

Service Delivery from a South African Police Service Perspective

John Modise

ORCiD ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2350-0695>

Derek Taylor

ORCiD ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2524-0559>

Kishore Raga

ORCiD ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1548-2079>

Abstract

In terms of section 205 (1); (2) and (3) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, the South African Police Service is mandated to prevent, combat and investigate crime, maintain public order, protect and secure the inhabitants of the Republic and their property, and uphold and enforce the law. The Service Delivery Improvement Programme (SDIP) (in SAPS) endeavours to enhance service delivery to the communities (South African Police Service (SAPS 2006b:6-19). The programme provides police station commanders with practical tools to enhance service delivery and law enforcement while seeking to inculcate a culture of participative management and increased community involvement. This is embodied in the SAPS (SAPS 2006a) Service Delivery Improvement Programme (SDIP). The purpose of this article is to reflect on the findings of a recently completed PhD study, which aimed to investigate the expectations and perceptions of members of the public towards the South African Police Service (SAPS); as well as service delivery in the Community Service Centre (CSC) in the Kimberley Cluster, and to consider the implications of COVID-19. The focus of the study was based on the measurement of service quality dimension and service delivery to generate quality models for SAPS CSC. The primary objective was to develop an understanding of the client's expectations and perceptions of the services

delivered by the SAPS CSC. The SERVQUAL Model was utilised to establish the clients' perceptions against their expectations of service quality at the SAPS CSC. The study was conducted in the SAPS environment, to contribute to customer citizenship behaviour, specifically the sub-dimensions of consumer advocacy and helping behaviour. The quantitative methodology was adopted to investigate the effect of customer satisfaction of service quality in the SAPS. A structured questionnaire was distributed to gather data. One (100) hundred respondents were surveyed. The data was analysed using Descriptive and Inferential statistics. The five service quality dimensions of the Servqual Model was utilised to measure the client's expectations and perceptions. The results revealed that in all five service quality dimensions: (tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy); there was a negative quality gap. The significant differences between perception and expectations of the clients in all five service quality dimensions was noted. Improvement is needed across all five service quality dimensions to enhance service delivery. Furthermore, the results revealed that the client's perception of service quality at the SAPS CSC is up to standard. It is recommended that SAPS assess and monitor employees regularly, including the clients experiences and provide feedback.

Keywords: South African Police Service (SAPS), Service delivery, Customer satisfaction, Service quality, Clients, Servqual, Community Policing, Trust

Introduction

The South African Police Service (SAPS) leadership is facing challenges to enhance service delivery in the organisation. Various legislative and policy directives exist, but the implementation thereof has been a challenge. The SAPS' service delivery has been inadequate, and the media has reported on this regularly (*The Daily Sun* 2017). Furthermore, taxpayers, who are the financiers of government, increasingly want to find out more about the cost-effectiveness of their tax money and whether police services are being delivered efficiently. Reasons for the apparent inadequate service delivery ranges from police members apathetic attitudes to a lack of training and skills (Burger 2013).

The legislative and policy framework promoting improved service de-

livery in the South African Police Service has received limited attention. Leadership in the public service is not only about occupying important offices or ranks, but should also include the ability to be visionary, leadership skills, motivation of staff, and continuously striving to improve service delivery. Moreover, efforts directed at converting the SAPS to a post-bureaucratic organisation and introducing managerialism has not taken root thoroughly (Van der Merwe, Van Graan & Ukpere 2013:630). Police stations are critical units in the police administration system. For many citizens, their first encounter with a police official is at a police station, to report a crime or seek assistance. The public's expectations of the police can only be met if they are satisfied with the professionalism and promptness of the services rendered by the officers at police stations. Therefore, it is important that SAPS personnel render services of a high standard, with efficiency, professionalism, integrity and empathy. The term "enable" refers not only to the provision of equipment, which is important, but also to the provision of skills and training, which are equally important for ensuring that the needs of community members are prioritised.

Globally, all police agencies have a common purpose: deliver an effective service to the communities in which they are situated (Sonderling 2003:1). The SAPS too, in essence, stands for service delivery. This is underlined by the National Strategy (SAPS 2002a:6), which accentuates the significance to provide a quality service to its clients; the South African public. This conforms with its own mission as well as the government's strategy, which is clear when it comes to the purpose of service delivery. It further embodies the Service Delivery Improvement Programme (SDIP) of the SAPS (SAPS 2006a). The primary goal is to provide a service to the public (SAPS.a: 2006:78). The SAPS is considered an important government department due to the nature of the services it renders. Furthermore, it has its own policies, procedures, processes and systems, and for these to be implemented correctly within the organisation, personnel must have a clear understanding, knowledge and guidance about what is expected (South African Police Service (SAPS) 2006c:7-8). Concerns and contributions to service delivery must promote the interest of the communities they serve and quality service delivery is important for any service provider. Levels of trust is also important, especially in terms of law enforcement. When trust in communication channels and public participation strategies is limited, co-production of services is impeded, and the ability to increase such trust is, in turn, is affected negatively (Jakoet-Salie 2018).

Research Problem

Complaints is a measure that can be used to measure the quality of service rendered by the South African Police Service. The aim is to amend service delivery based on the community's complaints. The Independent Police Investigative annual report for 2006/07 revealed that the South African Police Service received 5412 complaints against its members (Independent Police Investigative 2006/2007).

Northern Cape contributed 462 in this figure, which constitutes 9%. The complaints generated by the Northern Cape was relatively high in comparison to provinces such as Eastern Cape, Mpumalanga and Limpopo which only contributed 7% and 8% respectively (SAPS 2014/19, Strategic Plan).

Of significance is that the Northern Cape is the least populated province in the country. It comprises of 1 million citizens compared to the above mentioned provinces which vary from 4 million to 7 million respectively (South African Police Service 2008). A preliminary investigation revealed that based on information presented in the preceding paragraphs, SAPS management and commanders are concerned with the quality of service delivery. Furthermore, there has been considerable speculation on the reasons for this apparent poor service. Most senior officers assume that the lack of discipline and the demilitarisation of the SAPS is responsible for the poor delivery of services. They believe that although police officers are competent, a professional service is not provided because it demands more effort and input. However, the level of this perceived poor service, the understanding of the concept of service and the reason for such (provided by SAPS) is a serious concern for the community.

Literature Review

Theoretical Literature

Services

Services have certain unique characteristics, which distinguish them from goods. A consumer cannot hold a service and look at it before purchasing. Therefore, service organisations often use messages and images in their

promotional structure to help make the benefits of the service experience more tangible. Service customers often seek reviews and clues to help them judge the quality of a service before they buy. As a result, services underscore the physical evidence of quality (Perreault, Cannon & McCarthy 2008; Lamb, Walstab, Teese, Vickers & Rumberger 2004; Lewis & Boom 1983). There are four service characteristics in service marketing, namely: intangibility; heterogeneous; inseparability from consumers; and perishability. These are expounded upon in the sections below.

Intangibility

Fitzsimmons and Fitzsimmons (2008:389) assert that services are not physical, they are intangible. When you provide a customer with a service, the customer cannot keep it. A service is experienced, used, or consumed. The services are performances or actions rather than objects; they cannot be seen, felt, tasted or touched in the same manner that you can sense tangible goods (Kotler 2000:429). Service cannot be patented easily, and new service concepts can, therefore, easily be copied by competitors.

Chowdhury and Prakash (2001:496) state that '*an intangible service may require the customer to be mentally or physically present to receive the service*'.

Services cannot be seen, touched, tasted, felt or smelled in the same way as physical goods can be sensed. They cannot be inventoried or stored for long periods of time and they are difficult to duplicate. There are usually little or no tangible evidence once the service has been performed. Services are also more difficult to measure than physical products (Grönroos 1988; Kotler 2000; Lamb, Walstab, Teese, Vickers & Rumberger 2004; Lewis & Boom 1983; Palmer 2008).

Heterogeneity

Dhurup, Singh and Surujlal (2006:40) assert that quality of service performance is inconsistent and unpredictable. The employees delivering the service frequently are the same in the customer's eyes, and people may differ in their performance from day to day or even from hour-to-hour. Ensuring consistent service quality is challenging, because these are heterogeneous across time, organisations and people. Service is sometimes produced in person where the customer is located, and has committed to buy. It is difficult to

achieve economies of scale with personal service. One of the reasons for this is that service suppliers need similar equipment and staff at places where the service is actually provided and where it is difficult to achieve (Fitzsimmon & Fitzsimmon 2006:325).

Services tend to be less standardised and uniform than goods. Quality control and consistency are difficult to achieve because services are labour intensive and production and consumption are inseparable (Lamb, Walstab, Teese, Vickers & Rumberger 2004; Lewis & Boom 1983). Lewis (2007) posits that variability in services often exists because of non-standardisation of delivery. Standardisation and the training of service personnel may help to increase the quality control and consistency of the service delivery process because the staff will understand the customer's requirements and react appropriately (Ghobadian, Speller & Jones 1994).

Inseparability

Perreault, Connon and McCarthy (2009:234) postulate that service quality is often not consistent because it is difficult to separate the service experience from the provider. Customer satisfaction and customer referrals of respective friends is often influenced by interactions with the organisation employees. With regard to tangible goods, they are first produced, sold and then consumed. On the other hand, services are sold and then produced and consumed simultaneously. Sometimes, the customer is present when the service is being produced and may even take part in the production process. Hence, the production of the service is dependent upon the individual employee in charge of it, the individual customer receiving it and the time taken to perform the service (Wilson, Zeithaml, Bitner & Gremler 2008).

Service Tangibles

Certain service tangibles vary in terms of existence, design, relevance and service types. Services cannot be produced in a centralised location and consumed in decentralised locations. Hence, the service interaction between staff and customers is an integral part of the service delivery process (Palmer 2008). Kotler (2000) and Foster (2010) agree with this view and add that services are produced and consumed simultaneously. This means that the customer is present during the production of service which makes it impossible for the service provider to hide any quality shortfall (Lau, Akbar & Gun Fie 1998).

Perishability

Zeithaml, Bitner and Gremler (2006:321), maintain that services cannot be saved, stored, resold or returned. Furthermore, perishability in contrast to goods can be stored in inventory or resold another day, or even returned if the consumer is not happy. The fact that services cannot typically be returned or resold also implies a need for strong recovery strategy when things do go wrong (Wilson *et al.* 2008:19). Service involves action or performances (Lovelock & Wirtz 2007:16). Because the services offered cannot be stored, warehoused or inventoried, supply and demand need to be managed by service organisations (Kotler 2000; Lamb *et al.* 2004; Lewis 2007).

Nature of Service Quality

Johns and Tyas (1996) argue that service quality is growing in importance in the marketing literature. The early attempts to specify and measure hospitality quality were only concerned with tangibles such as food and physical facilities. However, during the past decades, the intangible services are recognised as being increasingly important in the advanced competitive market (heterogeneity and perishability), the quality of services is more difficult for consumers to evaluate than that of physical products (Kennedy 2003). The Service Delivery Improvement Programme (SDIP) of the SAPS defines service delivery as a programme designed to improve the quality of services rendered to the community. To improve the functioning of the CSC, the programme comprises of integrated plans at national, provincial, area and station level which align the priorities of the respective levels, setting out tasks, responsibilities, service standards, resources and time-frames (South African Police Service Act no 68 of 1995). Expectations have a direct effect on perceived quality. The perceived level is then compared to expectations, resulting in a gap or refudiation that may be either positive or negative.

According to Armstrong and Kotler (2010), a service's quality is difficult to judge because services are intangible, inseparable, perishable and heterogeneous. Service organisations thus use cues and images in their physical designs and promotions to make the benefits of a service more perceptible to clients (Perreault, Cannon & McCarthy 2009). In addition to these tangible efforts, culture is critical to good service. A service culture is one where an appreciation for good service exists. Providing goods services is expected, natural and one of the most important staffing activities as a service provider (Zeithaml, Bitner & Gremler 2008).

Customer satisfaction is determined by comparing the perceived service received against the service they expected or wished for, prior to receiving the service (Rust, Zahorik & Keiningham 1995; Lotz 2009; Harris 2003). If the quality of service received is below the expected level, the customer will be dissatisfied. If the service is at the expected level, the quality is considered just 'satisfactory'. Where the perceived level exceeds the expected level of service, customers will be very satisfied, or 'delighted' (Kurtz & Clow 2007). The only meaningful measure of customer service is the customer's perception of the quality of service offered – other measures are irrelevant to the client (Quintana 2006).

The aim of every service sector is consciously to minimise the discrepancy between service delivery and customer satisfaction. The ability of an organisation to determine the customer needs and to effectively meet the needs has a great impact on service quality. Storbacka, Storbacka, Strandvik, and Grönroos (1993) highlighted that service and relationship quality are antecedents to customer retention, and in a direct relationship with profit, since the cost of attracting new customers is higher than to retain existing ones.

The Dimensions of Service Quality

Quality is usually assessed as the difference between expected and perceived service levels across five dimensions (Fitzsimmons & Fitzsimmons 2006), as follows.

Tangibles

Tangibility refers to the appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel and communication material (Wilson, Zeithaml, Bitner & Gremler 2008; Bateson & Hoffman 2011). Tangibles are visible evidence of the quality of the service customers receive that customers use and are used to judge the service provider. For example, the condition of the physical premises (police stations) is used as a surrogate measure for the care and attention that they expect to receive from the service provider (Fitzsimmons & Fitzsimmons 2006).

Reliability

Performing the promised service accurately and dependably means the provider can be relied upon (Wilson *et al.* 2008; Lovelock & Wirtz 2011). If service is provided as expected, it will enhance the customer's perception of

quality (Brink & Berndt 2010). Reliability is the most critical component of a service, with the customer expecting the service to be accomplished timeously, consistently and error-free each time they interact with the service provider (Schneider & White 2004).

Responsiveness

Responsiveness involves the service provider's willingness to serve the customers swiftly (Bateson & Hoffman 2011). It accentuates promptness in handling customers' requests, complaints, and problems with attentiveness and speed. Customers become frustrated and angry if they perceive that they are being ignored. Making a customer wait for no good reason influences the perception of poor quality service (Perreault *et al.* 2009).

Assurance

Grönroos (2000) postulates that customers need to feel safe when making a transaction. The assurance dimension includes factors such as having the customers' best interest at heart, staff competence, politeness and respect, and effective communication. Arasli, Mehtap-Smadi and Katircioglu (2005:46) define assurance as the 'employees' knowledge, courtesy and ability to inspire trust and confidence in the customer'.

Empathy

Empathy involves caring and paying individual attention to customers. The essence of empathy is conveying, through personalized service, that customers are unique and special and that their needs are understood (Wilson *et al.* 2008). Empathy means understanding the clients' problems, doing things in their best interests and providing them with individual and personal attention; it implies approachability and sensitivity (Grönroos 2000). The significance of employees in service quality and service dimensions can be either positively or negatively influenced by staff actions. Hence, the role of staff in the service delivery process is critical (Lovelock & Wright 2007):

- The appearance of employees, including how neatly they dress, is indicative of the tangible dimension of service quality.
- The reliability dimension of service quality is almost entirely controlled by employees and their actions.

- Customers assess reliability by the actions of frontline employees, and their personal willingness to help customers.
- Assurance is created by employees communicating their personal credibility, thereby instilling trust in the customers.
- Empathy is provided by treating customers as individuals (Lovelock & Wright 2007).

Measuring Service

Quality equality problem is indicated when a negative gap exists between the service level expected by a customer and the service level that customer perceived that they received. Such a negative gap could lead to negative word-of-mouth about the service being spread (Grönroos 2000). To close such a gap between performance and expectations, it is necessary to be able to measure service performance against expectations. According to Metters, King-Metters, Pullman and Walton (2006), the best way of understanding the nature and extent of this gap is by using the SERVQUAL instrument with the form's customers. The SERVQUAL approach has attracted attention in the public sector services (Donnelly, Kerr, Rimmer & Shiu 2006). The SERVQUAL scale has been rigorously developed (LLosa & Orginsher 2007) and has been used to measure service quality and the service quality gap by many researchers internationally (Fitzsimmons & Fitzsimmons 2006). SERVQUAL asks respondents to rate their expectations and perceptions of a specific service (on a scale of from strongly disagree to strongly agree), for each of 22 pairs (expectations and perceptions) of statements about the five dimensions of service performance (Bruhn & Georgi 2006). For example, the statements relate to the service provider's appearance and dress (tangibles), promises and dependability (reliability), willingness and promptness (responsiveness), knowledge and trustworthiness (assurance), and personal attention and caring (empathy) (Lee & Ulgado 1997; Donnelly, Kerr, Rimmer & Shiu 2006; Sarrico, Miguel, Ferreira & Silva 2009).

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Empirical Literature

Whereas some researchers established a link between satisfaction and customer retention, others did not. For example, Fornell (1992) holds that high customer satisfaction will result in increased loyalty for the firm and that customers will be less prone to overtures from competition. Similarly, Jones and Sasser (1995) found that an increase in customer satisfaction produces a stronger effect on retention among customers who are at the high end of the satisfaction scale. But the difficulty has always been how to define the scale of satisfaction. However, Coyne (1989) concluded that the relationship between customer retention and customer satisfaction is weak when customer satisfaction is low, moderate when customer satisfaction is intermediate and strong when customer satisfaction is high. Thus, since different factors seem to affect the propensity to be loyal under the conditions of low and high satisfaction, it may be assumed that the form of the relationship between customer satisfaction and loyalty is different at different levels of satisfaction. Furthermore, the relationship between satisfaction and retention is neither simple nor linear which satisfied customers may defect (Jones & Sasser 1995). As a result, there are no simple solutions for turning retention into profits. If it were easy, however, everyone would already be doing it (Keiningham *et al.* 2007; Vázquez-Casielles 2010). Despite the lack of consensus, they agreed that some relationship exists between customer satisfaction and its retention.

Simon, Seigyoung and Karen (2005) established that as customer-organisation relationships deepen; consumers increase their expertise in the firm's product line and industry and develop increased switching costs. Technical service quality is hypothesised to be a more important determinant of customer loyalty than functional service quality as expertise increases. Both technical and functional service quality is hypothesised to have a reduced relationship with customer loyalty as perceived switching costs increase. Three-way interactions between the main effects of service quality, customer expertise, and perceived switching costs yield additional insight into the change in relative importance of technical and functional service quality in customers' decision to be loyal. They concluded that some relationship exists between service quality and customer loyalty. Furthermore, Wan-Jin (2009) in examining the relationship between web-based service quality and customer loyalty revealed that service quality has a direct and positive effect on customer loyalty. The same relationship is demonstrated by Al-Rousan and Badaruddin

(2010) in examining the relationship between service quality and customer loyalty in the Jordanian tourism industry. Bolton (1998) also noted that personal characteristics such as customers' gender (Cooil *et al.* 2007; Mittal & Kamakura 2001) and age (Baumann, Burton & Allriott 2005), which was revealed to affect customers' defection decisions considerably in various industries including financial and communication services as well as the auto industry. Lim and Kumar (2008) studied the effect of gender influence and customer retention and concluded that women are influenced by service quality more strongly than men. Men tend to focus on perceived economic value in retention decisions. Purchases by women is more influenced by interpersonal components of the service interactions than men.

Research Methodology

This study focused on describing the existing situation in three CSCs at one point in time, using a structured-questionnaire as the primary data collection instrument to gather information. The quantitative research method was adopted. The population comprised of persons 18 years and older, who had visited a SAPS CSC in the Kimberley cluster. The largest police station community service centres (Kimberley, Roodepan and Modderivier) were selected as data collection locations because they receive the greatest volume of complaints and are high crime stations.

The survey method was used to collect data (Hair, Bush & Ortinau 2000) from the following SAPS CSCs:

- Kimberley station CSC -45
- Roodepan station CSC -35.
- Modderivier station CSC -20;

Section B included reasons for visiting the community service centre. In Section C, Community's expectation customer satisfaction of service delivery was measured by adapting a questionnaire format initiated by Parasuraman *et al.* (1988). This questionnaire has been psychometrically tested. The mentioned questionnaire is designed in accordance with the SERVQUAL Dimensions: Tangibility, Reliability, Responsiveness, Empathy and Assurance. Items on this section were measured on a Five-Point Scales; as shown below:

- 1 = Strongly Disagree, (SDA)
- 2 = Disagree, (DA)
- 3= Uncertain, (UD)
- 4 = Agree, (A)
- 5 = Strongly Agree, (SA)

Section D measured the perceptions of customers of the target group by adopting the Five-point Likert Scale: 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Uncertain, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree.

Results and Discussion

The biographical profile of the sample is presented in below.

Gender Distribution of Respondents

Male respondents represented the majority of this group (54%). The female respondents held the minority (46%). The difference (7%) indicates a relative even gender distribution. The gender variable was relevant to acquire a better understanding of the uniqueness of each individual. Statistically, it is important to note the different perceptions of the different genders within the organisation and community. No differentiation is made between transgender because every person is seen as an individual.

Age Distribution of Respondents

The highest number of respondents was in the age category: 35 and 39 (31%), followed by age group 30 and 34 (23%), and the age category of 45 and 50 (12%) and (7%) 51 and older.

Marital Distribution of Respondents

The majority of the respondents (49%) were single, while 28% were married. A minor segment of the respondents was divorced (8%).

Extent of Satisfaction of Service Delivery by the SAPS

Average communalities score of the dimensions.

Dimensions	Number of items	Reliability
Tangibles	4	Good
Reliability	5	Good
Responsiveness	4	Good
Assurance	4	Good
Empathy	5	Good
Overall	22	Good

Source: Parasuraman (1988b)

The overall Cronbach alpha of the score revealed that the research instrument was statistically reliable with a high degree of consistency to score each dimension of the expectations and perceptions in the various categories.

Frequency table for customers' expectations of SAPS service delivery

Dimension	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
No	1	2	3	4	5
Dimension 1: Tangibility					
C1	45	48	1	1	2
C2	43	50	1	2	1
C3	44	47	2	2	2
C4	47	44	1	2	3
Dimension 2: Reliability					
C5	60	34	1	1	1
C6	49	45	0	1	2
C7	66	28	0	1	2
C8	59	35	1	1	1
C9	35	58	0	2	2
Dimension 3: Responsiveness					
C10	62	30	2	1	2
C11	62	33	0	1	1
C12	63	29	0	2	2
C13	36	57	0	2	2

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Dimension 4: Assurance					
C14	62	32	1	1	1
C15	60	34	1	1	1
C16	58	35	0	2	2
C17	55	39	1	1	1
Dimension 5: Empathy					
C18	61	33	0	2	1
C19	63	29	1	2	2
C20	65	29	1	1	1
C21	59	33	2	2	1
C22	49	45	1	1	1

Frequency table for customers' perceptions of SAPS service delivery

Dimension	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
No	1	2	3	4	5
Dimension 1: Tangibility					
D1	61	30	2	2	2
D2	58	30	2	3	4
D3	68	24	2	1	2
D4	76	16	1	1	3
Dimension 2: Reliability					
D5	73	20	1	2	1
D6	89	3	2	2	19
D7	76	14	1	2	1
D8	87	8	0	1	1
D9	87	8	0	1	1
Dimension 3: Responsiveness					
D10	87	6	1	1	2
D11	57	36	1	1	2
D12	61	33	1	1	61
D13	58	35	2	1	1
Dimension 4: Assurance					
D14	89	3	1	2	2
D15	93	1	1	1	1

D16	91	1	0	1	4
D17	78	13	2	2	2
Dimension 5: Empathy					
D18	75	14	4	3	1
D19	86	1	4	4	2
D20	89	2	1	2	3
D21	85	5	3	2	2
D22	80	12	2	1	1

Results

Demographic factors were considered when viewing customer service quality. Lim *et al.* (2008) identified the significance of demographic characteristics to measure service quality. The researchers noted that demographic characteristics, *inter alia*, gender, age group and marital status can be considered to measure service quality (Kumar & Lim 2008). Aspects such as reliability are acknowledged important factors in customer evaluation of service quality - customer loyalty (Hensher *et al.* 2003; Tyrinopoulos & Aifadopoulou 2008).

The findings revealed that all the service quality dimensions have a significant relationship with customer loyalty. Zeithaml *et al.* (1996), observed a significant relationship between service quality and loyalty. Cronin and Taylor (1992) highlighted divergent results and did not find a direct relationship between quality and loyalty. However, they concluded that service quality had less of an impact on purchase intentions than consumer satisfaction and quality is an antecedent of the latter. For Cronin *et al.* (2000), this apparent contradiction is an indication that quality provides only a partial view of customer loyalty and that “models of consumers evaluations of services that consider individual variables or direct effects are likely to result in incomplete assessments of the basis of these decisions”. The outcome supports the study by Oyeniyi and Abiodun (2008) who investigated the relationship between customer service quality and customer retention of mobile users in Nigeria. A moderately positive correlation (0.506) between the variables ($r = 0.506$, $n = 132$, $p < 0.01$) was revealed.

In summary, the study determined the effect of customer satisfaction of service quality provided by the SAPS to the community, and found that customer satisfaction of service quality delivered by SAPS was measured

perceptually. The outcome revealed further the extent of customer satisfaction of the services of SAPS, the customers were 'satisfied' (Mean: 4.00-4.99) (reliability good). All the dimensions of the customers service included: tangibility, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, reliability. However, while empathy and reliability had a significant positive effect on customer satisfaction, none had a negative impact on customer satisfaction. The study in its findings proposed a conceptual model to explain the relationship between customer satisfaction and services delivered by the SAPS. The rationale for a model was based upon the argument by Zeithaml, Parasuraman, and Berry (1990:7), that a conceptual model in service quality enables management to identify quality problems and thus help in planning for the launch of quality improvement programmes thereby improving the efficiency, profitability and overall performance. The model adopted in this study is the original gap model by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry in 1985, and refined in 1988 and 1991).

Gap 1 (positioning gap) – not knowing what customers are expecting from the service, usually due to insufficient marketing research or poor internal communication; failure to utilise feedback, or sometimes it's due to an organization's structure with too many levels of management.

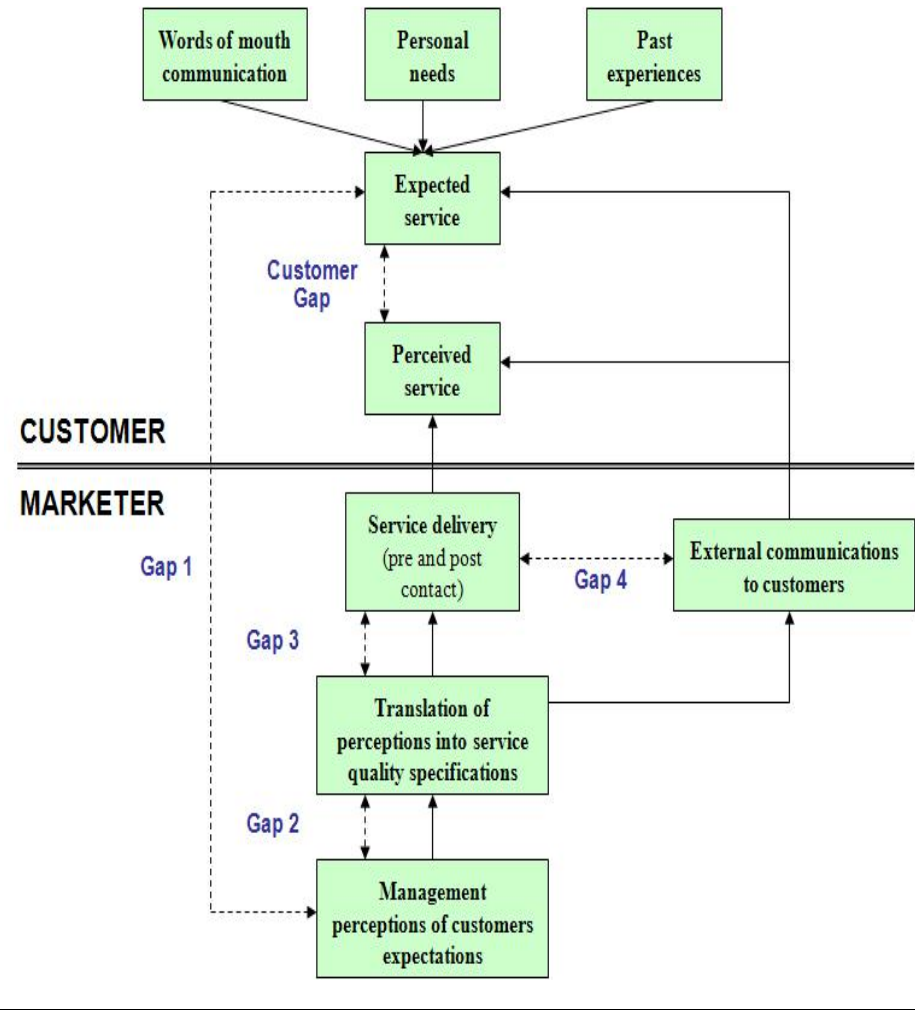
Gap 2 (specification gap) – is concerned with the difference between what management believes the consumer wants and what the consumers expect the centre to provide. It is caused by the unwillingness or inability on the part of the organization to change the way a service is delivered in order to meet or exceed the customers' expectations.

Gap 3 (delivery gap) – is concerned with inability of staff to perform a service at the level expected by customer and as specified by the organization. This gap is related to the human elements involved in service delivery – the Staff. It can be caused by disgruntled or poorly motivated workers, where there is lack of proper supervision, or even the lack of skilled workers who are critical to the overall service quality experience.

Gap 4 (communication gap) – exists when the promises communicated by the provider do not match delivery usually caused by overzealous marketing that creates unrealistic expectation that cannot be met or exceeded. Subsequently the promises do not match delivery.

Gap 5 (perception gap) – is the difference between the consumers’ internal perceptions and expectations of the services. It is noted that Gaps 1 to 4 (lie within the control of the organization) can be analysed by providers to determine the cause(s) and change(s) to be implemented to reduce or eliminate Gap 5.

Figure 1: Service Quality Model



To operationalise service quality using this model, a 24-item scale comprising of the five dimensions: reliability, responsiveness, tangibles, empathy and assurance was used to identify where gaps in the service existed and to what extent. The framework pre-supposes that service quality is the customer's thinking that they are getting better service than expected. It's worth noting that both sides of the gap are in the customers mind (manifesting the service quality attributes). But as it is with any research tool, researchers have expressed concerns and criticism of the original instrument including: the five dimensions being unstable across recreational services (Shonk 2006), domains of service quality may be factorially complex in some and very simple and uni-dimensional in others (Babakus & Boller 1992:253), failure to draw on other disciplines such as psychology, social sciences and economics (O'Neil & Palmer 2004:433). These remarks notwithstanding, the researcher agrees with Parasuraman (1991) that this is a good diagnostic tool hence suggests that for this particular study, the instrument was customized for the fitness sector including additional relevant questions as proposed by (Brown, Garland, Jeffrey, Jameson & Leroi 1993:285).

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- The customers were satisfied with the quality of service delivered by the SAPS.
- Of the service quality dimension, reliability, empathy, tangibility, responsiveness and assurance had a significant positive effect on customers. None had a negative effect on customers and rated 4 and above.

Recommendations

Based on findings of the study, the following recommendations were proposed.

- The SAPS should have measures of performance based on rigorous clients' satisfaction outcomes. The measures should be monitored regularly by an independent auditor such as a market research company which should be recruited to monitor clients' and SAPS staff. This would close the gap between actual performance and expectations.

- Quality service must start with education: the SAPS must invest in training the employees at all levels to improve skills in order to facilitate changes in behaviour and attitude. A client service course must be conducted among SAPS members, particularly those who work at the Community Service Centre. Moreover, attendance must be compulsory.
- SAPS must develop a new unit - “client care units”. The unit head office should be based at the provincial office. Each police station will have two client care members to ensure that all complaints are managed properly, and identify the person responsible for the submission of a report at the end of each month to the provincial offices. This could assist the organisation to establish the number of complaints they receive annually; how many were resolved; and how many remain outstanding and need to be attended to. Two members must personally visit or call all unhappy clients and attend to their complaints.

Conclusion

The ultimate determinant of SAPS performance is perhaps general public opinion. Irrespective of how good the department might appear in terms of statistics, it fails in democratic terms if the community is not satisfied. Any perception from the broader community of the SAPS’ inability to provide efficient services to citizens should be addressed by management. In this regard, the lockdown measures imposed on South Africans and enforced by the SAPS and the military due to COVID-19, will influence public opinion on the role of law enforcement agencies in the country. Public perception cannot be easily reversed by means of the normal organisational change methods or good public relations exercises. Rather, they require radical change intervention. Part of the leadership challenge in any police department is to implement strategies to improve the public’s perceptions on performance. The apparent increasing levels of violent crime such as murder, robbery, rape and other forms of aggravated murder and robbery have become a recurring theme in contemporary South Africa. The SAPS needs leaders that can devise strategies, identify weaknesses, and fix problems where policy fails, as well as demonstrate courage, foresight, decisive leadership, and clarity of vision to enhance services to the South African citizenry.

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John Modise
PhD Candidate
Nelson Mandela University
johnmodise3@gmail.com

Derek Taylor
Professor
Nelson Mandela University
Derek.Taylor@mandela.ac.za

Kishore Raga
Professor & Research Associate
Nelson Mandela University
Kishore.Raga@mandela.ac.za