Customer Service Expectations from South African Alcoholic Beverage Suppliers

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Abstract

To be successful in the current highly competitive market a South African alcoholic beverage supplying company (SAABSC) must guarantee customer service and service quality. As a means of differentiation companies have to focus their efforts on quality customer service. The purpose of the study is to measure the service delivery expectations and realisations of customers that receive delivery from SAABSC based on their geographical location. It required the implementation of a descriptive research method. The target population comprised customers of SAABSC situated in the Gauteng, Western Cape and North West Provinces of South Africa. The results from the study indicate that customers expect the SAABSC to deliver on all five service quality dimensions but fail to do so to their satisfaction. Recommendations on how to improve on these dimensions are given in the form of CRM strategies that SAABSC can implement. Ensuring that these recommendations are implemented will ensure a higher level of service quality and customer satisfaction. This should lead to increased customer retention, sales and profit growth, increased loyalty, the addition of new customers and overall better customer relationship.

Keywords: alcoholic beverage supplying companies, customer satisfaction, customer relationship management, relationship marketing, service quality, SERVQUAL.

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Introduction

To survive in today's competitive business market businesses should offer quality service and must form part of their overall strategy (Beukes, Prinsloo & Pelser 2014; Parasuraman, Zeithalm & Berry 1985).

In any company (be it a service delivery company or a manufacturing or merchandising business) a commitment to quality must start from the top and progressively move down to the bottom of any organisation. Service quality is generally considered in literature in terms of its importance for larger organisations with more administrative structures, the latter which often lead to a lack of response to customer needs and poor customer communication (Zeithaml *et al.* 1988).

Good customer relationships should be maintained through formal customer care policies that are introduced in order to address customers' service quality differences and to ensure quality of service. The goal for every business is to ensure that there is an understanding of the expectations of the customers and to fulfil those expectations (Gummesson 1988: 21).

Many original service quality researchers (Gronroos 1984; Parasuraman *et al.* 1985; 1988; Cronin & Taylor 1992; 1994) pay considerable attention to the development and testing of models for the measurement of service quality in retail banks, long distance telephone companies and credit card companies. In terms of service quality in South Africa there has been studies done by Rootman (2006; 2011), Du Plessis, Rousseau, Boshoff, Engelbrecht, Joubert & Sanders (2007), Mackay (2012), Roberts-Lombard, Van Tonder, Pelser & Prinsloo (2014) and Beukes (2015).

Gaps have become apparent that flowed from these studies; for example, the gap between service specifications versus service delivery. There is an indication of differences between customer expectations and their perceptions of the service delivered, and also between customer expectations and employees' perceptions.

Customer loyalty and retention is dependent on quality of service which in turn creates a competitive advantage and serves as a marketing tool for many companies. The purpose of the study is to measure the service delivery expectations and realisations of customers that receive delivery from SAABSC based on their geographical location (Beukes 2015). For the purpose of this study customers are defined as any retailer that receives physical delivery from an SAABSC. Also in this study the geographical focus is on rural and urban areas throughout South Africa (in the SAABSI – South African

Alcoholic Beverage Supplying Industry – there is no semi-urban or semi-rural areas, only urban or rural). Finally, urban customers have been categorised according to their being situated in the main cities (developed areas) while rural customers are situated on the outskirts (underdeveloped areas) of the main cities within the selected provinces.

Problem Statement

In a global world economy, where alcoholic beverage supplying companies (ABSC) are competitive and consumers very demanding, it is also increasingly difficult to hide inefficiencies in a company's service delivery execution and process. If service companies are unable to provide for the needs and wants of their customers they risk losing them to the competition

Over the last 5 financial years (2010-2014) the SAABSI has seen year on year volume growth. Even though there is year on year volume growth it is slowly but surely diminishing. This is a cause of concern to the SAABSC in the industry, possible reasons therefore can be established by investigating service delivery.

Also in conjunction with the aforementioned problem, there is among employees in the SAABSI a general perception that rural customers are not of the same importance as their urban counterparts. This perceived lack of investment importance is based on return on investment, sales volume, market share and expected profit growth of a SAABSC. The perceived tendency automatically creates different levels of service among rural and urban customers.

Diminishing product growth in any company is an indication of commercial deterioration in general, which might lead to possible retrenchments, restructuring or even closure. The problem statement in this study is based on the mentioned negative tendency and read as follows:

> The current negative volume growth experienced by the SAABSI pose a possible medium and long term survival threat for the industry.

This study focusses on service delivery, in all its dimensions, as a potential resolution. The primary objective of the study was to investigate the relationship and to determine if differences exist between customer expectations and customer realisations of SAABSC service delivery to their customers, based on their geographical location (rural vs. urban).

Literature Review

Current companies return to existing marketing strategies or relationship marketing to change the perceptions customers have of their service delivery (Egan 2011: 290). According to Egan (2011: 291) marketing was traditionally seen as the management process specifically responsible for the identifying, anticipating and satisfying of the customer's needs. However, Burrow (2006: 8) warns that the marketing concept is changing due to different perceptions and viewpoints on marketing, making its definition and activities more complex.

Mullens and Walker (2010: 14) provide a very comprehensive definition of marketing when declaring that it is:

> the process of analysing, planning, implementing, coordinating, and controlling programs involving the conception, pricing, promotion and distribution of products, services, and ideas designed to create and maintain beneficial exchanges with target markets for the purpose of achieving organizational objectives.

It is therefore clear that the traditional approach to defining marketing is no longer acceptable and that it should be seen as a diverse discipline at the heart of any business (doesn't matter what type). Marketing further influence all core business activities, including profitability, and the emphasis should constantly be on the understanding and satisfaction of customer needs in a mutually-beneficial manner by providing appropriate products and/ or services.

Relationship Marketing

Gummesson (2008: 3) considers relationship marketing to be an extension of marketing based on interaction within networks of relationships. Baran, Galka & Strunk (2008: 83) and Beukes, Prinsloo & Pelser (2013: 1) state that relationship marketing focuses on the relationships between an organisation and its customers which is based on ongoing cooperation and collaboration. The eventual profitability of the company is based on these activities that can improve the relationship. These activities and how they apply to SAABSC and service quality delivery to their customers (urban and rural) are investigated.

Service quality focuses on the standard of service delivery and the

interaction between the customer and the service provider in order to ensure that the customer's expectations are met (Roberts-Lombard *et al*. 2014). Literature (Beukes 2015) on service quality is dedicated to establishing ways to measure service quality and to identify any shortfalls or gaps.

SERVQUAL

Parasuraman *et al*. (1988) developed SERVQUAL, a concise multiple item scale model that can be used to better understand service expectations and consumer realisations. Etzel *et al.* (2007: 290) mention that the SERVQUAL model is based on the following five principal dimensions that customers use to judge a company's service:

- Tangibles
- Reliability
- Responsiveness
- Assurance
- Empathy

For the purposes of the study the SERVQUAL model plays an important role in the measurement of the service quality at a service firm due to the five service quality dimensions as identified by Parasuraman *et al.* (1988: 23). Parasuraman *et al.* (1988: 23) state that the dimensions are related to the differences between customers' realisations and their expectations of service delivery.

Perceived service quality by customers originates from a comparison of what customers feel the service business should have offered and how this matches their perceptions of the performance of the businesses providing the service. Previous empirical research on service quality has focused primarily on the measurement of service quality in hotels (Erto & Vanacore, 2002: 165), on the service quality provided by domestic airlines (Chang & Yeh 2002: 166), and on tourists' judgments of service quality (Weiermair & Fuchs 1999: 1004).

It is evident from the mentioned studies that previous empirical research focused on service quality in other industries (Beukes 2015). No evidence could be found that attention has been given to investigating the customer service expectations and realisations of SAABSC customers in rural and urban areas. Empirical research using the SERVQUAL model in a South

African context is limited especially in the SAABSI (Beukes 2015). Van der Wal, Pampallis and Bond (2002), Berndt (2006), De Jager and Du Plooy (2006) as well as Kgaile and Morrison (2006) have used the SERVQUAL method for research in different industries such as cellular telephones, the motor industry, public health as well as education. However, not much has been done to explore a comparison between SAABSC customers' expectations and the realisation of service delivered to them based on the five service quality dimensions (Beukes 2015).

SERVQUAL GAPS

Some of these unexplored service dimensions or gaps in the SERVQUAL model appear to be important and worthy of investigation in the context of SAABSC. These include the gap between service specifications and service delivery and the discrepancy between customer expectations and their realisations of the service delivered in rural vs. urban areas, the possible difference between rural and urban-based customer service expectations and realisations. In the context of the proposed study investigation of the gaps could lead to or create a better relationship between customers and SAABSC in the context of service delivery (Beukes 2015).

Service delivery and customer service plays a determining role in overall customer satisfaction and overall business performance. In today's highly competitive fast moving consumer goods (FMCG) market there is huge emphasis on these two aspects. Since the 1980s service quality has been associated with increased profitability and it is seen as creating a competitive edge by generating repeat sales and important positive word-of-mouth feedback, customer loyalty and competitive product differentiation (Pelser 2014a; Parasuraman *et al.* 1988).

According to Parasuraman *et al*. (1985; 1988) and Beukes *et al.* (2014) satisfaction results are a result of the comparison of consumers' expectations of service with their perceptions of actual service performance. Service quality is thus a critically important for any marketing strategy; it is determined by the interaction of all those factors that affect the process of making products and services available to the customer. If there is any noticeable weakness in making services available to the customer (wrong delivery, wrong time, wrong place), then a service gap exists, which needs quick resolution in order to ensure customer loyalty and to develop a successful business (Beukes 2015).
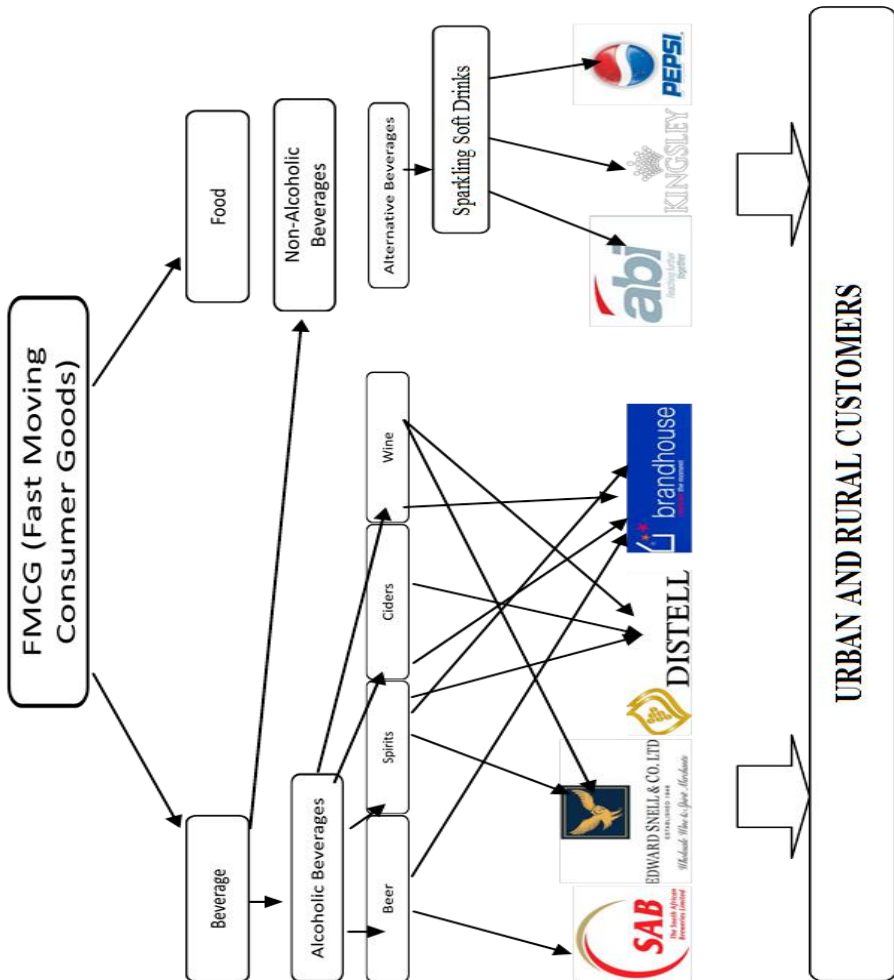
Figure 1: Industry framework

Within a dedicated FMCG market as shown in Figure 1 two main areas emerge, namely food and beverages. For the purpose of this study emphasis is on the beverage sector of the industry (Beukes 2015). The beverage industry is divided into two sub-sectors, namely alcoholic beverages and non-alcoholic

beverages. In the current study the focus is on alcoholic beverages. The alcoholic beverage industry is categorised according to the different categories of alcohol it produces: beer, ciders, wine and spirits (Beukes 2015).

In this market segment in South Africa there are four main entities (SAB, Brandhouse, Distell and Edward & Snell) as illustrated in Figure 1. All of these companies compete within the market to deliver their products to their respective customers with the best possible customer service and service delivery (Beukes 2015).

Research Methodology
Quantitative research, using the SERVQUAL model as basis, was used for the empirical study. The target population comprises customers of SAABSC situated in Gauteng, Western Cape and North-West provinces of South Africa.
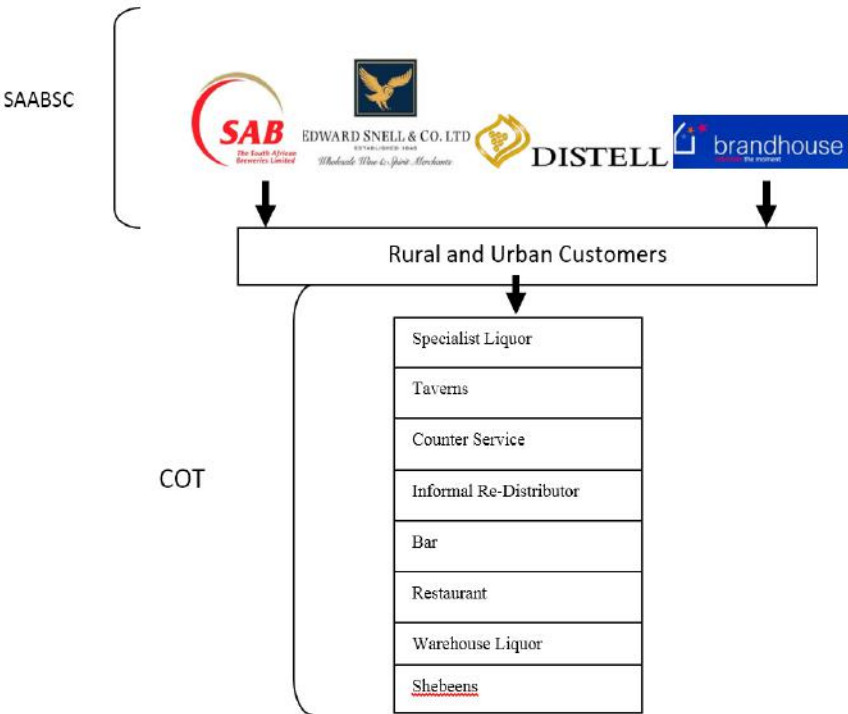

Figure 2: Alcoholic beverage industry COT breakdown

Only licensed customers were used in the study; licensed outlets renew their liquor license every year and sell alcohol legally. Shebeens do not have liquor licenses and have therefore been excluded from the study. SAABSC customers are categorised according to their trade; this is referred to as their class of trade (COT) and is depicted in Figure 2.

These three provinces were used in the study because the majority of the total alcoholic beverage industries customers are situated in these provinces and represent both urban and rural customers. The industry consists of $\pm$ 30 000 customers in total. A total of 39.3% of these customers are based in the rural areas and 60.7% in urban areas of South Africa. The three provinces feature 29.59% of the total customer population. The database of customers was obtained from an existing SAABSC customer database of the mentioned companies.

A non-probability judgment (purposive) sampling method was implemented. A confidence level of 90% and margin of error of 0.025 were used, resulting in a sample size for the study of 965 customers from the SAABSC. The primary alcoholic beverage focus areas used in the study comprised urban and rural areas within Gauteng, the Western Cape and the North-West Province. This was divided based on the percentage representation within each province.

The survey method was used to collect the primary data. Data was collected by means of 965 structured questionnaires that were distributed to respondents. Due to certain questionnaires not being completed correctly or in full the total usable questionnaires that were obtained were 926, thus culminating in a realisation rate of 96%.

Items in the questionnaire were based on the SERVQUAL model adapted to fit this specific study. Section A comprised of the demographic details of the respondents. Section B consists of a five point Likert scale, based on the 22 items in the SERVQUAL questionnaire. Responses on this scale range from 1 = strongly agree to 5 = strongly disagree.

Data Discussion

In this study the questionnaires were checked manually for completeness, consistency, accuracy and correct numbering (coding). All the returned data was captured on an excel spreadsheet. SPSS Version 22.0 for Windows was used to perform and evaluate the data analysis.

The Cronbach's alpha values were used to determine the reliability of the measurement instrument (the questionnaire). The Cronbach's alpha values obtained for the questionnaire of this study ranged between 0.680 and 0.887. This indicated sufficient reliability.

For the purpose of this study both face and construct validity were used. As for face validity, the questionnaire was pretested among a sample of 20 respondents from the target population so that they could assess whether the requisite statements had been included in the questionnaire. In terms of construct validity, a confirmatory factor analysis was conducted for each of the SERVQUAL dimensions measured in the questionnaire.

For the purpose of this study expectations refers to that which the customers (respondents) of alcoholic beverage supply companies expect certain items of service delivery to be, or what satisfaction levels they would want to get out of specific service delivery items. Realisations refers to what the reality of customers (respondents) of alcoholic beverage supply companies are, this is to say what the real-life situation for the customers on the same service delivery items are.

One questionnaire was developed and was distributed among urban and rural customers of alcoholic beverage supply companies. These questionnaires measured the expectations and realisations of both customer groups separately. With the exception of urban and rural customers, the content of the questionnaire was identical. The following sections present detailed data analysis and interpretation of the results.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis on Expectations

Both questionnaires were designed into different factors based on the five dimensions of service quality, namely tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. Tangibility consisted of 4 items, reliability of 5 items, responsiveness of 4 items, assurance of 5 items and empathy of 4 items.

The Kaiser-Meier-Olkin (KMO) measure measures sampling adequacy. The returned result on expectations of respondents was 0.724. This indicates that the sample sizes were acceptable. A Bartlett's test was also conducted; Field (2010: 25) states that it measures whether the correlations between the items are high enough; the p-value returned must be lower than 0.05 to reflect adequate correlation. This section returned a p-value of < 0.05. This shows a high enough correlation between the section items.
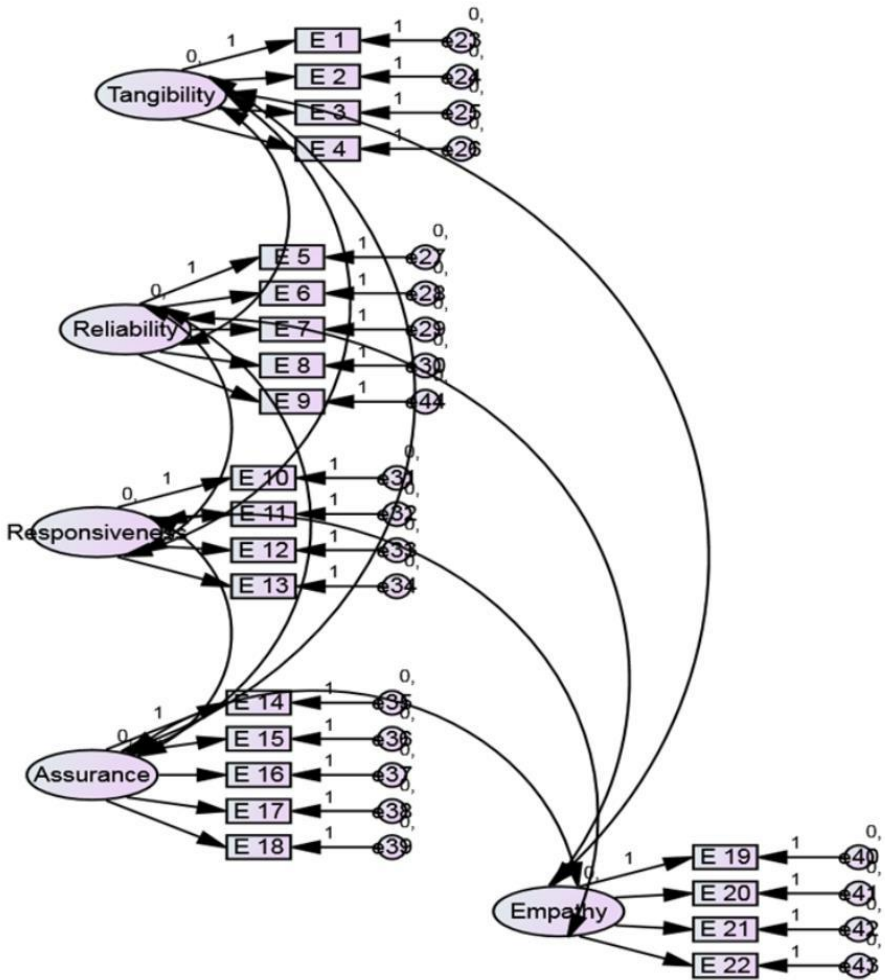
Figure 3: Confirmatory factor analysis model: Expectations

The confirmatory factor analysis model for expectations is indicated in Figure 3. Dimensions were grouped based on collected empirical data and are as follows:

- Tangibility (E1 - E4),

- Reliability (E5 - E9),
- Responsiveness (E10 - E13),
- Assurance (E14 - E18) and
- Empathy (E19 - E22).

Table 1 shows the goodness of fit statistics for expectations. The p-value returned on the expectations fit statistics was <0.001. This indicates statistical significance and that the model does fit. The CMIN/DF result returned was 4.77, which is acceptable. According to Bagozzi and Yi (2012: 29) the CFI is one of the most popularly reported fit indices due to the fact that it is one of the measures least affected by sample size. The CFI returned a value of 0.886, which indicates an acceptable overall fit. RMSEA is regarded as 'one of the most informative fit indices' based on its sensitivity to the number of estimate parameters (Diamantopoulos & Siguaw, 2000:85). The RMSEA (displayed in Table 6.21) fit indices indicate a good overall fit of the model (default) to the data (RMSEA = 0.064 [0.060 – 0.068]).

Goodness of fit statistics - Expectations	
Chi square p value	<0.001
CMIN/DF	4.77
CFI	0.886
RMSEA	0.064
RMSEA HI 90	0.068
RMSEA L0 90	0.060

Table 1: Goodness of fit statistics: Expectations

The confirmatory factor analysis supports the finding that the five factors identified through the theoretical exploration of the study are valid and correspond with the SERVQUAL instrument that measures service quality for expectations.

Descriptive Results of Factor Scores

In Table 2 it is depicted that six respondents completed all the items within each service quality dimension. Within the expectations dimensions the values

ranged from a minimum of 1 (Strongly agree) to 3 (Neutral). In the realisations dimension the minimum value was 2 (Agree) and the maximum was 5 (Strongly disagree). The highest mean value returned on the expectations section is on the reliability dimension (1.77) and 4.14 (reliability) on the realisations section. The lowest mean value returned on the expectations section is on the assurance dimension (1.56) and 3.62 on the tangibility realisation dimension.

All expectations dimensions returned a value close to the Agree value; this indicates that the respondents expect the SAABSC to deliver on the service dimensions. In comparison to this they indicated on all the realisations dimensions that they do not get the service they expect to their satisfaction.

Descriptive Statistics	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Expectations tangibility	926	1.00	3.00	1.76	.49737
Expectations reliability	926	1.00	2.60	1.77	.45336
Expectations responsiveness	926	1.00	2.50	1.63	.39443
Expectations assurance	926	1.00	2.40	1.56	.38409
Expectations empathy	926	1.00	2.50	1.57	.38013
Realisations tangibility	926	2.25	4.75	3.62	.45999
Realisations reliability	926	3.00	5.00	4.14	.58769
Realisations responsiveness	926	2.25	4.50	4.10	.56702
Realisations assurance	926	2.00	4.60	3.80	.52512
Realisations empathy	926	2.50	4.50	3.84	.54771

Table 2: Descriptive results of factor scores

Independent T-test Results

Figure 4 portrays the urban area respondents' expectations versus the rural area respondents' expectations mean values.
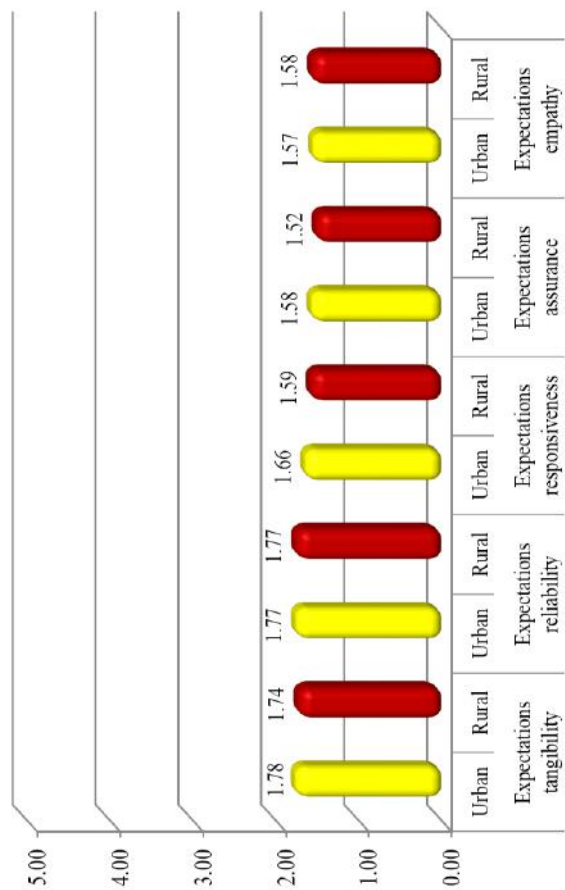

Figure 4: Urban versus rural areas service dimensions expectations

Figure 4 displays the urban area and rural area respondents' results as per their expectations of the service quality dimensions of service they receive

from SAABSC. Again the results are based on the Likert scale used (1 = Strongly agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Disagree and 4 = Strongly disagree). Respondents in both the urban and rural areas indicated that they expected good service delivery from the SAABSC on all five dimensions of service quality.

Table 3 displays the effect size and p-values of the T-test done between the urban and rural area respondents on each individual dimension. An 0.2 on the effect size indicates a small practically significant difference, 0.5 indicates a medium practically significant difference and 0.8 a large practically significant difference.

Dimension	Urban/Rural	Mean	Std. Deviation	p-value	Effect size
Expectations Tangibility	Urban	1.78	.49116	0.293	0.07
	Rural	1.74	.50644		
Expectations Reliability	Urban	1.77	.44022	0.984	0.00
	Rural	1.77	.47294		
Expectations Responsiveness	Urban	1.66	.39862	0.014	0.16
	Rural	1.59	.38537		
Expectations Assurance	Urban	1.58	.37441	0.026	0.15
	Rural	1.52	.39612		
Expectations Empathy	Urban	1.57	.37268	0.655	0.03
	Rural	1.58	.39141		

Table 3: Urban and rural areas expectations

There were two dimensions with p-values lower than 0.05, which indicates statistically significant differences. On these two dimensions the effect sizes

were 0.16 (expectations responsiveness) and 0.15 (expectations assurance) respectively. These indicate that there is no practically significant difference. There is thus no practically or statistically significant difference between the urban and rural area respondents expectations of service quality based on the five service quality dimensions as received by SAABSC.

In Figure 5 the results of the urban area and rural area respondents' results as per their realisations of the service quality dimensions of service they receive from SAABSC are displayed. Respondents in both the urban and rural areas indicated that they do not receive service delivery from the SAABSC on all five dimensions of service quality to their satisfaction.
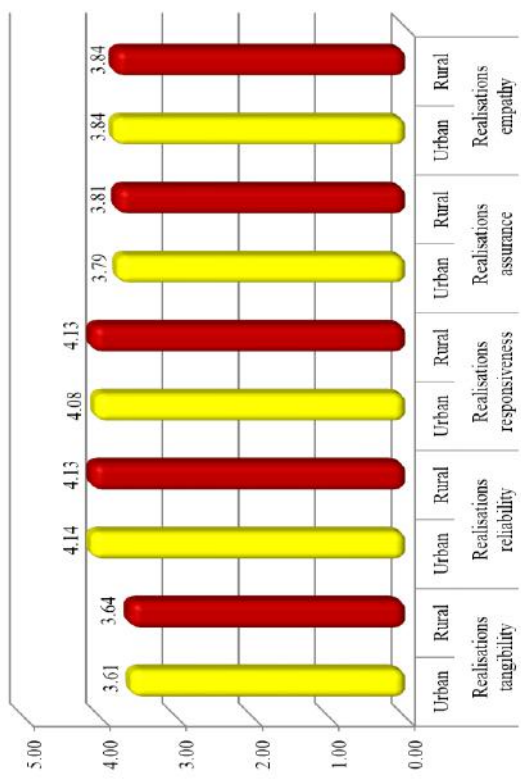

Figure 5: Urban versus rural areas service dimensions realisations

When comparing the rural area respondents' realisations results based on the five service quality dimensions as received from SAABSC the trend seems similar to the urban respondents' results. All five dimensions' results returned a mean value near to the Disagree option. This indicates that most of the respondents in the rural areas do not receive customer service delivery to their satisfaction within the five dimensions of service quality from SAABSC.

Dimension	Urban/Rural	Mean	Std. Deviation	p-value	Effect size
Realisations Tangibility	Urban	3.61	.44859	0.448	0.05
	Rural	3.64	.47678		
Realisations Reliability	Urban	4.14	.58275	0.949	0.00
	Rural	4.13	.59580		
Realisations Responsiveness	Urban	4.08	.58720	0.157	0.09
	Rural	4.13	.53464		
Realisations Assurance	Urban	3.79	.53397	0.667	0.03
	Rural	3.81	.51219		
Realisations Empathy	Urban	3.84	.54280	0.957	0.00
	Rural	3.84	.55571		

Table 4: Urban and rural areas realisations

The paired effect size and returned p-values displayed in Table 4 are now discussed for urban and rural area respondents' realisations. As previously mentioned, the p-value, which indicates whether there is a statistically signify-

cant difference between the means, must be below 0.05 to show that there is in fact a statistically significant difference between the means. All the dimensions returned a p-value higher than 0.05. This indicates that there is no statistical significant difference. Neither is there a practically significant difference.

In summary, no practically or statistically significant difference between the urban and rural area respondents' realisations of service quality based on the five service quality dimensions as received by SAABSC, could be found.

Dependent T-test Results

In this section the dependent T-test results for the urban and rural area respondents are displayed and discussed.

Dimension	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	P-value	Effect size
Expectations tangibility	1.7611	926	.49737	.01634	<0.001	3.75
Realisations tangibility	3.6239	926	.45999	.01512		
Expectations reliability	1.7691	926	.45336	.01490	<0.001	4.03
Realisations reliability	4.1363	926	.58769	.01931		
Expectations responsiveness	1.6331	926	.39443	.01296	<0.001	4.36
Realisations responsiveness	4.1031	926	.56702	.01863		
Expectations assurance	1.5587	926	.38409	.01262	<0.001	4.26
Realisations assurance	3.7972	926	.52512	.01726		
Expectations empathy	1.5699	926	.38013	.01249	<0.001	4.15
Realisations empathy	3.8404	926	.54771	.01800		

Table 5: Dependent T-test results

The dependent T-test compares the means of two related groups to detect whether there are any statistically significant differences between these means (Pallant 2010: 236).

Table 5 illustrates the difference in the respondents' expectations versus their realisations on all five service quality dimensions. Most of the respondents of SAABSC felt that the companies must deliver on all five service quality dimensions, but in their expectations indicated the SAABSC did not deliver to the full satisfaction of the respondents.

It is also evident in Table 5 that there is a practically significant difference between the means on all the service delivery dimensions when considering the respondents' responses. All effect sizes were above 3.74, this indicates a large practical significance. The p-values that were returned on all the dimensions were smaller than 0.05 which indicates a statistically significant difference between the respondents' expectations and realisations of service delivery form SAABSC.

In summary, there are a practically and statistically significant difference between the respondents' expectations and realisations of service quality based on the five service quality dimensions as received by SAABSC.

Findings and Recommendations

The following section indicates all the main findings of the study results. The implications and recommendations are discussed in relation to the main findings.

Finding 1

Respondents indicated that they expect the SAABSC to deliver on the five service quality dimensions but that these companies fail to do so to their satisfaction.

The fact that customers of SAABSC indicated that they do not receive the expected service delivery to their satisfaction can have numerous implications for the SAABSC; these include the following:

- Loss in customer retention.
- Bad company image and reputation.
- Loss in sales, volume and overall profit.

- Reduction in loyal customers.
- Increase in cost to retain customers and to re-establish the image and reputation.

The following recommendations are made per service quality dimension:

Tangibility Dimension

- Companies can improve the look of their fleet (trucks and trailers) overall; this can be budgeted for on a yearly basis.
- They can implement a truck/trailer washing and scrubbing plan to improve the appearance of the trucks.
- Yearly fleet audits to ensure that the appearance of trucks/trailers is maintained can be introduced
- SAABSC can upgrade their delivery equipment on a continuous cycle (devices that print invoices/statements when delivering to customers); this will ensure the neatness, correctness and overall modern look of the companies' equipment.
- Companies can ensure the upkeep of the equipment to ensure invoicing can take place correctly.
- SAABSC must also ensure that their crewmen/drivers/sales force and any employee of the company that interacts with customers are neat in their appearance on a daily basis; this includes wearing neat working outfits so that they look presentable when dealing with customers.

Reliability Dimension

- Companies need to execute their promises to their customers timeously.
- Employees of SAABSC should not make promises to customers that they cannot honour.
- SAABSC should resolve customers' problems and complaints timeously and accurately.
- They should ensure that the service is delivered correctly the first time.
- When a time is promised to the customer (being it delivery or resolu-

tion time of a complaint or problem) then the employee or company representative needs to ensure he/she adheres to the time promised.
- SAABSC must ensure that the equipment they have in place is not faulty, and if found faulty that there is a backup procedure in place to ensure error-free invoicing.

Responsiveness Dimension

- Companies need to offer their customers prompt service delivery.
- Employees need to be truthful about when a service will be performed.
- Companies must ensure that all employees that interact with customers have completed a customer service training course.
- They should ensure that employees are always willing to assist customers to resolve queries and complaints and pay attention to questions and requests.
- SAABSC can also ensure that their call centre agents do not let people wait for a call to be answered; this can be done by ensuring that when a line is engaged the call is diverted to an open line.

Assurance Dimension

- SAABSC need to ensure their employees that interact with their customers have the necessary skills and knowledge to answer customers' questions, queries and complaints.
- They must ensure employees treat customers courteously at all times.
- Employees need to ensure that they give customers individual attention.
- Employees' attitude and behaviour must instil confidence into their customers at all times.
- The SAABSC need to make sure that their customers feels safe when busy doing any transaction with the company.

Empathy Dimension

- SAABSC can ensure that they have convenient operating hours for their customers; this will entail having the call centre open and making

deliveries to customers at convenient times.
- Employees of the SAABSC need to understand the needs of their customers.
- Employees must be sincere in their dealings with customers and have their best interest at heart.

Finding 2

Respondents indicated that they all expect the SAABSC to deliver on the five service quality dimensions. What is significant in this result is that the respondents in the urban and the rural area did not differ in their opinions about what they expected the SAABSC to deliver on. Both areas (urban and rural) tended to agree that the SAABSC need to deliver on all five service quality dimensions.

It is recommended that the SAABSC need to focus their attention on all five service quality dimensions to improve their service offering to their customers. The SAABSC should not deem any of the dimensions more important than another dimension, as the respondents indicated that there is a minimal difference between what they expected in each dimension (they tend to agree that the SAABSC should deliver on all five service quality dimensions).

Results do not indicate that one dimension is more important than another dimension. The SAABSC must not go about improving on certain dimensions that they feel are important to their company, but should do so holistically and improve on all dimensions.

Finding 3

There are no significant differences between urban and rural respondents' realisation of SAABSC actual service delivery on all five service quality dimensions. They indicated that the SAABSC does not deliver to their full satisfaction on all five service quality dimensions. The urban areas realisations do not differ from the rural area realisations. Overall the respondents indicated that the SAABSC fail to deliver on all five service quality dimensions.

It is recommended that the SAABSC need to ensure they deliver on all five service quality dimensions; the data analysis shows they deliver poor customer service to their customers across the board. They need to improve

their sales/call centre employees'/operational teams' interaction skills when dealing with customers; customer service training is also encouraged. For example, the SAABSC can present a customer service course for their drivers and crew.

Finally, the SAABSC should also not deem urban areas customers more important than rural customers and vice versa when delivering a service. Differentiation between urban and rural customers can lead to customer defection, loss of sales and loss of profit.

Conclusion

Quality of service provides a competitive advantage and serves as a marketing tool for many companies; it also contributes to customer loyalty and retention. Pelser (2014b: 700) reports that service quality has been linked to an increase in profitability and is therefore considered a vital approach to ensure a competitive edge over competitors. For the past five financial years the SAABSI had seen year-on-year diminishing volume growth. This was a cause for concern to the SAABSC in the industry; and the reason why the researcher's conducted this particular study.

The study investigated the relationship and determined if differences exist between customer expectations and customer realisations of SAABSC service delivery to their customers, based on their geographical location (rural vs. urban).

The results from the study indicate that customers expect the SAABSC to deliver on all five service quality dimensions but fail to do so to their satisfaction. Recommendations on how to improve on these dimensions are given in the form of CRM strategies that SAABSC can implement. Ensuring that these recommendations are implemented will ensure a higher level of service quality and customer satisfaction. This should lead to increased customer retention, sales and profit growth, increased loyalty, the addition of new customers and overall better customer relationship.

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Customer Service Expectations and Alcoholic Beverage Suppliers

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