chapter 3: Research design and methodology
- Chapter 4: Empirical findings
- Chapter 5: Summary, conclusions and recommendations

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In chapter one an introduction and background of accommodation establishments were conducted by defining concepts that were used throughout this study. The researcher further stated the problem statement, research objectives, question and hypothesis and concluded with discussing how this study was conducted. The researchers discussed the research methods that were used, research design and methodology, sampling techniques, data collection and data analysis.

Tourism is a sector encompassing a group of travel actions towards different host communities compared to a customary environment (Lange, 2015:6). It also represents a sector that benefits from a variety of activities provided to a person or a group of people to meet their needs in terms of relaxation, rest, visits and entertainment (Coccossis, 2017:19). Considering that these are necessary in the service industry, it is important that accommodation establishments put effort in their endeavor to satisfy customers.

The chapter reviews literature on service quality, benefits of a high service quality, measurement and dimensional models of service quality and discussed service quality dimensions in department. The chapter further discusses the concept of satisfaction, customer satisfaction and lastly the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction with a strong emphasis on accommodation establishments in particular.

2.2 SERVICE QUALITY IN CONTEXT

The quality of service is a determining factor for customer satisfaction and directly affects the success of an organisation, especially in a service sector such as the accommodation establishments sector (Yilmaz, 2009:376). The delivery of quality service to the customers has become a very important for in accommodation establishments globally. The tourism and hospitality sector have become highly competitive, and one of the most significant elements to obtain a competitive advantage which is sustainable in the market has emerged to be service quality (Markovic, Raspor & Segaric, 2010:183). The accommodation industry globally has guaranteed over the years the offering of a high service quality at all levels as a means of

differentiation and establishing a competitive edge and improving investment return (Mhlanga, 2018:12). Service quality is a concept that is said to exist only in the mind of each customer. If the customer is not satisfied with the service received, it means that this service was undesirable specifically to that customer. The opinion of a service provider of his service does not matter as attention should be on their customers as their judgment matters (Meesala & Paul, 2018: 266). The second important issue is that good service quality should be a real surprise and unexpected to the customer. If the customers get what they expected, they will not be impressed, hence blowing the mind of customers in service provision is of utmost importance (Gupta & Singh, 2017:38).

As such, to impress the customers, service providers must offer more than the usual expectation. This means two things. Firstly, improving the quality of the service must be a continuous effort, because the customers will get used to a given level of service and will no longer be impressed with anything below standard level. Secondly, it means that service providers must know their customers very well and what their expectations are (Yarimoglu, 2014:91). The service quality is seen in literally every detail and in the makeup of rendering the services. The idea is to take care of all that makes up the big picture in service provision. Often, competing organisations will offer very close related products and services, and to become competitive, the organisation must differentiate itself from competitive products and services is important in the industry (Gupta & Singh, 2017:41).

Perceived quality is a general evaluative judgment of a product or service on the relative superiority of that product or service (Bansal & Taylor, 2015:77). This definition of perceived quality is very similar to that of satisfaction, and it is probably for this reason that the notions of satisfaction and perceived quality are often confused (Bansal & Taylor, 2015:78). However, these concepts differ. Satisfaction requires that there has been an experience with the product or service while quality judgment does not necessarily require it. Quality is judged by reference to a standard of excellence, which is not necessarily the case with satisfaction which can be judged by reference to expectations or fairness judgments (Kondasani & Panda, 2015:454).

Therefore, perceived service quality consists of comparing the customer's perception of quality with their previous expectations of this service. If the quality delivered exceeds expectations, the perceived quality is high; but if the yield is lower than expected, the perceived quality will be low. As customers take part in the consumption of the accommodation establishment

services, they closely interact with several aspects of this organisation giving them an opportunity to critically evaluate the provided services (Ladhari, 2009:310). Customers evaluate the quality of the service by comparing the services they receive with what they want or expect to receive. The satisfaction of the customer with service quality according to Ladhari (2009:317) is the matching of the perceptions of the received service with the expectations of the desired service. Exceeding the expectations means the service is viewed as exceptional quality. When the expectations are confirmed by the perceived service, the quality is regarded as satisfactory. Wu and Ko (2013:221) also affirm that the quality of the service implies the concept of meeting and exceeding the customer's expectations.

According to Markovic *et al.* (2010:183) service quality plays a fundamental role in the addition of value to the general experience of the service. The evidence suggests that the quality of the service does not depend only on a series of factors, but also varies from one industry to another (Markovic *et al.*, 2010:186). Therefore, to guarantee a better evaluation of the quality of the service in accommodation establishments, it is necessary that the service providers understand the dimensions used by the customers in measuring the service quality. According to Hapsari, Clemes and Dean (2016: 389) service quality has been extensively recognised a very important issue in the business world as it contributes to how organisations enhance their profits, satisfy and retain customers. When organisations provide excellent service quality they gain competitive advantage and are easily differentiated from other organisations. A discussion of service quality benefits follows.

2.3 BENEFITS OF A HIGH SERVICE QUALITY

Some people see the justification for service quality only in the profitability it provides. They ignore the fact that serving customers is an activity that has its own interest. Even though profit seeking organisations focus attention on the well-being of the customers and making their experience outstanding, it is not their core objective, but is advantageous for the organisation's overall performance (Buhler & Nufer, 2012:151). Good service quality allows the creation of a healthier work environment (Sodeyfi, 2016:147).

The above remarks apply to both the public and private sectors. The public is entitled to expect good service quality in the public sector because it pays for these services, just as the customers pay for the services of the private sector (Beckford, 2016:18). If there is good service quality in the public sector, it will inevitably lead to a decrease in expenditure. The state can then invest

more time and money to improve on other service quality offerings, which will better the population. Offering good service quality actively promotes service providers different actions in effectively carrying out their tasks towards customer satisfaction (Beckford, 2016:19).

All sectors (including the public sector), every new customer is an investment, in terms of time and money. Good service quality is also necessary for very practical reasons. Finding and retaining customers always costs money. Money from a new customer is no more valuable than that of an existing customer. It is therefore always more profitable and strategic to increase business volume with your existing customers, especially when they have proved to be loyal (Premkumar & Rajan, 2017:22). The cost of losing a customer far exceeds the mere volume of business generated by the same customer. Research shows that dissatisfied customers express their dissatisfaction to others who are very much influenced by negative word-of-mouth referrals. On average, a dissatisfied customer will tell their dissatisfaction to nine other people (Oliver, 2014:397).

A satisfied customer will be more likely to recommend the organisations. The customers will spread a positive word of the organisation's competence in product and service offering, and this will bring new business, with less advertising effort of the organisation to lure customers. It is interesting to note that a customer will often be more impressed by an organisation that has been able to cope with a problem than by another one which would not have caused a problem in the first place (Lovelock & Patterson, 2015:332).

Accommodation establishments with a high service quality can improve organisations participation in the market and its profitability (Garay & Font, 2012:330). Therefore, the quality of the service plays a fundamental role in the satisfaction of customers, reduction of costs, sales increase and the repetitive use of the organisations services (Amissah, 2013:28).

Great Britain Competition Commission (2012:79) notes that, in the airline industry benefits of service quality are shown in how rivalries are not able to outcompete those businesses with good service quality. A good management team which puts value on customers is essential in maintaining service quality and hence easily enjoy the benefits from loyal customers based on service quality provision. Most important benefit is winning over competitive pressures, for example, substitutes and strong competitors in the industry.

In the public transport business, there are social benefits which arise from better service quality, where both customers and business owners' benefit. Greater perceived service quality by customers leading to satisfaction. Customers and business owners in this sector both benefit because service quality of products being offered results in lower external costs, leading to social benefits. The social benefit gives the business an advantage and become eager to further improve in their quality of service (Dell'Olio, Ibeas, de Oña & de Oña, 2017:203).

2.4 SERVICE QUALITY DIMENSIONS

Zaibaf, Taherikia and Fakharian (2013:493) believe that quality is a multidimensional concept. Researchers postulate the existence of at least two dimensions of quality: product quality and service quality. By product quality, attention is paid to the perceived quality of the product's performance. Regarding the quality of the service, its dimensions and its functions are still subjects of discussion in the current literature.

In their famous SERVQUAL model, Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1985, 1988, 1991), proposed a conceptualisation of perceived quality in ten dimensions (competence, courtesy, credibility, security, access, communication, knowing the customer, reliability, tangibles and responsiveness) then they were refined into five dimensions of reliability, availability, empathy, security and the presence of tangible elements in the service experience. The acceptance of the model of Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry as a standardised tool has been strongly criticised in the literature. For many researchers, the proposed quality of service dimensions is not necessarily generalisable in different contexts (Zameer, Tara, Kausar & Mohsin, 2015:445).

Therefore, many authors have failed in their attempts to replicate the original dimensions of SERVQUAL and the instrument had to be modified to adapt to the specific context of the studies. Furthermore, according to Zameer *et al.* (2015:448), the SERVQUAL model presents problems both in the definition and in the measurement of expectations. A large part of the variance maintained in the SERVQUAL model's expectations part could be due to incorrect interpretation instead of different attitudes or perceptions. According to Pandža (2015:124) in his study of the tourism industry, the quality experienced by a customer would be based on two dimensions: technical quality (which refers to the result of the service) and functional quality (or the way in which the service was rendered; with courtesy, speed and professionalism). The

SERV-PERVAL multidimensional scale measures the perceived value in tourism. Zehrer *et al.* (2014:355) add a third dimension to Pandža (2015:129) proposition, and that is, the environment in which the service is rendered. There are five dimensions of quality of service (tangible, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy) identified by Nyadzayo & Khajehzadeh (2016:266) that influence the expectations of organisations customers about the quality of service which is next discussed in greater detail. These include, quality of service, providing customers with accurate service, helpful staff, efficient facilities, etc.

Based on the SERVQUAL model, Markovic *et al.* (2010:189) carried out a satisfaction survey among tourists who had made a business trip to the Taiwan region and were interested in measuring the quality of service offered in the accommodation establishments industry from this part of the globe. These authors have measured satisfaction through several dimensions deemed interesting because they reveal relevant information about the intention to renew their experience. These are the dimensions related to the behavior of the staff, the tangible aspect of the hotel, the catering, the location of the hotel, the reliability, reputation as well as services related to business customers. Their results show that dimensions related to the behaviour of the staff as well as the tangible aspect, more particularly cleanliness and comfort, of the accommodation institution have a more significant effect than those mentioned above.

Similarly, the behaviour of the staff was a source of exposure during a study concretised by Ladhari (2009:323) insofar as that it contributed significantly to the satisfaction of the customer. According to their study, the conduct of staff vis-à-vis visitors in hotel industry has outstripped certain elements of the hotel offerings. In order of importance; the location, the tangible aspect of the room, the price, the facilities, the reception, the service, the parking as well as restoration. At the same time, in order to create satisfaction among visitors, variables such as reception, physical appearance of the hotels and staff behavior are dimensions on which service providers should capture their attention. These same dimensions also influence customers' opinions about restaurants because they can generate a negative or positive perception of restaurant services, if customers are not well pleased (Markovic *et al.*, 2010:183).

Markovic *et al.* (2010:192) in their research show that certain dimensions more specifically related to the physical aspect and the behavior of the staff, are important criteria to the extent that they condition the success of the restaurant on the one hand, and on the other hand, the development of tourists and business customers. According to the results obtained, it is clear

that the design and architecture of a restaurant are factors that are gaining ground among the customers. In addition to these criteria's, staff behavior remains a considerable variable because it is closely tied to the satisfaction of customers. An apprehensive contribution of their research to the variables that most influence overall satisfaction depending on the nature of the customer is realised. These authors conclude that cleanliness is questionably a more important consideration for customers (Markovic *et al.*, 2010:192).

According to Rangarajan and Murti (2010:297) customers are not only concerned about the accuracy and reliability of the service delivered but also concerned about other dimensions. In the Indian industry reliability was considered a vital dimension to meeting customer satisfaction. The process dimensions namely, assurance, responsiveness, empathy and others are essential in exceeding customer expectations. The concept of customer satisfaction cannot be dealt with in isolation without service quality as its drive.

2.4.1 Tangibles

Tangibility may be used by customers to formulate evaluation based on the surroundings. Barnes, Collier, Howe and Hoffman (2016:280) define tangibles as the physical appearance of everything and everyone involved in the organisation, ranging from facilities layout, equipment design, communication, materials, to staff and related. Maintenance, hygiene, and safety matters are of great concern in as far as the physical evidence of the services are concerned as these have a negative or positive judgment from customers. According to Hoffman and Bateson (2010:328) managing the tangibles dimension is very important in matching and exceeding customer expectations to perceptions. Expectations on tangibility include attractive modern looking equipment, personnel which is always knowledgeable and smart looking, up-to-date and appealing materials, for example brochures, menus, pamphlets. These expectations correspond with customers perceptions. Law (2018:14) shows that the overall service satisfaction of a customer is obtained from purchasing such a service. Service quality consist of various attributes that play a major role in influencing a customer to purchase it. These elements and their importance are discussed below.

According to Verma (2012:198) studies, it is important that organisations stop undermining the significance of the design of their service environment through use of physical features, known as servicescapes. Service environment is a stimulus in dictating customer behaviours, hence service providers must attend to these needs. Three types of services which require a

specific environment to each are given, remote services, self-service and interpersonal services. Fischer and Curran (2012:99) concur by maintaining that ambience, design of service surroundings or physical built-in matters to customers, specifically referring to how physical equality dimension at the airport, terminal layout, security check points access parking are essential. Campbell (2017:239) also supports this by noting how physical aspects of organisations has a significant effect on customer satisfaction.

Verma (2012:199) further studies three environmental dimensions which have the power to provide cognitive, emotional, physiological and behavioural response from customers, these are indicated in more detail next.

2.4.1.1 Ambient conditions

Ambient conditions are defined as atmospheric conditions which prevail in the organisation. Ambience covers matters to do with humidity, air quality, temperature, smells, music volumes, light and related (Lin & Liang, 2011:356). It will be advantageous to offer good lighting, temperature, music and theming according to customers' preferences. It is important for organisations to maintain modern-looking, safe, clean, appropriate designed environments, as they have major impact on customer's impressions and satisfaction (Buswell, Williams, Donne and Sutton, 2016:126). In modern day life, most if not all customers look for an environment which has preferred comfortable physical conditions.

2.4.1.2 Space design conditions

Law (2018:14) stresses on how design lay out of an airport from check-in points to the airline matters to customers. A spacious and beautifully designed area brings a sense of sincerity as opposed to a littered and confined place. The organisations' area needs to be attractive so as to give customers a positive outlook on the service offerings. Chibili (2017:413) supports the same idea in managing hospitality services through having attractive room designs, en-suite facilities and eye-catching decorations. Space design concerns the design, layout and how service facility is organised, as well as arrangement and layout of equipment and furnishings. Service providers must give high attention to the appearance of their physical facilities (Verma, 2012:199).

2.4.1.3 Signs, symbols and artefacts

Different things like names, main colour, signs and how they appear convey symbolic meanings to customers. The name of a company, service system, style and décor and a well-thought-out arrangement used by organisation must be able to signify a particular style, function and purpose (Verma, 2012:199).

It is important to also note that functional conformity is regarded as essential in fulfilling customer satisfaction. Law (2018:15) shows that functional conformity is having all equipment functioning according to the purpose it is fitly designed to perform. This includes but is not limited to, Wi-Fi modems, televisions, decoders, washing machines, electronics, sliding doors or gates and so on. Tools and equipment for service provision must effectively function to contribute towards a positive customer experience in the organisation (William & Ferrell 2014:431).

Chen (2018:69) suggests that staff apparel contributes to service quality. It is very important that organisation staff be smartly groomed and dressed. Just by looking at the appearance of staff in organisations, customers can easily judge or perceive what kind of service they are likely to get, hence it counts a great deal to always have staff looking formally and neatly presentable. Their appearance must make a good impression before even engaging with customers.

Borangiu, Dragoicea and Novoa (2016:162) explain how customers comment about tangibles in accommodation establishments when they review of the services which were rendered to them. Customers review on parking facilities, Wi-Fi, good quality of beds, comfort of beds, air-conditioning, beauty of the accommodation establishment rooms, location and bathrooms etc.

2.4.2 Reliability

Bowie, Brookes, Buttle and Mariussen (2016:288) note how prior marketing of services to customers is more of a promise to a customer, and hence creates expectations of the product or service on offer. It is the organisation's responsibility to deliver as promised. Baporika and Neeta (2016:281) further support this by referring to reliability as the ability to deliver and implement a promised service as accurate as possible. The reliability dimension gives organisations the extra responsibility of having services performed consistently and timely. It is important to note that this dimension is more relevant to customers that make repeat

purchases and are likely to critic consistency in service offerings or performances. Consistency is judged from time to time and enables service reliability measurement. Every customers' expectation of a good organisation is that, what it says it offers, it does, hence being reliable. Unreliable organisations suffer from poor customer retention.

According to Vigolo (2017:113) customer services related to reliability are regarded highly important, simply because if the organisation is able to perform its service offering accurately and dependably, it will result in being the most preferred amongst many others by customers. This gives the organisation a competitive edge and means that profits will more than double. Once a customer is fully satisfied by how reliable an organisation can be, there are high chances of making repeat purchases, and therefore customer retention is made easier. Chen (2018:68) explains how reliability has an indirect effect on customer retention through customer satisfaction. Mention is also made of the comparison between tangibility and reliability dimensions. Reliability is shown to have greater importance when it comes to retaining customers. This is mainly due to reputation which staff may have from customers. How reliable accommodation establishments are in their service offerings is shown through, providing specific times of when services will be offered and abiding to those times for performance, provision of accurate information about the accommodation establishment, how quick, prompt, flexible, willing staff attends to matters, even urgent ones as long as it is aiming towards satisfying customers. Chen (2018:69) emphasises how managers need to focus more on reliability through investment in equipment and other machinery needed to enhance the trust and satisfaction of customers in their services.

John, Acharya and Chakraborty (2013:171) also supports Chen (2018), by elaborating on reliability factors which are similar. Such as providing services in the time promised to do so, emphasising on error-free records, keeping promises and offering services exactly at the communicated time and having staff which is always ready and willing to help. Pizam (2012:137) further adds the following reliability factors to John *et al.*'s (2013) reliability factors;

- Staff helping each other in keeping up with speed during busy times;
- Displaying special effort in handling customer requests;
- Providing quick and prompt service, and
- Providing services exactly as requested.

Borangiu *et al.* (2016:165) make comparison of two star and five-star (hotels) and show that the reliability of both is similar in importance of service quality towards customer satisfaction. Therefore, this shows that no matter what kind of an organisation it is, all reliability elements must be met to satisfy customers effectively, be it a high class or low-class organisation. For example, comparing a well-known hotel with just any other bed and breakfast, the reliability of staff is essential in making the customers happy and satisfied through implementation of reliability factors in service rendering.

According to Huo and Hong (2013:260) reliability goes further beyond accuracy and dependability of staff and also communicate commitment levels of staff. Committed staff is already ready to perform their services without feeling like it's a burden, it's something they have to naturally enjoy doing. Nothing brings joy to a committed staff member as obtaining fulfilment that they have achieved in fully satisfying customers' needs. Hoffman and Bateson (2016:325) expand on the discussion of reliability by showing that what is defined to be accurate and dependable must address the following questions;

- Does the organisation provide the same level of service quality or it varies time after time?
- Does the organisation keep to its promises, check-in and bill customers accurately, maintain correct records, and render services correctly at the first encounter?
- Is the organisation staff reliable in assisting customers?

These are some of the questions which show that if the reliability dimension is not met customers are likely to get frustrated with unreliable service providers and their staff (Uduk 2011:32). Customers are always ready to spend their money paying for services if the service provider promises to deliver exactly as promised. What can be most annoying to customers when service providers are unreliable is the fact that they may have to reschedule and adjust their programmes to fit the poor reliability of the organisation. This gets worse when staff lacks the courtesy to apologise, but rather give explanations of why services could not be provided on time. The organisations must thoroughly work on improving their reliability in offering services as the reliability dimension is rated to be the most important of the five SERVQUAL dimensions (Hoffman & Bateson, 2016:329).

Ordóñez de Pablos (2016:50) in her work supports the preceeding cited authors by explaining that organisations have to be satisfactorily consistent in providing their services. Customers' perceptions of reliability is a determinant in measuring customer satisfaction given by different organisations.

2.4.3 Empathy

Empathy goes beyond mere customer service. It refers to how the customer contact staff must understand and treat each customer as an individual, thereby giving them individualised hospitality experience and attention. This makes customers feel important, especially in the hospitality sector. It is to every organisation's advantage that staff which has the first encounter with customers are friendly and caring as this has a positive judgement about the organisation.

Staff ensures customer delight by continuously checking on the comfort of their customers. For example, waiters checking on customers at a restaurant, hotel staff following customers to airport or bus station to deliver forgotten items (Bowie *et al.*, 2014:289). Other factors related to empathy include convenient operating hours, understanding specific needs, addition of new features to user-friendly services (Verma & Ramanyya, 2014:67). Hoffman and Bateson (2016:331) agree with these authors by showing that empathy has everything to do with how one can experience another's feelings as their own. Having understanding of this causes organisations to make their services as accessible to their customers as possible.

According to Ordóñez de Pablos (2016:7) the dimension of empathy has more to do with personalised attention given to customers. This is shown by organisation staff through doing the following;

- Assisting customers that need special attention at even convenient times for them;
- Giving individual attention to each customer as they may require;
- Having a special understanding towards customers with special needs;
- Showing sincere effort in solving problems which may arise;
- Treating all customers with courtesy, respect and dignity, and
- Being understanding and concerned towards customers.

Customers are always appreciative of a friendly and accommodative staff, as it creates a conducive and pleasant atmosphere for them. If contact staff display sincere interest, eagerness and solemnity towards the customer's service needs, inevitably, customer satisfaction levels will be increased (Alhelalat, Ma'moun & Twaissi, 2017:47).

Most customers view the dimension of empathy as caring, personalised attention shown by organisation staff. As already stated above, it is important to show empathy through treating each customer as special and showing each of them is important to the organisation. Examples

on enhancing empathy in organisations include, efforts to cater for those with special needs by giving handwritten notes, special access, special parking area and allocating a customer representative to a customer (Fetchko, Roy & Clow, 2016).

Whilst other authors as mentioned previously determine other service quality dimensions to be the most important in guaranteeing customer satisfaction. Parker (2018:172) argues empathy to be the most recognised desirable dimension service providers should have for effectively meeting the specific demands of each customer. Empathy assists in establishing effective communication, confidence, active listening to each customer, which all breed loyalty to the organisation. Contact staff must be very empathetic, calmer, good listeners and solution oriented in character. These qualities enable contact staff to handle situations which require them to show emotionality, redefine customer problems as opportunity and work with them to bring about superior customer service and in turn gain customers' trust. However, argument arises over how empathy is such a subjective and deep-seated characteristic of an individual, so it cannot be easily taught to a person neither can they be trained on it (Riess, 2017:75).

Parker (2018:172) suggests three categories of techniques which organisation may implement to improve their empathy to customers;

- Having approaches in place to train staff on body language, including echoes and listening responsible methods;
- Intermediate techniques which attempt to create staff awareness of the customers' perspective by paying closer attention to questioning techniques and hence gaining understanding of their personal needs and feelings, and
- Allowing staff to experience what customers experience so as to gain empathy and through this apply emotional intelligence in building relationships with customers.

As shown previously, it is important that contact staff possess a high level of empathetic behaviour in dealing with their customers. This can go well with a high level of responsiveness to particular customer needs (Winczewski, Bowen, & Collins, 2016:195).

2.4.4 Responsiveness

Stiglingh (2014:245) states that responsiveness is the willingness and speed used to assist customers effectively, whilst attending to their request promptly. How customer, problems, requests, and complaints are dealt with shows the organisation level of responsiveness to its

customers. Customer's perception on service quality of the organisation is influenced by how contact customer staff is able to respond and helpfully attend to queries and request. Bowie *et al.* (2014:288) agree that the quicker the response of contact staff, the better as this leads to a higher rating in customer satisfaction. In organisations the ability of contact staff to provide precise services, shows responsiveness. In so doing a positive relationship exists between customer satisfaction and responsiveness, the more responsive the service is, the more satisfied will the customer be with that service (Ordóñez de Pablos, 2016:5).

Responsiveness also refers to how prepared the organisation's staff is to provide services. An evaluation of the helpfulness of staff is a major consideration of this dimension. Zainal, Radzi, Hashim, Chik and Abu (2012:70) discuss the responsiveness dimension through showing how production and consumption in service industry occur at the same time, for staff to be more responsible and counteract service failure a high level of attention should be given to how responsive they are to customer needs, especially during performance of service delivery. Guaranteeing customers of good service quality has a positive effect on customer satisfaction through showing responsiveness as a critical service quality dimension.

Sunder (2011:54) states that timely and hands-on response to customer enquiries and complaints are elements which are important under the responsiveness dimension. Responsiveness is also considered to be made up of immediate resolution of customer concerns, swiftness of reaction and availability of staff for communication.

Shermon (2017:192) discusses the positive effect responsiveness of staff has on improving consulting business' revenues. Profit is the end goal of every business, therefore maximises on elements which aim towards achieving this goal is essential. Responsiveness in this way could further on be achieved through developing an organisational culture geared towards a long-term view on benefits of being a highly responsive staff to customers.

2.4.5 Assurance

Baporikar (2016:81) define assurance as the competence and ability of the organisation and its staff to instil trust and confidence based on their knowledge and politeness as they interact with customers. Customer expectations of an excellent organisation range from safety in transaction with staff, consistency in politeness shown, knowledge and excellent behaviour of staff to attend to customer queries. These in turn reflect customer perceptions (Hoffman & Bateson, 2010:331). Assured staff easily influence customers to trust their advice and be confident to

receive the organisation's promises. Once staff present themselves rude, customers are offended and suddenly lose their confidence in the organisation (Baporikar, 2016:281).

Kitapci, Akdogan and Dortyol (2014:165) list four capabilities that the organisation should possess to be able to provide its customers with assurance, namely; to respond quickly, have the knowledge to answer questions, able to instil confidence and to be constantly polite. Svitlana (2013:92) states that employees in the hospitality sector are expected to be attitudinally and technically developed and have the following general basic skills:

- Personal and social skills;
- The capacity to learn and work independently;
- To use new technologies to achieve quality and provide customer care; and
- Communication skills and a variety of languages.

These attributes enable employees to provide customers with assurance. According to Shoes for Crews Europe (2017:1), the key determinant for customer retention is the impression left by the staff to customers as the customers rely on them to receive assistance. It is important for the whole organisation workforce to be knowledgeable about all operations of the organisations to be able to always assist customers. Berndt and Tait (2012:29) explain that trust is an expression of confidence and to build trust the organisation must ensure that customers know the organisation will stand behind its promise of service and honour its commitments. One of Sewell and Brown (2009:20) ten commandments to customer service is to show customers respect and to be polite and further explains that treating customers good leads to customer retention.

2.4.6 Convenience

Howard (2013:208) regards the convenience dimension as pertaining to how easily accessible services and products on offer are. For example, website access, internet services, banks services, mobile banking and the like. Convenient services are seen as how customer technology content organisations can increase customer convenience by improving on choice, time, and place of service ordering or consumption. Convenience of any organisation contributes to service quality.

Kaura, Durga Prasad and Sharma (2015:404) highlight that if service offerings are similar in a homogeneous market, greater service convenience may enable a competitive advantage.

Service convenience (time and effort) must be understood within the perspective of the activities that customers experience in the process of purchasing and using a service (Farquhar and Rowley, 2009:428). Kaura *et al.* (2015:405) in the Indian retail banking sector, came up with five dimensions of service convenience: decision, access, transaction, benefit and post-benefit convenience.

Decision convenience is relevant prior to the actual service exchange, when customers need to decide how to obtain a particular service given that multiple providers and delivery options usually obtainable (Chang & Polonsky, 2012:112). Decision convenience is achieved by giving customers adequate information to make it easy for them to make an informed purchasing decision. Access convenience encompasses the perceived time and effort needed to initiate service delivery (the actions required to request services and to receive them). To implement access convenience, service providers must be accessible at convenient times through various ways either in person or online (Kaura *et al.*, 2015:405). According Baines, Fill and Page (2011:465), transaction convenience is the customers' ability to easily and swiftly complete their service purchase. Benefit convenience deals with how easily at any given time the customers can access promised services, once the transaction stage and admission stage are completed (Ngoc Thuy, 2011:476). Lastly, post-benefit convenience relates to activities after core interactions have occurred. It is how the service provider quickly resolves problem with the service it provided and how easy the customer can obtain follow up service from the provider after purchase, (Kaura *et al.*, 2015:405).

2.4.7 Complaint Handling

Complaint management is an essential device of total first-rate management and patron retention and relationship system. Effective grievance administration tries to be successful in receiving, dealing with and solving a grievance (Kempen, 2012:41). It is important for customers to be aware of the process of effective complaint handling. The steps are; perception of a problem, voicing a complaint and problem-solving effort (Garding & Bruns, 2015:20).

Pizam (2012:132) shows that customer complaint behaviour and complaint resolution has become very important in the service industry over the years. The nature of the complaint cause (what causes customers to complain), complaint and post complaint behaviour and how organisations handle the resolution of these is very important in maintaining customer relationships. Customer complaints usually arise from failure to adequately meet customer

expectations and also the impoliteness of staff (Ingram, LaForge, Ramon, Schwepker & Williams, 2015:204).

Grading and Bruns (2015:21) emphasise the importance of a complaint management team to be in place in every organisation. This gives customers a level of satisfaction as they view the organisation to take them seriously and pay attention to concerns, grievances of complaints customers may encounter and need to report. Ingram *et al.* (2015:205) state that every customer has a right to be heard hence, the complaint handling process becomes relevant, after customers convey their complaints. Organisation's fairness in dealing with complaints shows the extent of satisfaction with complaint management systems. The manner in which management communicates with the complaining customer goes a long way in showing if they are appreciative of complains being brought forward. It is important to note that management has to treat both complaining and non-complaining customers the same despite the customer's value.

According to Cook (2012:24) most organisations actually need customers to communicate when they are not happy with their products or services. As explained above, it helps them understand and make corrections on what they are doing wrong, hence aiding in making adjustments and improvements in working towards customer satisfaction. There are three ways to encourage customers to complain and these are, publicises ways to complain, responding to complaints quickly and publicising improvement actions. All these can be done by making use of websites, online helps, e-mails and use of social media (Bowie *et al.*, 2016:303).

The discussion above thoroughly brings out the importance of service quality dimensions to various industries. The effort of service providers to ensure these are executed in their organisations is crucial to gaining a competitive edge, especially in how they can fully satisfy their customers. It is important to note that perceived value has a positive value on customer satisfaction (Hussain, Al Nassere & Hussain, 2015:170).

2.5 CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

Prud'homme and Raymond (2013:117) define satisfaction as that which brings joy, happiness and well-being of the customer who is the receiver of the service. Ward, Lundberg, Zabriskie and Berrett (2009:413) define satisfaction as contentment and pleasure that results from the fulfillment of what one expects and of what one desires. Although this definition reflects a

purely literary character, this description adapts to any field of research and covers in a broader sense the general problem of our research given the need for customers to meet their needs.

Satisfaction is recognised as a predominant element that can explain and predict different future actions of customers with respect to the use of a service on the market, Setó-Pamies (2012:1265) states that there is no general or perfect definition of this term. This observation seems to lead to a general idea about the appearance of several definitions concerning satisfaction. From this point of view, Butt and Aftab (2013:11) argue that the scientific literature is full of demonstrations to clarify this notion. there are those who identify satisfaction in a psychological setting (Mok *et al.*, 2013:98) while others define this concept in a form of comparison between client expectations and the performance of the organisation (Mok *et al.*, 2013:99), some refer to satisfaction as consistent enjoyment and lack of complaints. For this study, the focus will be directed towards the concept of satisfaction as fulfillment and relief. These types of satisfactions will be briefly discussed next.

2.5.1 Satisfaction as fulfilment

Kim, Kim and Wachter (2013:368) regard satisfaction as the customer's fulfilment response. It is a product or service provided, providing a pleasurable level of consumption-related fulfilment, including levels of under-fulfilment. According to Prud'homme and Raymond (2013:121) satisfaction is related to a sense of pleasure that arises during a period of consumption in relation to a product or service. This feeling can only be realized if the customer has been happy with their experience.

2.5.2 Satisfaction as relief

According to Kim *et al.* (2013:366) with regards to satisfaction, relief is a psychological condition that results from conciliation to a situation of discomfort. In other words, the organisations must meet all the possible conditions for the customers to have an enjoyable experience through a pleasant offer able to create a feeling of assurance for the customers experience and relief far from burnout (Amin & Nasharuddin, 2013:240).

Moreover, it is also clear that customer satisfaction results from an experience deemed positive. As for the learning period (consumption) Prud'homme and Raymond (2013:122) emphasise its importance and affirm that the concept of satisfaction represents a natural affection after supply has been completed. Also, Prud'homme and Raymond (2013:124) add that this condition is

valid only after the enjoyment of the offer in a very short time, otherwise the satisfaction level can also be realised in the future.

2.6 THE IMPORTANCE OF CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

Satisfaction involves a marketing role that allows the organisation to be closer to the customer, and thus, to be on the lookout for their judgment regarding the offer. According to Grisseman and Stokburger-Sauer (2012:1490) satisfaction is equated with a mediation function with respect to a particular product or service after the client has been served.

Mohsan, Nawaz, Khan, Shaukat and Aslam (2011:264) state that regardless of the organisational size customer satisfaction holds a significant role in the corporate sector because there is no business without satisfied customers. The influence of one dissatisfied customer creates more reputational damage than 10 satisfied customers can create a positive influence. Optimal customer satisfaction is achieved when organisation can satisfy its customers in the following levels (Grigoroudis & Siskos, 2009:7):

- Satisfaction with product and service;
- Satisfaction with a purchase decision experience;
- Satisfaction with a performance attribute;
- Satisfaction from a consumption-use experience;
- Satisfaction with a department or store of business organisation, and
- Satisfaction with a pre-purchasing experience.

Organisations' ultimate goal is to maximise profit and the strategies to help achieve this include increasing sales of products, improve quality standard, reduce wastage of the product, increase customer base and last but not least to retain existing customers (Panwar, 2016:184). There is a strong positive correlation between these strategies and customer satisfaction.

Given the importance of satisfaction, its measurement has become a standard means used by service providers (Ladhari, 2009:321). The frequent adoption of the appreciation of the satisfaction can be the source behind the relentless competition in organisations towards a multiple and diverse offer in the industry. However, no one can guarantee the customers' consideration even if they are satisfied with a particular offer because of the existence of another better offer in an evolving and distinct industry (Ladhari, 2009:322).

2.7 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SERVICE QUALITY AND CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

RAI (2014:166) identifies how customer satisfaction has a causal path with service quality. Customer satisfaction is determined to be an antecedent of service quality. Service quality plays a key role as an antecedent to satisfaction in most service industries and more so in the financial, retail, tourism, hospitality, and automobile sectors. Service quality is a pre-requisite to customer satisfaction. A well-established relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction is important as it brings about long-term benefits to the organisation such as, customer retention and loyalty which lead to higher profits.

Saleem and Raja (2014:708) adopted structural equation modelling to evaluate the impact of service quality on the customer satisfaction within accommodation industry in Pakistan. The study found that service quality enabled growth in customer satisfaction leading to increased probability of customer loyalty. The results identified that service quality played a critical role in how customers reacted to the outcome of their stays. Customers perceived high quality staff service, room quality, security and general amenities as important factors that influenced satisfaction. Zhou, Ye, Pearce and Wu (2014:6) identified that room quality was more important to customers. The hotel with rooms that are comfortable and well fitted with an extra edge obtain higher customer satisfaction and gain loyalty. Also, according to the findings of their study Markovic *et al.* (2010:190) found that staff and organisation amenities are critical for customer satisfaction.

Ren, Zhang and Ye (2015:49) used online reviews to identify the satisfaction of customers based on quality. The results showed that the focus on guestroom features such as shower room and quietness of the environment enabled customers to view service rendered as satisfactory. Additionally, Ren *et al.* (2015:57) argued that staff service played a crucial role in how customers reviewed hotels after their stay. According to Racherla *et al.* (2013:148), indicators of customer satisfaction and excellent quality service thereof depend intensively on the employees who give interactive service to customers. The more trustworthiness, honesty and ability to resolve issues with customers the more perceived satisfaction customers experienced. Clark, Hartline and Jones (2009:219) argued the importance of employees in delivering quality service to impact customer satisfaction.

Bonn *et al.* (2007:352) on the contrary identified that service quality affects customer satisfaction based on the environmental settings and proximity of environmental attractions such as museums. Wu (2013:365) identified three primary dimensions namely; interaction quality, physical environment quality and outcome quality and 12 sub dimensions which are attitude, behaviour, expertise, problem-solving, ambience, equipment, cleanliness, design, menu design, dining experience, food quality, menu variety sub dimensions of service quality which directly influence satisfaction of customers in Taiwan. Thus, as customers experience higher quality based on their perceived cultural viewpoint they gain increased satisfaction (Wu, 2013:371).

2.8 SUMMARY

This chapter reviewed literature pertaining to service quality dimensions, various aspects and variables that influence customer satisfaction in service industries, it starts by considering what exactly service quality is, by giving a brief discussion on service quality and discussing the benefits of high service quality. The discussion shows how these are related and important in measuring customer expectations, perceptions, making the model significant for the research study in understanding how these influence customer satisfactions. The study broadly discussed the dimensions of reliability, assurance, tangibles, empathy, responsiveness, convenience and complaint handling, showing their importance in establishing customer satisfaction from services offered. The concept of customer satisfaction is discussed and also the importance of it. Lastly, relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction is discussed.

The following chapter discusses the methodology used for data collection on the research, elaborating on materials used.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In chapter two, a reviewed literature on the concept of service quality was conducted covering the importance of service quality, measurement and dimensional models of service quality and the service quality dimensions. In addition, the chapter discussed customer satisfaction, focused on explaining the concept of satisfaction and lastly the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction is analysed.

Research methodology according to Taylor, Bogdan and DeVault (2015:3) is a framework of procedures, practices and rules that are employed by researchers to solve research problems. It is a way that explains how research can be undertaken. It provides in-depth information on research strategy, method, approach, and the methods of data collection, selection of sample, research process, and instrument and data analysis.

This chapter will discuss research design and research methodology that were used in this study. The chapter will further discuss the methods of data collection and data collection instrument that were used to collect primary data for this study and how the instrument was constructed and cover data analysis. Lastly, ethical considerations followed in the research are given.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

Flick (2018:56) defines the concept of research design as a plan set for collection and analysis of evidence which will make it possible for researchers to answer proposed questions of the study. Research design addresses all aspects of the study from data collection to chosen data analysis techniques. This is a critical stage of research as it determines procedures for the outcome of research.

Deciding on a research design begins with a choice of the research paradigm that informs the study. There is positivism, post-positivism, constructivism, transformative, and postcolonial indigenous paradigms (Taylor, Taylor & Luitel, 2012:381). It embraces that the methods, techniques and procedures used in the natural sciences offer the best framework for investigating the social world. Positivism also known as logical positivism holds that the

scientific method is the only way to establish truth and objective reality and that is the paradigm used in this study (Chilisa, 2011:161).

According to Polit and Beck (2010:1451) there are two research approaches that guides the research design, these are the qualitative and quantitative research approaches. Quantitative research approach emphasis on meeting quality of research through standardisation of the research problem hence enables control of the influences on the issues in the study as much as possible (Vescio, Ross & Adam, 2008:84). Increase of validity, reliability and objectivity are guaranteed thereof. Qualitative research does not treat these factors with unanimity or as a standard in research planning (Punch, 2013:301). Therefore, this study adopts a quantitative research approach to measure and describe the phenomena. Objectivity is maximised on by use of statistics, structure, number and control of the primary data collected.

3.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The descriptive research method is used in gathering the needed information for this study. This method facilitates the researchers to interpret the theoretical meaning of the findings and hypothesis development for further studies (Koh & Owen, 2012:219). The researcher used a questionnaire which assists the researcher to gather information from the respondents without the respondents having any complications in answering the questions required , for researchers to have information concerning the influence of service quality dimensions on customer satisfaction at accommodation establishments in Eastern Cape. There are two sources of data that can be collected which are secondary data and primary data (Collis & Hussey, 2014:196).

3.3.1 Population, sample frame and sample

A population is any group of individuals that have one or more common characteristics that the researcher is interested in, to obtain specific information which will assist in solving a research problem (Jha, 2014:182). In this study the population can be defined as any consumers who have stayed at accommodation establishments in the South Africa. These types of accommodation establishments range from Bed and Breakfast to major hotels. A sample frame is identifying possible respondents in the population that is accessible to the researcher (Newby, 2014:237). There is no sample frame for this study as there is no official list of people who have used an accommodation establishment in South Africa. According to Singh (2010:33) a sample is defined as a population selected for observation and analysis, of which the characteristics of the sample are observed and the sample for this study are customers who have stayed at an accommodation establishment in Eastern Cape.

3.3.1.1 Sampling techniques

After researchers have identified the appropriate population for the study, researchers will have to choose between two sampling methods. One of the methods is probability sampling where the chance of a respondent being chosen is known and each individual in the population had an equal chance of being chosen to be in the sample (Acharya, Prakash Saxena & Nigam, 2013:331).

Types of probability sampling include simple random sampling where every member is chosen using random number table or computer-generated list of random numbers and all individuals in the population have to be enumerated in ascending or descending order. Systematic random sampling only selects the first subject randomly and then the following subjects are designated by a periodic process. When using stratified random sampling data is divided into various sub-groups sharing common characteristics and then a random sample is taken from each sub-group. Cluster random sampling encompass dividing the whole population into clusters and then the clusters chosen randomly to be in the sample. With multiphase random sampling the population is organised into groups; subsequently groups are randomly carefully chosen then members are randomly selected in these groups (Acharya *et al.*, 2013:332).

The second method is non-probability sampling where the chance of selecting any member is unknown. The non-probability sampling methods are convenience sampling where the sample is selected on the basis of convenience to the researcher. Quota sampling procedure ensures the characteristics the researcher desires are all represented in the sample chosen. Snowball sampling is when the initial respondent is known to the researcher and chosen, and the expansion of the sample is determined by the information provided by the initial respondent (Acharya *et al.*, 2013:332). In this study non-probability sampling is used, in particular convenience and snowballing sampling. The researchers will physically hand out questionnaires to family and friends for completion, who will then give referral to other people who have stayed in accommodation establishments in Eastern Cape.

Once the sample has been drawn, a research instrument has to be developed. More details on the research instrument will be provided in the following section.

3.3.1.2 Research instrument

Data has been collected using a questionnaire. McNabb (2015:147) explains that a questionnaire has various advantages, and more so for this quantitative research. A major advantage is the flexibility nature of the questionnaire. As researchers have done, questionnaires can be custom designed to meet specific objectives of the study. Instruments which have been developed and thoroughly tested by other researchers may be used, as their application over the number of years guarantees strong belief in their effectiveness to measure another phenomenon (McNabb, 2015:147). Seale (2011:194) states that the design of a questionnaire enables wide gathering of information from various respondents for particular purposes. The simplicity of questionnaires enables straightforwardness in administering questions to respondents, and this can be via telephone, face-to-face, mail, or a drop and pick up method as adopted by researchers of this study. Another major reason for use is that there are very few rules to follow in developing questionnaires. However, the design of a questionnaire seemed to demand a high level of skill, especially due to, type of wording required, arrangement of questions, and logic in presenting them to a diverse population (Hair, Wolfinarger, Money, Samouel & Page, 2015:203).

A structured questionnaire was selected and used as the research instrument for collecting primary data. According to Zohrabi (2013:255) a structured questionnaire is a list of questions selected and developed with the purpose of extracting reliable answers from the chosen sample. It is important to note that the wording and structure of the questions is important as this influences the way responses were coded, tabulated and interpreted. Questions can be close-ended or open-ended. Closed-ended questions are multichotomies in structure, and provide discreet data (McNabb, 2015:157). According to Kramer (2014:125) open-ended questions make use of unstructured response and projective techniques. The response of the respondent is what matters, and hence there's no multiple-choice or suggested response by researcher. However consequent questions may arise for more information (McNabb, 2015:156). As this study adopts a descriptive research design, closed-ended questions are used and enable respondents to select appropriate answers from alternatives given by the researchers.

Literature offers many tips on the derivation of questions (Krosnick & Presser, 2009:3). This advice generally covers the guidelines on whether to include a question and on the wording of the questions. Questions should be formulated to not include statements that (Krosnick & Presser 2009:3):

- Have vague terms that can confuse the respondents;
- contain long questions;
- are double-barrelled questions;
- are generalised questions;
- are leading questions;
- ask two questions at once;
- include negative responses;
- contain technical terms, and
- need verification whether the respondent have the necessary knowledge.

The above criteria are commonly reasonable, in spite of the fact that there might be a justification for shifting a few. The purpose is to come up with questions in the questionnaire that show information which directly and precisely respond to the research question.

The questionnaire had three sections. Section A covers rating statements on service quality dimensions valued. These service quality dimensions were described by statements which will show the respondents' views on the services quality offered by the accommodation establishments. Section B had general questions on how satisfied the respondent was overall, to analyse the level of customer satisfaction. Section C covered the customer demographics (to know the type of customer surveyed) where closed ended questions were used. The questionnaire used for this study is attached (see Annexure 1). A closed ended question requires a respondent to answer in a very short factual manner or needs the respondent to choose from a list of predetermined answers (Collis & Hussey, 2014:212). The questionnaire was designed in English for easy read and understanding, as it is a language common at a global level. Sections A and B include questions examining critical service quality dimensions and customer satisfaction, a five-point Likert type scale ranging from one (strongly disagree) to five (strongly agree) is utilised and to be selected as responses.

The questionnaires are self-administered, which means they were distributed to the respondents personally by the researcher in a face-to-face manner and the respondent will complete on their own. De Vaus and de Vaus (2013:93) put forward that, a self-administered questionnaire refers to a questionnaire that has been specifically designed to be completed by a respondent without the intervention of the researcher.

3.3.1.3 Theoretical framework

Operationalisation of various constructs are formulated. Table 3.1 summarises the formulated operational definitions.

Table 3.1: Operationalisation definitions

Factor	Operationalisation	Sources
Tangibles	Tangibles refer to the physical appearance and condition of facilities and equipment at the accommodation establishment and accuracy of their promotion material, as well as staff's professional behaviour towards guests.	Fischer (2012:99) Borangiu, Dragoicea and Novoa (2016:162)
Reliability	Reliability refers to the ability of the accommodation establishment to deliver as promised on time, accurately and consistently while also being flexible about guests' requests and willing to address matters effortlessly.	Bowie, Brookes, Buttle and Mariussen (2016:288) Pizam (2012:137) Huo and Hong (2013:260)
Empathy	Empathy refers to an accommodation establishment that accommodates guests by operating at times that suit them and having staff that treats guest with courtesy and being eager to solve their personal issues.	Bowie et al., (2014:289) Verma & Ramanyya, (2014:67) Ordóñez de Pablos, (2016:7)
Responsiveness	Responsiveness refers to an accommodation establishment's willingness to assist guests at all times and responding to guests requests and needs by communicating consistently with them prior to, during and after their stay.	Hashim, Chik and Abu, (2012:70) Stiglingh, (2014:245) Sunder, (2011:54)
Assurance	Assurance refers to the ability of the accommodation establishment to provide secure and safe facilities and knowledgeable staff that instil trust and confidence when interacting with customers and being polite when communicating with them.	Baporikar (2016:281) Baporikar (2016:81) Kitapci, Akdogan and Dortyol (2014:165)
Convenience	Convenience refers to how easily accessible services and facilities are at the accommodation establishment and the ease with which a guest can get assistance and information from the staff, also after the stay (lost and found services).	Howard, (2013:208) Kaura et al.,(2015:405)

Complaint handling	Complaint handling refers to an accommodation establishment that has an effective and easy process in place to deal with complaints and where staff and management support problem reporting and resolution.	Kempen, (2012:41) Cook, (2012:24) Bowie et al., (2016:303)
Customer satisfaction	Customer satisfaction refers to an accommodation establishment offering value for money and meeting guests' needs and perceptions, specifically regarding safety and security, and exceeding their expectations which will encourage return visits and recommendations to others.	Grigoroudis and Siskos, (2009:4) Ward, Lundberg, Zabriskie and Berrett, (2009:413) Mohsan, Nawaz, Khan, Shaukat and Aslam, (2011:264)

The dimensions mentioned in the operational framework will be studied by collecting primary and secondary data and will be analysed thereafter.

3.3.2 Secondary data collection

According to Gillespie and Hennessey (2010:195), secondary data is information which has been previously collected for another purpose, and not specific to the current study. It has become popular in the past number of years due to availability, significantly, from any written source namely, books, journal, newspapers, articles, government gazettes, business annual reports, and related. Wilson (2018:69) agrees to this by discussing how researchers obtain secondary data from published offline and online sources material. These sources are analysed and include relevant academic literature in scholastic journal articles and industry and governmental websites, which are then made use of to obtain research in different fields. Trade association sources provides information for specific industries on several topics which are of major importance to organisations, (Zikmund, Babin, Carr & Griffin, 2013:175).

The secondary research of this study is conducted by consulting a variety of relevant textbooks and journal articles. The library facilities available at the Nelson Mandela University are used to access National and International databases, such as Emerald, EBSCOhost and Sabinet, Google Scholar and Research Gate.

3.3.3 Primary data

Contrary to secondary data collection, primary data focuses on collecting specific first-hand data for a purpose by having direct contact with sources of information. The collection of

primary data calls for decisions on the population, sample frame and sample (Gillespie & Hennessey, 2010:195). Primary data can be collected using numerous instruments which include surveys, interviews, focus groups and observations (Collis & Hussey, 2014:59). For the purpose of this study a survey was used. To commence with the survey researchers will request family and friends to complete the questionnaires.

3.3.4 DATA ANALYSIS

Once primary data had been collected, it was analysed using appropriate methods. The analysis process is a reflection process where researchers go beyond the data to access the essence of the phenomenon of study (Morse, 2015:1212). Raw data collected by use of questionnaire research is summarised into useful information and used to interpret service quality dimensions valued and customer satisfaction at accommodation establishments. Primary data was captured in Microsoft Excel and was analysed for interpretation.

The STATISTICA version 13 programme was used for data analysis. Conclusions derived from the quantitative research collection is analysed and attempted to solve the objectives of the study. The data was statistically tested for validity by use of exploratory factor analysis (EFA). Cronbach Alpha co-efficient will assess the reliability of the research instrument. Descriptive and inferential statistics will then be calculated. Podesva and Sharma (2014:288) state that descriptive statistics is used to summarise and organise data usually from studies of populations and samples. It can be calculated by determining the mean, mode or median which are measures of central tendency or by measuring the range, inter-quartile range or standard deviation which are measures of dispersion, but descriptive statistics cannot be used to demonstrate causal analysis, and this is where inferential statistics come in. Inferential statistics is needed to make generalisation from samples to populations to offer information about the population (Healey, 2014:145). An example is Pearson Product Moment Correlations and Multiple Regression Analysis. Pearson Product moment Correlations is the most used measure of association and is denoted as 'r' which is a measure of any linear trend between two variables (Puth, Neuhauser & Ruxton, 2014:185).

Multiple regression is an extension of linear regression. It is used to calculate the value of a variable based on the value of two or more other variables. The variable one wants to predict is called the independent variable (Keith, 2014:4). In this study the independent variable are the service quality dimensions which were tested to measure its influence on customer satisfaction (dependent variable).

3.3.5 Reliability and Validity

Validity refers to the measurement instrument's ability to measure what it is supposed to measure. Ideas of what the researcher is trying to measure must be represented accurately through the measuring instrument, (Sharma & Petosa, 2014:122). There are three categories of validity. The first category is *content validity*. This category analysis whether the instrument satisfactorily covers all the information that it should with respect to the variable. A subcategory of content validity is *face validity*, where specialists and experts are asked their opinion about whether an instrument measures the concept it was constructed to measure, (Heale & Twycross, 2015:66).

The second measure of validity is construct validity which refers to whether you can draw a conclusion reached on the basis of evidence about the scores related to the concept being studied. It is comprehensive, encompassing all sources of evidence supporting specific interpretations of a score from a measure, (Strauss & Smith, 2009:17). The final measure of validity is *criterion validity*. Criterion validity is the degree of correspondence between a test measure and other external referents (criteria), usually measured by their correlation (Drost, 2011:105). For the purpose of this research, construct validity was used to assess the validity of the measuring instrument, and a factor loading of 0.5 was considered significant in this study (Rau, 2016:358). For the purpose of this study face and content validity was used to ensure that there is no research bias, researchers sufficiently prepared the questionnaires. Careful construction was followed in drafting the questionnaires and a fundamental check or pretesting and the pilot trial of the questionnaire by academics before the real exercise was undertaken. The researchers ensured that there are no leading questions and the questions that could implicate the respondents here and there were likewise avoided.

Sharma and Petosa (2014:107) refer to reliability as an important attribute needed for accessing the adequacy and quality of any research instrument. Reliability is the ability of the research instrument's consistency in measuring results repeatedly. The degree to which an evaluation tool produces stable and consistent findings is essential. The way the questionnaire is structured and the responses from the respondents must indicate reliability. In this study Cronbach alpha was used to calculate reliability. Cronbach alpha provides a measure of the internal consistency of a test or scale; it is indicated as a number between 0 and 1. A low score indicating a low number of questions, 'poor inter-relatedness between items or mixed concepts and a 'too' high score may suggest that some statements or questions are redundant as they are testing the same

question but in a different wording. A minimum alpha value of 0.70 has been recommended, (Giorgi & Shoss, 2017:216).

3.4 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

According to Bell, Bryman and Harley (2018:109) ethical considerations on conducting the study is the responsibility of the researcher. The rights and welfare of respondents who take part in the study must be protected. It is important too that the researchers respect the specific ethical values governing a particular profession, trade or industry in which the study is conducted. The current researchers observed maximum probable safety measure and respect of facts and activities which ensure the safety, humane treatment and which safeguards voluntary participation. The researchers made efforts to inform respondents of the possible consequences, risks and benefits of the study before engaging them into the study including that at any point, they could choose to discontinue with the study and no explanation was sought from them. In this study, researchers sought consent from respondents prior to data collection. The researcher applied for an ethical clearance from the Ethics Committee at the Nelson Mandela University before data collection started which is attached (see Annexure 1:). Respondents were assured of anonymity and confidentiality about any information provided.

3.5 SUMMARY

This chapter presented the research design and methodology that were used during the study. The chapter began by restating the research problem, providing a logical positioning of quantitative research and a description of the research design. The quantitative method was used, and a questionnaire was the measuring instrument used, as detailed in this chapter. Two hundred questionnaires were self-administered by the researchers to the respondents who were willing to participate in the research. A discussion of the procedure, study participants, data collection, and questionnaire questions outlined the specifics of how the study was conducted and who participated in the study.

Clarifications were made on the rationale for using the non-probability convenience sampling techniques and for using a questionnaire as the research instrument. Anonymity, self-determination and confidentiality were ensured during administration of the questionnaires and report writing. Questionnaires were distributed to individuals who have stayed in accommodation establishments in Eastern Cape. To ensure validity, reliability and validity were further increased by pretesting the questionnaire.

CHAPTER FOUR

EMPIRICAL RESULTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In the preceding chapters a theoretical background to the study was sketched by conducting and presenting a thorough literature review. The research design and methodology to be utilised in this study was also discussed. Several statistical techniques were used to analyse the data collected through questionnaires. The results obtained from the 214 respondents about customer satisfaction of accommodation establishments in Eastern Cape will be presented in this chapter.

Firstly, a description of the sample characteristics will be provided. Secondly, results of the exploratory factor analyses that were used to assess the validity of the various constructs will be presented, while the reliability of the constructs was assessed using descriptive statistic, Cronbach's alpha coefficients will be indicated. Based on these findings the theoretical framework and hypotheses was revised. Lastly, the inferential statistics are presented which include Pearson's product moment correlations and the multi regression analysis. A summary of the chapter is provided to conclude.

4.2 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

STATISTICA Version 13 was utilised to perform the statistical analyses in this study. Section C of the questionnaire required respondents to complete nine questions related to the demographic information of the respondent and the accommodation establishment they stayed in. Information about the type of accommodation they stayed in, gender, ethnic affiliation, age, current employment and marital status were collected. Table 4.1 provides a summary of the accommodation specific information pertaining to respondents. The summarised information will be discussed in paragraphs that follow.

Table 4.1: Information pertaining to accommodation stayed in

Criteria	Specification	Frequency	Percentage
Type of Accommodation	Apartment	38	17.76
	Bed and Breakfast	33	15.42
	Backpackers lodge	7	3.27
	Boutique hotel	9	4.21
	Guest house	32	14.95
	Hotel	67	31.31
	Luxury lodge	7	3.27
	Spa resort	7	3.27
	Other	14	6.54
Star rating	Two	13	11.71
	Three	34	30.63
	Four	35	31.53
	Five	28	25.23
	Not specified	1	0.90
Specific needs	Yes	37	17.30
	No	177	82.70
Specific types of needs	Dietary food restrictions	7	3.27
	Foreign exchange	5	2.34
	Disability assistance	5	2.34
	Good lighting	5	2.34
	24hr pharmacy	4	1.87
	Easy venue access	4	1.87
	Guaranteed safety for belongings	4	1.87
	Medical assistance	3	1.40

As can be seen in the table above that the accommodation establishments stayed in by more than one third (35.52%) of respondents is a boutique or hotel and the least stayed at Backpackers lodges. Respondents mostly stayed in establishment with four- and five-star ratings. It can be assumed that a 4-5-star rating is associated with boutique hotels, luxury lodges, hotels, spa resorts or even guest houses. Specific needs includes the 17.3% of needs with some needs being health related (6.64%) including dietary food restrictions, 24hr pharmacy and medical assistance. Some (8.42%) specific needs are facility based, such as requiring disability assistance (2.34%), good lighting (2.34%) and guaranteed safety for belongings (1.87%) and easy venue access (1.87%). The most indicated specific need was dietary food restrictions (3.27%) and the least was medical assistance (1.40%).

Specific information about the accommodation the respondents stayed in (D1-D2) has been provided. The demographic profile information about the respondents (D3-D9) are next presented. As can be seen in Table 4.2, there are slightly more female respondents (56.07%) than males (43.93%). About half (56.54%) of the respondents are of black ethnic affiliation, followed by whites (22.43%) and coloureds (15.89%) and about 1% who are Indian.

Table 4.2: Demographic information of the respondents

Criteria	Specification	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	94	43.93
	Female	120	56.07
Ethnic affiliation	Black	121	56.54
	White	48	22.43
	Coloured	34	15.89
	Asian	9	4.21
	Indian	2	0.93
Age	18-25	125	58.41
	26-35	48	22.43
	36-45	22	10.28
	46-55	12	5.61
	56-65	6	2.80
	66+	1	0.47
Continent of origin	Africa	196	91.60
	Antarctica	2	0.93
	Asia	7	3.27
	Australia	2	0.93
	Europe	2	0.93
	North America	4	1.87
	South America	1	0.47
Employment status	Full-time employed	72	33.65
	Part-time employed	13	6.07
	Self-employed	14	6.54
	Retired	1	0.47
	Student	107	50.00
	Unemployed	7	3.27
Marital status	Divorced	10	4.67
	Married	48	22.43
	Single	144	67.29
	Widowed	1	0.47
	Living together	11	5.14

More than a half (58.41%) of the respondents are between 18 to 25 years old followed by the age group 26 to 35 years (22.43%). Only one respondent is older than 66 years. In terms on continent of origin, the majority was African (91.60%) and the least was from South America with one respondent. Half of the respondents are students (50%) and a third (33.65%) are full-time employed and only one respondent is retired. Most of the respondents disclosed their marital status as single (67.29%), followed by married (22.43%) and only one respondent who is widowed. It seems that students and employed individuals between 18 to 35 years stay at accommodation establishment either for work, studies or research purposes.

4.3 RESULTS OF THE VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY ANALYSIS

Validity refers to the measurement instrument's ability to measure what it is supposed to measure. Ideas of what the researcher is trying to measure must be represented accurately through the measuring instrument, (Sharma & Petosa 2014:122). For the purpose of this

research, construct validity was used to assess the validity of the measuring instrument, and a factor loading of 0.5 was considered significant in this study (Rau, 2016:358). Therefore any factor loading above 0.5 indicated that the scale is valid and factor loading below 0.5 were considered invalid. A minimum of three items must load onto one construct to be considered valid and items that across load onto constructs are disregarded from further analysis. In this study, items are disregarded when cross loading occur as advised by Yong and Pearce (2013:84). Cronbach Alpha co-efficient assesses the reliability of the research instrument and only a co-efficient of 0.6 will be deemed significant as advised by, Van Griethuijsen, Van Eijck, Haste, Den Brok, Skinner, Mansour, Gencer and BouJaoude (2015:589).

4.3.1 Factor matrix of variables

Using the STATISTICA Version 13, the eight constructs with eigenvalue above one were extracted. Table 4.3 shows the eigenvalues of the constructs as well as each the amount of variation in the total sample accounted for by each construct.

Table 4.3: Eigenvalues of the valid constructs

Variables	Eigenvalue	% Total variance
Tangibles	1.553	2.505
Reliability	2.278	3.674
Empathy	1.784	2.878
Information sharing	1.637	2.641
Convenience	2.882	4.648
Complimentary services	2.020	3.259
Complaint handling	21.323	34.392
Customer satisfaction	2.475	3.992

Based on the Eigenvalues exceeding the value one, seven service quality dimensions (independent variables) and customer satisfaction (dependent variable) were extracted. Table 4.4 shows the factor coefficients loading matrix for the seven variables.

When considering the independent variables as can be seen in Table 4.4. As evident in Table 4.4, a total of five valid constructs (independent variables) were considered for further analysis. Two factors were disregarded namely; empathy and convenience because less than three items loaded with a factor loading of above 0.5 which declared them invalid (Van Griethuijsen *et al.* 2015:589). Due to the EFA, considering the items that loaded together (RS3, A7 and C2) was

renamed to *Information sharing*. Considering the three items that loaded together (C9, C10 and T6) it was renamed to *Complementary Services*.

Table 4.4: Factor coefficients loading matrix for the nine independent variables

Items	TAN	REL	EMP	INFO	CON	COMPS	CH	CS
T1	0.743	0.058	0.093	0.003	0.131	0.101	0.188	0.076
T2	0.671	0.256	0.029	0.057	-0.174	0.151	0.170	0.280
T3	0.554	0.300	0.100	0.068	-0.065	0.144	0.122	0.247
T4	0.396	0.432	0.250	0.037	0.194	0.111	0.170	0.008
T5	0.426	0.387	0.185	-0.012	0.342	-0.005	0.076	0.212
T6	0.227	0.119	0.023	-0.002	0.204	0.682	0.084	0.187
T7	0.188	0.261	0.226	0.158	0.108	0.466	-0.102	0.154
T8	0.370	0.462	0.029	0.275	0.368	-0.053	0.061	0.020
T9	0.217	0.290	0.091	0.372	0.477	-0.224	0.053	0.043
T10	0.283	0.329	0.099	0.365	0.397	-0.098	0.207	0.122
REL1	0.208	0.665	0.083	0.200	0.002	0.002	0.242	0.315
REL2	0.054	0.816	0.197	0.131	0.058	0.069	0.086	0.253
REL3	0.085	0.783	0.151	0.119	0.020	0.134	0.147	0.270
REL4	0.157	0.756	0.166	0.078	0.037	0.059	0.195	0.277
REL5	0.079	0.638	0.150	-0.021	0.161	0.050	0.340	0.191
REL6	-0.000	0.399	0.395	0.171	0.045	0.006	0.326	0.289
REL7	0.043	0.421	0.420	0.072	0.197	-0.008	0.323	0.233
REL8	0.209	0.304	0.191	0.442	-0.172	0.085	0.108	0.120
E1	0.108	0.300	0.398	0.304	0.093	0.282	0.175	-0.022
E2	0.109	0.273	0.595	0.120	0.294	0.036	0.158	0.056
E3	0.105	0.340	0.714	0.005	0.216	0.030	0.191	0.111
E4	0.107	0.467	0.487	0.065	0.162	0.053	0.313	0.259
E5	-0.020	0.402	0.483	0.191	0.045	0.096	0.235	0.207
E6	-0.004	0.417	0.362	0.261	0.159	0.011	0.209	0.161
E7	-0.002	0.357	0.333	0.374	0.014	0.403	0.285	0.119
E8	0.020	0.387	0.217	0.362	0.037	0.357	0.412	0.100
RS1	0.088	0.284	0.296	0.403	0.028	0.106	0.351	0.172
RS2	0.151	0.327	-0.038	0.197	0.403	0.207	0.355	0.018
RS3	0.110	0.132	0.046	0.536	0.050	0.110	0.013	0.311
RS4	0.165	0.221	0.267	0.081	0.245	-0.001	0.355	0.368
RS5	0.261	0.095	0.239	0.238	0.127	0.050	0.231	0.389
RS6	0.128	0.313	0.260	-0.020	0.005	0.079	0.385	0.426
A1	0.129	0.129	0.325	0.259	-0.068	-0.145	0.373	0.384
A2	0.141	0.123	0.347	0.152	0.462	-0.040	0.015	0.375
A3	0.238	-0.076	0.198	0.199	0.088	0.289	-0.002	0.503
A4	0.227	-0.075	0.216	0.459	-0.120	0.161	0.155	0.506
A5	0.121	0.188	0.323	0.319	0.005	0.190	0.445	0.227
A6	0.128	0.260	0.378	0.172	0.038	0.241	0.431	0.326
A7	-0.120	0.275	0.087	0.618	-0.148	0.106	0.275	0.093

Items	TAN	REL	EMP	INFO	CON	COMPS	CH	CS
C1	-0.000	0.281	0.187	0.384	0.148	0.298	0.308	0.137
C2	0.098	0.275	0.130	0.421	0.463	0.110	0.106	0.130
C3	-0.049	0.034	0.201	-0.085	0.775	0.164	0.110	0.053
C4	-0.088	0.031	0.119	-0.098	0.774	0.144	0.128	0.054
C5	-0.037	0.162	-0.010	0.538	0.172	0.053	0.376	0.142
C6	0.290	0.054	-0.106	0.323	0.466	-0.032	0.012	0.262
C7	0.285	0.148	0.026	0.384	0.024	-0.014	0.204	0.366
C8	0.114	0.279	-0.304	-0.036	0.126	0.425	0.331	0.114
C9	0.282	0.355	-0.086	0.139	0.318	0.124	0.122	0.240
C10	0.048	-0.011	0.035	0.215	0.138	0.590	0.104	0.141
CH1	0.022	0.324	0.289	0.061	0.123	0.224	0.482	0.191
CH2	0.156	0.197	0.108	0.087	0.149	0.082	0.735	0.088
CH3	0.127	0.237	0.224	0.122	0.003	-0.098	0.676	0.285
CH4	0.158	0.242	0.239	0.044	-0.035	0.055	0.695	0.181
CH5	0.144	0.182	-0.097	-0.001	0.390	0.073	0.517	0.166
CH6	0.031	0.079	0.051	0.259	0.163	0.041	0.662	0.261
CH7	0.071	0.129	0.049	0.137	0.192	0.110	0.666	0.253
CS1	0.127	0.305	-0.013	0.089	0.005	0.087	0.198	0.681
CS2	0.144	0.423	0.047	-0.032	0.149	0.090	0.217	0.647
CS3	0.099	0.538	0.021	0.240	0.079	0.076	0.186	0.555
CS4	0.144	0.385	0.118	0.129	0.122	0.068	0.184	0.736
CS5	0.047	0.380	0.029	0.116	0.146	0.004	0.230	0.701
CS6	-0.037	0.285	0.168	0.008	0.050	0.141	0.192	0.718
Explained variance	2.967	7.475	3.800	3.747	3.728	2.376	5.947	5.915
Proportion of total	0.048	0.121	0.061	0.060	0.060	0.038	0.096	0.095

Key: T=Tangibles; REL=Reliability; E=Empathy; INFO = Information sharing; CON=Convenience; COMPS = Complimentary services; CH=Complaint handling; CS=Customer Satisfaction

The five valid independent variable constructs are: *Tangibles*, *Reliability*, *Information Sharing*, *Complementary Services* and *Complaint Handling*. Item CS3 (Provided value for money) cross loaded both onto the *Reliability* and *Customer Satisfaction* constructs and was therefore excluded from further analysis.

The following sections discuss the results of the valid constructs as depicted in Table 4.4 in conjunction with Cronbach's alpha coefficients (α) for reliability.

4.3.2 Validity and reliability of the instrument for the independent variables

The five valid variables are represented with all the items that successfully loaded with them and a re-operationalised definitions for each variable is provided.

4.3.2.1 Tangibles

Table 4.5 summarises the results of the EFA which extracted the construct *Tangibles*, the items that loaded the Eigenvalue of the construct, as well as the Cronbach's alpha (α) of each item and the overall construct.

Table 4.5: Validity and reliability of the tangibles construct

Eigenvalue: 1.55 % of variance = 2.51		Cronbach's alpha 0.754		
Items	Statements	Factor loading	Item correlation	Cronbach's alpha after deletion
T1	A modern external building appearance	0.743	0.487	0.764
T2	Equipment and facilities in good working condition	0.671	0.675	0.563
T3	Clean bedroom and bathroom facilities	0.554	0.575	0.656

As is evident in Table 4.5, three of the 10 items (T1 to T10) intended to measure the construct, *Tangibles*, loaded onto the construct with factor loadings above the minimum factor loading coefficient of 0.50, ranging between 0.554 and 0.743. Therefore, sufficient evidence of construct validity for *Tangibles* is provided. The *Tangibles* construct had an Eigenvalue of more than 1 (1.55) and explained 2.51% of the variance of the data. *Tangibles* returned a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.754 and was well above the cut-off point of 0.60 suggesting that the items measuring this construct can be deemed reliable.

Due to the EFA, *Tangibles* was re-operationalised to refer to the accommodation establishments exterior attractiveness, cleanliness of rooms and well-functioning of equipment and its facilities.

4.3.2.2 Reliability

Table 4.6 summarises the results of the EFA which extracted the construct *Reliability*, the items that loaded the Eigenvalue of the construct, as well as the Cronbach's alpha (α) of each item and the overall construct.

Table 4.6: Validity and reliability of the reliability construct

Eigenvalue: 2.28 % of variance = 3.67		Cronbach's alpha 0.922		
Items	Statements	Factor loading	Item correlation	Cronbach's alpha after deletion
REL1	Delivered its services as promised	0.665	0.768	0.911
REL2	Performed its services consistently	0.816	0.873	0.890
REL3	Performed its services accurately	0.783	0.853	0.894
REL4	Performed on time	0.756	0.828	0.899
REL5	Addressed urgent matters swiftly	0.638	0.674	0.929

As is evident in Table 4.6, five of the eight items (REL1 to REL5) intended to measure the construct, *Reliability*, loaded onto the construct with factor loadings above the minimum factor loading coefficient of 0.50, ranging between 0.638 and 0.816. Therefore, sufficient evidence of construct validity for *Reliability* is provided. The *Reliability* construct had an Eigenvalue of more than 1 (2.28) and explained 3.67% of the variance of the data. *Reliability* returned a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.922 and was well above the cut-off point of 0.60 suggesting that the items measuring this construct can be deemed highly reliable.

Due to the EFA, *Reliability* was re-operationalised to refer to the accommodation establishments' ability to deliver on its promises consistently, accurately, on time and address urgent matters swiftly.

4.3.2.3 Information sharing

Table 4.7 summarises the results of the EFA which extracted the construct *Information sharing*, the items that loaded the Eigenvalue of the construct, as well as the Cronbach's alpha (α) of each item and the overall construct.

Table 4.7: Validity and reliability of the Information sharing construct

Eigenvalue: 1.64 % of variance = 2.64		Cronbach's alpha 0.626		
Items	Statements	Factor loading	Item correlation	Cronbach's alpha after deletion
RS3	Confirmed my booking prior to arrival	0.537	0.379	0.604
A7	Staff that can speak a language I understand	0.618	0.460	0.490
C5	Provided adequate information to make a decision	0.538	0.464	0.480

As is evident in Table 4.7, three items loaded onto this newly named construct, *Information sharing*, with factor loadings above the minimum factor loading coefficient of 0.50. Item RS3 (Confirmed my booking prior to arrival) which was intended to measure *Responsiveness* and C5 (Provided adequate information to make a decision) which was intended to measure *Convenience*, loaded onto this construct. Cheng and Jin (2019:65) state one of the factors that give accommodation establishments a competitive advantage is communication especially pre-arrival communication to share detailed and clear information about a guests' stay, as it relieves anxieties and builds trust. Item A7 (Staff that can speak a language I understand) which was intended to measure *Assurance* also loaded onto this construct. Language can be a huge barrier for effective and efficient *Information sharing*, hence a person who is multilingual is preferred for occupations dealing with people (Markus, Sekiguchi & Takeuchi, 2015:140).

Factor loadings for this construct is ranging between 0.537 and 0.618. Therefore, sufficient evidence of construct validity for *Information sharing* is provided. The *Information sharing* construct had an Eigenvalue of more than 1 (1.64) and explained 2.64% of the variance of the data. *Information sharing* returned a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.626 and was above the cut-off point of 0.60 suggesting that the items measuring this construct can be deemed reliable.

Due to the EFA, *Information sharing* was re-operationalised to refer to providing guests at accommodation establishments with adequate information to make an informed decision and with pre-booking confirmation prior to their stay and during their stay to relay information to guests in a language they understand.

4.3.2.4 Complimentary services

Table 4.8 summarises the results of the EFA which extracted the construct *Complimentary services*, the items that loaded the Eigenvalue of the construct, as well as the Cronbach's alpha (α) of each item and the overall construct.

Table 4.8: Validity and reliability of the complimentary services construct

Eigenvalue: 2.02 % of variance = 3.26		Cronbach's alpha 0.607		
Items	Statements	Factor loading	Item correlation	Cronbach's alpha after deletion
T6	Complimentary internet service	0.682	0.564	0.292
C9	A lost and found service	0.123	0.232	0.753
C10	Free Wi-Fi access	0.590	0.502	0.392

As is evident in Table 4.8 two of the ten items intended to measure Convenience loaded onto this construct with factor loadings above the minimum factor loading coefficient of 0.50. Item T6 (Complimentary internet service) intended to measure *Tangibility* also loaded onto this construct. For this reason, the construct was renamed to *Complimentary services Amenities offered by service industries must justify the expense of it, offering complimentary internet service has a positive influence on return on investment* (Kucukusta, 2017:1961). Factor loadings for this construct is ranging between 0.590 and 0.682. Therefore, sufficient evidence of construct validity for *Complimentary services* is provided. The *Complimentary services* construct had an Eigenvalue of more than 1 (2.02) and explained 3.26% of the variance of the data. *Complimentary services* returned a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.607 and was just exceeding the cut-off point of 0.60, suggesting that the items measuring this construct can be deemed reliable.

Due to the EFA, *Complimentary services* was operationalised as those complimentary services that guests at accommodation establishments value such as free internet and Wi-Fi access and a lost and found service

4.3.2.5 Complaints handling

Table 4.9 summarises the results of the EFA which extracted the construct *Complaints handling*, the items that loaded the Eigenvalue of the construct, as well as the Cronbach's alpha (α) of each item and the overall construct.

Table 4.9: Validity and reliability of the complaints handling construct

Eigenvalue: 21.32 %variance=34.39		Cronbach's alpha 0.869		
Items	Statements	Factor loading	Item correlation	Cronbach's alpha after deletion
CH2	A user-friendly complaint procedure	0.735	0.716	0.838
CH3	Staff that I can easily communicate to about problems	0.676	0.686	0.843
CH4	Has been serious about resolving my complaints	0.695	0.665	0.847
CH5	Publicised improvements done about complaints	0.517	0.530	0.871
CH6	Management that encourage reporting problems	0.662	0.687	0.843
CH7	Management that insist on resolving complaints	0.666	0.727	0.836

As is evident in Table 4.9, six of the seven items (CH1 to CH7) intended to measure the construct, *Complaints handling*, loaded onto the construct with factor loadings above the minimum factor loading coefficient of 0.50, ranging between 0.517 and 0.735. Therefore, sufficient evidence of construct validity for *Complaints handling* is provided. The *Complaints handling* construct had an Eigenvalue of more than 1 (21.32) and explained 34.39% of the variance of the data. *Complaints handling* returned a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.869 and was well above the cut-off point of 0.60 suggesting that the items measuring this construct can be deemed highly reliable.

Due to the EFA, *Complaints handling* was re-operationalised to refer to accommodation establishments ensuring that a user-friendly complaints system are in place whereby staff are committed that complaints are handled effectively and efficiently and having management that encourage problem sharing and resolution.

4.3.3 Validity and reliability of the instrument for the dependent variable

An exploratory factor analysis was undertaken to measure the validity of the dependent variable, namely *Customer satisfaction*. Table 4.10 summarises the results of the EFA which extracted the construct *Customer satisfaction*, the items that loaded the Eigenvalue of the construct, as well as the Cronbach's alpha (α) of each item and the overall construct.

Table 4.10: Validity and reliability of the customer satisfaction construct

Eigenvalue: 2.47 % of variance=3.99%		Cronbach's alpha 0.880		
Items	Statements	Factor loading	Item correlation	Cronbach's alpha after deletion
A3	Guaranteed my personal safety	0.503	0.428	0.892
A4	Safe payment facilities	0.506	0.493	0.884
CS1	Satisfied my needs	0.681	0.692	0.865
CS2	Exceeded my expectations	0.647	0.733	0.856
CS4	Is worth recommending to other people	0.736	0.852	0.840
CS5	I will stay at again	0.701	0.778	0.850
CS6	Matched my perceptions of what it would be like	0.718	0.729	0.857

As is evident in Table 4.10, five of the six items (CS1, CS2 and CS4 to CS6) intended to measure *Customer satisfaction* loaded onto the construct with factor loadings above the minimum factor loading coefficient of 0.50. As item CS3 cross loaded also onto the *Reliability* construct, it was disregarded from further analysis. Two other items (A3 and A4) intended to measure *Assurance* loaded onto the construct. To guarantee personal safety (A3) and have safe payment facilities (A4) is related to customer satisfaction. Security refers to the safety and security of customer transactions and is found a significant predictor and influencer of customer satisfaction (Al-Azzam, 2015:50).

The factor loadings for this construct are ranging between 0.503 and 0.736. Therefore, sufficient evidence of construct validity for *Customer satisfaction* is provided. The *Customer satisfaction* construct had an Eigenvalue of more than 1 (2.47) and explained 3.99% of the variance of the data. *Customer satisfaction* returned a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.880 and was well above the cut-off point of 0.60 suggesting that the items measuring this construct can be deemed highly reliable.

Due to the EFA, *Customer satisfaction* was re-operationalised to refer to the fulfilment of the accommodation establishment's guests needs by meeting their perception and exceeding their expectations regarding safety and security issues which will prompt them to revisit and recommend the establishment to other people.

4.4 REVISED THEORATICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES

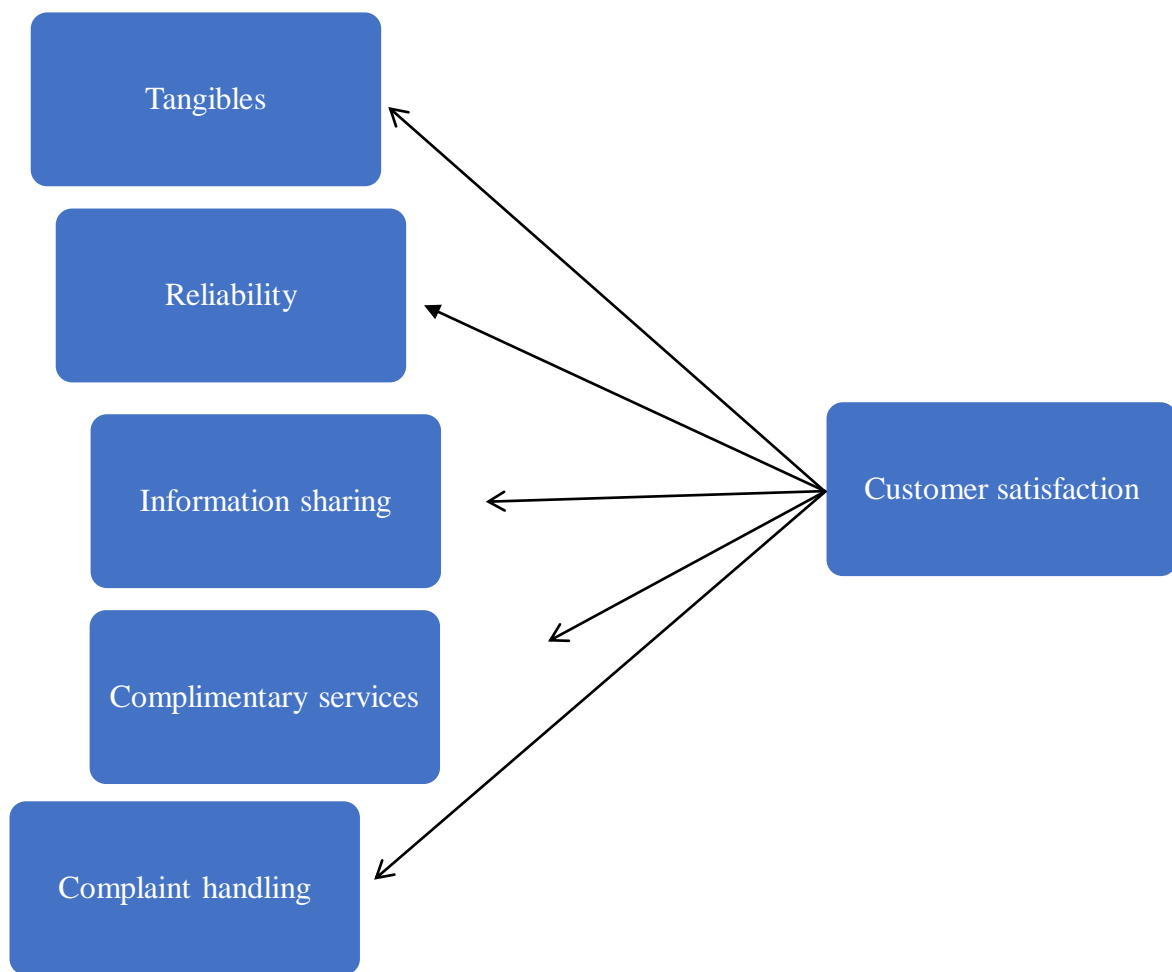
As a result of exploratory factor analysis, operationalisation of various constructs, as well as the theoretical framework were revised and reformulated. Table 4.11 summarises the reformulated operational definitions, while Figure 4.1 presents the reworked theoretical framework.

Table 4.11: Reformulated operational definitions

Factor	Operationalisation
Tangibles	Tangibles refer to the accommodation establishments exterior attractiveness, cleanliness of rooms and well-functioning of equipment and its facilities.
Reliability	Reliability refer to the accommodation establishments' ability to deliver on its promises consistently, accurately, on time and address urgent matters swiftly.
Information sharing	Information sharing to refer to providing guests at accommodation establishments with adequate information to make an informed decision and with pre-booking confirmation prior to their stay and during their stay to relay information to guests in a language they understand.
Complimentary services	Complimentary services refer to those complimentary services that guests at accommodation establishments value such as free internet and Wi-Fi access and a lost and found service.
Complaints handling	Complaints handling refer to accommodation establishments ensuring that a user-friendly complaints system are in place whereby staff are committed that complaints are handled effectively and efficiently and having management that encourage problem sharing and resolution.
Customer satisfaction	Customer satisfaction refer to the fulfilment of the accommodation establishment's guests needs by meeting their perception and exceeding their expectations regarding safety and security issues which will prompt them to revisit and recommend the establishment to other people.

The renamed independent variables resulted in the revised theoretical framework as shown in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1: Revised theoretical framework: Influence of service customer dimensions on customer satisfaction



Source: Researchers own construction

The reformulated hypotheses are as follows:

- H₁: Tangibles at accommodation establishments influence customer satisfaction.
- H₂: Service reliability of accommodation establishments influences customer satisfaction.
- H₃: Information sharing by and at accommodation establishments influences customer satisfaction.
- H₄: Complimentary services provided by accommodation establishments influences customer satisfaction.
- H₅: Complaint handling at accommodation establishments influences customer satisfaction.

4.5 EMPIRICAL RESULTS OF THE DESCRIPTIVE AND INFERENTIAL STATISTICS

The results of the descriptive and inferential analyses are presented below. Descriptive statistics included calculating means and standard deviations. Inferential statistics included calculating Pearson's product moment correlations and undertaking multiple regression analyses.

4.5.1 Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics were calculated to describe the sample data. Table 4.12 contains the descriptive statistics of all variables, these include the mean and standard deviation.

Table 4.12: Descriptive statistics for factors

Variables	Means	Standard deviation
Customer satisfaction	3.824	0.751
Tangibles	4.081	0.736
Reliability	3.749	0.851
Information sharing	3.944	0.690
Complimentary services	3.684	0.846
Complaints handling	3.544	0.707

With regards to the dependant variable, *Customer satisfaction*, obtained a mean score of 3.824, indicating that respondents on average appear to be satisfied with staying at the accommodation establishments. *Customer satisfaction* returned a standard deviation of 0.751 indicating that there were dispersion amongst the customer responses.

With regards to the independent variables, *Complaint handling* scored the lowest mean of 3.544 and *Tangibles* scored the highest mean of 4.081. All the scores tend towards agreement that these service quality dimensions are important issues when staying at an accommodation establishment. The standard deviations ranged from 0.690 to 0.851 indicating some variation in responses, with *Reliability* being the highest and *Information sharing* the lowest.

4.5.2 Pearson's product moment correlations

As mentioned in Chapter Three, Pearson Product moment Correlations is the most used measure of association and is denoted as 'r' which is a measure of any linear trend between two variables (Puth, Neuhauser & Ruxton, 2014:185). Therefor in order to determine the correlation between all the variables (customer satisfaction tangibles, reliability, information

sharing, complimentary services and complaint handling), a Pearson product moment correlation was undertaken. A coefficient of correlation varies between -1 and +1.

The magnitude of the Pearson correlation coefficient determines the strength of the correlation. Although there are no hard-and-fast rules for assigning strength of association to particular values, some general guidelines are provided by Cohen (2013) in Table 4.13 below.

Table 4.13: Interpretations of the r values

Coefficient Value	Strength of Association
$0.1 < r < 0.3$	Small correlation
$0.3 < r < 0.5$	Medium/moderate correlation
$ r > 0.5$	Large/strong correlation

The correlations between the different variables under investigation in this study, are presented in Table 4.14.

Table 4.14: Pearson moment correlation

VARIABLES	CS	TAN	REL	INFO	COMPS	CH
Customer satisfaction	1.000					
Tangibles	0.497	1.000				
Reliability	0.628	0.446	1.000			
Information sharing	0.480	0.274	0.450	1.000		
Complimentary services	0.451	0.350	0.402	0.336	1.000	
Complaint handling	0.573	0.394	0.556	0.473	0.380	1.000

From Table 4.13 it can be seen that *Customer satisfaction* has strong correlations with *Reliability* ($r=0.628$) and *Complaints handling* ($r=0.573$), and moderate correlations with *Tangibles* ($r=0.497$), *Information sharing* ($r=0.480$) and *Complimentary services* ($r=0.451$). *Tangibles* has a moderate correlation with *Complimentary services* ($r=0.350$), *Complaint handling* ($r=0.394$) and *Reliability* ($r=0.446$) and a weak correlation with *Information sharing* ($r=0.274$). *Reliability* has a strong correlation with *Complaint handling* ($r=0.556$) and moderate correlation with both *Complimentary services* ($r=0.402$) and *Complaint handling* ($r=0.450$). *Information sharing* has a moderate correlation with *Complaint handling* ($r=0.473$) and *Complimentary services* ($r=0.336$). *Complimentary services* has a moderate correlation with *Complaint handling* ($r=0.380$). To summarise, one of the reported r-values that indicate the

weakest positive correlation between *Information sharing* and *Tangibles* ($r=0.274$). Three strong positive correlations are identified, namely between *Reliability* and *Customer satisfaction* ($r=0.628$), *Complaint handling* and *Customer satisfaction* ($r=0.573$) and lastly between *Complaint handling* and *Reliability* ($r=0.556$). These results indicate that *Reliability* and *Complaint handling* are strongly associated with achieving customer satisfaction and *Reliability* is related to *Complaints handling*.

4.5.3 Multiple regression analysis

As defined in Chapter Three multiple regression is an extension of linear regression. It is used to measure influence. The variable one wants to predict is called the independent variable (Keith, 2014:4). In this study the independent variable are the service quality dimensions which will be tested to measure its influence on customer satisfaction (dependent variable). A beta coefficient is calculated for each variable within the theoretical framework. According to Davis and Cladis (2016:1358) the p-value must be low to affirm statistical significance, the values of 0.05 and 0.001 are usually chosen cut-offs, but numbers higher or lower may be used if demanded by particular circumstances as long as some validation is provided. In order to assess the influence of various independent variables (service quality dimensions) under investigation in this study, multiple regression analyses were undertaken. The results can be found in Table 4.14. According to Acock (2008:225), $\beta < 0.20$ is considered a *weak* effect, β between 0.2 and 0.5 is considered a moderate while effects of $\beta > 0.50$ are considered a *strong* effect.

Table 4.15: Multiple regression analysis

Dependent variables: Customer satisfaction $R^2 = 0.526$				Hypothesis number	Hypothesis outcome
Independent variables	Beta	T-value	p-value		
Tangibles	0.192	3.514	**0.001	H ₁	Accepted
Reliability	0.308	4.981	*0.000	H ₂	Accepted
Information sharing	0.147	2.633	**0.009	H ₃	Accepted
Complimentary services	0.132	2.441	**0.015	H ₄	Accepted
Complaints handling	0.206	3.388	**0.001	H ₅	Accepted

* $p < 0.001$ ** $p < 0.05$

The results of the multiple regression analyses show that the independent variables explain 52.6% of the variance in *Customer satisfaction*. Four of the five independent variables, *Tangibles* ($b=0.192$; $p=0.001$), *Information sharing* ($b=0.147$; $p=0.009$), *Complimentary services* ($b=0.132$; $p=0.015$) and *Complaints handling* ($b=0.206$; $p=0.001$) were found to have

a significant influence on *Customer satisfaction* at $p < 0.05$. *Reliability* ($b = 0.308$; $p = 0.000$) had a significant positive influence on *Customer satisfaction* at $p < 0.001$. *Reliability* and *Complaint handling* had a moderate effect on *Customer satisfaction* with reliability having the strongest effect compared to all the other constructs which have a weak effect on *Customer satisfaction*.

4.6 SUMMARY

In this chapter the empirical results of the study were presented. A summary of the demographic information collected from the respondents were provided. The results of the validity and reliability of the measuring instrument were given. Based on the factor analysis constructs with eigenvalue above one were extracted. In the factor coefficients loading matrix, five valid independent variables constructs, and one dependent variable construct were considered for further analysis. Due to the EFA, considering the items that loaded together, two new constructs were added namely *Information sharing and Complementary services*. The operational definitions of the factors under investigation in this study were redefined, the hypothesis reformulated and the proposed model for this study was revised by disregarding some service quality dimensions and adding newly named constructs. All valid independent and dependent variables provided satisfactory evidence of reliability. The results of the correlation and regression analyses were also presented.

A number of assumptions and conclusions can be drawn from the results presented in this chapter. From the demographic information it seems that students and employed individuals between 18 to 35 years stay at accommodation establishment either for work, studies or research purposes. The multiple regression analysis discovered tangibles, reliability, information sharing, complimentary services and complaint handling are the service quality dimensions that actually have an influence on customer satisfaction. The multi regression analysis also detected that reliability is the strongest predictor of customer satisfaction.

In Chapter five, a brief summary of various chapters in the study will be provided. Thereafter the empirical results will be interpreted, conclusions drawn, and recommendations provided. The contributions and limitations of the study will be discussed and recommendations for future research presented.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The main goal of this study was to determine the influence of service quality on customer satisfaction at accommodation establishments in Eastern Cape. Up until now, this has been achieved by exploring existing literature on service quality and customer satisfaction, constructing a proposed hypothesised model, identifying suitable design methods to be used in the empirical study and finally examining the data obtained.

This chapter will conclude the study by providing a brief overview of the preceding chapters, together with a summary of the main findings. Detailed recommendations on how to ensure customer satisfaction at accommodation establishments in Eastern Cape will be provided and the shortcomings and recommendations proposed for future research will be disclosed.

5.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of this study was to determine the influence of service quality on customer satisfaction. To achieve the primary objective of this study, the following secondary objectives were formulated:

- Identify and describe how customer satisfaction at accommodation establishments is ensured;
- Investigate which service quality dimensions customers value;
- Empirically investigate the influence of service quality dimensions on customer satisfaction at accommodation establishments; and
- Provide recommendations to accommodation establishments about how to improve service quality to ensure customer satisfaction at accommodation establishments.

The following methodological objectives were followed:

- Conduct a literature review of the dimensions of service quality and customer satisfaction;
- Select a fitting methodology and research design for the study; and

- Develop an appropriate measuring instrument that will be used to empirically test the influence of the independent (service quality dimensions) variables on the dependant variable (customer satisfaction).

5.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

The following section will discuss the research method employed in the study, the research design and methodology, as well as the sampling techniques and statistical methods used in the study. Secondary and primary research was conducted to address the research objectives outlined in Chapter One. To achieve the primary objective of this study, the secondary research of this study consisted of an extensive literature review designed to identify and describe the nature and importance of customer satisfaction in general and meeting the service quality expectation (dimensions) of consumers at accommodation establishments. The secondary research of this study was conducted by consulting a variety of relevant textbooks and journal articles. In addition, the library facilities available at the Nelson Mandela University were accessed. National and International databases, such as Emerald, EBSCOhost and Sabinet, were also consulted to identify preceding research on the service quality dimensions customers value and which will lead to satisfaction at accommodation establishments in Port Elizabeth.

The research paradigm used in this study is positivistic in nature and involved quantitative research undertaken with the aid of a designed questionnaire to collect data. Due to the study being quantitative in nature, a large sample was required, and therefore a sample of about 200 respondents that stayed at accommodation establishments in the Eastern Cape were selected. The research population consisted of guests that frequented an accommodation establishment in the Eastern Cape. The measuring instrument used was a questionnaire. Researchers utilised information derived from the literature sources, Chapter Two, to develop statements which were tested for validity and reliability. The investigation employed a non-probability sampling technique to ensure willing and available consumers can assist in completing the questionnaire. The questionnaire included statements that would measure each of the service quality dimensions as well as customer satisfaction. The questionnaire, designed in English, comprised of three sections namely, a section for customer demographics, a section for rating service quality dimensions valued, and a section that addressed five general questions on how satisfied they are with the service quality. A Likert type scale ranging from one (strongly disagree) to five (strongly agree) was utilised and selected as responses.

Raw data collected by use of questionnaire research was summarised into useful information and used to interpret service quality dimensions and customer satisfaction at accommodation establishments. Primary data was captured in Microsoft Excel and was analysed for interpretation. After data collection, raw data was converted into useful information using several data analysis methods. The data was statistically tested for validity and reliability by use of exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and Cronbach Alpha co-efficient statistical methods respectively. Measuring the validity of the instrument was done to ensure the instrument was measuring the intended purpose whilst Cronbach Alpha co-efficient was used to assess the reliability of the research instrument. This was achieved through the Pearson Product moment Correlation which was used to measure the association between the valid factors, and multiple regression which was performed to ascertain which of the proposed hypotheses in the hypothetical model of this study were supported or rejected.

5.4 MAIN FINDINGS FROM THE LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter two sought to provide a literature review based on customer satisfaction and the different service quality dimensions that customer's value. It was determined that service quality is a concept that is customer based and heavily dependent on customer expectations and how to satisfy and exceed those expectations. The quality of service is a determining factor for customer satisfaction and directly affects the success of an organisation. The benefits of a high service quality identified in the literature review included the creation of a conducive work environment, the retention of existing customers, and the improvement of an organisation's participation in the market and its profitability, and the strengthening of brand image from positive customer recommendations.

Several models have been discussed to measure service quality. The Gronoos model is a service quality measurement model that defines service quality as satisfactory if perceived and expected quality have slight differences. The SERVQUAL model is a service quality measurement model that divides service quality into a five-dimensional aspect, with the dimensions being tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. The last model discussed was the SERVPERF model, which is a service quality measurement model that adopted the same dimensions as SERVQUAL but takes the performance only based measurement of quality as opposed to perceived service quality. The study adopted a version of the SERVQUAL model with the key dimensions being tangibles, reliability, empathy, responsiveness, assurance, complaint management and convenience. Tangibles included the

physical appearance of everything, and everyone involved in the organisation. Reliability was considered as the organisation's responsibility to deliver as promised. Empathy referred to how the customer contact staff must understand and treat each individual customer. Responsiveness was regarded the willingness and speed used to assist customers effectively. Assurance referred to the competence and ability of the organisation and its staff to instil trust and confidence based on their knowledge and politeness as they interact with customers. Convenience referred to how easily accessible services and products on offer are.

The concept of customer satisfaction was discussed in terms of fulfilment and relief. Fulfilment was defined as the pleasure that arises during a period of consumption in relation to a product or service while relief was defined as the set of possible conditions for the customers to have an enjoyable experience. It was noted that customer satisfaction, which can be measured by asking customers to rate their satisfaction with the business, product, or service, is important to any establishment since the influence on one dissatisfied customer creates more reputational damage than the positive influence from ten satisfied customers. There was a strong positive correlation between customer satisfaction and favourable outcomes like increased sales, improved quality standard and increased customer base.

Furthermore, it was revealed that a relationship exists between customer satisfaction and service quality, with customer satisfaction determined to be an antecedent of service quality. The quality of service provided to the customer played a significant role in determining how satisfied that customer is. Ultimately, building a firm connection between service quality and customer satisfaction ensured long term gains to the accommodation establishment in the form of customer loyalty and preferences which lead to higher sales. Empirical studies by Clark, Hartline and Jones (2009), Racherla, Connolly and Christodoulidou (2013), Ren, Zhang and Ye (2015) supported the idea of a positive link between customer satisfaction and service quality as service quality has been noted to enable growth in customer satisfaction. However, some empirical studies such as Bonn *et al.* (2007) revealed that environmental settings and proximity of environmental attractions such as museums will determine how service quality affects customer satisfaction.

5.5 MAIN FINDINGS FROM THE EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION

Chapter four presented the primary data collected for this study. Firstly, the questionnaire obtained data such as age, occupation, marital status as well as specific preferences they would like at the accommodation establishment and this included dietary food restrictions, 24hr pharmacy, disability assistance and medical assistance. When analysing the primary data collected, EFA was utilised to obtain the factors with Eigenvalues greater than one. In order to confirm construct validity a cut-off point of 0.5 for minimum factor loadings was set. With this limitation, empathy and convenience were disregarded for further analysis, whilst two factor were renamed to information sharing and complimentary services respectively. Therefore, five valid constructs were considered to have an influence on customer satisfaction in Eastern Cape's accommodation establishments.

Cronbach's alpha coefficients were calculated for these valid factors that were retained, with a minimum of 0.60 to be deemed reliable to demonstrate inter-item consistency. As a result of exploratory factor analysis, operationalisation of various constructs and hypotheses were revised and reformulated. Three strong positive correlations were identified in the Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis, namely between *Reliability* and *Customer satisfaction*, *Complaint handling* and *Customer satisfaction* and lastly between *Complaint handling* and *Reliability*. The weakest correlation was between *Tangibles* and *Information Sharing*. All the other factors had moderate correlations between each other.

In this study the independent variables tested to measure the influence on customer satisfaction were the service quality dimensions. Five significant relationships were found between the service quality dimensions and the influence on customer satisfaction. Of these five significant relationships, two service quality dimensions namely, *Reliability* and *Complaints handling*, were seen to have a moderate effect on customer satisfaction at accommodation establishments in Eastern Cape. With respect to the other three significant relationships, three service quality dimensions, namely *Tangibles*, *information sharing* and *complementary services*, had weak effects on customer satisfaction at accommodation establishments in Eastern Cape.

5.6 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The preceding sections provided an overview of the study and how the objectives of the present study were achieved. A key goal of this study was to identify which service quality dimensions influence customer satisfaction at accommodation establishments in the Eastern Cape. The following sections present the conclusions and provide recommendations for statistically significant relationships for the influence of service quality dimensions on customer satisfaction at accommodation establishments in Eastern Cape.

5.6.1 Conclusions and recommendations per factor of the statistically significant relationships

Five independent variables, namely Tangibles, Information sharing, Complimentary services, Complaints handling, and Reliability were found to have a statistically significant influence on Customer satisfaction at accommodation establishments in Eastern Cape. These relationships will be commented on further.

5.6.1.1 Tangibles

It appears that guests at accommodation establishments in EC regard tangibles as an important service quality dimension. The respondents of this study regard tangibles such as, all equipment and facilities functioning according to their use and being guaranteed clean bedrooms and bathroom facilities during their stay as important. Borangiu *et al.* (2016:162) disclose that customers prefer quality and comfortable beds, working facilities and aesthetically appealing rooms.

Tangibles (H_1) presented a weak statistically significant relationship with *customer satisfaction*. This is consistent with the literature, as Hoffman and Bateson (2010:328) indicate that tangibles play a crucial role in matching and exceeding customer expectations to perceptions. This in turn will impact the level of customer satisfaction at any given accommodation establishment.

To ensure customer satisfaction, it is suggested that accommodation establishments in the Eastern Cape pay attention to the tangibility aspect of service quality as follows:

- Making the accommodation establishment more aesthetically pleasing by decorating the premises with contemporary art and décor and ensuring the premises is well lit;

- Ensuring all appliances and equipment are properly functioning through regular checks and testing.
- Ensuring that staff changes sheets every day after a guest has used the bedding; and
- Thorough cleaning of bathroom facilities everyday using disinfectants.

5.6.1.2 Reliability

It appears that guests at accommodation establishments in Eastern Cape regard *reliability* as an important service quality dimension. Guests regard *reliability* as providing promised services, in the time declared and delivering services consistently and accurately. They also regard reliability as addressing urgent matters swiftly. Pizam (2012:137) confirmed that reliability refers to providing services speedily, promptly and accurately.

Reliability (H₂) presented a moderate statistically significant relationship (positive) with *customer satisfaction*. Borangiu *et al.* (2016:165) state that regardless of the type of organisation, all reliability elements are important towards effectively meeting customer satisfaction.

To ensure customer satisfaction, it is suggested that accommodation establishments in the Eastern Cape pay attention to the reliability aspect of service quality as follows:

- Motivating contact staff by conducting team building sessions to ensure they remain committed to offering excellent customer service;
- Accommodation establishments should have a “service blueprint” to assist in mapping out the points of customer contact and services processes, which will improve reliability by standardising the service performance process throughout;
- Top management must ensure that services are performed timely by making staff sign in and out for their duties and have disciplinary measures in place for failing to do so;
- In order to address matters swiftly, accommodation establishments should have an open direct line (telephone call) of communication from guests to staff, at any time. This may include installing a localised landline or an intranet at the accommodation establishment; and
- Continuously conducting market research on how to achieve reliability to anticipate customer needs and wants.

5.6.1.3 Information Sharing

It appears that guests at accommodation establishments in Eastern Cape regard *information sharing* as an important service quality dimension. Guests want to be provided with pre-booking confirmation prior to their stay and adequate information to make informed decisions about staying at the accommodation establishment. Guests also want language proficient staff that can communicate easily with them in an understandable manner. Kitapci *et al.* (2014:165) believes that an organisation must be able to communicate well with guests and share adequate information they deemed necessary and useful.

Information Sharing (H₃) presented a weak statistically significant relationship with *customer satisfaction*. These findings are consistent with Racherla, Connolly and Christodoulidou (2013) who identify the ability of staff to respond and obligingly attend to queries and requests as factors likely to influence customer satisfaction.. As indicated by Bowie *et al.* (2014:288) the faster the response of staff to a customer request is, the greater the chance of receiving a high rating for customer satisfaction.

To ensure customer satisfaction, it is suggested that accommodation establishments in the Eastern Cape pay attention to the information sharing aspect of service quality as follows:

- Sending out confirmation emails to guests after their bookings have been confirmed and sending out reminders two days before arrival;
- Ensuring that accommodation establishments recruit bilingual employees, with at least being fluent in English communication and writing skills;
- Adopting booking systems with search engines, which would allow customers to book online; and
- The accommodation establishment should have an easily accessible website with all the current the establishment's information on rates, offers, contact details, specialities and so on. Websites can be made more accessible by using search engine optimization techniques such as targeting local searchers with local listings and using YouTube search engine optimisation.

5.6.1.4 Complimentary Services

It seems that guests at accommodation establishments in Eastern Cape regard complimentary services as an important service quality dimension. The respondents of the study, regard complimentary internet services, free Wi-Fi connectivity and a lost and found service as

important in reflecting good service quality. Howard (2013:208) gives emphasis on how complementary services like website access and internet services are important factors for service quality. Kaura *et al.* (2015:405) confirmed that post-benefit convenience relates to activities after the core interaction has occurred and this includes lost and found services.

Complimentary Services (H₄) presented a weak statistically significant relationship with *customer satisfaction*. These results are consistent with the findings of Zhou, Ye, Pearce and Wu (2014), and Ren, Zhang and Ye (2015), who highlight the presence of complimentary services as a factor likely to influence customer satisfaction.

To ensure customer satisfaction, it is suggested that accommodation establishments in the Eastern Cape pay attention to the aspect of complimentary services of service quality dimension as follows:

- Accommodation establishments should have efficient Wi-Fi routers which have a broad coverage of the premises;
- Guests should be provided with their personal Wi-Fi password as they check-in;
- A lost and found service box can be placed at reception where all guests and staff can place any lost items and also look for lost items with the help of the staff; and
- The staff responsible for cleaning and tidying up the rooms must check for any remaining items and contact relevant guests promptly to make arrangements to send or fetch their lost items.

5.6.1.5 Complaints Handling

It seems that guests at accommodation establishments in Eastern Cape regard complaint handling as an important service quality dimension. The respondents of this study regard having a user-friendly complaint procedure, staff that is approachable about guests' problems and determined to solve them as important. Complaint handling for guests in study also means having management teams which encourage reporting complaints and explaining the complaint process. According to Garding and Bruns (2015:20), effective complaint handling involves replying to complaints quickly and broadcasting improvement actions, as well as raising customer awareness on the process of lodging complaints. The level to which management show how appreciative they are of complaints being brought forward and the efficiency in

resolving complaints, ultimately impacts the level of customer satisfaction (Ingram *et al.* 2015:205).

Complaints Handling (H₅) presented a statistically weak significant relationship (positive) with *customer satisfaction*. The findings in this study are consistent with those of Racherla, Connolly and Christodoulidou (2013) who identify the ability to resolve customer issues as a factor likely to influence customer satisfaction.

To ensure customer satisfaction, it is suggested that accommodation establishments in the Eastern Cape pay attention to the complaints handling aspect of service quality as follows:

- Have a clearly communicated complaint procedure in place whereby staff tell guests when they check-in about it and must also send this to staff when confirming their booking prior to arrival;
- Ensure customer contact staff competence, credibility, reliability, courtesy, responsiveness and communication skill through the creation of code of behaviour and understanding towards guests;
- Effectively monitor customer satisfaction by employing suggestion and complaint systems by having a section in the establishments website to leave compliments, complaints and recommendations;
- Publicise feedback on how complaints were resolved on the accommodation establishment website; and
- Training staff on how to manage customer complaints in a calm yet swift manner; and

5.7 SHORTCOMINGS OF THE RESEARCH

The representation of demographics could be a shortcoming in the study. The results show that there was a higher response rate from both black respondents and student respondents. Another shortcoming is the fact that this study solely relied on quantitative data, yet contemporary research practice has shown increasing efforts being made to combine both quantitative and qualitative research. Despite these shortcomings, this study offers a unique addition to the literature on service quality on customer satisfaction at accommodation establishments in Eastern Cape.

5.8 FUTURE RESEARCH

Based on the findings and conclusions derived from this study, the following recommendations are provided:

- The study could be extended to other provinces in South Africa, using the same measuring instrument;
- A qualitative study could be done on how other two service quality dimensions which were disregarded (empathy and convenience) can be enhanced to have a strong influence on customer satisfaction in Eastern Cape and;
- The study could be extended to look at the influence of service quality dimensions on other hospitality service providers.

5.9 SELF REFLECTION

The importance of accommodation establishments in the accommodation establishments sector, coupled with the rise of customer-oriented business practice, has led to a growing need to understand the the influence of service quality on customer satisfaction at accommodation establishments. This study allowed the researchers to engage the existing literature, as well as conduct statistical analysis, to establish the influence of service quality on customer satisfaction at accommodation establishments, specifically in the Eastern Cape. Not only did the researchers further their theoretical knowledge of service quality on accommodation establishments, but were able to sharpen their analytical skills, as well as gather invaluable experience in the planning, implementation and management of the research process. Furthermore, this study provided the researchers with unique insights into the accommodation sector in the Eastern Cape, thus prompting the chance of engaging in extended research within Eastern Cape, and the rest of South Africa.

5.10 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The primary objective of this study is to determine the influence of service quality dimensions on customer satisfaction at accommodation establishments in Eastern Cape. The study also identified the degree to which customers at accommodation establishments view the service quality dimensions as important role players in ensuring that they are satisfied in accommodation establishments. It was distinguished from the results that five service quality dimensions influence the level of customer satisfaction in accommodation establishments (*reliability, information sharing, complaints handling, complimentary services, and*

tangibility). The research study undertaken supports the idea that the aforementioned service quality dimensions play an important role in affecting the level of satisfaction of customers in Eastern Cape accommodation establishments.

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ANNEXURE 1: QUESTIONNAIRE



Summerstrand South Campus

DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

05 June 2019

INFLUENCE OF SERVICE QUALITY DIMENSIONS ON CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AT ACCOMMODATION ESTABLISHMENTS IN EASTERN CAPE

We are Honours students conducting research on Influence of service quality dimensions on customer satisfaction at accommodation establishments in Eastern Cape. We are collecting information in the form of a survey to understand and quantify the effect of service quality dimensions on customer satisfaction in accommodation establishments. All sources will be treated as confidential and would be used for research purposes only. The majority of the data will be reported in statistical form and no individual respondents will be identified. The questionnaire is to be completed anonymously.

The questionnaire comprises of the following four sections:

- Section A: Service quality dimensions
- Section B: Customer satisfaction
- Section C: Demographic Information

Sincerely

Miss A. Dyasi & Miss T.F Shumba

Students

Prof S. Perks

Supervisor

SECTION A: SERVICE QUALITY DIMENSIONS

Instruction: Please indicate your response by making a cross (X) in the appropriate block.

	The accommodation establishment I stayed at has	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
T1	A modern external building appearance	5	4	3	2	1
T2	Equipment and facilities in good working condition	5	4	3	2	1
T3	Clean bedroom and bathroom facilities	5	4	3	2	1
T4	Comfortable beds	5	4	3	2	1
T5	Well-groomed and dressed front-line staff	5	4	3	2	1
T6	Complimentary internet service	5	4	3	2	1
T7	A safe off-street parking space	5	4	3	2	1
T8	Up to date brochures and menus	5	4	3	2	1
T9	Meal options	5	4	3	2	1
T10	A visually appealing lobby	5	4	3	2	1
R1	Delivered its services as promised	5	4	3	2	1
R2	Performed its services consistently	5	4	3	2	1
R3	Performed its services accurately	5	4	3	2	1
R4	Performed on time	5	4	3	2	1
R5	Addressed urgent matters swiftly	5	4	3	2	1
R6	Willing and helpful committed staff	5	4	3	2	1
R7	Been flexible to meet my special requests	5	4	3	2	1
R8	Billed me accurately	5	4	3	2	1
E1	Convenient operating times	5	4	3	2	1
E2	Given me personal attention	5	4	3	2	1
E3	Sincere staff that understand my special needs	5	4	3	2	1
E4	Eager staff that make an effort to solve my problems	5	4	3	2	1
E5	Staff that treated me with respect and dignity	5	4	3	2	1
E6	Caring management that listens to customers	5	4	3	2	1
E7	User friendly services	5	4	3	2	1
E8	User friendly facilities	5	4	3	2	1
RS1	Successfully assisted me with enquiries	5	4	3	2	1
RS2	24 hours available customer services	5	4	3	2	1
RS3	Confirmed my booking prior to arrival	5	4	3	2	1
RS4	Staff willing to go the extra mile	5	4	3	2	1
RS5	Kept customer records up to date	5	4	3	2	1
RS6	Quickly responded to my requests	5	4	3	2	1
A1	Polite staff	5	4	3	2	1
A2	A safe for valuable personal belongings	5	4	3	2	1
A3	Guaranteed my personal safety	5	4	3	2	1
A4	Safe payment facilities	5	4	3	2	1
A5	Knowledgeable staff to answer my questions	5	4	3	2	1
A6	Staff that instil confidence	5	4	3	2	1
A7	Staff that can speak a language I understand	5	4	3	2	1
C1	Easily accessible services and products	5	4	3	2	1
C2	A variety of booking service choices	5	4	3	2	1
C3	A shuttle service that operates at convenient times	5	4	3	2	1

	The accommodation establishment I stayed at has	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
C4	A shuttle service with various pick up and drop off points	5	4	3	2	1
C5	Provided adequate information to make a decision	5	4	3	2	1
C6	An in-room call and online service request system	5	4	3	2	1
C7	Easy to use payment facilities	5	4	3	2	1
C8	24 hour access to all facilities	5	4	3	2	1
C9	A lost and found service	5	4	3	2	1
C10	Free Wi-Fi access	5	4	3	2	1
CH1	Resolved my problem(s) successfully	5	4	3	2	1
CH2	A user-friendly complaint procedure	5	4	3	2	1
CH3	Staff that I can easily communicate to about problems	5	4	3	2	1
CH4	Been serious about resolving my complaints	5	4	3	2	1
CH5	Publicised improvements done about complaints	5	4	3	2	1
CH6	Management that encourage reporting problems	5	4	3	2	1
CH7	Management that insist on resolving complaints	5	4	3	2	1

SECTION B: CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

	The accommodation establishment I stayed at	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
CS1	Satisfied my needs	5	4	3	2	1
CS2	Exceeded my expectations	5	4	3	2	1
CS3	Provided value for money	5	4	3	2	1
CS4	Is worth recommending to other people	5	4	3	2	1
CS5	I will stay at again	5	4	3	2	1
CS6	Matched my perceptions of what it would be like	5	4	3	2	1

SECTION C: DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

1. Type of accommodation establishment?

Apartment	1	Boutique hotel	4	Luxury lodge	7
Bed and Breakfast	2	Guest house	5	Spa resort	8
Backpackers lodge	3	Hotel	6	Other (Specify)	9

2. If stayed at a hotel, which star grading did it has?

Two star	1	Four star	3
Three star	2	Five star	4
If other, please specify			5

3. Gender?

Male	1	Female	2
------	---	--------	---

4. Ethnic affiliation?

Black	1	Coloured	3
White	2	Asian	4
If other, please specify			5

5. Age in years?

18-25	1	36-45	3	56-65	5
26-35	2	46-55	4	66+	6

6. Continent of origin?

Africa	1	Asia	Europe	4	South America	7
Antarctica	2	Australia	North America	5		

7.

Full-time employed	1	Retired	4
Part-time employed	2	Student	5
Self-employed	3	Unemployed	6

8. Do you have any specific needs?

Yes	1	No	2	If yes, what kind?
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9. Marital status?

Divorced	1	Single	3	Living together	5
Married	2	Widowed	4		

ANNEXURE 2: ETHICS CLEARANCE

NELSON MANDELA UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC SCIENCES

ETHICS CLEARANCE FOR TREATISES / DISSERTATIONS / THESES

Instructions:

- Should be completed by supervisor and student
- Must be signed off by student, supervisor and HoD
- Submit completed form to Ms Lindie van Rensburg
- Please ensure that the research methodology section from the proposal is attached to this form
- *Please note that by following this Proforma ethics route, the study will NOT be allocated an ethics clearance number*

FACULTY: Business and Economic Sciences

SCHOOL / DEPARTMENT: Business management

I, (surname and initials of supervisor) Perks, Sandra

the supervisor for (surname and initials of candidate) SHUMBA T.F. (student number)

216830710
216262445

DIASA

a candidate for the degree of B Com Honours

with a treatise/dissertation/thesis entitled (full title of treatise/dissertation/thesis):

TITLE INFLUENCE OF SERVICE QUALITY DIMENSIONS ON
CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AT ACCOMMODATION ESTABLISHMENTS

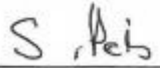
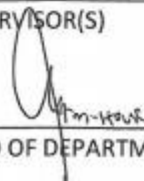
considered the following ethics criteria (please tick the appropriate block):

		YES	NO
1.	Is there any risk of harm, embarrassment of offence, however slight or temporary, to the participant, third parties or to the communities at large?		X
2.	Is the study based on a research population defined as 'vulnerable' in terms of age, physical characteristics and/or disease status?		X
2.1	Are subjects/participants/respondents of your study:		

2.1.1	Children under the age of 18?		X
2.1.2	NMMU staff?		X
2.1.3	NMMU students?		X
2.1.4	The elderly/persons over the age of 60?		X
2.1.5	A sample from an institution (e.g. hospital/school)?		X
2.1.6	Handicapped (e.g. mentally or physically)?		X
3.	Does the data that will be collected require consent of an institutional authority for this study? (An institutional authority refers to an organisation that is established by government to protect vulnerable people)		X
3.1	Are you intending to access participant data from an existing, stored repository (e.g. school, institutional or university records)?		X
4.	Will the participant's privacy, anonymity or confidentiality be compromised?		X
4.1	Are you administering a questionnaire/survey that:		
4.1.1	Collects sensitive/identifiable data from participants?		X
4.1.2	Does not guarantee the anonymity of the participant?		X
4.1.3	Does not guarantee the confidentiality of the participant and the data?		X
4.1.4	Will offer an incentive to respondents to participate, i.e. a lucky draw or any other prize?		X
4.1.5	Will create doubt whether sample control measures are in place?		X
4.1.5	Will be distributed electronically via email (and requesting an email response)?		X
	<p>Note:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If your questionnaire DOES NOT request respondents' identification, is distributed electronically and you request respondents to return it <i>manually</i> (print out and deliver/mail); AND respondent anonymity can be guaranteed, your answer will be NO. If your questionnaire DOES NOT request respondents' identification, is distributed via an email link and works through a web response system (e.g. the university survey system); AND respondent anonymity can be guaranteed, your answer will be NO. 		
5.	Do you wish to publish an article from this study and submit to an accredited Journal?		X

Please note that if ANY of the questions above have been answered in the affirmative (YES) the student will need to complete the full ethics clearance form (REC-H application) and submit it with the relevant documentation to the Faculty RECH (Ethics) representative.

and hereby certify that the student has given his/her research ethical consideration and full ethics approval is not required.


 SUPERVISOR(S)

 HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

28/04/2019
 DATE
 29/04/2019
 DATE

Ali - Ayaz
STUDENT(S)

25/04/2019
DATE

ANNEXURE 3: TURNITIN REPORT

Treatise			
ORIGINALITY REPORT			
19%	5%	4%	19%
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS
PRIMARY SOURCES			
1	Submitted to Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University Student Paper	4%	
2	Submitted to Westminster International College - Kuala Lumpur Student Paper	1%	
3	Submitted to CITY College, Affiliated Institute of the University of Sheffield Student Paper	1%	
4	Submitted to Mancosa Student Paper	1%	
5	Submitted to Universiti Teknologi MARA Student Paper	<1%	
6	Submitted to University of Northumbria at Newcastle Student Paper	<1%	
7	Submitted to Arts, Sciences & Technology University In Lebanon Student Paper	<1%	