

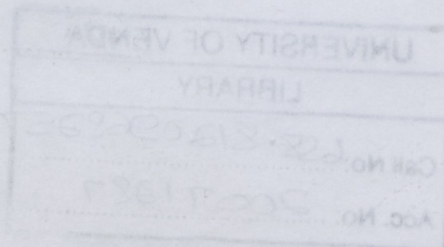
A CUSTOMER SERVICE EVALUATION OF THE STUDENT CAFETERIA AT THE
UNIVERSITY OF VENDA

A research dissertation for the partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Degree of
Bachelor of Commerce (Honours) in Business Management at the University of Venda in
Pretoria, Limpopo Province, South Africa

**A CUSTOMER SERVICE EVALUATION OF THE STUDENT
CAFETERIA AT THE UNIVERSITY OF VENDA**

SUPERVISOR: PROFESSOR J.E. SPENGLER

P.E. ZEMBANI





DECLARATION

**A CUSTOMER SERVICE EVALUATION OF THE STUDENT CAFETERIA AT THE
UNIVERSITY OF VENDA**

A mini dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Degree of
Bachelor of Commerce (Honours) in Business Management at the University of Venda in
Thohoyandou, Limpopo Province, South Africa

SUPERVISOR: PROFESSOR J.P. SPENCER

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I declare that “A Customer Service Evaluation of the Student Cafeteria at the University of Venda” is my own work and that all the resources quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references. I am grateful to Professor J.H. Jacobs who was instrumental in the realizing of the research in the early stages. And last but not the least, my sincere gratitude goes to others, too numerous to mention here, who were tremendously supportive and inspirational.

Pamela Edna Zembani

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and lines.

Signature:

Date: 2012/06



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to thank God almighty for giving me the strength and wisdom to conduct the study and complete it. Special thanks go to my parents Mr. and Mrs. Zembani, my sister Minnie and brother Clement, who believed in me throughout the process and to Professor J.H. Jacobs who was instrumental in the realizing of the research in the early stages. And last but not the least, my sincere gratitude goes to others, too numerous to mention here, who were tremendously supportive and inspirational.

Data was gathered by means of a research instrument namely: The University of Venda Student Cafeteria Customer Service Evaluation. The empirical findings revealed that there are tolerable levels of customer service.

The study recommends that the food service operator reviews food prices, reduces customer waiting times and institutes training to upgrade employee customer service skills.



ABSTRACT

Good customer service is the essence of any business. A business can capture as many new customers as it could, but unless it gets some of those customers to come back, the business will not be profitable for long.

The purpose of the research was to determine the students' perceptions of the current level of customer service in the student cafeteria at the University of Venda.

Data was gathered by means of a research instrument namely: The University of Venda Student Cafeteria Customer Service Evaluation. The empirical findings revealed that there are tolerable levels of customer service.

The study recommends that the food service operator reviews food prices, reduces customer waiting times and institutes training to upgrade employee customer service skills.

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AT THE UNIVERSITY OF VENDA

Pamela Edus Zembani

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CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND AND JUSTIFICATION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The marketing environment is becoming more and more competitive. The only way to survive in this environment is to provide the best products and services. The only way to do this is to provide the best customer service. The only way to do this is to provide the best value for money. The only way to do this is to provide the best quality for the price.

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products, or services. The only way to do this is to provide the best customer service. The only way to do this is to provide the best value for money. The only way to do this is to provide the best quality for the price.

The increase in competition in the market and the availability of information has made customer service and management even more important. Competition is becoming fiercer for the same customers. The only way to survive in this environment is to provide the best products and services. The only way to do this is to provide the best customer service. The only way to do this is to provide the best value for money. The only way to do this is to provide the best quality for the price.

Pamela Edna Zembani

Customer service is a concept specifically to all organisations. It is the process of identifying customers' needs and striving to meet those needs. The only way to do this is to provide the best customer service. The only way to do this is to provide the best value for money. The only way to do this is to provide the best quality for the price.

BACKGROUND AND ORIENTATION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The increasing availability of technology means that the majority of companies find it relatively easy to compete on products, than compete on service, because service not only depends on modern technology, but also on the attitude of the people providing it. According to Parker (2003: online), a while ago customer service people prided themselves on leaving their customers with a satisfied feeling about their company, products, or services. Today, customer service people seem to only want to leave their customers so they (the service person) are not associated with the exchange. In other words, the exchange should not cause a problem for them.

The increase in competition in the market and the availability of alternatives has made customer service and management even more important. Competitors are constantly competing for the same customer and the same disposable income. An organisation's ability to attract and retain its customers rests on its capability to provide efficient customer service. Today however, there is a trend that focuses on attracting new customers rather than retaining existing ones. The importance of existing customers in the form of repeat business cannot be over emphasised, because if existing customers are satisfied with service, they will advertise the business to other non-users.

Customer service is a concept applicable to all organisations and is simply aimed at identifying customers' needs and striving to meet them. Organisations can surpass their generic objectives by focusing on customer needs and thereby achieving maximum business revenue. Today's customer is spoiled for choice. The moment a firm takes its eyes off the customer a competitor could snatch away that customer. Unfortunately many organisations overlook the fact that it takes more resources to attract a new customer than to retain an existing one. So while organisations can have impressive service promises on paper, the bottom line to business success lies in putting such service promises into practice and understanding customers' needs and satisfying them.



Customer service is incorporated in many commercial food service outlets, such as restaurants, take-away and fast food establishments. However, for food service operations in tertiary educational institutions, customer service may be relegated as a secondary objective. The primary objective being the provision of food that meets the basic nutritional requirements of students. This trend raises the need to examine closely how a food operator in a tertiary educational institution addresses the issue of customer service.

It is equally important to regard students in the educational institutions as important customers because ultimately the customer is the paymaster who should also receive quality service. Students are also competitors, because they possess the ability to perform some of the food service operator's tasks themselves such as preparing their own meals should they have free time and resources. Students derive economic benefits from preparing their own food, especially when they have confidence in their ability to perform the service correctly and have the aspiration to control the service delivery outcome.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The University of Venda in Thohoyandou, South Africa, contracts out the student catering service to an independent food service operator. The food service operator is selected based on proven ability in satisfying students' nutritional needs. Upon understanding that customer service is an important concept in customer retention and that it needs to be conducted on a continuous basis to maximise revenue, it is necessary to determine the level of customer service provided by the student cafeteria. As such there is need for a study directed towards finding out if the food service operator is in touch with customer needs, and if not, identifying areas where if feasible, customer service can be improved. This study is to assess the students' perceptions of the current levels of customer service as well as initiate a process whereby a more efficient feedback mechanism between the food service operator and students is created to bring a personal touch to service delivery to students on campus.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY



The objectives of the research are as follows:

- i. create a formal and structured framework whereby students' changing needs are voiced and incorporated in the food service operator's delivery system
- ii. evaluate students' perceptions of the current level of customer service
- iii. encourage the food service operator to maintain service quality and improve where necessary

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The research will:

- i. provide an updated framework of information to the food service operator and the University on existing customer satisfaction levels
- ii. afford the food service operator the opportunity to identify short falls in service delivery and implement improvements where necessary and maintain standards in areas where service is good, thus attracting new customers while retaining existing ones to maximise profits
- iii. assist the food service operator to align service delivery with identified needs
- iv. create continuous feedback between the food service operator and the student

1.5 STAKEHOLDERS OF THE STUDY

- i. The primary stakeholder is the food service operator who may utilise the results of the study to initiate any necessary improvements.
- i. The secondary stakeholders are the students who patronise the cafeteria who might view the study as an opportunity to express more of their requirements.
- ii. The ultimate stakeholder is the University of Venda authority, which is fundamentally responsible for the appointment of the food service operator.



1.6 METHODOLOGY

The research will be qualitative and descriptive. Customer satisfaction surveys will be conducted through a survey study, specifically a customer satisfaction opinion survey. Closed and multiple choice questions will be used in the questionnaires to evaluate customer opinions with regard to service quality, price, reliability, convenience, availability, choice and personal touch as discussed in the literature review.

1.7 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The researcher conducted an in depth study of the problem. The following questions guided the study:

- i. Has service delivery changed in the past two years?
- ii. Is the service operator meeting the current needs and requirements of the students?
- iii. What can be done to rectify gaps, (if any), with current service delivery?

1.8 DEFINITION OF TERMS

In this section the researcher defined key concepts used in the study, with the aim of enabling the reader to understand the context in which such concepts were used.

1.8.1 Customer Service

The concept is defined broadly by different authors. As such there is no standard definition for customer service. However, Freemantle (1993: xiv) opines that customer service is based on two fundamental assumptions, namely:

- i. That customer service is all about getting some basic things right
- ii. That the process of getting them right is all to do with good management



1.8.2 Service Quality

Service quality is a focused evaluation that reflects the customers' perception of specific dimension of service such as reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and other tangibles (Zeithmal and Bitner, 2000: 74).

1.8.3 Perception

Perception is the way we see something on the basis of our experience (Theron, Botha and Du Toit, 2003:8)

1.8.4 Customer

The customer is the person who is receiving the service (Bennett, 2000:300). In this particular study the student will be referred to as the customer.

1.8.5 Sustainable Competitive Advantage

A sustainable competitive advantage is the firm's ability to outperform competitors by providing something the market values (Du Plessis, Jooste and Strydom, 2005:184).

1.8.6 Core Product/Offering

The core product is the essential service or benefit designed to satisfy the identified needs of target customer segments (Komppula 2001: online). The core product is also referred to as the core offering and will be discussed in the study as food and drink.

1.8.7 Cognitive Dissonance

Cognitive dissonance is a negative emotion stemming from a psychological inconsistency in the cognitions (the things that a person knows). Cognitive dissonance is defined as uncertainty whether the chosen alternative was the best, often called buyer's remorse (Churchill and Paul Peter 1995:253). Dissonant buyers will try to



correct the psychological inconsistencies by attempting to convince themselves that the original decision was correct and very judicious.

CUSTOMER SERVICE, A PERSPECTIVE CONCEPT

1.9 CONCLUSION

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The author believes that information presented and discussed in subsequent chapters will assist to underpin the understanding of the concept of customer service and such information will be incorporated in the customer service evaluation of the student cafeteria. Currently the widespread perception that customer service should only be concerned with private, large and commercial organisations has to be refocused. Customer service is a perspective which needs to be encouraged in all organisations and should be given equal importance in university food service operations because the student is also an important customer whose payment of the core offering, whether through a bursary or other, sustains the food operator's business.

NOTE: Customer service is used interchangeably with service quality in the study.

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CUSTOMER SERVICE, A PERSPECTIVE CONCEPT

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Customer service has been the focus of many managers since the early eighties. The concept was initiated notably by Jan Carlzon who in the early 1980's, became Chief Executive of the Scandinavian Airlines Systems. At a time when business was becoming tougher for everybody, Carlzon refocused the company's strategy from an internal focus which concentrated on the company's operational elements such as airport terminals, timetables, computers, baggage equipment, and catering arrangements, by redirecting the company to an outward focus which concentrated on the customer. As such instead of the organisation turning inward and focusing on improving its internal systems and processes, it turned outward and focused on the customer by identifying what customers needs were and satisfying them. The result was that customer service became a focal point and major source of revenue and profit for the company.

The concept of customer service has been widely adapted in one way or another by the majority of organisations. Hopson and Scally (1991:16) further expand on customer service by articulating that it involves the re-examination of traditional management structures. The authors hold the opinion that traditionally, organisations have a Top-down management structure where decisions and policies are made "on high" and communicated down the line to front line employees, who deliver the service or product to the customer as indicated in the pyramid (a) in Figure 2.1 (over page). Jan Carlzon was able to adopt the Bottom-up management structure as illustrated in pyramid (b) in Figure 2.1, thereby reversing the typical structure of the pyramid to an external focus where the customer became the "boss". Instead of top management being the major focus, the reversed pyramid (b) places front line staff as the key players in service delivery because they are the first contact point for the customer. To the customer, these front line staffs who can take the form of waiters, cashiers and counter assistants are the establishment. They shape the establishments' image and the customers' perception of it.

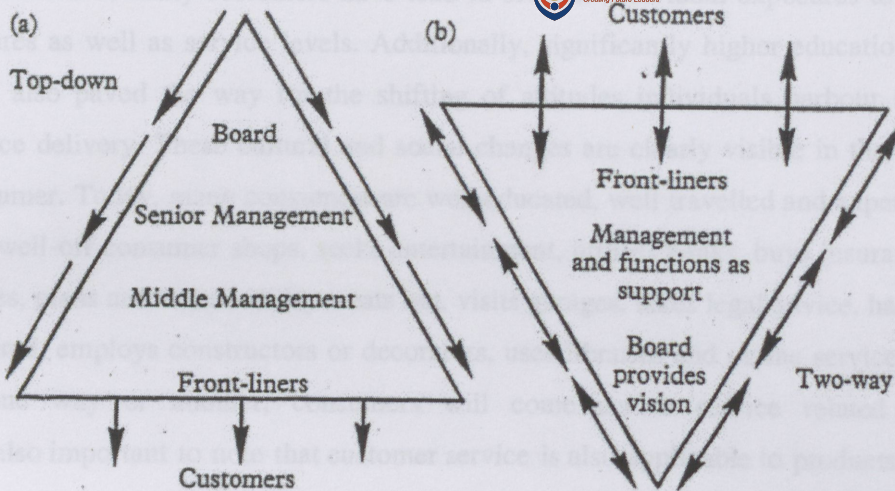


Figure 2.1: Customer Service-A Bottom-Up Approach

Adapted From Hopson and Scally (1991:17)

2.2 THE EVOLUTION OF CUSTOMER SERVICE

2.3 WHAT IS CUSTOMER SERVICE?

The modern concept of customer service has its roots in the craftsman economy of the 1800s, when individuals and small groups of manufacturers competed to produce arts and crafts to meet public demand (Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia 2006: online). In the 1970s, as international competition increased, manufacturers responded by improving the quality of their products and services to attract more purchases. This development led to the progression of the service quality concept.

Customer service has evolved since the 1980s. Before, the concept primarily focused on the service industry. Today however, customer services have grown and are applicable to all organisations and industries. The growth of customer services can be attributed to a number of factors such as technological, cultural and social changes.

Technological change spurred by the invention of the computer and advancements in telecommunications have stimulated faster processing of customer orders, in so doing facilitating the demand for faster and better customer service through the reduction of waiting times. Cultural and social changes have occurred in many societies. Global



movements of many customers have lead to broad individual exposures to diverse cultures as well as service levels. Additionally, significantly higher education levels have also paved the way for the shifting of attitudes individuals harbour towards service delivery. These cultural and social changes are clearly visible in the modern consumer. Today, many consumers are well educated, well travelled and experienced. The well-off consumer shops, seeks entertainment, utilises banks, buys insurance and homes, plans and takes holidays, eats out, visits garages, takes legal advice, has goods repaired, employs constructors or decorators, uses libraries and online services. Thus in one way or another, consumers will come across service related issues. It is also important to note that customer service is also applicable to products. Every product in some form or other has a service need and requirement embedded in, or attached to it. For example while a car is a product, it generates service requirements because it needs to be maintained and serviced on a regular basis. This could explain why today's car dealers will offer a service plan along with each sale as a form of vehicle guarantee.

2.3 WHAT IS CUSTOMER SERVICE?

It is difficult to draw up a universally accepted definition of customer service. However as consumers we all become instinctively aware when we get poor service. According to Hopson and Scally (1991:15) we do not know what good service is until we do not get it. Good service is simply giving the customers a little more than they expect. According to Customer Service Manager (2004-2006:online), there are definitions for customer service as detailed below:

- i. Customer service is the ability to provide a service or product in the way it has been promised
- ii. Customer service is about treating others as you would like to be treated yourself
- iii. Customer service is an organisation's ability to supply their customers' wants and needs
- iv. Customer service is a phrase that is used to describe the process of taking care of our customers in a positive manner



- v. Customer service is any contact between a customer and a company, that causes a negative or positive perception by a customer
- vi. Customer service is a process for providing competitive advantage and adding benefits in order to maximise total value to the customer
- vii. Customer service is the commitment to providing value added services to external and internal customers, including attitude, knowledge, technical support and quality of service in a timely manner

Customer service involves the identification, evaluation and satisfaction of the particular intangible goods and non goods, demands and requirements of a customer base (Blumberg, 1991:8). According to Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia (2006: online), customer service is the provision of labour and other resources, for the purpose of increasing the value that buyers receive from their purchases and from the processes leading up to the purchase.

2.4.1 Desired Service Expectations

Customer service is a perspective concept. The entire discussion about customer service is centred upon the customers' perception. A customer's perception originates from his or her expectations of service, also known as perceived service. Customers evaluate service quality by comparing their expectations of service with what they actually receive i.e. the perceived service (Bennett, 2000:245).

2.4 SERVICE EXPECTATIONS

Bennett (2000:245) identifies two sets of customer expectations as follows:

- i. Desired expectations: which are concentrated on the service level the customer aspires to receive
- ii. Adequate expectations: which relate to an acceptable service level. Adequate expectations are positioned below desired expectations but are a more realistic expectation level of service.

2.4.2 Adequate Service Expectations

Bennett (2000:246) further explains that a number of factors have to be in place in order to influence both adequate and desired service expectations. The factors are as follows:



- i. **Explicit service promises:** These are personal and non personal statements made by the organisation that are within its control. Explicit service promises can be initiated from the organisations' strategic plan, its mission statement or its values.
- ii. **Implicit service promises:** Occur when customers make inferences about service, based on the pricing of a specific service or other features associated with the service.
- iii. **Word of mouth:** Includes both personal and non personal communication about service from someone other than the organisation which influences customers' service expectations.
- iv. **Past experience:** Customers use any past experience with a particular service to build on to their desired and adequate expectations of future service.

2.4.1 Desired Service Expectations

There are, however, additional factors which influence a customer's desired service expectation as follows:

- i. **Beliefs about what is possible:** These beliefs are shaped from the customers' own personal service philosophy as well as the expectations of others. Such beliefs are individually solid factors that will influence a customers' expectation of service, and may clarify why some customers are more demanding than others
- ii. **Personal needs:** Such needs can include physical, psychological and functional needs. For example, a business person booking for accommodation may require a hotel in the city with internet connectivity and access to the central business district while another business person booking for holiday accommodation may require a hotel which is out of town and technology-free.

2.4.2 Adequate Service Expectations

Just as a customer's desired expectation levels are influenced by independent factors, adequate expectation levels are also influenced singularly by the factors below:



- i. Perceived service alternatives: The presence of multiple service alternatives raises customers' adequate expectations of service much higher. The absence of such alternatives lowers their expectation levels.
- ii. Self perceived service role: There are some instances where customers are expected to become active participants in service delivery and have to engage in specific roles to do so. For example, if a customer specifically requests well-done steak and gets angry if he/she is served with rare steak. If the customer feels that their role was performed adequately, their expectation level will be high.
- iii. Situational factors: certain factors can surpass the control of the company. Customers will understand if such factors impact on service delivery and will reduce their service expectation levels. Situational factors can include bad weather and natural disasters.

According to Bennett (2000:246), desired and adequate expectations are separated by a "zone of tolerance" as illustrated in Figure 2.2 (below).

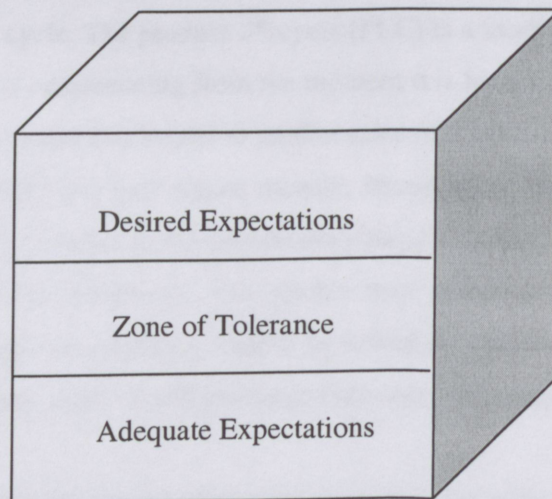


Figure 2.2: Zone of Tolerance
Adapted From Bennett (2000:246)

Organisations that perform within this zone of tolerance manage to meet the customer's minimum service expectation levels resulting in a fairly satisfied

customer. However, if the organisations performance falls below the zone of tolerance, the customer will be disappointed with the service.

2.5 THE IMPORTANCE OF CUSTOMER SERVICE

Statistics show that it is approximately ten times more expensive to acquire a new customer than it is to sell another product to an existing customer (Koekemoer et al 2004:352). The importance of customer service is fixed in its customer retention potential and the development of a sustainable competitive advantage for the establishment which leads to profit maximisation. Retaining existing customers can only be achieved by providing them with good customer service. Bad customer service can lead to a customer literally walking out on a sale. The cost of one customer walking out will have far reaching consequences. A dissatisfied customer will influence others in their buying decision and the effect is exponential.

Customer service is important for the organisation's development of a sustainable competitive advantage. This role is clearly illustrated by the impact customer service has on the product life cycle. The product lifecycle (PLC) is a model that maps out the progression of a product commencing from the moment it is launched in the market to its decline. Organisations use this model to predict sales of a particular product during various periods. The PLC has four stages namely; introduction stage, growth stage, maturity stage and decline stage. In the introductory stage a product is launched in the market after successful development. The market may perceive the product as an innovation and organisations employ a variety of strategies such as sales promotions in order to create primary demand and persuade customers to purchase that particular product.

In the growth stage when the market becomes more familiar with the product, sales begin to increase however, other competitors enter the market. Thus the organisation has to work hard to build selective demand for its products by differentiating themselves from their competitors. In the maturity stage, organisations become increasingly constrained in differentiating their products due to intense competition. During this stage many products become homogeneous as such profit margins come under severe pressure and organisations have to be relentless in reminding their customers of the benefits of their products. In the decline stage, the product loses its

appeal with the customer and it may be unprofitable for the organisation to continue offering that product. Organisations can rejuvenate or upgrade their product to remain profitable, in which case the product begins another PLC series. Alternatively a product can be taken off the market and any remaining inventory liquidated. Customer service is a great opportunity created by the organisation to sustain it throughout the product life cycle. In the introductory and growth stages, the customer's focus is on the function and features of the product. In the maturity and decline stages where all products and services are similar and competitors are rife, customer service is the most important element that can differentiate the establishment from competitors, and become a source of revenue, much better than product rejuvenation could. As such the organisation develops sustainable competitive advantage over its competitors. This is clearly demonstrated in Figure 2.3 below.

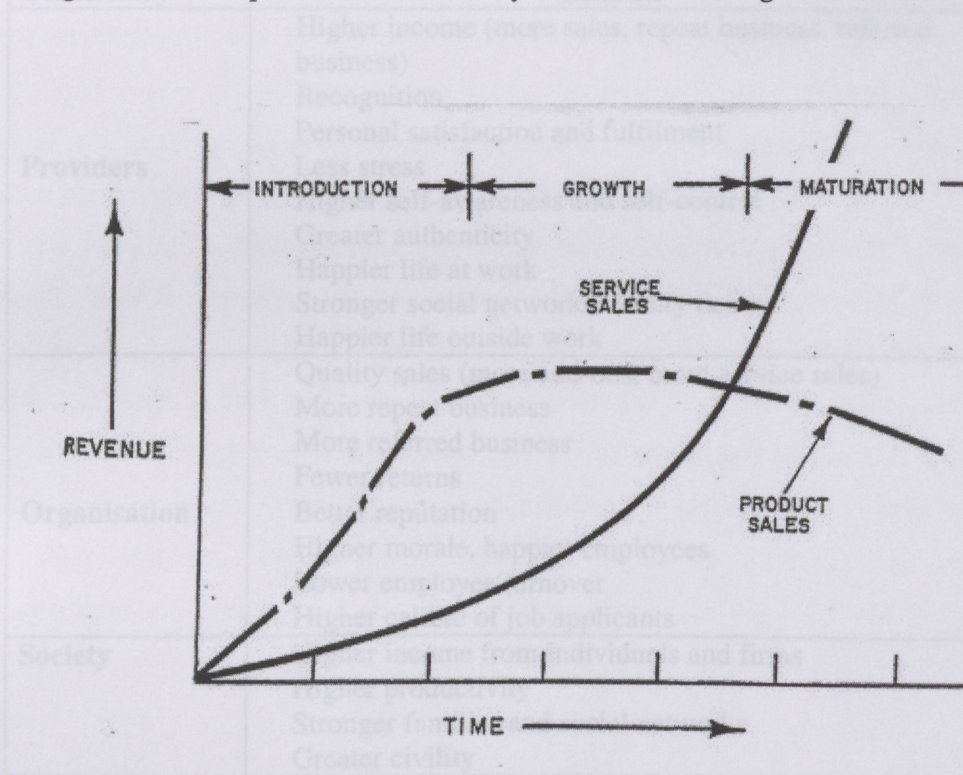


Figure 2.3: The Impact of Customer Service on the Product Lifecycle
Adapted From Blumberg (1991: 13)

Figure 2.3 illustrates two PLC trends pitted against revenue over time. The broken line represents a standard PLC influenced by product only sales which will begin to decline in the maturity stage. The straight-line represents a service influenced PLC

where sales still increase during the maturity stage. Organisations which adopt a customer service philosophy can increase their revenue and extend the life span of a given product well into maturity and delay product decline as long as possible.

2.6 BENEFITS OF CUSTOMER SERVICE

Customer service may be important primarily to the organisation. However, there are specific benefits of customer service for various participators, such as employees and the society in the service encounter as detailed in Table 2.1 (below).

Table 2.1: Benefits of Customer Service

Beneficiary	Benefits
Providers	Higher income (more sales, repeat business, referred business) Recognition Personal satisfaction and fulfilment Less stress Higher self-awareness and self-control Greater authenticity Happier life at work Stronger social networks, family ties Happier life outside work
Organisation	Quality sales (more add-ons, more service sales) More repeat business More referred business Fewer returns Better reputation Higher morale, happier employees Lower employee turnover Higher calibre of job applicants
Society	Higher income from individuals and firms Higher productivity Stronger families and social networks Greater civility

Table Adapted From Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopaedia (2006: online)

2.7 THE SERVICE VALUE MIX



The value mix for services is a concept based on the intangible nature of services. Du Plessis et al. (2005:379) opine that people, process and physical evidence are components of the service mix.

2.7.1 People

The role of people in customer services cannot be over emphasized. According to Du Plessis et al.(2005:378), people refers to all the human actors who play a role in the delivery of service and provide cues to customers regarding the nature of the service. As a factor of the service value mix, people are referred to as the employees of the establishment, who are the interface between the organisation and the customer. In the sphere of customer service, the contact employee is the service and has an integral role in service delivery. It can be argued that in some service encounters the contact person plays a relatively small role in service delivery. Such is not the case in cafeteria services and other hospitality establishments because the industry is people oriented. It is the employees who facilitate the service delivery process thus the importance of their responsibility in the process. Employees physically embody the product offering; as such their personality embodies the firm in the customer's eyes. Thus employees are perceived as the service, the organisation and the marketers of the products. The role employees play in service delivery necessitates an assessment of how their attitudes, responsiveness and behaviours can influence customers' perceptions about service.

2.7.2 Process

The service delivery process and operational flow of service provides customers with evidence upon which to evaluate services. The following are cited by Du Plessis et al. (2005:379) as elements that influence the process.

- i. The flow of activities
- ii. The number of steps in the production process
- iii. The level of customer involvement

iv. The effectiveness of systems, processes and producers



Additional elements are specifically applicable to food service operations which include customer waiting times and queues.

2.7.3 Physical Evidence/Service Scope

Physical evidence/service scope is the environment in which the service is delivered and wherever the customer and firm interact, and any tangible commodities that facilitate performance or communication of the service (Zeithaml and Bitner 2000: 252). Physical evidence includes all the tangible representations of service. Applied to cafeteria services, physical evidence takes account of the image of the building, clothing of staff, furniture, signage, equipment, decor and layout.

2.8 TYPES OF SERVICE ENCOUNTER

Service encounter is classified under three categories as follows:

- i. Remote encounters: without any direct human contact such as ATM systems.
- ii. Phone encounters: occur over the telephone such as general inquiries.
- iii. Face to face encounters: which include the employee as the facilitator of the service.

Owing to the nature of cafeteria services which depend on employees to perform the service, this study will be evaluated under face to face encounters.

2.8.1 Face to Face Encounters

Face to face encounters can occur at any location, be it at the customers' home, service facility of the establishment or any other venue where the service provider and the customer meet face to face. As will be evaluated in the study in 5.2.5, the appearance, product knowledge, attitude, empathy and other behaviours of the service staff not only contribute to the tangibility of service, they also contribute significantly the quality of a face to face encounter. It is important to note that face to face

encounters are staff dominated. As a result they have a significant influence on the service experience, as was previously discussed under the service mix. Bennett (2000:301) opines that when face to face encounters occur on the company's premises, the inanimate environment must support the service. In customer service, the inanimate environment is also known as physical evidence or service scape and is discussed in detail under the service value mix in 2.7 above. The inanimate environment provides tangible evidence of service and may include the establishment's buildings, furniture, décor and equipment. Another tangible is employees, also discussed under the service value mix.

2.9 THE ROLE OF MANAGEMENT IN CUSTOMER SERVICE

“For service not only depends on modern technology, but also the attitude of its people and therefore the capability of its managers,” Freemantle (1993: xv). Whatever can be written or practiced about customer service, it cannot be experienced unless there is an overriding commitment at the top of the organisation. Customer service was before misconstrued as to be left to the lower staff levels. Top management naturally took the assumption that somebody was dealing with the customer until complaints ascended to the point of necessitating corrective action by the top management. However, today's customer driven organisations comprehend that even though customer service is primarily performed by front line staff, its benefits transcend lower organisation levels and are realized throughout the organisation through increased sales and a better organisational image. As such customer service requires the development, implementation and support of policies which adhere to the customer service concept. Top management has to be visible and consistent in its support for customer service. This can be achieved and reinforced by offering education, training, incentives and recognition programs to employees.

2.9.1 Education and Training

Frontline employees must principally be individuals who can take initiative and who have a positive attitude towards the customer. Employees have to be trained in order to take ownership of their decisions, to understand a broader “total” view of customer service and what the concept translates into for them as individuals and broadly for

the entire organisation. Customer service should be an ongoing learning process as such it is vital that the organisation not only provide training on organisational policies and technology, but also on how to handle customers. Top managements' understanding of the importance of training is essential for the success of a customer service program because customer service doesn't just occur by chance. Desatnick (1987:5) indicates that training has to materialise in three phases:

- i. Executive education in which senior management learns its role.
- ii. Management education in which those who must implement the process learn how to do it and
- iii. A training and employee education system in which all the employees of the company learn their roles towards contributing to customer service. Training should be continuously repeated to reinforce the learning and maintain the desired behaviour.

2.9.2 Incentives and Recognition

Employee incentive programs are essential for maintaining morale for customer service initiatives. Employee incentives should be balanced and based on meeting the organisation's mission, goals, and values. Incentives should be timely and transparent. The organisation has to also include the service staff when formulating the incentives to ensure that the organisation only invests in incentives which the employees desire and which will achieve measurable results. Programs can be developed to sustain enthusiasm for the customer service program but should not be used as an alternative for basic human relation practices. As such incentive programs should not become a customary event on the calendar because if the program is expected employees may only apply the customer service concept just prior to the program. Employee incentives could include cash, selected merchandise, plaques or jewellery, merchandise catalogues or an honorary title such as employee of the month.

2.10 THE ROLE OF THE CUSTOMER IN CUSTOMER SERVICE

The customer plays a role in customer service under two scenarios namely: self-perceived service role and other customers as detailed below:

2.10.1 Self Perceived Service Role



According to Bennett (2000:248), there are situations where customers must perform certain roles or components of the service themselves. If customers believe that they have performed their roles adequately they will have even higher service expectations from the service provider. On the contrary, if they have not performed their role satisfactorily, the customers lower their expectations of service delivery. For example if the customer orders 100% fruit juice and instead he/she is served with a cola drink.

2.10.2 Other Customers

Other customers include any other customer, who is present at the time of the service delivery at the service establishment and who to a greater or lesser extent, impacts on the experience of the main customers (Bennett 2000:300). Other customers can bring about disruptions in queues, make noise and therefore irritate others and negatively influence their service experience.

2.11 DIMENSIONS FOR EVALUATING SERVICE QUALITY

According to Bly (1993:48) there are several criteria under which service is evaluated. Such criteria encompass: quality, service, price, speed, convenience, reliability, choice, availability/support, security/assurance, expertise and personal touch.

2.11.1 Quality

According to Bly (1993:49), a customer defines a quality product as one that is good, excellent or one of the best. It uses the finest ingredients, the most expensive materials and reliable components. A quality product is made with superior craftsmanship and is backed by excellent service. It is important to assess the quality level the customer needs or expects to pay for because the adage that everyone wants quality is no longer applicable today. Technological innovations have led to improvements in the manufacturing of products, translating into different versions and higher classes of products. As such, products which do not meet certain quality specification and standards can be rolled off the assembly line, made available to the market and sold at

much cheaper prices. Such products have given rise to a number of competitive alternatives as well as different acceptance levels. Quality ensures that the product meets the quality requirements set by the customer. This applies particularly to products by specification. Any divergence from the standard specification results in dissatisfied customers which may adversely affect the image of the enterprise and cause sales to decline sharply.

2.11.2 Service

Blem (1995:6) describes service as all the activities which create a bond between organisations and their clients or customers. There are still many organisations which do not believe in customer service at all. But the costs of no service or bad service are vast. Costs will arise in various avenues including in the handling of complaints, lawsuits against the organisation, paying refunds for unsatisfactory products and services and rectifying the organisations' negative image through costly public relations activities. But the greatest cost for the organisation takes the form of lost opportunities, which is at a much greater cost than attempting to retain an existing customer base through customer service. Due to the highly competitive nature of today's market place, the customer demands the highest level of service. If the customer does not get the service he/she wants, he/she will look for it elsewhere. It is therefore important to determine the level of service that the customer desires and also how they want delivery to be performed. This gets rid of any ambiguities on the organisation's ability to satisfy customer needs on a continuous basis.

The need to render constantly superior service is the area of greatest opportunity for the organisation today and yet, it is also an area of greatest susceptibility. Service is the area of greatest susceptibility because of the heterogeneous nature of services. Services are heterogeneous because they are normally performed and rendered by people and thus are rarely identical. As service is performed by people the outcome is of varying standards. People perform service depending on their mood, time of day, whether they are tired and also depending on the customer involved who might be infuriated or accommodating.



Other elements of service include:

- i. Service is intangible: Due to the illusive nature of services, customers cannot see, touch or smell service. As such they have to use other cues (also referred to as tangible elements of service) to influence their purchase decision. Such cues can include the ambience of the physical environment as well as the appearance of staff.
- ii. Services and providers are inseparable: Service and its providers go hand in hand. In other words, the producer of the service and the service itself are perceived by the consumer as one and the same person. The customer cannot experience service without the provider because services are manufactured and consumed simultaneously.
- iii. Services are perishable and unlike products cannot be stored for future use.

2.11.3 Speed

The customer has come to expect instant gratification in most service scenarios and the service provider who does not deliver this gratification is at a competitive disadvantage. In many service scenarios, customers have to wait in queues before they are served. Queues contribute to stress and dissatisfaction. This is because in general, customers perceive waiting as negative customer service. Speed of service is closely linked to the organisation's rate of responsiveness to the customers' needs. Speed can also translate to the organisation's ability to perform the desired service accurately and dependably. Factors affecting speed of service include:

- i. Flow of service
- ii. Prompt service to customers
- iii. Willingness to help customers
- iv. Readiness to respond to customers requests

Technological changes have had a major influence on the customer's desire for instant gratification. In just about all aspects of life, technology has created the expectation that service has to be speedy and instantaneous. This has led to customers who are unwilling to wait. Computers, cell phones, vending machines, ATMs, aircrafts with on board telephones, microwave dinners, emails and internet have all fuelled the



demand for faster service in various service sectors. Technology has also led to the increase in the pace of life for customers. Customers have become more time pressured and have less and less time for advance planning.

To improve on speed of service delivery, the organisation has the option of:

- i. Working faster to accelerate the delivery process: Missing a deadline or delivery date is the quickest route to creating major customer dissatisfaction. Therefore each customer deadline and service delivery requirements should be carefully assessed.
- ii. Educating customers to expect more pragmatic deadlines. This ensures that customers understand why it takes a specific time frame to perform a specific service so that they are more willing to accept a longer delivery period. Excellent customer service means informing customers exactly how long they will wait.

2.11.4 Price

Price is the value one puts on the utility one receives from products and services. Price has a different meaning for the customer and the business. Skinner (1994:418) defines price as “something of value” that a buyer gives up in an exchange. To the customer, price represents the amount of money he or she pays for a product or service, thus the need satisfaction he or she receives. For the organisation, price is important because it can directly influence profitability. Furthermore, for the organisation, price translates into understanding what customers will or will not pay for the various offerings they purchase. Price can influence how much of the service the consumer will buy. Consumers will look for a price that is reflective of the benefits they will receive from the offering while considering the price of relative competitive offerings.

In many cases the consumer has a major influence on price such that if the value received is not worth the value given, the consumer may purchase a substitute product or make no purchase at all. Regardless of how a product is priced, its intention is to convey the value of the product offered on the market. Consumers can tolerate high



prices if the price is related to the quality of the offering. However if there is no balance between the price and quality customers can be shocked, dismayed, angry and upset resulting in customer dissatisfaction. Customers do not like to be abused or ripped off continually by an organisation which puts profits before service. A good proportion of customers have become “price buyers”. This means that price is the biggest influence on their purchase decision. Even though “price buyers” are numerous, there are certain segments of the market that are willing to pay much more for certain benefits, privileges and considerations. These considerations include convenience, quality, service, fast delivery, security or support. But above all price should represent value for money no matter what commodity is on sale.

2.11.5 Reliability

Bennett (2000:248) denotes reliability when applied to service, as the ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately. However, when applied to a product, reliability is defined by Bly (1993:57) as meaning one that performs as promised, efficiently and effectively without interruptions, breakdowns and frequent repair. Many establishments today are unreliable. This is attributed to the fact that they compromise on service promises made to customers. Even when the establishment provides good products and services, other commitments are left unfulfilled. Lack of reliability can commence a downward spiral for the business. If an organisation is unreliable, the customer loses confidence in it and no longer believes in any service promises the establishment makes. Repeated unreliability inevitably leads to the establishment acquiring a negative image. Bennett (2000:249) outlines a number of factors that may positively influence service reliability as follows:

- i. Providing services as promised
- ii. Dependability in handling customers' service problems
- iii. Performing services right the first time
- iv. Providing services at the promised time
- v. Keeping customers informed about when service will be performed.

Reliability is an integral part of service quality. As such it is necessary for any organisation to demonstrate its commitment to customers by never negating on service promises.



2.11.6 Convenience

In the current business environment, consumer trends are leaning towards seeking convenience in all aspects of life. Convenience may be overlooked by the organisation as a significant element of service, but it can be a very important influence in the consumer's buying decision. A customer could willingly pay a couple rand more to avoid standing in a queue for five minutes or driving two kilometres for the same item. Convenience is so important that even price-conscious, value driven buyers would pay more for convenience. For the consumer paying more money to save time can translate into monetary savings if he/she decides that his/her time is worth much more than paying a couple of rand more for the service. Thus convenience can determine how the consumer will evaluate service quality.

2.11.7 Availability/Support

The fundamental concept of support is that organisations have to be available when customers need them. In a customer service context, the organisation's availability refers to its hours of operation as well as how accessible the business becomes after normal business hours. One can hardly argue that more and more establishments are progressively and effectively gaining a sustainable competitive advantage by making themselves a lot more available to their customers than their competition. Many hospitality establishments have specific operating hours in accordance with their operating guidelines or franchise agreements. Some establishments do not work on Sundays and thus are inaccessible to customers. For some establishments, cellular technology and other forms of communication make it possible for the organisation to keep in contact with the customer, because if the establishment is unavailable, the customers will buy from another source, which is more supportive and more available. Support means that the establishment must not only deliver a product or service, but is there long after the service is made to ensure that it delivers continued satisfaction to the customer throughout its lifetime (Bly

1993:64). Support may not be overtly important as other elements of customer service. However, it is becoming increasingly essential to consumers who want the organisation to see them as strategic partners, caring for their needs and wants and not just as money making devices.

2.11.8 Choice

Bly (1993:61) defines choice as options. Customers should be afforded the opportunity to choose between products, services, methods of working, payment plans, models and accessories. Caution needs to be exercised when giving customers choice. Customers do not want to have so much choice such that it leaves them overwhelmed, confused and their core needs unmet. Choices should be simple, clear and balanced and ensure that the customer gets a complete package regardless of the option pursued. Thus choices should clearly define various forms of alternatives and should not dictate only one direction to the consumer.

2.11.9 Security/Assurance

Bennett (2000:249) describes assurance as employee knowledge, courtesy and their ability to inspire trust and confidence in the customer. Assurance is an important element of customer service and Bennett (2000:249) indicates that it which can be displayed through:

- i. Employees that instil confidence in customers
- ii. Employees that make customers feel safe in their transactions
- iii. Employees that are consistently courteous
- iv. Employees that have adequate product knowledge to answer customer questions and handle complaints

Cognitive dissonance is very common with many customers and they need the reassurance to make them feel secure that they have made the right choice on a purchase. Churchill and Paul Peter (1995:253) define cognitive dissonance as uncertainty whether the chosen alternative was the best, 'often called buyers remorse'. Some customers are quite conservative and security conscious and thus make safe



purchase choices. They do not like innovation though it might offer a bigger payback than their usually safer options. Other customers are more adventurous and risk takers during the purchase phase. Dissonant buyers have to be assured of their buying decisions and should be given adequate security and reassurance. Customers depend on the organisation to provide this assurance. The dedication of the establishment to provide such security and assurance is an important aspect of customer service.

2.11.10 Expertise

The modern organisation specialises not only on products or service alone but also on knowledge and information stored in their databases. In many situations such specialisation could translate into the organisations' expertise and its ability to meet specific customer needs regardless of the segment customers are profiled under. The organisations' expertise is important because customers depend on the organisation for guidance. Customers who are unsure of a purchase decision and who may experience cognitive dissonance, rely on the guidance of the service provider. As such the service provider must be familiar with the needs of the customers as well as have adequate knowledge of the products and services of the establishment in order to provide such guidance. In part this can be achieved by observing the customer's body language, facial expressions and other non verbal cues in such away that undeclared needs are detected. But mainly, the frontline staff need to be empowered through training so that they are able to provide assistance and accurate information about the organisation' products and services. Organisations may deal in similar products and services but differ with the knowledge and expertise they provide. Customers want the reassurance that they are dealing with an expert who will assist them in making the right decisions. Thus the establishment should supply its customers with expert, accurate and friendly information on a continuous basis.

2.11.11 Personal Touch

There are more advantages to the modern business with the adoption of technology in terms of achieving economies of scale and efficient production methods. Even though we are in the technological era, customers still crave for the personal human touch. In



addition customers want to be treated as people, not numbers. Customers want to put a face to the service and the organisation and want to build a relationship with the organisation. Regardless of the number of customers the business has, each customer aspires to be treated as if they were the only ones the establishment is working with, highlighting the significance of personal touch in customer service.

According to Bennett (2000:231) marketing scholars have been very little interested in the problems of firms in service industries and that the service industry has thus been forgotten to a great extent. As such it can be assumed that the problems of firms in service industries have not been largely addressed. Such problems could be an indication of the improvement or decline of service standards in the industry and the service evaluation criteria discussed above can be employed to examine this decline as will be conducted in the study.

2.12 DECLINING SERVICE STANDARDS

According to Weinberger (2004: online), a recent survey indicated that customers feel a decline in quality of service. The survey indicated that 63% of customers believe that customer service has gotten no better in the last five to ten years. Weinberger further indicates that consumers undoubtedly have strong feelings on the subject. The survey asked about other "potentially unpleasant situations" respondents might have to endure. About 83% preferred visiting the dentist, sitting in traffic, or paying taxes to dealing with a rude and unhelpful customer service employee. About 51 % said that they would rather argue with a traffic policeman or watch paint dry. Kurtz and Clow (1998:8) attribute the decline of service standards to:

- i. Short term goal orientation of service firms: In order to generate immediate profits, firms look for techniques to gain efficiencies in their operations. Such techniques may include standardising operations, pushing employees to increase their productivity levels, down sizing and streamlining the firm's activities. This contributes to short term goal orientation of firms which results in more a profit oriented than a customer focused organisations.
- ii. Skills shortages: Hiring competent service workers is difficult due to a skill deficient job market.



iii. Establishments downsizing and cutting down on specific value added functions in order to keep operating costs to a minimum: Organisations are adopting methods which streamline their activities in order to reduce operating costs and maximise profits.

2.12.1 SIGNIFICANT REASON FOR DECLINING SERVICE STANDARDS

The most significant reason for declining services standards is simply because service organisations rarely carry out external service audits to keep track of customer needs and when they do the results of such audits are seldom implemented and published. According to Bennett (2000:234), very little formal marketing research on customer needs is conducted by tourism establishments in South Africa and that often when the research is done it is on an informal and adhoc basis, leaving ample room for both error and improvement.. The lack of published information about customer service in any of the cafeterias at the University of Venda supports this view highlighting even more the necessity of an external customer service audit. It is particularly important to gain insight into changes in customer priorities, because having the assumption that customers' priorities are not changing can be risky for any establishment. Customer priorities are continuously changing and because there are few or no customer service evaluations in existence there is a huge gap in tracking down these changing priorities. As will be highlighted in Chapter three, university cafeteria services lag even further behind in service surveys because primarily they are designed to cater to the food nutrition needs of students. Customer service information on university cafeteria services is so scarce that the researcher has to assume that food service operators do not largely practise the concept. This study should be a small contribution to a starting point where a thorough understanding of student needs is achieved.

2.13 CONCLUSION

Understanding customer service entails expanding the thinking about customer needs and requirements. The responsibility of any organisation is to consistently exceed customers' expectations. This involves recognising that every aspect of the business has an impact on customer service and not just those aspects of the business that



involve face-to-face customer contact. Improving customer service involves making a commitment to learning what customers' needs and wants are, and developing action plans that implement customer friendly processes which emanate from the top of the organisation. Upon this background the various dimensions to service will be employed to evaluate customer service standards at the student cafeteria of the University of Venda to give students the opportunity to voice out what they feel is really happening with customer service. An important step in the process is determining what students' need are.

The diverse needs of the student community. The operational internal service audits to measure internal standards in order to direct the firm's performance with the aim of achieving a set of predetermined objectives set by the University student body. However these internal evaluations of performance originate from the firm's viewpoint and not the customers it caters for. Such evaluations address only the establishment values, and highlight only the operational side of service. Additionally internal service audits do not address the behavioural aspects of the service experience which are better highlighted by a customer service evaluation.

The basic operational criteria of the cafeteria are to make provision for breakfast, lunch and dinner which meet the basic nutritional requirements. As such customer service may not fit in with such criteria and could be relegated to the back as secondary criteria in any performance evaluation of the cafeteria. Since its inception, the primary objective for the University of Venda Student Cafeteria has been the provision of food of adequate nutritional value, quality and appeal. Currently there is no formal system in place for the student community to record or report customer service incidents or fluctuations, necessitating research which should provide a platform for tracking these changes. In addition such a study has to validate the daily experiences students encounter in the cafeteria such as waiting in line for unnecessary periods. Students may feel uncomfortable or discouraged to voice their opinions because they may feel that in the absence of a formal report nothing will be done. As such a customer service evaluation should address issues, which would otherwise be overlooked.

A CUSTOMER SERVICE EVALUATION OF THE STUDENT CAFETERIA AT THE UNIVERSITY OF VENDA

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The food service operator for the student cafeteria of University of Venda operates under a student body to cater to the diverse needs of the student community. The operator undertakes internal service audits to measure internal standards in order to direct the firm's performance with the aim of achieving a set of predetermined objectives set by the University student body. However these internal evaluations of performance originate from the firm's viewpoint and not the customers it caters for. Such evaluations address what the establishment values, and highlight only the operational side of service. Additionally internal service audits do not address the behavioural aspects of the service experience which are better highlighted by a customer service evaluation.

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3.2 CUSTOMER SERVICE AS APPLIED TO THE STUDENT CAFETERIA OF THE UNIVERSITY OF VENDA



The attention on and necessity of assessing the students' perceptions of the current level of customer service, is broadly for macro economic implications such as the tracking of comparative statistics and an indication of quality of life. As indicated in the literature review, increased levels of customer services, can lead to increased customer satisfaction, increased customer loyalty and maximise profits. However for the cafeteria food service operator, the importance of bringing the customer service concept to life within the student cafeteria at the University of Venda has consequences far reaching beyond just satisfying the current customer. Through the study, the student cafeteria will have the opportunity to comprehend the impact they make with every face-to-face meeting, and that whether or not there is an actual request or transaction, is an opportunity to enhance the customer's perception.

Customer needs are always changing. What is considered customer service which satisfies customers today may be different tomorrow. This can be attributed to today's consumer being more educated, more exposed to and aware of global and local trends and thus becoming more knowledgeable and demanding. The same holds true for students to whom reference is made in the study as "customers". For students, customer service requirements may change because when they are away from the University they are exposed to different levels of service quality and so they too, know what good or bad service is.

As indicated above, the immediate relevance of customer service for the student cafeteria is increased customer loyalty, which will lead to greater profitability for the food service operator, however beyond all these factors and more specific to the investigation is a situation where students are so accustomed to the implicit limitations of the existing cafeteria service standards that they may not be aware of their unmet needs. Conducting a customer service study could assist in unearthing what these unmet needs are.

Service expectations are dynamic (Zeithaml and Bitner, 2000:68). This has resulted in escalating service expectations. In the hospitality industry as in



many other competitive industries, banking companies seek to raise the level of customer service above that of competitors. Customer service stems from understanding what customers want and in the case of the student cafeteria, it begins with understanding what the students want. Such an understanding has to take into account that these students may not always know what they want, or why they want it. As such a customer service survey should determine the level of customer service at the student cafeteria. In addition, there have been general concerns raised over declining service standards as earlier highlighted in the literature study. Kurtz and Clow (1998:7) allude to the fact that the level of service has been declining over the past two decades. Closer to home, in South Africa, Blem (1995:23) echoes the view by citing that service standards in South Africa are deplorable. A customer service evaluation could assist in establishing if the authors' opinions about declining service standards apply to the student cafeteria service.

3.3 A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF UNIVERSITY FOOD SERVICES

College and University Food Services operations are diverse and complex (Walker 1999:277). Food service managers face many challenges because the majority of clientele reside on campus which results in boredom and requires innovation from the food service operator to ensure that needs and requirements are met. The University of Venda cafeteria falls under cafeteria services in the hospitality industry. The broad and variable nature the hospitality industry means that it can embrace elements of associated sectors of the industry such as the licensed trade, leisure activities and catering (under which cafeteria services fall). The hospitality sector is service-based. In services operations work activity is people oriented. The personal nature of hospitality services, places emphasis on the importance of direct interaction between employees and customers. Service quality and customer satisfaction are dependent upon the attention and attitudes of staff as well as their performance.

The hospitality sector in South Africa is a very large and growing service sector encompassing university cafeteria services. Rarely do university cafeteria services conduct external/ customer service evaluations. In addition, if conducted, such types of evaluations have been periodic and the findings of these evaluations have rarely



been made public and accessible. The challenge faced with the lack of customer service evaluations is that quite a significant number of establishments have missed out on the opportunity of gaining specific and valuable information concerning how their customers feel about service as well as utilising such information on a continuous basis to initiate improvements on service quality. The unavailability and inaccessibility of published information regarding the University student cafeteria customer evaluations and the importance of such findings is reflective of the hospitality industry under which the student cafeteria is classified. In addition, cultural, economical and technology impacts on the attitudes and perceptions of customers, make it increasingly important to monitor customer service levels regardless of the type of establishment or the type of segment. The cafeteria service sector of the hospitality industry still experience disparities in service delivery. The concepts of cuisine, ambience and conviviality are seldom found. Some would argue that the very nature of cafeteria services could translate into a fast service concept that is primarily concerned with the core offering and has no room for incorporating customer service. Furthermore, because the University cafeteria food service primarily fulfils the objective of food nutrition, customer service aspects can be relegated to the background. Although this maybe the case, there needs to be consideration that students pay for any product or service they receive, as such they should be afforded a level of service quality as they would receive at any commercial establishment.

3.4 ADDITIONAL EVALUATION CRITERIA

Due to the nature of cafeteria food services which concentrate on the provision of food and drink, the customer service evaluation will include the following two additional criteria:

3.4.1 Nutrition

Nutrients are defined as components of food that cannot be made in the body but are essential for normal growth and development (Carr, 2003:5). Against this backdrop, the ability of the food service operator to provide food from all nutritional groups is necessary including



3.5 CONCLUSION

- i. Bread and other cereals and potato groups
- ii. Fruits and vegetable groups
- iii. Milk and dairy food groups
- iv. Meat, fish and alternatives groups e.g. beans, pulses, eggs, lentils and nuts

Young adults have increasing control over what and when they eat. While many students are aware of what they should be eating, most choose to disregard this and may experience difficulty managing their nutrition. However, students who eat from the student cafeteria, tacitly transfer the responsibility of providing themselves with meals with adequate nutrition onto the food service operator. This characteristic justifies the inclusion of an assessment of the ability of the food service operator to provide nutritional meals in the customer service evaluation. In addition the rationale for the inclusion of nutrition in the evaluation is that food is the core offering of the University cafeteria.

3.4.2 Hygiene

Food operators have a legal obligation and moral duty to protect the people they are catering for from food borne illness. Contamination and mistakes which occur during food processing, transportation, storage, preparation and service can expose consumers to potential food borne illness. University food operations should operate and handle food in such a way that food wholesomeness is preserved and that food borne illness is prevented. The importance of cleaning and maintaining food service areas in schools, colleges and Universities cannot be overemphasized (Griffin 2006: online). Customers can succumb to illness if eating areas and surfaces are contaminated. In situations where food spills are not cleaned up and garbage cans are overflowing, customers develop the perception of the food service facility as being potentially hazardous to their health. It is imperative that any food service facility's interior and exterior be well maintained and hygienic.



3.5 CONCLUSION

To date, much of the reporting on customer service has been in the context of well established commercial organisations. The emerging picture is that, there needs to be more recognition of this concept in university food service establishments, case in point, the student cafeteria of the University of Venda. The current system is that for many university food service operators, the operational tasks and ability to meet nutritional needs of students is sufficient to guarantee foodservice operator selection to cater for specific universities as well as adequate profits. But in today's competitive business climate, and specifically for service establishments, such an approach is rewarding only in the short term and may prove unsustainable in the long term. Emerging organisations that excel at customer service will out perform their competition. A broader perspective encompassing the adoption of a customer service concept can guarantee longer-term sustainability of business functions. In this context, long term research is still needed. This effort could be undertaken under university cafeteria services. According to Bennett (2000:234) the most critical step is probably determining exactly what customers' need. The evaluation of customer service in the student cafeteria of the University of Venda is only a small step in the process.

4.1 SAMPLING PROCEDURES

The participants were randomly selected until a desirable sample of 50 students was arrived at. The sample was derived from students on campus, selected from various University of Venda campus circuits namely the University library, classrooms and grounds. A cross section of students was sought by being approached individually and in groups to ensure that the sample encapsulated a much more realistic perspective of opinions and perceptions, as well as to gain insight into changes in students' priorities, and to ascertain if specific needs are not being met with the existing customer service.



EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to investigate students' perceptions of the current level of customer service in the student cafeteria of the University of Venda. The following questions were raised to guide the research:

- i. Has service delivery changed in the past two years?
- ii. Is the service operator meeting the current needs and requirements of the students?
- iii. What can be done to rectify gaps, (if any), with current customer service?

4.2. POPULATION

The population of the study consisted of 50 registered students of the University of Venda who reside in the Thohoyandou region in the Limpopo Province of South Africa.

4.3 SAMPLING PROCEDURES

The participants were randomly selected until a desirable sample of 50 students was arrived at. The sample was derived from students on campus, selected from various University of Venda campus circuits namely the University library, classrooms and grounds. A cross section of students was sought by being approached individually and in groups to ensure that the sample encapsulated a much more realistic perspective of opinions and perceptions, as well as to gain insight into changes in students' priorities and to ascertain if specific needs are not being met with the existing customer service.



4.4 ADMINISTRATION PROCEDURES AND TECHNIQUES

Permission to conduct the research on the student cafeteria of the University of Venda was sought from the food service operator Mr Markus Bazinger. The researcher was granted permission through a meeting which was held with Mr Bazinger in his office situated in the student cafeteria on the University campus. Mrs E. Hlungwane was party to the meeting.

Data gathering instruments were given by hand to the participants. The purpose of the study was individually explained to the participants, who were also guided on how to complete the various sections of the instrument. This was carried out to ensure that all instruments were completed as required and were collected immediately after completion. Questionnaire completion times varied among participants. Some participants were able to complete their questionnaires as soon as they were handed to them, while other participants took the questionnaires to their residences to complete and returned them in two to three days.

4.5 STATEMENT OF THE HYPOTHESIS

Following the review of the literature the following hypothesis was developed: **the customer's perception of service can be positively influenced by the actions and attitudes of service staff as well as management procedures, practices, support and commitment to customer service.**

4.6 DATA GATHERING INSTRUMENTS

The researcher developed the data collection instrument titled: The University of Venda, Student cafeteria customer service questionnaire as shown in Appendix A. The instrument consisted of 41 items. The first four items (1-4), required the participants to give their biographical information. The remaining 37 items (5-41) necessitated the participants to give their opinions in various categories concerning customer service aspects as guided by the literature review.



4.7 RATIONALE FOR THE INSTRUMENT ITEMS

Each item in the research instrument served a clear purpose, detailed as follows:

4.7.1 Biographical Information

Items 1-4 required the participants to provide information regarding biographical data. Items 1 and 2 constitute age and gender of the participants while Items 3 and 4 covered registration status and type of residence. The basis for Items 1 and 2 was to ascertain whether the age and gender of the participants would have any bearing on their perception of customer service.

4.7.2 Service Quality

Items 5 and 6 ascertained if poor service could be a motivating factor for not eating in the student cafeteria.

Items 7 –18: Reliability as applied to service is the ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately. Reliability has been consistently shown to be the most important determinant of perceptions of service quality. The literature review alluded to the fact that when customers cannot get consistent service delivery, perceptions of poor service delivery are high. The items were to establish if the system for providing service to students is efficiently working, including if the system ensures that immediate action is taken when any aspect of service fails.

Items 19 and 20: Convenience

Consumer trends in this age are to seek out convenience in all aspects of their lives. The items were to establish if the cafeteria food service was accessible at times which correlated with students' schedules. Operating hours constitute a significant factor of convenience. Students who cannot access the cafeteria at certain hours develop poor perceptions of the ability and willingness of the food service operator to meet their service needs.

Items 21 and 22: Speed

"A reduction in waiting times means a greater through put of customers, better productivity and increased revenue," (Freemantle,1993:16). Customer service means,



customers have to be taken care of immediately. Queues can signify an inefficient flow of service. The items were to determine if service was delivered in acceptable waiting times.

Items 23 and 24: Price

To the customer, price represents the amount of money he/she pays for as service thus the need satisfaction and value he/she receives. Price was included to determine if students perceived that current prices delivered value for money.

Items 25 – 27: Hygiene

Contamination and mistakes, which occur during food processing, transportation, storage preparation and service can expose consumers to potential food-borne illnesses. The items ascertained customers perceptions of how food is handled and how the food service area is maintained.

Items 28 – 34: Core Product/Offering (Food and Nutrition)

The items investigate aesthetic factors such as appearance, presentation, taste, portioning, temperature and choice of the core product. The nutritional aspect was also included to ascertain if the students were getting food with the minimum of required nutrients.

Items 35, 39- 41: Service

Customers perceive service in terms of its quality and their overall satisfaction with the entire service experience. The items ascertained intangible aspects of service and related elements.

Item 38: Physical Evidence/ Services Scape

The environment in which the service is delivered and wherever the customer and firm interact can impact service quality . The item focused on how the design of the service scape can influence customer's expectations, perceptions of and satisfaction with service. These included cafeteria décor and attractiveness.



Items 36 and 37: Employees

As indicated in 2.7.1 above, the contact employee is the service. The Items focused on how frontline service employees give assurance, empathy, friendliness as well as how they understand, interpret and filter information from the establishment to the customer and vice versa.

4.8 CONCLUSION

The nature of customer services involves an intimate association of its tangible and intangible elements in order to achieve a better understanding of the results. Motivations behind purchase choice are investigated involving an association of good customer service with the specific dimensions of services as discussed in 2.11. As the study is descriptive, a fairly good understanding of the results should be achieved in the subsequent chapter.

5.2.1 Biographical Information

Responses on biological data are reflected in Appendix B. In items 1 and 2, responses came from all the participants as reflected in Appendix B. According to the information gathered, the total for female participants was 21; making 42% of the participants and for males the total was 29 making up 58% of total participants.

Appendix B indicates 66% of the participants were aged 21-25; 28% were aged 18-20 and only 6% were aged 26 – 30. There were no participants aged over 30 nor under 18. Responses on age signify that the majority of data in the study was supplied by participants in the 21-25-age bracket. Appendix B also reflects items 3 and 4. Item 3 (registration status) indicates that 98% of the participants are full time registered students and only 2% are part time students.

Item 4 (types of residence), demonstrates that 66% of the participants have university accommodation, 30% reside at home while 14% have private accommodation. The researcher deduced that because the majority of the participants (66%) had university accommodation their type of residence could influence eating patterns.



CHAPTER FIVE

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to analyse and interpret the data pertaining to the questions raised in Chapter One and to test the hypothesis raised in 4.5 above. The researcher's intention was to determine whether service delivery has changed for the better and if current customer service meets the current needs and requirements of the students, as well as proffering solutions to gaps that may exist with service quality.

5.2 THE SAMPLE

5.2.1 Biographical Information

Responses on biological data are reflected in Appendix B. In Items 1 and 2, responses came from all the participants as reflected in Appendix B. According to the information gathered, the total for female participants was 21; making 42% of the participants and for males the total was 29 making up 58% of total participants.

Appendix B indicates 66% of the participants were aged 21-25; 28% were aged 18-20 and only 6% were aged 26 – 30. There were no participants aged over 30 nor under 18. Responses on age signify that the majority of data in the study was supplied by participants in the 21-25-age bracket. Appendix B also reflects Items 3 and 4. Item 3 (registration status) indicates that 98% of the participants are full time registered students and only 2% are part time students.

Item 4 (types of residence), demonstrates that 66% of the participants have university accommodation, 20% reside at home while 14% have private accommodation. The researcher deduced that because the majority of the participants (66%) had university accommodation their type of residence could influence eating patterns.



After Items 1-4, the research instrument was divided into two sections namely: Section A and B (see Appendix A). Section A identified students who were not customers of the cafeteria, while Section B focused on students who were customers of the University cafeteria.

5.2.2 Past Service Encounters

Responses on past service encounters are reflected in Appendices C and D. Section A had two Items 5 and 6, with the objective of finding the views of students that are not customers of the cafeteria. “Missing system” in Appendix C separates and identifies 68% of the participants as non customers which responded only to Items 5 and 6. The remaining 32% were identified as customers who completed Items 7 – 41 in the data collection tool.

Item 5 required the participants to indicate their past encounters (if any) with the cafeteria service. Appendix C indicates only 9% of the students who are not customers have had past encounters with the cafeteria service, while 91% of the same group (not customers) have had no previous encounters with the cafeteria. *This implied that the majority of the participants in the group had never eaten in the cafeteria. The reason for this was supplied in Item 6.*

Item 6 required the participants to indicate reasons for not patronising the cafeteria service, with the purpose of discovering if poor customer service was the main reason for not patronising the cafeteria service. A variety of alternatives were provided as possible responses to avoid leading the participants to lean towards poor customer service as a choice. Room was also provided for Item 6, to allow for any additional input to the posed item. Appendix C demonstrates that only 2% of the students who are not customers of the cafeteria indicated poor service as a reason for not patronising the cafeteria. *This could imply that poor customer service is not the foremost reason why the majority of students are not eating in the cafeteria. The main reasons (as shown in Appendix C) with regard to why the 68 % do not eat in the cafeteria were cited as a lack of bursary which was alluded to by 36% of the participants and the perception that cafeteria food items are expensive which was the reason cited by 28% of the participants.* The majority of the students who are not



customers of the student cafeteria cited *they would engage the University cafeteria service if they had student bursaries. The researcher concluded that students who were not customers of the cafeteria did not engage the cafeteria because they lacked food bursaries.*

5.2.3. Physical Evidence / Service Scapes

Section B concentrated on students who are customers of the student cafeteria in order to identify their motivations for being customers specifically with the aim of unearthing if good customer service was a key motivating factor for purchasing food from the cafeteria. Responses thereto are reflected in Appendix D.

In Section B, Item 7 required the participants who are customers of the cafeteria to indicate if they had eaten from the cafeteria in the past. The response was as follows: 75% indicated they had eaten from the cafeteria before, while 25% declared no, as reflected in Appendix D. *According to their responses the majority of the existing customers were identified as regulars, making them suitable respondents for Item 39.*

Item 8 provided several options for the participants to choose from. The item focused on the 25% of participants identified in Item 7 (who had indicated they had no previous patronage with the cafeteria) in order to establish their current buying pattern while attempting to associate it with good customer service. None of the options provided for the Item were selected. Qualitative responses were supplied by the participants who cited reasons for the change as, a change in the management, convenience and extra money. None of the participants cited customer service as a reason for switching from not patronising the cafeteria before, to currently patronising the student cafeteria. *This led the researcher to deduce that customer service did not motivate the students to purchase from the cafeteria. It can be deduced that the main motivation as is also evident in Appendix C, is the availability or unavailability of student bursaries.*

Item 9 required the participants to indicate their frequency of purchase of meals from the cafeteria. 62.5 % indicated their constancy of meal purchases to be regular at more than 3 times a week. The remaining 37.5% purchased meals only occasionally. *The high percentage (62.5) displayed in Item 9 indicates that the cafeteria customers are predominantly regulars.*



To allow for ease of interpreting of results, the research findings for Items 11-41 were summarized into four main categories namely: physical evidence/service scape, core offering (food) and related items, employees, and service delivery and related items.

5.2.3. Physical Evidence / Service Scape

Responses on physical evidence are reflected in Appendix E. Item 10 required the participants to indicate their setting preference and if they preferred to eat in the cafeteria setting or take away their meals to eat elsewhere. Appendix E shows that 81% of the participants preferred to take away their meals rather than eat in the cafeteria. Reasons for the choices were highlighted in Items 11 and 12.

Items 11 and 12 followed up on Item 10, requesting from the participants reasons for eating in the cafeteria or takeaway. Appendix E indicates the responses to the items highlighting participants who represented 81% of takeaway meals. *Qualitative responses were supplied to the items 11 and 12 where takeaway customers cited the main reasons for taking away their meal as that, they like to eat their meals in their rooms so that they can share with friends.* Only one participant cited cafeteria uncleanliness as the reasons for taking away the food.

Item 13 required the participants to indicate if they would bring a friend to the cafeteria. A total of 56.3% declared no, while 43.8 % indicated yes to the item (see Appendix E).

Items 14 and 15 were a follow up to Item 13, requiring participants to give reasons for choices in Item 13. Primarily the purpose of the items was to find out if the service scape or cafeteria atmosphere was a factor that attracted the participants to the cafeteria. Secondly the items served the purpose of determining if good service was an influencing factor for the decision to bring a friend.

Item 15 provided qualitative responses with regard to why 56.3% participants indicated they would not bring friends to the cafeteria. *Responses included, an unpleasant environment, bad service and that the students have little or no choice in deciding the condition of the service scape.* In Item 14, the 43.8%, who indicated that



they would bring a friend to the cafeteria, citing reasons for the choice as, *good atmosphere, good service, surplus bursary funds, and positive change in cafeteria management in comparison to the previous management*. None of the participants indicated that good atmosphere of the cafeteria as reason for bringing a friend. *Only 2% cited good service as a reason why they would bring a friend to the cafeteria. Even though the responses were qualitative, the above results indicate a comparable difference of opinion on the physical environment in the cafeteria. The impression created here supports the views discussed in the literature review that customer service is based on customer perceptions representing almost clear-cut differences of opinion in perception of the service.*

Item 38 required the participants to indicate their opinions on the attractiveness of the cafeteria. The responses were as follows: 40% of the participants thought the cafeteria attractiveness was poor, 53.3% thought it was adequate and only 6.7% thought it was good. *As the majority of the participants (53%) thought the attractiveness was adequate the researcher concluded that the attractiveness of the cafeteria was generally tolerable (See Appendix E).*

Items 25 and 26 required the participants to specify their opinions on the general cleanliness of the cafeteria. The responses were as follows: With regard to Item 25, 50 % of the participants felt that the cafeteria was usually clean, 25% thought it was mostly clean, 18.8% felt it was always clean, and a small 6.3% thought the cafeteria was never clean. In response to Item 26, 50% of the participants cited that the cafeteria eating tables were sometimes clean, 18.8 % thought they were always clean, another 18.8% felt that they were clean most of the time and only 12.5% thought tables were rarely clean. *From the above, conclusion was drawn that the participants felt that the physical environment under which service took place and all related factors is adequate because only a negligible 6% of the participants thought that tables were never clean and 53% of the participants felt the décor was adequate. This led the researcher to deduce that the physical evidence element was not critical in the student's perception and assessment of service delivery.* However, for the service operator a sufficient physical environment denotes performance, which is just above average. "Average" customer service is not agreeable. In order to address objective iii) of the study, there should be mechanisms instituted by the establishment



to upgrade the service scape in order to elevate students' tolerable satisfaction levels into higher satisfaction levels.

5.2.4 Core Offering (Food) and Related Items

Responses on core offering (food) and related items are reflected in Appendix F. Item 23 required the participants to indicate who paid for their meals. The response was that 43.8% of the meals were paid for by parents, 37.5% by bursaries and 18.8% were paid for by the participants themselves as indicated by Appendix F.

Item 24 requested the participants to indicate if they deemed that food prices matched quality. The responses were significantly different as only 25% felt that food quality was related to price while 75% of the participants felt that quality was not related to price, see Appendix F.

The above items (23 and 24) relate to the food price opinions indicated in Item 39, where participants were asked if food prices had changed for the better or the worse in the last two years. In Item 39, 80% of the participants indicated that food prices had changed for the worse, while 20% felt that they changed for the better. In addition the outcome also relates to indications in Item 6, where 28% of participants cited the reason for not eating in the cafeteria as that cafeteria food is expensive and a lack of bursary which represented 38% of the participants. This 38% indicated in their qualitative responses that they would eat in the cafeteria if they had a bursary.

Item 27 required participants to indicate if the food is hygienically handled and served. The responses were indicated as follows: 62.5% replied negatively while 37.5% replied positively.

Item 28 required participants to indicate if they felt that the food presentation was attractive. The responses were 56.3% of the participants agreed that food presentation was attractive and 43.7% did not agree. *This implies a general acceptance of food presentation.*

Item 29 required the participants to indicate their opinions on food taste. The responses were as follows: 56.3% cited an acceptable food taste, 18.8% cited good



food taste, another 18.8% cited poor taste and only 6.3% cited very good food taste. *The researcher concluded that the 56.3% indicates a suitable patronage for the acceptability of food taste.*

Item 30 required the participants to indicate their opinions on food nutrition. The responses were as follows: 56.3% felt food was not nutritious while 43.7% felt that food was nutritious.

Item 31 required the participants to indicate their satisfaction with current food portions/size. The responses were as follows: 43.8% of the participants felt that portions were fair, 37.5% felt they were small, a lesser 12.5% felt portions were medium and even lesser 6.3 % of the participants indicated that food portions were large. *This led the researcher to conclude that the 43.3% support for fair food portioning indicates that food portions are typically acceptable.*

Item 32 required participants to indicate their opinions on food temperature and the responses were as follows: 56.3% indicated that food was served at the correct temperatures while 43.7% of the participants did not think foods were served at the correct temperature (see Appendix F).

Item 33 required the participants to indicate if they had a variety of food choices. The responses were as follows, 56.3% replied yes while 43.8% replied no.

The tendency which core offering responses and related items took, led the researcher to conclude that participants were adequately satisfied with the core item. However a major concern with the core offering was the price. Price concerns expressed by customers can also be linked to lack of bursary concerns, which were highlighted by non customer in Appendix C, Item 6 as a reason for not buying from the student cafeteria. It can be interpreted that most of the meals are not affordable.

Item 34 required participants to indicate the menu items they would like served in variety. The responses were: 60% indicated more fish, 100% indicated more beef, 80% cited more chicken, 85.7% indicated more cooked vegetables, 83.3% indicated more soup, while 71.4% cited more salads should be added. About 66.7% Of the

participants cited more sandwiches should be included and 85.7% indicated that they would like a variety of fruit juice served. A balanced split was indicated for rice and pasta where 50% of the participants were satisfied with the current servings of rice and the other 50% felt pasta servings could not make any significant alterations to the menu, to sufficiently lead to significant satisfaction levels.

5.2.5 Employees

Responses on employees are reflected in Appendix G. Items 36 and 37 addressed employee specific issues as indicated in Appendix G.

Item 36 required participants to indicate if they were acknowledged by the service staff. The responses were as follows: 66.7% of the participants indicated there was no acknowledgement from staff members, while 33.3% indicated that they received acknowledgement from service staff.

Item 37 required the participants to indicate various interpersonal skills of staff members with regard to customer service. The responses were as follows: 62.5% of the participants felt staff members were friendly however, 60% of participants felt staff members were inefficient in their duties. 53.3% Of participants indicated that staff members were pleasant; 80% felt staff members were slow; only 33.3% of the participants felt that staff members were attentive; 66.7% felt they were helpful, and 40% felt that staff members were informative.

These findings indicated that the staff members have pleasant personalities and are well acquainted with their technical duties but demonstrated a lack of customer service related interpersonal skills. The 80 % who felt that staff members were slow led the researcher to deduce that there was an inefficient work flow which may explain why participants queued as indicated in Item 21.

5.2.6 Service Delivery and Related Items

Items under service delivery and related items were summarised to address objective (ii) of the study.

Responses on service delivery and related items are summarized in Appendix H. Item 16 required the participants to indicate if they considered service as reliable. Responses indicated that 68.8% felt service was unreliable, while 31.3% felt service was reliable.

Items 17 and 18 required qualifying reasons for Item 16. Qualitative responses were supplied. *Participants cited daily service fluctuations including that when they needed specific food items, they were unavailable, a lack of variety, poor service, shortage of stock, because participants got hungry late in the night and if they wanted to buy from the cafeteria, it was closed and unavailable. The participant's views on lack of availability supported citations on availability in 2.11.7 in the literature review indicating that the basic concept of support is that organisations have to be available when customers need them.*

Following up on Items 17 and 18 was the related Item 19, which required participants to indicate if the cafeteria operating hours were suitable. There was an equal split of opinions in the responses such that 50% of the participants felt operating hours of the cafeteria service suited them, while the other 50% felt the hours did not suit them. *The results support citations in the literature study that service availability is dependent on the time that the customer requires of the establishment.*

Item 20 followed up on Item 19 requiring participants to indicate the specific cafeteria operating times that suited them. A variety of responses were given on the Item. The researcher additionally took into consideration the fact that student time tables could differ from one another but a general pattern of the responses leaned towards: Breakfast from 7.00 am to 10.00 am, lunch from 12.00 pm to 2.00 pm. For supper the responses were very split with varied times of from as early as 4.30 pm to as late as 10.00 pm. *The researcher concluded that while student timetables varied, cafeteria operating hours could be structured in such a way that mutually acceptable time frames accommodate student meal times.*

Item 21 required the participants to indicate if they usually found a queue in the cafeteria. All the participants indicated that they usually found a queue in the cafeteria.

Item 22 required the participants to follow up on Item 21 and indicate how long they had to wait in the queue before they were served. The response indicated that 62.5% waited more than 10 minutes and a collective 37.5% waited from 5 to 10 minutes. *This implies that customers could be taking longer than is necessary to get served, indicating an inefficient workflow in the cafeteria service which may be impeding service delivery.*

Item 35 required the participants to indicate the added service features they would like to see. All the participants indicated they would like to see price displays, while 75% of the participants indicated more flexible operating hours.

Item 39 required the participants to indicate how service had changed in the past two years in various aspects. The responses were as follows: 87.5% of the participants felt that food quality had changed for the better, however 80% felt that food prices had changed for the worse, 75% felt food variety was better, 68.8% felt overall cafeteria hygiene was better, 62.5% indicated that cafeteria décor was better, 75% felt that promptness of service had improved over the two years and another 75% indicated that staff friendliness had progressed for the better.

Items evaluated under physical evidence included 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 25, 26 and 38.

Items 40 and 41 required the participants to indicate their opinions on overall service in the cafeteria. The responses were as follows, 68.8% of the participants felt that current service was acceptable, 12.5% felt service was good and 18.8% felt that service was poor. Item 41 elicited further comments about service from the participants. Qualitative comments supplied were as follows: *The general atmosphere is not conducive to pleasant eating; some staff members are not clean and that operating hours should be clearly communicated. There is need for improvement of service quality, regular inspections in the cafeteria to ensure hygiene standards are maintained and there needs to be a reduction of food prices especially snacks. For bursary students, there should be no restrictions to the daily amount of food items allowed per student, there needs to be an improvement on food taste and visible*

attempts to make the eating environment friendly should be put in order. Food must be well stocked and prepared in good time, and not prepared while students are waiting in the queue and there needs to be a wider variety of drinks.

5.4 CONCLUSION

The researcher concluded that the major negative aspects pinpointed with service delivery and related elements are the increased waiting times (queues), a lack of price displays, an inefficient work flow, perceived high prices and non-flexible operating hours.

5.3 THE EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

Appendices B to H reflect all statistics regarding results of the empirical items. This was conducted to facilitate simple interpretation and comparison of results. All participants responded to all the questionnaires and all items in the research tool.

Filter, follow up, order, structured and scaled questions were used widely because the researcher was interested in measuring attitudes. The results were reflected into four main categories in which related items were aroused together as follows: physical evidence/service scape, core offering (food) and related items, employees and service delivery and related items.

5.3.1 Physical Evidence/Service Scape

Items evaluated under physical evidence included 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 25, 26 and 38.

5.3.2 Employees

Items evaluated under employees included 36 and 37.

5.3.3 Core Offering (Food) and Related Items

Items evaluated under core offering encompassed 8, 24, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33 and 34.

5.3.4 Service Delivery and Related Items

A number of items were grouped together as to be evaluate as items that directly impact on specific aspects of service delivery. These are evaluated under past service

encounters and service delivery and related items. These encompassed Items 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 35, 39, 40 and 41.



SUMMARY OF STUDY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.4 CONCLUSION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The results presented in the above chapter are testimony to the growing recognition and awareness of the concept of customer service by the students. An important lesson from the study is the recognition of the opportunities presented by customer service and identification of the constraints that impede delivery of customer service which could be negatively affecting customer satisfaction levels. Results reflect that to large extent students are fairly satisfied with the core offering and there has been significant improvement of service quality since the past two years, however more still need to be done and recommendations to this effect are proffered in the subsequent chapter.

Questionnaires were administered to students. Responses thereto supported and

NOTE: “Missing system” in all data analysis appendices indicates non-responses to a specific item.

6.2 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

The following section gives a brief account of the problem statement, the objectives of the study, the significance of the study, stakeholders of the study, the empirical investigation and hypothesis testing. The primary data was sourced by utilising the data gathering instrument namely, The University of Venda, Student Cafeteria Customer Service Evaluation Questionnaire. The resultant data were evaluated and interpreted as percentages. The data collection tool also provided room for



SUMMARY OF STUDY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.2.1 Statement of the Problem

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The University of Venda in Thohoyandou, South Africa, contracts out the student cafeteria. The study investigated the students' perceptions of the current level of customer service and thus included identifying if the current food service operator at the University of Venda student cafeteria is in touch with the customers' needs and if not, identifying gaps in service quality and proffering solutions for improvement.

The literature survey indicated a range of inputs made on the subject of customer service. Chapter 3 highlighted the extent to which the concept of customer service is adhered to by university food service operators and the hospitality industry as a whole with specific reference to the student cafeteria at the University of Venda.

Questionnaires were administered to students. Responses thereto supported and confirmed a number of the observations highlighted in the literature survey with specific emphasis on price, speed of service (specifically relating to waiting times), processes which directly influence the work flow and queues, employees, availability and support, hygiene, physical evidence and choice.

Concerns raised about customer service were consistent with those made by researchers in the specific categories mentioned above specifically focusing on how customer perceptions influenced their evaluation of customer service.

6.2 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

The following section gives a brief account of the problem statement, the objectives of the study, the significance of the study, stakeholders of the study, the empirical investigation and hypothesis testing. The primary data was sourced by utilising the data gathering instrument namely; The University of Venda, Student Cafeteria Customer Service Evaluation Questionnaire. The resultant data were evaluated and interpreted as percentages. The data collection tool also provided room for

participants to respond to open questions. The responses thereto were qualitatively analysed.



6.2.1 Statement of the Problem

The University of Venda in Thohoyandou, South Africa, contracts out the student catering service to an independent food service operator. The food service operator is selected based on proven ability in satisfying students' nutritional needs. Upon understanding that customer service is an important concept in customer retention and that it needs to be conducted on a continuous basis to maximise revenue, it is necessary to determine the level of customer service provided by the student cafeteria. As such there is need for a study directed towards finding out if the food service operator is in touch with customer needs, and if not, identifying areas where if feasible, customer service can be improved. This study is to assess the current levels of customer service as well as initiate a process whereby a more efficient feedback mechanism between the food service operator and students is created to bring a personal touch to service delivery to students on campus.

6.2.2 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the research are as follows:

- i. to create a framework whereby students' changing needs are incorporated in the food service operators' delivery system; as suggested in Appendix I
- ii. to evaluate students' perceptions of the current level of customer service; as addressed in 5.2.6
- iii. to encourage the food service operator to maintain service quality and improve where necessary; as suggested in 6.7 and 6.7.3

6.2.3 Significance of the Study

The research will:

- i. provide an updated framework of information to the food service operator and the University on existing customer satisfaction levels



- ii. afford the food service operator the opportunity to identify short falls in service delivery and implement improvements where necessary as well as maintain standards in areas where service is good, thus attracting new customers while retaining existing ones in order to maximise profits
- iii. assist the food service operator to align service delivery with those needs
- iv. create continuous feedback between the food service operator and the students

6.2.4 Stakeholders of the Study

- i. The primary stakeholder is the food service operator who may utilise the results of the study to initiate any necessary improvements.
- ii. The secondary stakeholders are the students who patronise the cafeteria who might view the study as an opportunity to express more of their requirements.
- iii. The ultimate stakeholder is the University of Venda authority, which is fundamentally responsible for the appointment of the food service operator.

6.2.5 Empirical Investigations

The primary data was sourced by utilizing the data gathering instrument titled; The University of Venda, Student Cafeteria Customer Service Evaluation Questionnaire. The resultant data were evaluated and interpreted as percentages. The data collection tool also provided room for participants for open questions. The responses thereto were qualitatively analysed.

6.2.6 Testing the Hypothesis

The researcher developed a hypothesis in 4.5 which indicates that **the customer's perception of service can be positively influenced by the actions and attitudes of service staff as well as management procedures, practices, support and commitment to customer service.** After the review of literature and the empirical investigation, .The researcher concluded that the hypothesis is acceptable. The hypothesis is acceptable because when management is overt about its commitment to customer service by ensuring that its policies, guidelines and practices operationalize customer service, such dedication can translate into a positive perception of customer

service for the customer. An example could be if the student cafeteria had a policy that ensured that no customer stands in the queue for more than five minutes before being served, and to support such a policy management ensured that adequate staff members are available to clear orders as accurately and as quickly as possible. This will mean that customers will go into the student cafeteria with the perception that management is doing its best to ensure that the customer's meal experience is pleasant. Another commitment to customer service was highlighted in 2.9.1 and 2.9.2 where education, training, reward and recognition can empower employees such that they feel valued and empowered enough in such a way that their attitudes and actions are supportive of the customer service philosophy and in turn positively influence the customers perceptions of service.

6.3 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

Significant findings of the study are called from the literature study and the empirical investigation.

6.3.1 Findings From the Review of Literature

The literature review revealed that customer service is entrenched in the customer's perceptions and expectations. The literature study also emphasizes that in service encounters, employees who represent the organisation, are the organisation in the eyes of the customer. The review further illustrates that, the existence and level of customer service in any establishment is a direct reflection of the commitment of its top management such that it should energise the entire organisation and its employees.

The literature review outlines various dimensions upon which customers evaluate services. Even though the dimensions serve as guidelines, the absence of one dimension for each individual customer can translate to poor customer service. In addition the study of the literature leans towards a service value mix consisting of people, process and physical evidence as the pillars on which service is made tangible.

6.3.2 Results of the Empirical Investigation



Empirical findings are presented in the following categories:

6.3.2.1 Past Service Encounters

The researcher concluded that service quality had markedly improved over the past two years. New customers cited better management as a reason for buying from the cafeteria. The researcher noted that many of the students who patronised the cafeteria were regulars and those many had bursaries and had previous service encounters with the cafeteria. The option of good customer service was not singled out as reason for patronising the cafeteria. *As such the researcher deduced that the students were more concerned with other customer service elements, evident by the strong opinions mentioned on food prices of the core offering.*

6.3.2.2 Physical Evidence

The impression drawn from the study was that there is minor dissatisfaction with the service environment. Qualitative responses in Items 11-15 cited that students generally found the service environment and the décor acceptable. As is indicated in chapter five, 81% of the students who take away their meals gave varying reasons for the choice, with only two participants citing a bad environment in which to take their meals. The responses in Items 25, 26 and 38 indicate that students found the cafeteria to be adequately clean and the décor to be acceptable. *This indicates that the students do not consider physical evidence as a negative of the service delivery that could indicate poor service delivery by the food service provider.*

6.3.2.3 Core Offering (Food) and Related Items

Core offering specifics included food hygiene, nutrition, price, presentation, taste, portion/ size, temperature and variety. According to the findings there is a general satisfaction with the core offering and other related aspects. However, there is a shared concern with food prices, as two thirds of the participants cited highly priced menu items. In addition responses to Item 39 indicated that the majority of the participants considered that food prices had changed for the worse. The researcher also noted that current non customers cited high prices and a lack of bursaries as the reason for not eating in the cafeteria. *It can be deduced that a lack of price displays*

could be fuelling price complaints. The perceptions that the cafeteria is performing adequately but there is still room for improvement especially with price and price displays. There is also an indication (as indicated in the empirical findings in item 30) that participants did not find the food nutritious but they regarded the food portions as fair. Participants felt that food could be more hygienically handled and that there should be a better variety of the existing food items with the majority of the participants citing beef, chicken, fish, cooked vegetables, and soup and fruit juices.

6.3.2.4 Employees

Generally, the study found that employee individual personality traits were positive, as participants considered the employees friendly and pleasant. However, job specific interpersonal qualities relating to customer service such as efficiency, attentiveness, helpfulness and provision of information were found to be lacking. Employees should also be encouraged to acknowledge customers.

6.3.2.5 Service Delivery and Related Items

As the researcher wished to address objective (ii) in the study, the data collected has reflected that generally, students perceive the current levels of customer service in the cafeteria as tolerable. The most important concern raised by participants was that customer-waiting times were long. The general view is that service delivery has improved in the last two years. However a better flow of service could be considered by the food service operator in order to reduce queues. Queues have been highlighted as a major customer service problem in the student cafeteria such that 62.5% of the participants had to wait for more than 10 minutes and that the majority of the participants always found a queue. There are seemingly minimally shared expectations about operating hours, with an equal split of expectations for hours of operation. The food service operator could further investigate how it can accommodate students desired hours of operation without infringing on the establishments own operating policies, so that service could become more accessible at certain times.

6.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY



A major problem encountered in the study was the scarcity of scholarly materials on the concept of customer service as well as the application of the concept in university food service operations. Getting sources, which directly focused on the problem, was challenging in such a way that even the Internet provided few related articles.

An additional limitation was structuring the research gathering tool in such a way that included non-customers and customers and the decisions behind their purchase patterns in such that a broader perspective of the cafeteria service was incorporated.

6.5 CONCLUSIONS

The research has informed that according to the perceptions of the participants the core product and related items have positively changed to an acceptable degree, with the exception of price, where significant concerns have been raised. The researcher concluded that students perceive the level of customer service in the student cafeteria of the University of Venda to be tolerable. However there are significant concerns with lack of food price displays, perceived high priced menu items, queues and an inefficient workflow which leads to long queues. Additional areas for improvement should focus on the staff. Employee skills which directly relate to customer service, such as acknowledgement of customers, speed of processing orders and product information are lacking. Upon understanding that the food service operator provides operational training to the employees, specific training focusing on customer service is suggested on a continuous basis to allow for current service skills to be updated. In addition food stocks have to be sufficient before service commences to minimise situations where food orders cannot be processed due to depleted stock levels.

6.6 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study should serve as a resource for informing the food operator on the areas that require specific attention as well as create a formal and structured framework whereby students' changing needs are voiced and incorporated in the food service operator's delivery system. As mechanism for addressing objective (i) of the study, the



researcher proposes Appendix I as a framework for facilitating feedback between the food service operator and the students.

6.7 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are suggested in order to address objective (iii) of the study:

The food service operator should consider updating customer service training programs to train employees in customer service issues. Programs can be conducted on the job so that employees are constantly reminded of customer service. Staff training needs to focus on customer sensitivity to bring about significant improvement of customer perceptions of the employees ability and product knowledge. An ongoing scheme for training and feedback needs to be created.

Food price displays should also be considered and more food choices should also be given consideration. The operator should consider employees incentive programs to enhance customer services. Food prices could be addressed by creating speciality food menus at reduced prices and other items on specific days of the week to cater to those who cannot afford the perceived highly priced current menu items.

Adjusting flow of service to reduce waiting times is necessary. The food service operator can improve the flow of service by better aligning staff activities to reduce student queues and thus improve on speed of service. The researcher notes that reducing waiting times will not automatically translate to improved service, but also understands that delivering service in the least possible time will contribute to enhanced positive perceptions of customer service.

6.8 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Standards have to be maintained by the food service operator. Staff members have to be supported and motivated to maintain and increase standards so that customer service levels can be significantly improved bearing in mind that when standards are lowered there will be a decrease in existing customer satisfaction levels.



6.7.1 The Role of the University of Venda

The University should source more scholarly materials on customer service and make such material accessible in the University library to facilitate better information resource for further follow up research.

6.7.2 The Role of Students

Students have a role in expressing their specific service requirements. Students feel strongly about their rights to reduced priced and quality meals. These needs and requirements should be articulated in a formal and structured manner so that documentation exists on which to conduct further research and compare results in order to track changes in service quality. The Suggested Student Cafeteria Feedback Form (Appendix I) should allow students to articulate their needs on a continuous basis.

6.7.3 The Role of the Food Service Operator

The food service operator should ensure that the provision of staff training and customer service programs are on an ongoing basis. Employee incentives and programs should be visible for the employees as a motivation for the achievement of excellent customer service. In addition the service provider can provide comment cards to students on various aspects of service and indicated in the literature study to ensure that feedback is maintained between the cafeteria and students.

6.8 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Further research on customer service needs to be conducted as a follow up to establish if any highlighted concerns have been addressed. In addition other cafeterias in the University such as the staff cafeteria could also be evaluated to establish the perceptions of customer service.

6.9 FINAL WORD



The challenges presented by the survey were due to the intangible nature of the concept however, the survey has informed the company on where and how to take corrective action, thus providing mutual communication between the service provider and the students. The study has informed the food service operator on what its customers think. Specific opinions and perceptions on customer's service have emerged. In addition the survey has measured what students perceive to be the facts in the context of customer service as well as measuring the levels of satisfaction and dissatisfaction with the student cafeteria services. As such it can be held that the survey has provided a diagnostic tool for evaluating customer service based on the criteria discussed in the literature review. It has provided a clear and continuation point, through written documentation of a formal, documented mutual communication tool, between the food service provider and students as proposed in Appendix I. Gaps have been identified and recommendations have been suggested. The researcher hopes the study has improved feedback mechanisms for the food service provider and the students, thereby providing the basis for the development of an interactive and up to date system for gauging the degree and level of customer satisfaction with current service on a continuous basis.

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UNIVERSITY OF VENDA

STUDENT CAFETERIA CUSTOMER SERVICE EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Student,

We value your input in order to evaluate the current level of customer service in the student cafeteria. Your response to these questions will be used for an accurate assessment. Your responses will be treated with the utmost confidentiality.

INSTRUCTIONS

Please mark appropriately in one block with the symbol "X" to indicate your response to a particular question.

An example is given below:

I am a registered student for the year:

- 2002
 2003
 2004
 2005
 2006

All responses in the section marked "Other" should be simple and to the point.

PERSONAL INFORMATION

1 Gender

- Male
 Female

2 Age

- 18-20
 21-25
 26-30
 Over 30

3 Registration status

- Fulltime
 Part time

4 Type of residence

- University Accommodation
 Private Accommodation
 Home



UNIVERSITY OF VENDA

STUDENT CAFETERIA CUSTOMER SERVICE EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Student,

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INSTRUCTIONS

Please mark appropriately in one block with the symbol "X" to indicate your response to a particular question.

An example is given below:

I am a registered student for the year:

- 2002
- 2003
- 2004
- 2005
- 2006

All responses in the section marked "Other" should be simple and to the point.

PERSONAL INFORMATION

1 Gender

- Male
- Female

2 Age

- 18-20
- 21-25
- 26-30
- Over 30

3 Registration status

- Fulltime
- Part time

4 Type of residence

- University Accommodation
- Private Accommodation
- Home

THIS SECTION "A" IS TO BE COMPLETED IF YOU DO NOT EAT IN THE CAFETERIA

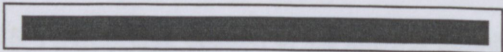
5. Did you eat in the cafeteria in the past?

- Yes
- No

6. Why don't you eat in the cafeteria currently?

- I eat at home
- I eat at KFC/Wimpy/ Shop rite/Spar/ Nandos/Other
- Cafeteria food is expensive
- It is inconvenient for me
- I have no bursary
- Poor service in the cafeteria
- Other reason (please specify)

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION
PLEASE RETURN THE QUESTIONNAIRE



THIS SECTION "B" IS TO BE COMPLETED IF YOU EAT IN THE CAFETERIA

7. Have you always eaten from the cafeteria in the past?

- Yes
- No

8. If No why the change (Why do you eat from the student Cafeteria now)?

- Good quality food
- Food is not expensive
- The service is good
- It is convenient for me
- I have a bursary
- Other reason (Please specify)

9. How often do you eat from the student cafeteria?

- Occasionally (once-twice a week)
- Regularly (more than 3 times a week)

10. Do you eat your meal within the cafeteria or do you take away to eat elsewhere?

- Eat in the cafeteria
- Takeaway



11. If you eat within the cafeteria indicate reason why?

- Convenience
- Good service
- I like the atmosphere
- I like to chat with my friends

Other reason (Please specify)

.....
.....
.....

12. If you take away your meal, indicate why.

- I like to eat in my room
- I like to eat at home
- I like to buy food before the service closes

Other (Please specify)

.....
.....

13. Would you bring a friend to the cafeteria to eat?

- Yes
- No

14. If Yes, Why?

- Convenience
- Good service
- Good atmosphere

Other.....
.....

Give reason for your choice:

.....
.....

15. If No, why not:.....
.....

16. Do you consider the service as reliable?

- Yes
- No

17. If Yes, explain why:.....
.....

18. If No, explain why not:.....
.....

19. Is the cafeteria operating hours suitable for you?

- Yes
- No

20. If No, Indicate what time would be suitable for you.

Breakfast from.....to.....

Lunch from.....to.....

Supper from.....to.....

Do you usually find a queue at the cafeteria?

- Yes
- No

22. If Yes, how long do you wait in the queue before you are served?

- Less than 5 Minutes
- 5-10 Minutes
- More than 10 Minutes

23. Who pays for your meal?

- Self
- Friends
- Bursary
- Parents/Guardian

24. Do you think prices match the quality of the food?

- Yes
- No

25. What is your opinion of the general cleanliness of the Cafeteria?

- Always clean
- Usually clean
- Mostly clean
- Never clean

26. Are tables cleaned and cleared before you sit down to eat?

- Always
- Sometimes
- Most of the time
- Rarely
- Never

27. Do you think the food is hygienically handled and served?

- Yes
- No

28. Is the food presented in a pleasant and attractive manner?

- Yes
- No

29. How does the food taste?

- Poor
- Acceptable
- Good
- Very Good
- Excellent

30. Do you think the food is nutritious?

- Yes
- No

31. What do you think of the food portions/size?

- Small
- Fair
- Medium
- Large

32. What do you think of the food temperature (Is hot food served hot and cold food served cold)?

- Yes
- No

33. Do you have a wide variety of food choices?

- Yes
- No

34. If **No** indicate the menu items you would like served in variety:

	MORE	LESS
Fish	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Beef	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Chicken	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cooked Vegetables	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Soup	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Salads	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rice	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pasta	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sandwiches	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fruit juices	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

35. What added service features would you like to see?

- Price displays
- Flexible operating hours
- Other (Please specify):

.....

.....

.....

36. Are you acknowledged (welcomed/greeted) by the service staff?

- Yes
- No



Do you think the cafeteria staff are:

- | | | |
|-------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Friendly | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Efficient | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Pleasant | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Quick | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Attentive | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Helpful | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Informative | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

38. What do you think of the attractiveness of the cafeteria?

- Poor
- Adequate
- Good
- Very good

39. How have the following changed in the past 2 years?

- | | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Food quality | <input type="checkbox"/> Better | <input type="checkbox"/> Worse |
| Food prices | <input type="checkbox"/> Better | <input type="checkbox"/> Worse |
| Food variety | <input type="checkbox"/> Better | <input type="checkbox"/> Worse |
| Overall cafeteria hygiene | <input type="checkbox"/> Better | <input type="checkbox"/> Worse |
| Cafeteria decor | <input type="checkbox"/> Better | <input type="checkbox"/> worse |
| Promptness of service | <input type="checkbox"/> Better | <input type="checkbox"/> Worse |
| Staff friendliness | <input type="checkbox"/> Better | <input type="checkbox"/> Worse |

40. All things considered what is your opinion of the service in the student cafeteria?

- Poor
- Acceptable
- Good
- Very good
- Excellent

41. Any further comments about the cafeteria:

.....

.....

.....

.....

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION.

APPENDIX B: Biographical Information



Gender

Item 1

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Male	29	58.0	58.0
Female	21	42.0	42.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0

Age

Item 2

	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent
18-20	14	28.0	28.0
21-25	33	66.0	66.0
26-30	3	6.0	6.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0

Registration status

Item 3

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Full time	49	98.0	98.0	98.0
	Part time	1	2.0	2.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Type of residence

Item 4

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	University accommodation	33	66.0	66.0	66.0
	Private accommodation	7	14.0	14.0	80.0
	Home	10	20.0	20.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

UNIVERSITY OF VENDA
LIBRARY

APPENDIX C: Past Service Encounters



Did you eat at the cafeteria in the past?

Item 5

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	3	6.0	8.8	8.8
	No	31	62.0	91.2	100.0
	Total	34	68.0	100.0	
Missing	System	16	32.0		
Total		50	100.0		

Why don't you eat at the cafeteria currently?

Item 6

- I eat at home

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	ticked	8	16.0	100.0	100.0
Missing	System	42	84.0		
Total		50	100.0		

-I eat at KFC/Wimpy/Shoprite/Spar/Nandos/Other

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	ticked	2	4.0	100.0	100.0
Missing	System	48	96.0		
Total		50	100.0		

-Cafeteria food is expensive

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	ticked	14	28.0	100.0	100.0
Missing	System	36	72.0		
Total		50	100.0		

-It is inconvenient for me

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	ticked	1	2.0	100.0	100.0
Missing	System	49	98.0		
Total		50	100.0		

-I have no bursary

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid ticked	18	36.0	100.0	100.0
Missing System	32	64.0		
Total	50	100.0		

-Poor service in the cafeteria

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid ticked	1	2.0	100.0	100.0
Missing System	49	98.0		
Total	50	100.0		

APPENDIX D: Past Service Encounters



Do you eat your meal with the other students?
Have you always eaten from the cafeteria in the past?

Item 7

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	12	24.0	75.0	75.0
	no	4	8.0	25.0	100.0
	Total	16	32.0	100.0	
Missing	System	34	68.0		
Total		50	100.0		

If no, why the change, why do you eat from the cafeteria now?

Item 8

-I have a bursary

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	ticked	1	2.0	50.0	50.0
	not ticked	1	2.0	50.0	100.0
	Total	2	4.0	100.0	
Missing	System	48	96.0		
Total		50	100.0		

How often do you eat at the student cafeteria?

Item 9

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Occasionally (once or twice per week)	6	12.0	37.5	37.5
	Regularly (more than 3 times a week)	10	20.0	62.5	100.0
	Total	16	32.0	100.0	
Missing	System	34	68.0		
Total		50	100.0		

UNIVERSITY OF VENDA
LIBRARY

Do you eat your meal within the cafeteria or do you take away to eat elsewhere? **Item 10**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Eat in the cafeteria	3	6.0	18.8	18.8
	Takeaway	13	26.0	81.3	100.0
	Total	16	32.0	100.0	
Missing	System	34	68.0		
Total		50	100.0		

If you eat in the cafeteria indicate reason why (qualitative responses)? **Item 11**

If you takeaway your meals indicate why (qualitative responses)? **Item 12**

Would you bring a friend to the cafeteria to eat? **Item 13**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	7	14.0	43.8	43.8
	no	9	18.0	56.3	100.0
	Total	16	32.0	100.0	
Missing	System	34	68.0		
Total		50	100.0		

If yes indicate why?
 -Good service

Item 14

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Ticked	1	2.0	50.0	50.0
	Not ticked	1	2.0	50.0	100.0
	Total	2	4.0	100.0	
Missing	System	48	96.0		
Total		50	100.0		

If no why not (qualitative responses)?

Item 15

What do you think of the attractiveness of the cafeteria?

Item 38

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Poor	6	12.0	40.0	40.0
	Adequate	8	16.0	53.3	93.3
	Good	1	2.0	6.7	100.0
	Total	15	30.0	100.0	
Missing	System	35	70.0		
Total		50	100.0		

What is your opinion of the general cleanliness of the cafeteria? Item 25

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Always clean	3	6.0	18.8	18.8
	Usually clean	8	16.0	50.0	68.8
	Mostly clean	4	8.0	25.0	93.8
	Never clean	1	2.0	6.3	100.0
	Total	16	32.0	100.0	
Missing	System	34	68.0		
Total		50	100.0		

Are tables cleaned and cleared before you sit down to eat? Item 26

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Always	3	6.0	18.8	18.8
	Sometimes	8	16.0	50.0	68.8
	Most of the time	3	6.0	18.8	87.5
	Rarely	2	4.0	12.5	100.0
	Total	16	32.0	100.0	
Missing	System	34	68.0		
Total		50	100.0		

Who pays for your meal?

Item 23

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Self	3	6.0	18.8	18.8
	bursary	6	12.0	37.5	56.3
	parents/guardian	7	14.0	43.8	100.0
	Total	16	32.0	100.0	
Missing	System	34	68.0		
Total		50	100.0		

Do you think prices match the quality of food?

Item 24

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	4	8.0	25.0	25.0
	No	12	24.0	75.0	100.0
	Total	16	32.0	100.0	
Missing	System	34	68.0		
Total		50	100.0		

Do you think food is hygienically handled?

Item 27

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	6	12.0	37.5	37.5
	No	10	20.0	62.5	100.0
	Total	16	32.0	100.0	
Missing	System	34	68.0		
Total		50	100.0		

Is the food presented in a pleasant and attractive manner?

Item 28

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	9	18.0	56.3	56.3
	No	7	14.0	43.8	100.0
	Total	16	32.0	100.0	
Missing	System	34	68.0		
Total		50	100.0		

How does the food taste?

Item 29

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Poor	3	6.0	18.8	18.8
	Acceptable	9	18.0	56.3	75.0
	Good	3	6.0	18.8	93.8
	Very good	1	2.0	6.3	100.0
	Total	16	32.0	100.0	
Missing	System	34	68.0		
Total		50	100.0		

Do you think the food is nutritious?

Item 30

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	7	14.0	43.8	43.8
	No	9	18.0	56.3	100.0
	Total	16	32.0	100.0	
Missing	System	34	68.0		
Total		50	100.0		

What do you think of the food portions/size?

Item 31

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Small	6	12.0	37.5	37.5
	Fair	7	14.0	43.8	81.3
	Medium	2	4.0	12.5	93.8
	Large	1	2.0	6.3	100.0
	Total	16	32.0	100.0	
Missing	System	34	68.0		
Total		50	100.0		

What do you think of the food temperature (is hot food served hot and cold food served cold)?

Item 32

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	9	18.0	56.3	56.3
	No	7	14.0	43.8	100.0
	Total	16	32.0	100.0	
Missing	System	34	68.0		
Total		50	100.0		

Do you have a wide variety of food choices?

Item 33

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	9	18.0	56.3	56.3
	No	7	14.0	43.8	100.0
	Total	16	32.0	100.0	
Missing	System	34	68.0		
Total		50	100.0		

If no, indicate the menu items you would like to served in variety:

Item 34

-Fish

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	More	3	6.0	60.0	60.0
	Less	2	4.0	40.0	100.0
	Total	5	10.0	100.0	
Missing	System	45	90.0		
Total		50	100.0		

-Beef

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	more	6	12.0	100.0	100.0
Missing	System	44	88.0		
Total		50	100.0		

-Chicken

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	More	4	8.0	80.0	80.0
	Less	1	2.0	20.0	100.0
	Total	5	10.0	100.0	
Missing	System	45	90.0		
Total		50	100.0		

-Cooked vegetables

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	More	6	12.0	85.7	85.7
	Less	1	2.0	14.3	100.0
	Total	7	14.0	100.0	
Missing	System	43	86.0		
Total		50	100.0		

APPENDIX F Continued...
-Soup

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	More	5	10.0	83.3	83.3
	Less	1	2.0	16.7	100.0
	Total	6	12.0	100.0	
Missing	System	44	88.0		
Total		50	100.0		

-Fruit Juices
-Salads

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	More	5	10.0	71.4	71.4
	Less	2	4.0	28.6	100.0
	Total	7	14.0	100.0	
Missing	System	43	86.0		
Total		50	100.0		

-Rice

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	More	3	6.0	50.0	50.0
	Less	3	6.0	50.0	100.0
	Total	6	12.0	100.0	
Missing	System	44	88.0		
Total		50	100.0		

-Pasta

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	More	3	6.0	50.0	50.0
	Less	3	6.0	50.0	100.0
	Total	6	12.0	100.0	
Missing	System	44	88.0		
Total		50	100.0		

APPENDIX F Continued...



-Sandwiches

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	More	4	8.0	66.7	66.7
	Less	2	4.0	33.3	100.0
	Total	6	12.0	100.0	
Missing	System	44	88.0		
Total		50	100.0		

-Fruit juices

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	More	6	12.0	85.7	85.7
	Less	1	2.0	14.3	100.0
	Total	7	14.0	100.0	
Missing	System	43	86.0		
Total		50	100.0		

-Efficient

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	6	12.0	40.0	40.0
	No	9	18.0	60.0	100.0
	Total	15	30.0	100.0	
Missing	System	35	70.0		
Total		50	100.0		

-Pleasant

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	8	16.0	53.3	53.3
	No	7	14.0	46.7	100.0
	Total	15	30.0	100.0	
Missing	System	35	70.0		
Total		50	100.0		

APPENDIX G: Employees



Are you acknowledged (welcomed/ greeted) by service staff? Item 36

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	5	10.0	33.3	33.3
	No	10	20.0	66.7	100.0
	Total	15	30.0	100.0	
Missing	System	35	70.0		
Total		50	100.0		

Do you think the cafeteria staff are:

Item 37

-Friendly?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	10	20.0	62.5	62.5
	No	6	12.0	37.5	100.0
	Total	16	32.0	100.0	
Missing	System	34	68.0		
Total		50	100.0		

-Efficient

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	6	12.0	40.0	40.0
	No	9	18.0	60.0	100.0
	Total	15	30.0	100.0	
Missing	System	35	70.0		
Total		50	100.0		

-Pleasant

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	8	16.0	53.3	53.3
	No	7	14.0	46.7	100.0
	Total	15	30.0	100.0	
Missing	System	35	70.0		
Total		50	100.0		

-Quick

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	3	6.0	20.0	20.0
	No	12	24.0	80.0	100.0
	Total	15	30.0	100.0	
Missing	System	35	70.0		
Total		50	100.0		

-Attentive

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	5	10.0	33.3	33.3
	No	10	20.0	66.7	100.0
	Total	15	30.0	100.0	
Missing	System	35	70.0		
Total		50	100.0		

-Helpful

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	10	20.0	66.7	66.7
	No	5	10.0	33.3	100.0
	Total	15	30.0	100.0	
Missing	System	35	70.0		
Total		50	100.0		

-Informative

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	6	12.0	40.0	40.0
	No	9	18.0	60.0	100.0
	Total	15	30.0	100.0	
Missing	System	35	70.0		
Total		50	100.0		



Do you consider the service as reliable?

Item 16

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	5	10.0	31.3	31.3
	No	11	22.0	68.8	100.0
	Total	16	32.0	100.0	
Missing	System	34	68.0		
Total		50	100.0		

If yes, explain why (qualitative responses)?

Item 17

If no, explain why not (qualitative responses)?

Item 18

Is the cafeteria operating hours suitable for you?

Item 19

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	8	16.0	50.0	50.0
	No	8	16.0	50.0	100.0
	Total	16	32.0	100.0	
Missing	System	34	68.0		
Total		50	100.0		

If no, indicate what time would be suitable for you.

Item 20

Breakfast from

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	6	1	2.0	14.3	14.3
	7	4	8.0	57.1	71.4
	7	1	2.0	14.3	85.7
	8	1	2.0	14.3	100.0
	Total	7	14.0	100.0	
Missing	System	43	86.0		
Total		50	100.0		

Breakfast to

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	9	3	6.0	42.9	42.9
	10	2	4.0	28.6	71.4
	10	1	2.0	14.3	85.7
	11	1	2.0	14.3	100.0
	Total	7	14.0	100.0	
Missing	System	43	86.0		
Total		50	100.0		

APPENDIX H Continued...



Lunch from

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	12	5	10.0	71.4	71.4
	12	1	2.0	14.3	85.7
	13	1	2.0	14.3	100.0
	Total	7	14.0	100.0	
Missing	System	43	86.0		
Total		50	100.0		

Lunch to

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2	1	2.0	14.3	14.3
	13	1	2.0	14.3	28.6
Valid	14	4	8.0	57.1	85.7
Missing	15	1	2.0	14.3	100.0
	Total	7	14.0	100.0	
Missing	System	43	86.0		
Total		50	100.0		

Supper from

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	5	1	2.0	14.3	14.3
	7	1	2.0	14.3	28.6
	16	1	2.0	14.3	42.9
	17	1	2.0	14.3	57.1
Missing	18	1	2.0	14.3	71.4
Total	18	1	2.0	14.3	85.7
	19	1	2.0	14.3	100.0
	Total	7	14.0	100.0	
Missing	System	43	86.0		
Total		50	100.0		



Supper to

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	8	1	2.0	14.3	14.3
	9	1	2.0	14.3	28.6
	19	1	2.0	14.3	42.9
	20	1	2.0	14.3	57.1
	20	2	4.0	28.6	85.7
	22	1	2.0	14.3	100.0
	Total	7	14.0	100.0	
Missing	System	43	86.0		
Total		50	100.0		

Do you usually find a queue at the cafeteria?

Item 21

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	16	32.0	100.0	100.0
Missing	System	34	68.0		
Total		50	100.0		

If yes, how long do you wait in the queue before you are served?

Item 22

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Less than 5 minutes	3	6.0	18.8	18.8
	5-10 minutes	3	6.0	18.8	37.5
	More than 10 minutes	10	20.0	62.5	100.0
	Total	16	32.0	100.0	
Missing	System	34	68.0		
Total		50	100.0		

What added service features would you like to see?

Item 35

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
	Price displays	16	100.0	100.0
	Flexible operating hours	12	75.0	75.0
	Total	16	32.0	100.0
Missing	System	34	68.0	
Total		50	100.0	

How have the following changed in the past 5 years?

Item 39

-Food quality

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Better	14	28.0	87.5	87.5
	Worse	2	4.0	12.5	100.0
	Total	16	32.0	100.0	
Missing	System	34	68.0		
Total		50	100.0		

-Food prices

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Better	3	6.0	20.0	20.0
	Worse	12	24.0	80.0	100.0
	Total	15	30.0	100.0	
Missing	System	35	70.0		
Total		50	100.0		

-Food variety

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Better	12	24.0	75.0	75.0
	Worse	4	8.0	25.0	100.0
	Total	16	32.0	100.0	
Missing	System	34	68.0		
Total		50	100.0		

-Overall cafeteria hygiene

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Better	11	22.0	68.8	68.8
	Worse	5	10.0	31.3	100.0
	Total	16	32.0	100.0	
Missing	System	34	68.0		
Total		50	100.0		



-Cafeteria décor

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Better	10	20.0	62.5	62.5
	Worse	6	12.0	37.5	100.0
	Total	16	32.0	100.0	
Missing	System	34	68.0		
Total		50	100.0		

-Promptness of service

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Better	12	24.0	75.0	75.0
	Worse	4	8.0	25.0	100.0
	Total	16	32.0	100.0	
Missing	System	34	68.0		
Total		50	100.0		

-Staff friendliness

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Better	12	24.0	75.0	75.0
	Worse	4	8.0	25.0	100.0
	Total	16	32.0	100.0	
Missing	System	34	68.0		
Total		50	100.0		

All things considered what is your opinion of the service in the student cafeteria?
Item 40

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Poor	3	6.0	18.8	18.8
	Acceptable	11	22.0	68.8	87.5
	Good	2	4.0	12.5	100.0
	Total	16	32.0	100.0	
Missing	System	34	68.0		
Total		50	100.0		

Any further comments about the cafeteria (Qualitative responses)? Item 41

APPENDIX I: Suggested Student Cafeteria Feed Back Form/Customer Comment Card



UNIVERSITY OF VENDA
STUDENT CAFETERIA CUSTOMER COMMENT CARD

Dear Student,

We value your opinion in order to maintain and /or improve the level of customer service in the student cafeteria.

INSTRUCTIONS

Please mark appropriately in one block with the symbol "X" to indicate your response to a particular question.

An example is given below:

I am a registered student for the year:

- 2003
- 2004
- 2005
- 2006
- 2007

All responses in the section marked "Other" should be simple and to the point.

1. How was the quality of your meal?

- Excellent
- Good
- Average
- Poor

Give a reason for your choice:

.....

.....

.....

.....

2. How was the attitude of staff during service?

- | | | |
|-------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Friendly | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Efficient | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Pleasant | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Quick | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Attentive | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Helpful | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Informative | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

3. Did you find a queue?

- Yes
- No

4. If Yes, how long did you wait in the queue before you were served?

- Less than 5 Minutes
- More than 10 Minutes

5. Was the meal affordable?

- Yes
- No

Give a reason for your choice:

.....

.....

.....

.....

6. If there were another student cafeteria on campus, would you still come back to this one?

- Yes
- No

Give a reason for your choice:

.....

.....

.....

.....

7. What in your opinion, can the cafeteria do to enhance the quality of your meal experience?

.....

.....

.....

.....

THANKYOU YOU FOR YOUR INPUT.

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