AN ASSESSMENT OF QUALITY OF CUSTOMER SERVICE PROVISION AND SATISFACTION AT LAFARGE ZAMBIA PLC

BY

CHIPO REBECCA NKHATA

A Dissertation Submitted to the University of Zambia in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Award of Master of Business Administration in Management Strategy.

THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA

LUSAKA

2020

COPYRIGHT

DECLARATION

I, **Chipo Rebecca Nkhata**, do hereby declare that the work in this study is solely mine. I further declare that this research has not been previously submitted at any other university and that all referencing from other works has been acknowledged.

Signature: …………………………..   Date: ……………………..

APPROVAL

This dissertation by Chipo Rebecca Nkhata is approved as a fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Business Administration of the University of Zambia.

Examiner 1   Signature   Date

……………………………   ………………………   …………………

Examiner 2   Signature   Date

……………………………   ………………………   …………………

Examiner 3   Signature   Date

……………………………   ………………………   …………………

Chairperson   Signature   Date
Board of Examiners

……………………………   ………………………   …………………

Supervisor   Signature   Date

……………………………   ………………………   …………………

ABSTRACT

This study was undertaken to assess the quality of customer service provision to Lafarge. The specific objectives were to establish the quality of customer service provision at Lafarge based on the SERVQUAL model, and to determine the extent of customer satisfaction with service provision at Lafarge. The customer service factors or variables which were used in the study to measure the level of customer service were derived from SERVQUAL model and these were assurance, responsive, reliability, tangibility and empathy; and these were incorporated in the research questionnaires. In order to conduct this investigation, the study adopted qualitative and quantitative methods following the descriptive design. The study sample comprised of 250 respondents sampled using purposive method from Lafarge retails in Kafue and Lusaka District. The research study was guided by the SERVQUAL model and four theories namely; Discrepancy theory, the Dissonance theory, the contract theory and the expectancy disconfirmation theory.The study adopted a questionnaire survey to collect data and the data was analyzed thematically and statistically using inferential and descriptive statistics. The findings from the study reveal that the general picture of customer service provision was good and met the expectations of customers. The result further indicated that there was a significant positive correlation among all the variables which led to the rejection of the null hypothesis. Therefore, the study recommended, among other things, that Lafarge Zambia Plc should make an arrangement at a certain period of time to conduct research on their customers towards the service they received from the complaints which can put Lafarge Zambia Plc in a better position to know the expectations from their customers in order to take measures to improve the services they received at the company. The company should also put priority to customer service by monitoring the quality of service, training of staff on customer service, and provision of logistics such as transport to its customers.

Key words: *Service Provision, SERVQUAL, Customer, satisfaction, quality, Lafarge Zambia Plc, expectations.*

DEDICATION

This piece of work is especially devoted to my angels, Emmanuel .A. Simukondya and James S. Simukondya. You always gave me a reason to hang on each time I felt like giving up.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

TABLE OF CONTENT

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF APPENDICES

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ANOVA   Analysis of Variance

EDP   Expectancy Disconfirmation Paradigm

ICT   Information communication and Technology

SD   Standard Deviation

SERVQUAL   Service Quality

SPSS   Statistical Package for Social Sciences

UNZA   University of Zambia

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Customer satisfaction is commonly defined as a "post-choice evaluation which varies along a hedonic continuum from unfavourable to favourable, in terms of whether or not the experience of a specific purchase was at least as good as it was supposed to be" (Jun et al. 2001, p. 142). It can also be broadly defined as a difference between customers' expectations and experience performance after using a service and/or product at a certain period.

Quality of service in the manufacturing industry is defined by the availability or absence of the quality dimensions.

Service quality is the measure of the extent to which the customer is experiencing the level of service that he/she is expecting or the ability of a service to bear on it the total features and characteristics that satisfy customer needs.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1. Introduction

This chapter has provided the broad background information that circles the perspective of the research. The background is followed by the statement of the problem under investigation, the purpose of the study, the significance of the study, the research objectives and questions. The chapter also presents the definition of terms as they have been used in the study.

1.2. Background

Lafarge Zambia Public limited company(Plc) formerly known as Chilanga Cement was founded in 1949, privatized in 1957, nationalized in 1973 and was the first state owned company to be re-privatized in 1994 and also the first company to be listed on the Lusaka Stock Exchange. In 2007, Chilanga cement was changed to Lafarge Cement Zambia to align the company with the international Lafarge group. Due to the fact that Lafarge produces various building materials and not just cement, it is now called Lafarge Zambia Plc so that it is not restricted to cement only. Lafarge Zambia Plc has various types of cement for different uses such as roadcem, wallcrete, mphamvu, supaset, powerplus, powercrete and also a variety of aggregates such as fluxstone, quarry dust and also kilnstones which are in different sizes dependent on the use at hand. Each cement type has got a specific use and this information is on the bags in which the cement is packaged. Lafarge Zambia Plc has customers ranging from merchants, contractors through to the mines. The cement is offered both locally and also exported to other countries such as Angola, Burundi, Zimbabwe, Malawi, and Tanzania with the majority of the export being taken to Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

There has been no external or internal research done about Lafarge with regards to assessing the quality of service provision to Lafarge customers. It was important to undertake this study to ascertain as to whether Lafarge customers were satisfied with the service provided to them or not. For any company to grow there is need to provide quality service which will satisfy customers and thereby making them loyal to the company. The loyal customers are less likely to leave the company than those who are not loyal. It is therefore very important for any company

to provide high quality customer service which may lead to loyal customers and ultimately more revenue.

Lyndsay (2018) defines quality customer service as the key differentiator between good, bad and indifferent companies. Good quality customer service keeps customers coming back; bad customer service drives customers away, taking their friends, family and workmates with them. All else being equal, good quality customer service gives the edge over competitors.

The success of any organization is measured in its ability to quickly respond to market changes with more efficient satisfaction and customer retention. According to Allred and Addams (2000), service quality is a significant issue in the service industry, and more importantly, for financial service providers, who have difficulty demonstrating to their customers the differentiation by products alone. Service quality is the result of human interaction between the service provider and the customer. Marketers of products and services needs to realize that to successfully leverage service quality as a competitive edge, they first need to correctly identify the antecedents of what the consumer perceives as "service quality". Many researchers have suggested that there is a strong correlation between the ability of customer service providers to develop strong customer relationships with consumers which attribute to outcomes such as customer satisfaction, customer service quality and loyalty.

In the manufacturing industry such as that of Lafarge, service quality is among the most crucial determinant of customer satisfaction and excellent customer service (Clark *et al*., 2004). Service quality is a quality management term used to describe achievement in service. Since the mid-1980s, service quality has been a priority theme in both marketing and logistics research, running parallel to the interest in quality, quality management and satisfaction in companies, (Fisk *et al*., 1993; Shet *et al*., 2006; Richey *et al*., 2007. in Fuentes, 2008, p.651) The effective management of customer service requires that service be defined, standards for its management established, measurement be carried out, and a program for control initiated (Heskett, 1994). Customer service levels determine the efficiency and effectiveness of an organization.

Business in the manufacturing industry has been greatly influenced by the inclusion of concepts such as service quality, excellent customer service and relationship marketing. These concepts

are among the most crucial determinants of customer satisfaction. Nowadays there are a lot of cement companies that offer services to their clients' such as individuals and corporate firms.

Service quality is the measure of the extent to which the customer is experiencing the level of service that he/she is expecting or the ability of a service to bear on it the total features and characteristics that satisfy customer needs. Quality of service in the manufacturing industry is defined by the availability or absence of the quality dimensions. The absence of these quality dimensions result in service gaps. The service gaps are a result of variations or deviations of customer service delivered from customer service expectations. In this type of industry, customer service is determined by factors such as time, dependability, communication and convenience. Customer satisfaction is commonly defined as a "post-choice evaluation which varies along a hedonic continuum from unfavourable to favourable, in terms of whether or not the experience of a specific purchase was at least as good as it was supposed to be" (Jun et al. 2001, p. 142). It can also be broadly defined as a difference between customers' expectations and experience performance after using a service and/or product at a certain period [Azman, Ilyani Ranlan et al. 2016, Mosahab, Mahamad & Ramayah 2010].

Customers compare perceived service with expected service in which if the former falls short of the latter the customers are disappointed (Holmberg, 2000). Customer satisfaction is the primary focus for all service providers but it comes with the challenges of meeting customer expectations which differ depending on the client and the type of industry in which the client operates. In 1988 Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry developed a generic instrument called SERVQUAL to measure service quality based on input from focus groups. It is based on the proposition that service quality can be measured as the gap between the service that the customers expect and the service they perceive to have received and is calculated as the difference in the two scores where better service quality results in a smaller gap. Although the instrument was developed within the marketing sector, it is also being used in a variety of organizational settings, it is for this reason that the model was used to analyze the of service quality of Lafarge to its customers.

1.3. Statement of the problem

From the above discussed background of the company, it is clear that there has been an increase in the services that the cement manufacturing industries **are** offering. Comparisons have risen in

terms of the quality of service each company provides. This has given customers a wider choice to pick from different providers who now have to fight for market share as competition increases. In any organisation customer service is determined by factors such as time, dependability, communication and convenience. Customer dissatisfaction is a common phenomenon in such industries with an average of 50 percent of clients perceiving that their most important service provider was not meeting their expectations. Quality of service is defined by the availability or absence of the quality dimensions. The absence of these quality dimensions result in service gaps. The service gaps are a result of variations or deviations of customer service delivered from customer service expectations. This research will look at what is causing these problems of poor services and what recommendations can be done and also possible solutions in order that there is good quality of services being provided to customers so as to bring about satisfaction.

The demand for cement is met by local production by the three major producers Lafarge Zambia Plc, Dangote and Zambezi Portland Plc. Lafarge Zambia Plc currently own 58% of the market share, followed by Dangote cement with approximately 24%, Zambezi Portland with 11% and the others. It is however important to note that Lafarge Zambia Plc is a company that was at one time known to be a monopoly as it was the only cement producing company then and hence owned 100% of the market share. The coming in of other cement companies in the industry reduced the market share percentage from 100% to the current 58%. The reduction in market share affected the sales of the company as can be seen in the figure below.

Figure 1.1 clearly indicates that the cement sales have been declining from the year 2014, this could be as a result of the reduced market share of the company. The sales of any company are the heartbeat of the company, without sales, companies are at a risk of making losses. The researcher believes that the sales figures may be largely affected by the quality of customer service, hence the need to assess the quality of customer service for Lafarge.
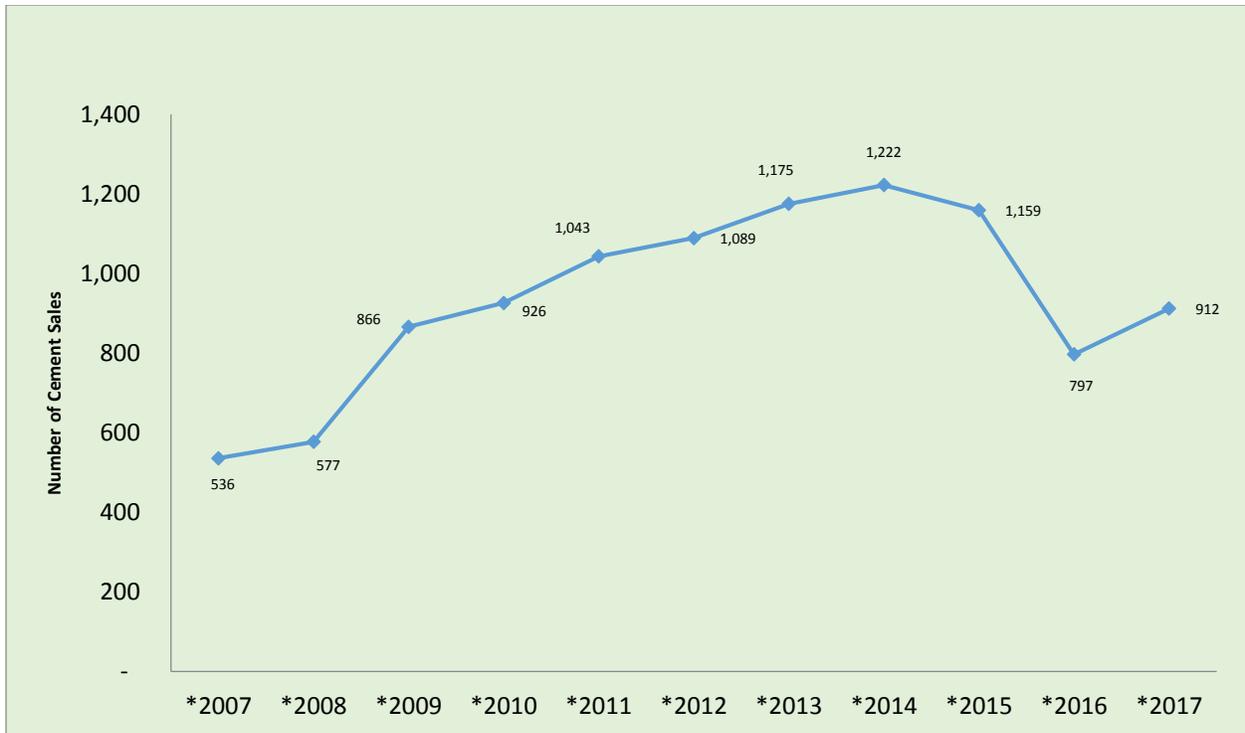
Figure 1.1: Trend of Cement sales for Lafarge Zambia Plc

Source: Lafarge Zambia plc Annual report 2013 page 27 and 2017 page 7

Figure 1.1 above is indicating that the sales reduced 1,222 thousand tones in 2014 to 912 thousand tones in 2017.

1.4. Research General Objective

The main objective of this study is to assess the quality of customer service provision and satisfaction at Lafarge.

1.4.1. Specific Objective

1. To establish the quality of customer service provision at Lafarge based on the SERVQUAL model.
2. To determine the extent of customer satisfaction with service provision at Lafarge.

1.5.Research questions

1. What is the quality of customer service provision at Lafarge based on the SERVQUAL model?
2. What is the extent of customer satisfaction with service provision at Lafarge?

1.6. Significance of the study

As it has been seen from figure 1.1 above, there has been a decline in cement sales for the company. This study is important to Lafarge Zambia Plc, because it will scientifically determine the quality of service being provided to their customers, meeting customer expectations hence leading to customer satisfaction and also highlighting the service quality dimensions that are critical in satisfying customers. This will then help the company focus efforts on the key dimensions that are directly associated with customer satisfaction. The sharp decline in the market share from 100% to the current 58% calls for concern, could it be that the company does not provide quality service to its customers?

This research answers this and many more other questions which relates to market share and the quality of customer service. The literature review has also supported the relationship between customer service quality and customer loyalty. For example according **to** Gummesson (1987), long term relationships with customers are especially important in industries. Where relationships with customers can be more expensive to establish, it is important for a company to recognize that high satisfaction leads to high customer loyalty, and many companies today are aiming for total customer satisfaction. Customer loyalty is dependent on the customer's actual satisfaction, as well as good service provision.

It was justifiable to undertake such a research so that Lafarge maintain or increase the current market share through provision of quality customer service. All other factors being constant, it is most likely that the increase in the market share of the company leads to the increased sales. This is evidenced by the research entitled "Customer satisfaction and business performance: a firm's level analysis" done by Paul Williams (2011). His aim was to examine the relationships between customer satisfaction and a variety of company performance metrics at the firm's level of analysis and found that there were significant, and moderate to strong associations between

satisfaction levels and a firm's financial and market performance. Specifically, there were strong links between customer satisfaction, and retention, revenue, earnings per share and stock price. The results from this study are likely to be used as references for further research work done by anyone who might be interested in this area of study, it will also be very helpful to Lafarge Zambia plc to make informed decision in regards to quality customer service provision to its customers. Finally the study is likely to help customers to express their feelings in relating to the way Lafarge is delivering services with expectation to receive improved service quality.

1.7. Scope of the study

The study focused only on the performance sales of the cement covering the period of 2007 to 2016 and the responses from customers were collected through questionnaires in the period February 2018 to July 2018.The results from this study is only limited to Lafarge Zambia plc cannot be applied to the other companies in the cement industry.

1.8. Limitations of the Study

The data was collected using self-reported questionnaire and may, therefore, have been subject to misreporting either deliberately or unintentionally. Additionally, causation could not be determined because of the nature of the study design.

1.9. Structure of the dissertation

In this chapter the researcher provided and explained the background to the study, the statement of the problem, purpose, the research objectives, and questions. It also provided the significance of the study, delimitation or scope of the study and the operational definitions used in the study.

In chapter Two, the relevant literature of the study has been discussed. Literature has been reviewed from both foreign and local studies which supported and bridged the gap of the study. In chapter Three, the theoretical framework, the conceptual framework and the hypothesis were outlined. In chapter Four, the methodology of the study particularly, the research design, research study area or site, study population, study sample, sampling techniques, instruments used for data collection, the procedure for data collection and data analysis. In chapter Five, the findings of the res earch study have been presented according to the themes drawn from the

research questions. The findings of the study were discussed in chapter Five. The discussion has been done under themes emerging from the findings of the study objectives. In chapter Six, the conclusion and recommendations of the study will be provided.

1.10. Summary

This chapter has presented the background to the study, the statement of the problem, purpose of the study, objectives and research questions, significance, delimitation, limitations, and operational definitions. It is clear that not much of research has been done regarding quality of customer service provision at Lafarge Plc. However, evaluation of customer service provision has been overlooked, as one of the researchers acknowledged and suggested inquiry to the oversight. The next chapter presents the literature review.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter the researcher reviewed some of the relevant literature on the quality of customer service provision in production firms. The literature review helps to identify the gaps in the existing knowledge that this study aimed to contribute. The researcher also presents some of the studies conducted in Zambia, the world and sub-Sahara Africa. This is done in order to relate to the current evaluation study of the quality of customer service provision at Lafarge Zambia Plc. The chapter ends with a summary on the literature that has been reviewed.

2.2 Concept of satisfaction in Business

According to the advanced english dictionary (Microsoft corporation, 2014), the word 'satisfaction' means, "the contentment one feels when one has fulfilled a desire, need, or expectation" or "state of being gratified or satisfied". Therefore satisfaction can easily be understood as an act whereby there must be one party that can give or has an obligation of giving the other party some kind of experience be it from a service or some goods or combination of both. Or, as a phenomenon which individual person experience in relation to his or her personal needs or expectations concerning the realization of those needs or/and expectation. Satisfaction can also be a person's feelings of pleasure or disappointment that results from comparing a product's perceived performance or outcome with their expectations (Kotler and Keller, 2009). There is broad accord that service quality and customer satisfaction are different constructs, but there is some agreement on the nature of their relationship, although both influence customers' future product or service selection intentions (Tian-Cole and Cromption, 2003).

2.2.1. Types of satisfaction in Business

There are multiple types of satisfaction depending on many factors most notable being context and author's perception and knowledge depth. Consumer satisfaction has been typically theorised as either an emotional or cognitive response (Giese & Cote, 2002). This means that, at

one point, satisfaction can be categorized basing on whether it has originated from either individual's state of the emotion or individual's mental response to a certain experience.

2.2.2. Emotional response satisfaction in Business

According to Lin and Mattila (2010) satisfaction is referred as "an emotional response". Emotion is also inherent and natural in every individual, they produce individual psychological, subjective and behavioural responses. This means that, satisfaction at this level is brought by the various emotional changes that have been triggered by the fulfilment of a certain expectation, need or want within an individual.

2.2.3. Cognitive satisfaction in Business

This concept refers to as a buyer's cognitive state. It tends to follow the traditional five step classification outlining problem recognition, information search, alternative evaluation, choice and outcome evaluation as the key stages in consumer decision processes (Erasmus et al. 2001, Schiffman et al 2007) In this category, the satisfaction an individual receive comes from the fact that an individual buyer is aware of the fact that he or she will be adequately or inadequately rewarded for the sacrifices he or she has undergone in the process of attaining the satisfaction for his or her expectation or and needs.

Emotional satisfaction and cognitive response satisfaction have been chosen as the most notable types of satisfaction because they fall right under the dominion of the study as the study involves the customer satisfaction which can easily be understood as belonging in either emotional or cognitive satisfaction.

2.3. Overview of customer service provision

This is an act of providing a service to customers before, during and after a purchase or can be described as the act of taking care of the customer's needs by providing and delivering professional, helpful, high quality service and assistance before, during, and after the customer's requirements are met. Customer service is another attribute customers consider in choosing a service provider, by assessing the quality of service and the manner in which it is provided. Service quality well blended with customer service yields customer satisfaction (Bardi *et al.,*

1990). Customer satisfaction is a collective outcome of perception, evaluation and psychological reactions to the consumption experience with a product or service (Lambert, 1990).

According to Holmberg (2000, p.36) "satisfaction is a person's feeling of pleasure or disappointment resulting from comparing a product's perceived performance or outcome in relation to his or her expectations". The level of satisfaction increases when the quality of service exceeds the wants, needs and expectations of the customer (Anderson and Sullivan, 1993). While there is no consensus as to a single definition for customer service, Lalonde *et al*. (1991); Bardi *et al*. (1990), identified three principal ways in which people think of customer service. These may be thought of as three levels of involvement or awareness regarding customer service, and include the following: Customer service as an activity. This level treats customer service as a particular task that must be accomplished to satisfy the needs of the customer.

In addition, customer service as a performance measure is another level of involvement and awareness. This level stresses customer service in the context of specific performance measures such as percentage of orders delivered on time and complete, and number of orders processed within acceptable time limits. This level represents an enhancement over the previous one, but it is important to look beyond the performance measures themselves and to see that actual customer satisfaction is achieved.

Customer service is also considered a philosophy. This level elevates the interpretation of customer service to a firm's wide commitment to customer satisfaction through the provision of superior levels of customer service. This way of viewing customer service is entirely consistent with today's emphasis by many firms on the topic of quality and quality management. Rather than viewing customer service narrowly as an activity or as a set of performance measures, this explanation involves a dedication to customer service which pervades the entire firm, and becomes ingrained in all of its activities. According to Seth (2004), customer satisfaction can be achieved through the provision of superior levels of customer service. Customer service levels determine the efficiency and effectiveness of an organization (Bardi *et al,* 1990). Little (1991) identified important concepts to customer service as special request, communicating information, post-sales support, accuracy and recovery from errors.

2.4. Indicators of quality of service provision

These are six indicators of quality of service provision in most businesses, this study outlines them as follows:

2.4.1. Timeliness

It involves the accuracy of billing, accuracy of record keeping and the completion of service at designated time. Furthermore, it is important for firms to meet the demands stated in a particular order in terms of quantity and quality upon arrival, in terms of whether or not the package sustained any sort of damages. If any complaints were to be brought forward and mismanaged, it would lead to customer dissatisfaction and further prompt a switch to the other competitors in the industry.

2.4.2. Condition and Accuracy of order

Sound interaction between personnel and the customers had been discussed being a factor contributing to customer satisfaction. The ability of the personnel to distinguish regular clients is equally important to learn different preferences, problem solving and improve knowledge on the products as well as providing customized attentions that will increase satisfaction in return encouraging future repurchases.

2.4.3. Quality of information

The ability of any customer centric company to include relevant product information is essential to attract customers' attention to their specific service and promotions which meet their needs. The overall customers' satisfaction can be affected by the information provided, in terms of trustworthiness and quality of information which would help customers in making better decisions. Parasumaran (1988) suggested that firms should consider including multiple languages in the information provided.

2.4.4. Availability and Quality of personnel

It is of great importance that personnel should always be available in case of queries from customers and also they should be staff that have ample information on the products they are offering.

2.4.5. Retention and loyalty of customers

Offering quality service to the customer is very important as it brings about retention and loyalty of the customer. Loyalty is when the customer just wants to be using the same service provider and retention refers to the percentage of customer relationships that, once established, a business is able to maintain on a long-term basis. This will bring about good perception which is how the clients perceive the Lafarge as a company.

2.4.6. Increased sales and profits

Due to the customers being satisfied, the company providing good customer service will increase in its sales hence the profits as well, this will bring about availability of resources needed by the employees and this will make work more efficient.

2.5. Schema of work

The relationship between service quality variables and customer satisfaction variables can be shown as figure above. The five traditional service quality dimensions have been developed by Parasuraman and adopted by many researchers as an appropriate model to measure the service quality. The measurement was to analyse the expected service. In our case study the technique measured the correlation between service quality elements and customer satisfaction.

2.6. How customer service affect sales

Martins (2017) study on why excellent customer service is crucial to improving sales outlines the strong relationship between customer service and how it affects sales. He stated that happy customers buy more form the company. Retaining loyal customers leads to repeat purchases and keeping your customer satisfaction high is great for getting referrals. The better your customer service, the more likely that your customers' price sensitivity will drop. Satisfied customers who

feel like they are valued by the company are generally much more willing to spend more than new customers.

2.6.1. Up-Selling

Not only are existing customers more likely to spend more, they are also easier to up sell to ten times easier actually. If you're about to launch a new product, or you want to increase sales for a certain item, your loyal customers are one of your best options. Customers who have consistently received good customer service, along with good products, are more likely to be loyal to your brand. Because of how high their satisfaction is, they are much more open to trying new products. Remember that their price sensitivity is also lower! Not only are they more willing to try a new product, they're probably going to pay the most for it. Provide excellent customer service and half the work of your advertising is done for you (Martins, 2017).

2.6.2. Higher Lifetime Value

This all leads to a much higher lifetime value (LTV) for your customers. Happy customers can have an LTV six times higher than regular customers and LTV is important. If a customer's value is higher, they're more profitable for your company and much more important to keep. These customers can be five times as likely to buy from you again and are four times as likely to refer your company to another potential customer. So it isn't only important to make sure your customer service is top notch, but also to make sure that it stays that way. Retain those happy customers (Martins, 2017).

2.6.3. Acquisition vs. Retention

The referrals your satisfied customers give are just another way to help boost those sales. Although retaining customers is incredibly important, that doesn't mean that customer acquisition is redundant. Every company wants and needs new customers to keep the business alive and growing. And it's especially important for small businesses. For example if your product like cement is good, your customers are much more likely to talk about your company to friends and family. They may even post about it online, where their reach is far wider. The writer further says after having a positive experience with a business, 83% of people are actually willing to refer that company to another person. The relationship between customer service and

sales is symbiotic, so why not take advantage of it? Improve your customer service today and you could potentially increase your customer base by that 83%. When you consider that it costs 4 to 10 times more to acquire a new customer than it does to retain one, it's obvious that creating a fantastic customer service is a much more cost effective path.

2.7. How Customer Acquisition and Retention Affect Sales

The difference between acquisition and retention can be vast not only in cost, but in growth. Retained and loyal customers can help increase your incremental growth by up to 20% a year. And that's nothing to be sniffed at. Without customers, any business would be redundant. It's important to appreciate the customers who are loyal to you and consider their needs.

However, acquiring new customers is important for rapid growth. Although it is far more expensive to your company, it can often be worth it. New customers can be up to 2.8 times more important for rapid revenue growth than retained customers. If retained customers can increase your growth by 20%, consider what acquired customers can do for your company.

Customer service can no longer just be an aftercare thought. For example, if potential customers are browsing your website, this is when your customer service can change that lead into a conversion. On-site advisors and web chat features are always helpful in pushing customers towards a sale. If a customer is finding your website difficult to navigate, or they can't find the item they want, 78% of them may simply abandon their cart if the customer service isn't good enough to help them. But with excellent Customer Service, you can avoid this. Your operators should be there to lend a hand when it's needed and they should be actively looking for people that they can help on your website.

2.7.1. The effect of unhappy customers on Business

If a customer has received a faulty item or is confused by a service you provide, helping them the first time should be a priority. First contact resolution can save you money in the long-run. Of course, your employees need to be well trained, have the right temperament, and be experts in the product or service in question. Without them doing a fantastic job on your frontline, those unhappy customers can become a nightmare. One of the most famous examples is that of David Carroll and United Airlines. After United's employees broke David's guitar, the airline refused

to admit its mistake or pay for the damage. This shameful Customer Service led to David writing a song about United using his broken guitar as a prop which eventually cost the company $180 million.

And it doesn't seem like they have learned from their mistakes. United have faced many scandals so far in 2017. From dragging a man off of a plane, to a scorpion falling from an overhead bin, United's faux pas don't seem to be letting up.

And you can be rest assured that they are still refusing to admit that their customer service is a little less than stellar. All of this saw their stock prices drop and their market capitalisation fall by as much as $770 million. Figure 2.1 shows the summary of how unhappy customers affect business.

According to Douglas & Connor, (2003, p.166), Parasuraman et al., (1985, p.42), and Ladhari, (2008, p.172), the intangible elements of a service (inseparability, heterogeneity and perishability) are the critical determinants influencing service quality perceived by a consumer. This means that a service must be well defined by the provider in terms of its characteristics in order to understand how service quality is perceived by consumers. According to Johns, (1999, p.954), a service could mean an industry, a performance, an output, an offering or a process and it is defined differently in various service industries. The differences in service industries are based on the characteristics of service which include; intangibility, heterogeneity, perishability and inseparability. The importance of excellent customer service to improving sales shown in Figure 2.1.
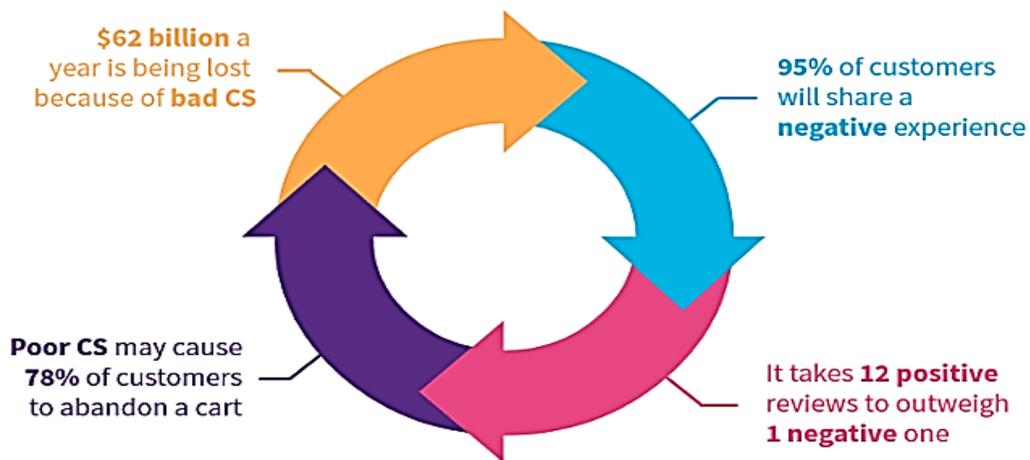
Figure 2.1: Summary of Statistics for the Importance of Excellent Customer Service to Improving Sales

Intangibility means there is no physical product, nothing to be touched, tasted, smelled or heard before being purchased and this therefore means that it is difficult for consumer to understand the nature of what they receive. An example would be a telecommunication company offering mobile services to consumers; here the consumer makes just calls and does not receive any physical product. In grocery stores, it is very difficult to evaluate intangibility because their activities are centered on the physical products. This means that service providers must try to determine the level of intangibility of services and try to include tangible elements that could aid understanding of expectation from the consumer's perspective (Beamish & Ashford, 2007, p.240). Heterogeneity means that, difference which comes in at the level of delivery of service due the difference in human behaviour of those offering services and the consumer. Example occurs when a salesperson offers assistance to one customer at the counter, that same person cannot offer exactly the same thing to the next customer because of differences in behaviours.

This is why it is difficult to determine the quality and level of service provided since consumers and service providers are different, the same consumer could act differently with the same service provider (Beamish & Ashford, 2007, p.241). Perishability means that, since services are produced and consumed at the same time implying they cannot be stored for later usage. If the service is not used then, it cannot be used again. This does not however hold in every service industry (Beamish & Ashford, 2007, p.241). An example occurs when a person books a hotel

room for a night and does not use it, no other person can use at that same time. Inseparability means services are consumed as they are purchased. An example is seen when a consumer is making a telephone call, he/she consumes the service while paying the charges. This implies that the consumer is involved in the production and delivery of the service meaning he/she takes special note of what is actually produced by the service provider (Beamish & Ashford, 2007, p.240).

2.8. How unhappy customers share experiences with other

According to Asubonteng et al., (1996), due to intense competition and the hostility of environmental factors, service quality has become a cornerstone marketing strategy for companies. This highlights how important improving service quality is to organisations for their survival and growth since it could help them tackle these challenges they face in the competitive markets. This means that service-based companies are compelled to provide excellent services to their customers in order to have a sustainable competitive advantage. There is however, a need for these organisations to understand what service quality is in order to attain their objectives. In service marketing literature, service quality is generally defined as the overall assessment of a service by the customers, (Eshghi et al., 2008, p.121) or the extent to which a service meets customer's needs or expectations, Asubonteng et al., (1996).

Parasuraman et al., (1985) define service quality as "The discrepancy between consumers' perceptions of services offered by a particular firm and their expectations about firms offering such services". If what is perceived is below expectation, consumer judges quality as low and if what is perceived is meets or exceeds expectation then consumer sees quality to be high. Critical component of service quality identified are; consumer's expectation which is seen as what they feel service provider should offer and this is influenced by his/her personal needs, past experience, word-of-mouth and service provider's communications, Parasuraman et al., (1985, p.49). However, this meaning of expectation is that of service quality literature which is different from expectation in the customer satisfaction literature which defines expectation as predictions made by consumer about what is likely to happen during an impending transaction. Consumers' perception of performance is what he/she experiences, (Parasuraman et al., 1988, p.17).

Just like the encounter with Ocean Marketing, customers who have suffered bad Customer Service (CS) will usually share this with others and will even tell them not to shop with that company. Customers are much more likely to talk about negative experiences with a business than positive ones. 95% of customers who have received bad service will tell other people about it. Even if you have a large base of loyal customers, meagre customer service can change all that. If your customers feel unappreciated, like they can't get any help from your company, or that your staff are rude or impatient, they may take their money elsewhere. Yes, even if your products or services are top-notch.

2.9. Empirical Studies: Global outlook of Studies in Customer Satisfaction

According to Nantapaibon (2008) Customer satisfaction is an expression of the customer's feelings in positive ways towards the experiences after using the service, of which each of the service and situation had met their expectations. Those feelings can be classified into several levels based on the environment and conditions of service at the time. Service quality and customer satisfaction have received a great deal of attention from both scholars and practitioners because of their relevancy and relationship according to Eshghi et al., (2008) and the main reason for focusing on these issues is to improve overall performance of organisations (Magi & Julander, 1996, p.40).

Zeithmal and Bitner (2003) define satisfaction as the consumer fulfilment response hence high quality of service can result in high customer satisfaction. Watson et.al. (2001) indicated that the concept of service quality is different from satisfaction. Satisfaction is usually a short-term measure whereas service quality evolves over time and relates to the customer's developed attitude toward a service. Service quality can also be defined in terms of reducing the gap between customers' expectations for excellent service and their perceptions of services delivered.

Unlike current study that focuses on a cement production and sales services, Markovi´c and Raspor (2010) in their work with regards to measuring perceived service quality using servqual, it was a case study of the Croatian Hotel Industry. Its purpose was to examine customers' perceptions of service quality in the Croatian hotel industry with the aim to assess the perceived service quality of hotel attributes and to determine the factor structure of service quality perception. Their study employed the use of a modified servqual scale so as to assess service

quality perceptions from the perspective both the domestic and international tourists. 15 hotels were used for data collection purpose in the Opatija Riviera (Croatia), using a self-administered questionnaire. The study reviewed high expectations of hotel guests regarding service quality.

Kumar et al, (2009) used the SERVQUAL model in a research so as to determine the relative importance of critical factors in delivering service quality of banks in Malaysia (Kumar et al., 2009, p.211). In this article they modified the SERVQUAL model and considered six dimensions; tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance empathy and convenience and these consist of 26 statements. Convenience was considered because of it being an important determinant of satisfaction for banking customers in Malaysia and contributed very highly in the customers' appreciation of the quality of services offered by the bank (Kumar et al, 2009, p. 214). This study was carried on banking customers regardless neither of which bank one used nor how they did their transactions, could be domestically, internationally among others (Kumar et al, 2009, p.215). After the study was carried out, they ended up with the recommendation that banks needed to be more competent in delivering their services and fulfilling the assurance of customers and providing the banking services more conveniently (Kumar et al, 2009, p.211).

In addition, studies by Ismail and Yunan (2016) which was aimed at determining service quality as a predictor of customer satisfaction and customer loyalty and examining the correlation between service quality and customer satisfaction as well as the correlation between service quality and customer loyalty. Self-report questionnaires were distributed and gathered from patients at an army medical centre in West Malaysia which were used for information collection. The outcome of Smart PLS path model analysis showed that service quality dimensions, namely tangible, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy were significantly correlated with customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. This finding confirmed that the capability of service providers to appropriately implement the quality dimensions in providing medical services had enhanced customer satisfaction and customer loyalty in the organizational sample.

Curry et al., (2002) further in an attempt to assess the quality of physiotherapy services used the SERVQUAL model and three physiotherapy services in Dundee, Scotland. They considered the ten original criteria for evaluation and combined them into five; tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance (including competence, courtesy, credibility, and security) and

empathy (including access, communication, and understanding. The survey involved questions relating to customers' expectations and perceptions. They sought to measure five gaps developed by Parasuraman et al., (1985) to which they found out that the services were highly appreciated by customers even though they realised that the perception gaps were slightly negative and the services could be improved. Their studies proved that assurance and empathy were very important in their research. In spite of the criticisms of the SERVQUAL model they confirmed its potential applicability in measuring service quality in the public sector to determine consumer priorities and measure performance.

In another study by Handrinos, Folinas and Rotsios with an objective to present and analyse the findings of research which aimed to measure the services that a locally-based SME (Small-Medium Enterprise) campus store of a farm school provides to its customers. The examined start-up store was operated by the college students in the context of their entrepreneurship, business and marketing classes. After one year of operation students decided to evaluate the quality of the store's services and measure the customers' satisfaction by applying the well-known SERVQUAL model. The deployment of the model revealed at first the importance of the store know-how to measure services from the consumers' perspective so as to better understand their needs. Secondly, the findings of the research highlighted 'Security', 'Reliability' and 'Empathy' as the most significant dimensions. The findings of this research can help small and medium enterprises to improve the services they provide to their customers by focusing on these three important dimensions.

Badri et al., (2003) made an assessment and application of the SERVQUAL model in measuring service quality in an information technology centre. A larger sample was used for this research which differs from other studies that addressed the dimensionality problem of the IT centre-adapted SERVQUAL instruments, this was the first gap. The second gap was to identify the gaps in service quality in the IT centres in the three institutions of higher education in the United Arab Emirates. Their findings showed that there was an inadequacy of dimensions for a perfect fit. On the other hand, based on their feedback, respondents felt that SERVQUAL is a useful indicator for IT center service quality in institutions of higher education. SERVQUAL identified gaps in service quality for the three institutions. Empirical results of SERVQUAL scores for the IT centers in the three institutions are also presented.

Negi (2009) used the model to determine customer satisfaction through perceived quality in the Telecommunication industry and found out that reliability, empathy and network quality proved to significantly effective in contributing to overall service quality and overall customer satisfaction with mobile services. In a related study, Akan, (1995) used the SERVQUAL model in the four stars hotels and found out that competence and courtesy combined with assurance where most important attributes influencing the perception of quality.

Prasad (2010) studied the Role of Service Quality on Customer Retention in Banks. His study considered the banking industry as its sample frame and analysed the relevant concepts in the context of the banking customers and the employees. The specific aim of his study was to analyse the customer perceptions of the delivery of service by the bank employees and their customer retention abilities thereof. His research study was guided by the analytical framework which investigated the relationship between service quality and customer retention. The statistical analysis supported the relevancy his research problem and regression analysis was carried out to test the hypotheses in order to assess the relationship between service quality customer satisfaction and customer retention. The results of his study indicated that better service quality attributes was needed by the bank employees to enhance their customer retention abilities.

The significant influence of factors empathy especially on customer satisfaction coupled with tangibles and reliability on customer retention confirmed that bank employees need to be more competent in performing their job and more open and expressive about their thoughts and feelings which have a major impact on establishing relationships which is an antecedent to customer retention. He concluded that Employee attitudes had great influence on the quality of customer service. Rashid (2008) in his study on 'Measuring and achieving quality customer service: a study on public sector in Malaysia' found that Most common complaint regarded the poor quality of the Customer Service Representative themselves. Out of 100 respondents, his survey demonstrated that representatives had poor communication skills, were not customer friendly, were inefficient, didn't have product knowledge, and were not systematic in accomplishing their task.

Other things which led to poor customer service were insufficient number of counters opened, too many unnecessary procedures, bureaucracy, and slow response time. The respondents also gave their views about how to improve the quality of Customer Service Representation and the experience itself. They recommended that Customer Service Representatives needed to be a customer-centered people. They were expected to know how to interact professionally with their customers. The study also revealed that representatives who are well-versed in other languages had an added advantage because they had no barriers in communications of the major races in Malaysia (Malay, Chinese, and Indian). In addition, Customer Service Representatives were expected to have product knowledge to ensure customer receives proper information. Some respondents also suggested sending the representatives to a customer service course and that the supervisor should show as a good example to their subordinates.

Customers needed a comfortable environment and priority needed to be given to older citizen and disabled people. In addition, they need to review all the procedures and eliminate unnecessary ones to expedite the process. All the important information the customer needed was expected to be readily available anytime. The other finding was that the department was expected by the customers to do more corporate social responsibility works such as food and handouts. For those customers who interacted with this department via e-mail or phone, also should be treated professionally. The customers expected prompt reply and resolution on the questions they had with the department.

Gruber et al, (2010) investigated how students perceived the services they were offered at a German university and how satisfied they were with them. For this purpose, an evaluation study using a new tool to measure fifteen dimensions of student satisfaction at an institutional level was presented that covers most aspects of student life. It was decided to develop a new measurement tool as many existing surveys were poorly designed, lack standardization and give no evidence concerning reliability or validity. The results showed that students' satisfaction with their university was based on a relatively stable person-environment relationship. Thus, the satisfaction of students seemed to reflect quite well perceived quality differences of offered services and of the wider environment. Students were particularly satisfied with the school placements and the atmosphere among students. Students were mostly dissatisfied with the university buildings and the quality of the lecture theatres.

Additionally, a research by Chingang and Berinyuy (2010) on using the SERVQUAL Model to assess Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction, they said service quality and customer satisfaction are very important concepts that companies must understand in order to remain competitive in business and hence grow. It is very important for companies to know how to measure these constructs from the consumers' perspective in order to better understand their needs and hence satisfy them. Service quality is considered very important because it leads to higher customer satisfaction, profitability, reduced cost, customer loyalty and retention. The main purpose of their study theoretically was to find out how applicable the SERVQUAL model was in the context of grocery stores and empirically, describe how consumers (students) perceived service quality and whether they were satisfied with services offered by these stores in Umea.

The research design was based on a self-completion questionnaire was developed from the SERVQUAL instrument and distributed using a convenience sampling technique to students in the Umea University campus to determine their perceptions of service quality in grocery stores. From the analysis carried out, they found out that, the SERVQUAL model was not a good instrument to measure service quality because some of the items under the dimensions overlapped and regrouped under different dimensions from the factor analysis carried out. It also showed some items which were associated to more than one component. Some dimensions showed a reliability scale of less than 0.7 which could have been as result of the wordings used in the questionnaires or the number of items used under each dimension. Also, it was found that the overall service quality perceived by consumers was not satisfactory meaning expectations exceeded perceptions and all the dimensions showed higher expectations than perceptions of services. They found that the SERVQUAL model is not the best tool to use to measure service quality in grocery stores because the dimensions do not best measure the construct in that context. Practical implications suggested that grocery stores in Umea were not providing the level of service quality demanded by customers. The findings also suggested that grocery stores needed to improve all the dimensions of service quality from the gap analysis carried out.

Verhoef (2003) conducted a research with the objective of understanding the effect of customer relationship management efforts on customer retention and customer share development. His objectives were to understand the effect of CRPs and relationship marketing instruments (RMIs)

on customer retention and customer share development. Secondly, he examined whether different variables of CRPs and RMIs influence customer retention and customer share development. Using a longitudinal research design, he related customers' relationship perceptions (CRPs) and RMIs to actual customer retention and customer share development. His first notable finding of his research was that affective commitment is an antecedent of both customer retention and customer share development. This result was not in line with other researcher's findings that commitment does not influence customer retention (Gruen, Summers, and Acito, 2000).

However, it confirmed previous claims in the relationship marketing literature that commitment is a significant variable in customer relationships (Morgan and Hunt 1994; Sheth and Parvatiyar 1995); more precisely, it affects both relationship maintenance and relationship development. At the same time, the absence of an effect of satisfaction and payment equity raised some notable issues. His result contradicts previous findings in the literature (Bowman and Narayandas 2001; Szymanski and Henard 2001); several reasons may explain this. First, prior research has typically relied on survey measures for which self-reported dependent variables are correlated as a result of common method of measures. His study used behavioural data based (partially) on internal company data.

Secondly, unlike prior studies on customer share (Bowman and Narayandas 2001; De Wulf, Odekerken-Schröder, and Iacobucci 2000) in which causality is problematic, this study focused on the change in customer share. An understanding of customer share development may require a deeper understanding of the role of CRPs and RMIs. Thirdly, prior studies focused on customer share of a single brand in a single product category (Bowman and Narayandas 2001), but his study focuses on customer share across multiple different services. Customer share changes occur over time when customers add (or drop) new (current) products or services to (from) their portfolio of purchased products or services at the focal supplier or at competing suppliers. In this underlying decision process, satisfaction and payment equity play only a marginal role for several reasons.

First, satisfaction and payment equity are based on one's current experiences with the focal supplier. These experiences do not necessarily transfer to other products or services of that supplier: New events may occur during the relationship that could change these perceptions

(Mazursky and Geva 1989; Mittal, Kumar, and Tsiros, 1999), thereby limiting the explanatory power current perceptions. Second, in a competitive environment, firms attempt to maximize customer share. Although customers may be satisfied with the focal firm's offering, they may be equally satisfied with competing offerings from other suppliers. This again limits the explanatory power of satisfaction and payment equity. In contrast, affective commitment seems less vulnerable to new experiences in the relationship; it is also unlikely that customers will consider themselves committed to multiple suppliers.

Instead of satisfaction and payment equity being considered direct antecedents of customer retention and customer share development, they should be considered variables that shape commitment (Morgan and Hunt 1994). A second notable finding is that RMIs can influence customer retention and customer share development. Direct mailings with a "call to action" are suitable to enhance customer share over time. Loyalty programs that provide economic rewards are useful both to lengthen customer relationships and to enhance customer share. Bolton, Kannan, and Bramlett (2000) report that loyalty programs for credit card customers have a strong, positive effect on customer retention; however, no studies have yet considered the effect of loyalty programs and direct mailings on customer share development.

The repeatedly reported positive effect of the loyalty program counters the contention of Dowling and Uncles (1997, p. 75) that "it is difficult to increase brand loyalty above the market norms with an easy-to-replicate 'add on' customer loyalty program." The third relevant finding pertains to the explanatory power of both CRPs and RMIs. For both customer retention and customer share development, past customer behaviour explains the largest part of the variance (CRPs and RMIs are responsible only for approximately 10% of the total explained variances in both the customer retention and the customer share development models). This finding seems to support the claims of skeptics of CRM that there is not much a firm can do to affect customer loyalty in consumer markets (Dowling 2002).

During reflection on the results of the customer share development model, it might also be perceived that Ehrenberg's (1997, p. 19) remarks on the antecedents of market share also hold for the antecedents of customer share development; in particular, his claim "that most markets are near stationary and that everybody has to run hard to stand still" might also be applicable to

customer share development. In the short run, my results point to the effect of RMIs as only marginal. For example, stopping direct mailings for one year may not necessarily severely harm customer share development in that year. In a long-term perspective, the effects might be different. The effect of both CRPs and RMIs on customer purchase behaviour could result in increased relationship age, increased customer shares, and purchases of certain additional products or services such as car insurance and life insurance. Some of these variables positively affect customer retention and customer share development in later stages of the customer relationship. Differences between the Antecedents of Customer Retention and Customer Share Development Another research objective was to examine whether the antecedents of customer retention and customer share development are different. Theoretically, there is a clear distinction between relationship maintenance and relationship development; however, this has not been empirically investigated. Unfortunately, a statistical comparison of the coefficients in the customer retention model and customer share development model is not possible (Franses and Paap, 2001).

Thus, the only possible comparison is whether the significant predictors are different. The results show that the significant variables were remarkably consistent across the two models such as affective commitment and loyalty programs are significant predictors of both customer retention and customer share development. The only exception is the interaction effect between satisfaction and relationship age. However, with consideration of the effect of the past customer behaviour control variables, there are some differences. For example, whereas high prior customer share has a positive effect on customer retention, it has a negative effect on customer share development. Likewise, relationship age has a positive effect on customer retention but no effect on customer share development. The latter results confirm that different variables affect customer retention and customer share development. However, from a CRM perspective, this difference is not as important as it seems, because the same CRM variables affect both customer retention and customer share development.

A study by Mohd, et al, (2014) conducted in Malaysia to examine students' perceptions of quality of service offered in Malaysian skills training institutes and how it influences overall satisfaction. The study found that physical facilities and training delivery were not significant predictors of students' overall satisfaction. Enriching knowledge in service quality and customer

satisfaction is important for skills training institutes to identify priorities for performance improvement. The implication of the finding was deemed valuable and useful for institutional management, policymakers and researchers in the training and educational sector.

2.10. The African Perspective of Customer Satisfaction

According to study that was done on some selected banks in Rwanda which had to do with service quality and satisfaction using the descriptive and cross functional type of design with a sample size of 384 out of the 50,807 customers, it was concluded that both service quality and customer satisfaction were high. It was also determined that there was no significant relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction. Out of the research, came up some strategies which incorporated the staff of those banks which indicated that the staff should do the following: a) maintains an error free records service b) handle customer problems in a constant manner c) be willing to solve customer problems promptly and d) understand specific needs of individual customers. Recommendations to this effect were as follows: a) improve the quality of its service quality in order to increase the level of customer satisfaction b) increasing employees ability to handle customer's complaints and problems in a consistent manner c) Bank management should consistently be updated where service has failed and look for a solution without delay, especially where more staff are needed due to great number of customers to avoid long waiting lines.

In addition, in relation to good quality service provision in the network service in Ghana, a case study on MTN Ghana was conducted. In this study, data was collected by use of questionnaires and focus groups. Primary and secondary information was collected from MTN employees and also its customers. The findings included the employees having a perception of them providing good quality service to its customers whilst its customers thought the exact opposite.

Recommendations from the study were that there was need for improvement of the quality of services, it was noted that the perception of customers influence the level of customer satisfaction and the level of customer satisfaction in turn influence the perception of customers. If customers are happy with a service, they can continue to use it but if unhappy then they are likely to discontinue hence it was recommended for MTN to improve on the services it's provided. Additionally, visible contributions to the community was recommended, this was in

view to make MTN go a long way in terms of it being competitive and attain competitive advantage. It was also concluded that MTN Ghana customers were not happy with the services MTN was providing hence they needed to do more surveys and depend less on the opinion of the employees which in turn would make it competitive.

Another study was done on behavioral responses to customer satisfaction on some specific banks, which reviewed that when customers assess customer satisfaction to be high, they decide to stay with the existing service provider and subdue their negative behavioral intentions and that customer satisfaction is associated positively with word of mouth communications.

With these examples of researches that have been done, it is clear that customer satisfaction is key in all organisations hence it is apparent that if customers are satisfied and see value in the quality of customer service provided, they are more likely to repeat a purchase and tend to do so in the future (Goodman, 1999) and also this causes the development and increment of the customer's loyalty which is a very crucial factor in any company's profitability, growth, and performance (Reichheld, 1996). It is an industry-wide belief that the best core marketing strategy for the future is to try to retain existing customers by increasing customer's loyalty and customer value (Kim et al., 2004).

In a certain research on customer satisfaction by Little (1996), respondents declared that the choice of a service provider is influenced by factors such as reputation, availability or location of the service provider, recommendation, services offered, convenience, price or cost of the service, management values and employee attitude towards customer satisfaction, however, he noted that this list does not define every customer since customer perceptions vary from one customer to the other. Customer satisfaction also plays a very vital role in both the short and long terms of any business' success (Kristensen et al, 1992; Zeithaml et al, 1996). Apart from future repeat purchases, satisfaction also brings about or affects positive word of mouth (Swan and Oliver, 1989) and also by reducing the initial cost of introducing and attracting new customers.

Several authors pointed out that customers generate different levels of profitability (Cooper and Kaplan, 1991; Peppers and Rogers, 1993; Shapiro et al, 1987, Slywotzy and Shapiro, 1993) but moreover, there is no single concept of satisfaction for these our customers. In fact according to Anderson et al (1994), at least two different conceptualizations can be distinguished, for

instance, transaction specific and cumulative. From a transaction perspective, customer satisfaction is viewed as a post choice evaluative judgment of a specific purchase occasion (Oliver and Swan, 1989). In contrast, cumulative customer satisfaction is an overall evaluation based on total purchase and consumption of a product or service over time (Fornell, 1992). On the other hand, there are two approaches of customer satisfaction which dominates its literature (Gilbert and Veloutsou, 2006). The first approach is the expectancy-disconfirmation approach (Parasuraman et al., 1988; Zeithaml et al., 1996). This approach is based on a comparison of customer's expectations versus what the customer actually experiences.

Expectations-disconfirmation approach appears most widely in definitions of product/service quality and consumer satisfaction. This usually means that product/service performance falls short of (or exceeds) what a consumer expects when making a purchase decision with negative (or positive) implications for the experience. The second approach is the performance-only approach. In this approach, service features are measured in relation to transaction-specific, and satisfaction is conceptualized as a onetime post purchase evaluation (Oliver, 1997).

2.11. Knowledge Gap Analysis

This study was an assessment of quality of customer service provision and satisfaction at Lafarge Zambia plc. Most literature reviewed in this text has similarities in the tool and assessment methods but does not directly relate to customer satisfaction with service provision in such an industry as Lafarge Zambia Plc. Most assessments of quality of service in this literature has covered the banking sector, the education sector, the hotel and hospitality sector and mobile service provider. Hence causing some gaps in the way services are being managed in the manufacturing sector especially that of cement production. Figure 2.2 presents a summary of the knowledge gaps in the past studies.
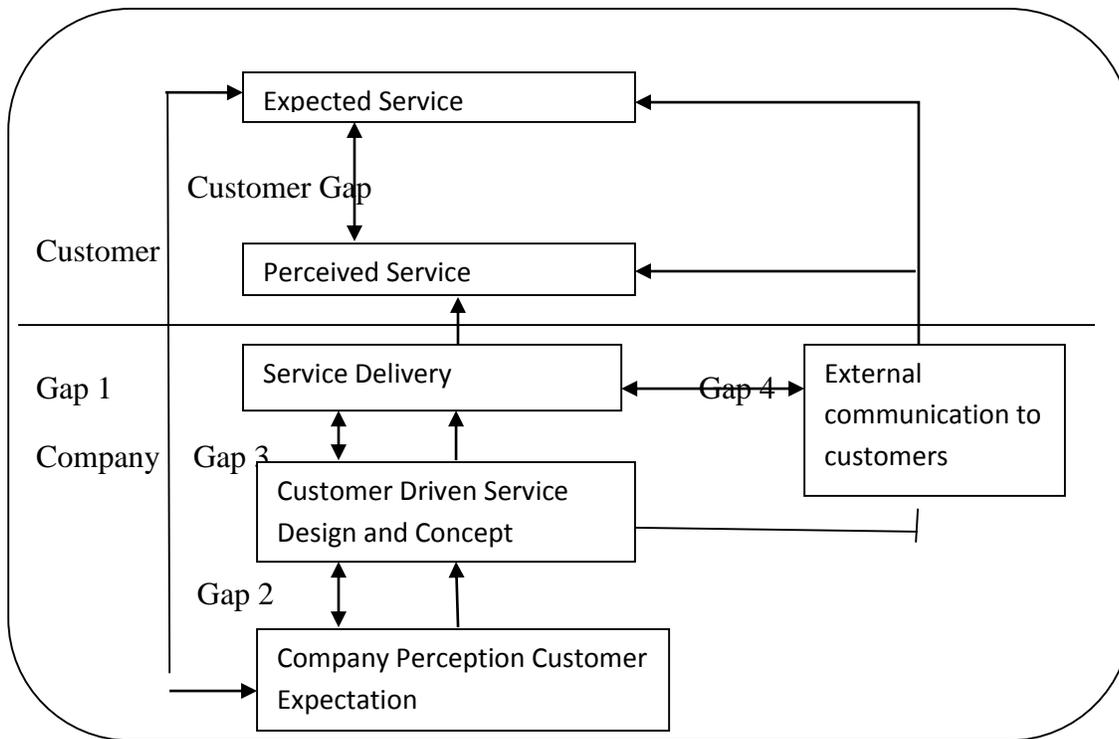
Figure 2.2: Service quality model and Knowledge Gaps

Source: Based on work by Parasuraman, *et al.* (1988)

2.12. Summary

In this chapter the researcher reviewed existing literature that was related to the topic under study. The various literature related to assessment of quality of customer service provision and satisfaction which was considered to be relevant to this study with a view of putting it into the context of similar works done so far, thereby providing a justification for this study. In the next chapter, the theoretical and conceptual framework were being looked at.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

3.1. Introduction

The chapter presents the theoretical and conceptual framework in which this study is situated, it further outlines the theories and concepts on the quality of customer service and its effect on the company revenue or sales.

3.2. Theoretical Framework

The research study was guided by the SERVQUAL model and four theories namely; Discrepancy theory, the Dissonance theory, the contract theory and the expectancy disconfirmation theory. However, each single theory is not sufficient on its own to explain the intricacy of the study. For this reason, a combination of all the identified theories is required and useful to provide a clear understanding of the quality of service success phenomenon in global markets.

For example, on the one hand, SERVQUAL model which is a Gaps Model of Service Quality. The framework was applied to establish the quality of customer service provision at Lafarge Zambia Plc by measuring customer satisfaction levels in light of the dimension of service quality through customer expectations and perceptions. The SERVQUAL model was developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1988). It is based on a generic questionnaire which is designed to cover five broad aspects of service quality.

The SERVQUAL framework is a useful tool in highlighting specific difficulties and ensuring high quality of service both by management at institutions and customers in all situations. The model identifies five gaps where there may be a shortfall between expectations and perceptions of actual service delivery (Parasuraman et.al., 1985). These are; Gap 1: Gap between consumer expectations and management perception: Management at Lafarge may think that they know what customers want and proceed to deliver this, when in fact customers may expect something quite different. Gap 2: Gap between management perception and service quality specification: This gap arises because management may not set quality specifications or may not set them

clearly. On the other hand, management may set clear quality specifications but these may not be achievable.

Gap 3: Gap between service quality specifications and service delivery: Unforeseen problems or poor management can lead to a service provider failing to meet service specifications. This may be due to human error but also mechanical breakdown of facilitating support goods. Gap 4: Gap between service delivery and external communications: There may be dissatisfaction with a service due to the excessively heightened expectations developed through the service provider's communications efforts. Dissatisfaction occurs where actual delivery does not live up to expectations held out in an institution or a company's communications. Gap 5: Gap between perceived service and expected service: This gap represents the difference in the way customers perceive actual services as well as their initial expectations.

Interpreting the model, Palmer (2005) states that if the first gaps are great, the task of bridging the subsequent gaps becomes greater. Under such circumstances quality service can only be achieved by good luck rather than good management. Thus, it can be stated that SERVQUAL is an important model which allows management to make an analytical assessment of the cause of poor service quality. This study only considered the fifth gap (Gap between perceived service and expected service) because it is the one that deals directly with the purpose of the study which is to investigate the quality of customer service provision at Lafarge Plc.

3.2.1. Discrepancy theory

A discrepancy is a perceived difference between an adopted anchor and a personal understanding of accomplishment along the same dimension (Locke 1969; Oliver1981). Discrepancy theory claims that satisfaction is related to the extent to which real outcomes match the expectation of the individual: the closer the match, the higher the person's satisfaction with it. An important part of discrepancy theory is in finding how to measure and reduce this perceived ''gap'' between project outcomes and desires. Large negative gaps result in dissatisfaction, while smaller ones result in satisfaction. Large positive gaps vary in impact, depending on the nature of the item and its utility as expressed by the stakeholder. As the measures considered in our research were all desirable ones without detriment if expectations were exceeded, a positive gap was always of value.

Behavioral researchers have empirically supported this claim. An individual's satisfaction is determined by their self-perceived desires and self-perceived delivery. Discrepancies between them are associated with turnover. Consumer satisfaction is commonly defined as a "post-choice evaluation which varies along a hedonic continuum from unfavorable to favorable, in terms of whether or not the experience of a specific purchase was at least as good as it was supposed to be" (Jun et al. 2001, p. 142). Expectations reflect anticipated performance. They can be considered in a variety of ways, including anticipatory elements or comparison to other referents (Szymanski and Henard 2001). Performance in consumer satisfaction studies is the ability of the product or offering to add value along the lines promised by the provider. Its primary importance in the consumer satisfaction literature has been as a standard of comparison by which to assess disconfirmation (Churchill and Suprenant 1982). That is, expectations and performance delivery perceptions lead to a disconfirmation measure of the discrepancy between expectations and perceived performance. Expectations can influence perceived performance as perceptions can be clouded by prior expectations (Niedrich et al. 2005). Expectations, perceptions of performance, and a perception of whether the performance met expectations all lead to consumer satisfaction (Churchill and Surprenant 1982). While the dominant focus in empirical investigations in consumer satisfaction research has been on modeling disconfirmation and performance for their effects on satisfaction, the cumulative findings suggest that performance.

3.2.2. The Dissonance Theory

The Dissonance Theory suggests that a person who expected a high-value product and received a low-value product would recognize the disparity and experience a cognitive dissonance (Cardozzo, 1965). Thus consumers are posited to perceptually distort expectation-discrepant performance so as to coincide with their prior expectation level" (Oliver, 1977). The researchers pursued this approach implicitly assume that consumers would generally find that product performance deviated in some respect from their expectations or effort expenditures and that some cognitive repositioning would be required (Oliver, 1980). In his criticism of the Dissonance theory, Oliver (1977) argues that, it is the magnitude and direction of the difference between one's expectation and product performance, which affects one's post-decision affect level. One's expectation serves only to provide the comparative baseline. In fact, satisfaction/dissatisfaction is thought to arise from recognition and acknowledgement of

dissonance". Also the theory fails to take into account the concept of "tolerance level". The tolerance level suggests that purchasers are willing to accept a range of performance around a point estimate as long as the range could be reasonably expected (Yi, 1990).

The Dissonance Theory fails as a complete explanation of consumer satisfaction; however, it contributes to the understanding of the fact that expectations are not static in that they may change during a consumption experience. This implies that as customers' progress from one encounter to the next, say from hotel's reception to the room or the restaurant, their expectations about the room may be modified due to the performance of the previous encounter (Danaher & Arweiler, 1996).

3.2.3. The Contrast Theory

The Contrast Theory suggests the opposite of the Dissonance theory. According to this theory, when actual product performance falls short of consumer's expectations about the product, the contrast between the expectation and outcome will cause the consumer to exaggerate the disparity (Yi, 1990). This theory predicts that product performance below expectations will be rated poorer than it is in reality (Oliver & DeSarbo, 1988).

In other words, the Contrast Theory would assume that outcomes deviating from expectations will cause the subject to favourably or unfavourably react to the disconfirmation experience in that a negative disconfirmation is believed to result in a poor product evaluation, whereas positive disconfirmation should cause the product to be highly appraised (Oliver, 1977). In terms of a restaurant situation, the consumer might say that the restaurant was one of the worst he or she had ever been and the food was unfit for human consumption, when he or she just hated the amount of salt in the meat.

If the Contrast Theory was applied to a consumption context, then the poor performance would be worse than simply poor, and good performance would be better than a rating of good would suggest (Oliver, 1997). It is important to note the criticism that, these theories (Dissonance and Contrast) have been applied and tested in laboratory settings where the customer satisfaction was tightly controlled, situation specific and individually focused. For instance, researchers investigated the ability of these theories in predicting customer satisfaction with a pen

(Cardozzo, 1965), a reel-type tape recorder (Olshavsky and Miller, 1972), ball-point pen (Anderson, 1973), and a coffee brand (Olson and Dover, 1979). Thus, it is curious whether hypotheses held by these theories could be accepted or rejected when applied in a field survey research study of hospitality and tourism services (Oh and Parks, 1997). It is, for instance, not clear whether all purchase decisions in tourism and hospitality services result in dissonance.

3.2.4. The Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory

Drawing on the shortcomings of the above early theories of consumer satisfaction, Oliver (1977) proposed the Expectancy-Disconfirmation Paradigm (EDP) as the most promising theoretical framework for the assessment of customer satisfaction. The theory implies that consumers purchase goods and services with pre-purchase expectations about the anticipated performance. The expectation level then becomes a standard against which the product is judged.

That is, once the product or service has been used, outcomes are compared against expectations. If the outcome matches the expectation confirmation occurs. Disconfirmation occurs where there is a difference between expectations and outcomes. A customer is either satisfied or dissatisfied as a result of positive or negative difference between expectations and perceptions (Oliver, 1980).

Thus, when service performance is better than what the customer had initially expected, there is a positive disconfirmation between expectations and performance which results in satisfaction, while when service performance is as expected, there is a confirmation between expectations and perceptions which results in satisfaction. In contrast, when service performance is not as good as what the customer expected, there is a negative disconfirmation between expectations and perceptions which causes dissatisfaction (Oliver, 1980). Despite its widespread popularity, however, the EDP is not free of shortcomings. The main criticisms of this approach focus on the use of expectations as a comparison standard in measuring customer satisfaction, the dynamic nature of expectations and the timing of its measurement, the meaning of expectations to respondents, the use of difference scores in assessing satisfaction, and the reliability and validity of the EDP in predicting customer satisfaction. The following shows the Figure 3.1 of Customer's perceived service quality. Adapted from Fitzsimmons and Fitzsimmons (1998).
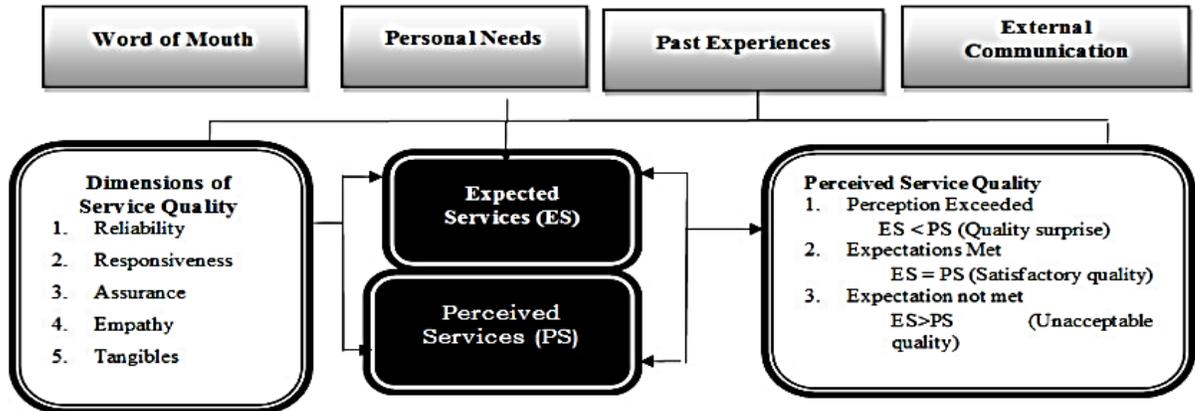
Figure 3.1: Customer's perceived service quality. Adapted from Fitzsimmons and Fitzsimmons, (1998)

3.3. Conceptual Framework

The study was based on a conceptual framework of independent and dependent variables as illustrated in Figure 3.2.
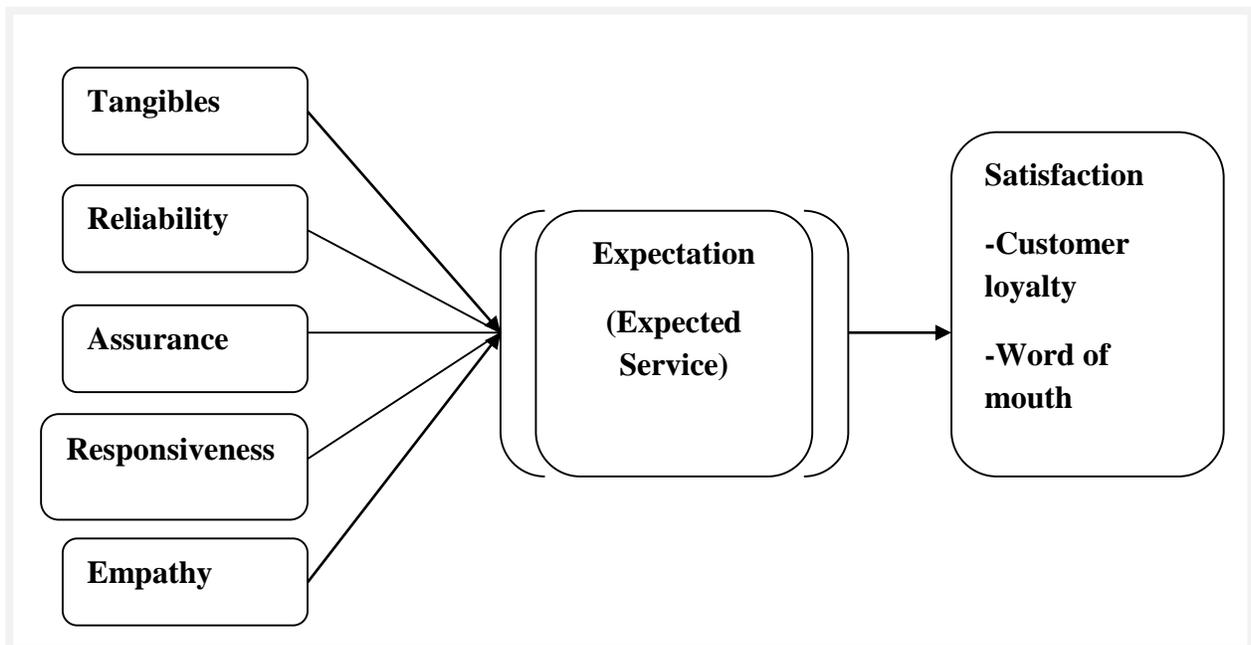
Figure 3.2: Conceptual Framework

3.4. Hypothesis of the Study

The researcher has stated both the null and alternative hypotheses and in doing this followed the works of previous researchers.

Empathy

H0: Empathy is associated with customer satisfaction at Lafarge.

H1: Empathy is not associated with customer satisfaction at Lafarge.

Responsiveness

H0: Responsiveness is associated with customer satisfaction at Lafarge.

H1: Responsiveness is not associated with customer satisfaction at Lafarge.

Assurance

H0: Assurance is associated with customer satisfaction at Lafarge.

H1: Assurance is not associated with customer satisfaction at Lafarge.

Reliability

H0: Reliability is associated with customer satisfaction at Lafarge.

H1: Reliability is not associated with customer satisfaction at Lafarge.

Tangibles

H0: Tangibles is associated with customer satisfaction at Lafarge.

H1: Tangibles is not associated with customer satisfaction at Lafarge.

3.4.1. Operationalisation on the hypotheses

The meanings of the dimensions of the SERVQUAL are as explained below:

a) **Empathy**

This is accessibility of the firm and its ability to communicate with its customers. It also includes the firm's ability to understand its customer's needs and the extent to which it turns their requirements into specifications (Bardi, 1990).

b) **Responsiveness**

This is the willingness to provide prompt service and to help customers. It shows how reactive an organization is towards its customers (Cronin, 1992). This dimension describes the firm's ability to respond quickly, promptly, rapidly, immediately, or instantly.

c) **Assurance**

This includes employees' knowledge, courtesy and ability to convey trust and confidence. Service providers are expected to be the experts of the service they are delivering. It is important that service providers communicate that expertise to customers (Rafele, 2004).

d) **Reliability**

It is the ability to perform the desired service dependably, accurately and consistently (Deming, 2001). Elements of reliability are probability, time and conditions. This dimension requires that as a company you do what you say you are going to do when you said you were going to do it. This is very necessary since customers want to count on their provider (Allen, 2008). According to Bardi (1990) it is three times more important to be reliable than have shiny new equipment or flashy uniforms.

e) **Tangibles**

This defines the appearance of physical elements which include office premises, machinery and employees. Organizations may view this as the least important dimension, however, appearance matters (Gattorna, 1983). Service providers have to make certain that their employees' appearance, uniforms, equipment, and work areas on-site look good.

Analysis of the data was related to the fifth gap (gap between perceived service and expected service) of SERVQUAL instrument for measuring service quality (Parasuraman et.al., 1985). This was because the fifth gap in the model represents the difference in the way customers perceive actual services and their initial expectations. Thus, it fits well with the purpose of this study which was an assessment of the quality of customer service provision and satisfaction at Lafarge Zambia Plc.

3.5. Summary

The chapter has discussed the different theories on the subject of the study. The conceptual framework has been derived from the theories. The chapter has shown that there are different

variables used to measure the quality of customer service. The hypotheses of the study have also been outlined. In the next chapter, the methodology that was employed in this study has been presented.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research methods which were employed in this study. It constitutes the following: research design, target population, sample size, sampling procedure, research instruments, data collection and data analysis.

4.2 Research Design

A research design is the plan and structure that is used to analyse the subject matter being researched on with the intention of answering the research questions (Cooper and Schindler, 2014). A research design can also be described as a systematic planning of research, usually including; the formulation of a strategy to resolve a particular question; the collection and recording of the evidence collected; processing and analysis of these data and its interpretation; and finally the publication of results (Cooper and Schindler, 2014).

It is the blueprint that guides the whole study to attain the research objectives as well as answer the questions. The choice of research design is influenced by, among other things, the availability of a large pool of methods, techniques and sampling plans. This study used the descriptive research design. A descriptive research design explains the behaviour and characteristics of a population (Sloman, 2010). Burns and Bush (2010) also define descriptive research as the set of techniques and procedures that can be used to describe variables.

Furthermore, Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2007), have shown that surveys are one of the most utilized methods in business research because they allow the collection of large amount of data from a sizeable population in a highly economic and effective way at the same time describing the status quo. The survey method was therefore justified for this study as it had many characteristics that were advantageous given the large sample size and short time span for administration. Some of the characteristics include; control of the data collection environment, flexibility of data collection, range of questions, sample management, number of data, response rate, rate and expenditure. A survey was undertaken in the population with the dependent

variable being customer satisfaction. The independent variables were assurance, responsiveness, assurance, reliability and tangibles.

4.3 Deductive or Inductive approach

This research also followed an inductive approach in order to build a new theory related to assessment of quality of customer service provision and satisfaction at Lafarge Plc. Inductive approach involves collecting the data in the form of participant experiences and observations allowing for the collection of rich data (Westbrook, 1994; Creswell, 2009). In addition, an inductive approach has no pre-stated hypotheses against which the results of the data are tested, but rather, themes to be tested emerge from the data making it possible to get deeper meanings of the phenomenon of interest (Westbrook, 1994; Strauss & Corbyn, 1990).

In the deductive approach, the researcher needs to pre-define the hypotheses to be tested (Saunders et al., 2009; Hart, 2011. Ryan, 2007; Cooper & Schindler, 2006). This restricts, scholars have argued (Bernard, 2013; Creswell, 2009) that the level of detail can be obtained from the data but rather just follows the narrowly defined null and alternative hypotheses (Denscombe, 2017; Sarantakos, 2013). Nonetheless, some researchers reject the two narrow distinctions and argue that both approaches can be used in the same research and that the differences between them are not keen (Ryan, 2006). For the purposes of this dissertation, the deductive approach will be used as well.

4.4 Study Area

A study area is simply a place where a research is going to take place. The study was carried out in Lusaka and Kafue Districts. The two districts were purposively sampled because this is where Lafarge has a reasonable customer base. This study was conducted in all Lafarge Zambia Plc outlets.

4.5 Target Population

According to Cooper and Schindler (2014), the target population includes those people that contain the desired information and can answer the measurement questions. Target population includes persons meant to be administered instruments. The target population for this study

constitute selected retail customers of Lafarge Zambia Plc within Lusaka and Kafue districts of Lusaka province.

4.6 Sample Size

According to Mugendo and Mugendo (1999), a sample is a smaller group obtained from the target population. This sub-group is carefully selected so as to be a representative to the whole population. The sample of the study consisted of customers that purchase the Lafarge products. The Lafarge master file has 400 customers within Lusaka Province of which 250 representing 62.5% were administered questionnaires by way of random and purposive sampling and in some instances availability sampling also applied.

4.7 Description of Sample and Sampling Techniques

Sampling is the procedure a researcher uses to gather people, places or things to study (Kombo and Tromp, 2006). A sample is a subset of the population containing same characteristics of a larger population. Samples are used in statistical testing when the population size is too big for the test to include all members for observation. The sample should stand for the whole population and not reflect prejudice towards a precise feature. In selecting the study sample in this study, the researcher used both purposive and simple random sampling techniques. The questionnaire was personally prepared with SERQUAL criteria's and surveyed among 250 customers in Lusaka. The sampling frame for the study is shown in the Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Sampling frame and sample size for the research

Location	N0. Of Customers Targeted	Sample size	%
Kafue	30	30	12
Lusaka	220	220	88
Total :	250	250	100

Therefore, the sample size for this research study was a total of approximately 250 Lafarge customers in two districts Kafue and Lusaka.

4.8. Purposive and Random Sampling

The criteria which was used in collecting the data was both purposive and random sampling in selected outlets. Purposive sampling was used to select the participants (Lafarge outlets selling cement products). Purposive sampling procedure is a method where the researcher purposively targets a group of people believed to be for the study (Kasonde-Ng'andu, 2013).

Kombo and Tromp (2006:82) state that "the power of purposive sampling lies in selecting participants who will provide the richest information for in- depth analysis related to the central issue being studied" and in this case, that is why 250 outlets were purposely selected since they are involved in using Lafarge cement products. In line with Kombo and Tromp (2006), the researcher found this method very suitable for the study because these people are expected to have adequate knowledge on the subject.

However, simple random sampling was employed to select the customers to participate in the study. "A simple random sample (SRS) of size "n" consists of "n" individuals from the population chosen in such a way that every set of "n" individuals has an equal chance to be the sample actually selected" (Moore and George(2006). This method was used in that it provided each participant an equal chance to be selected. Random samples were used to avoid bias and other unwanted effects, thus this method was used above all other methods because it avoids bias and other effects.

4.9 Data Collection Instruments

Data collection instruments include questionnaires, interview schedules, focus group discussions and observation schedule guide (Kombo and Tromp, 2006). A structured Questionnaire and interviews were the main research instruments that were used in this study. The questionnaire was designed for easy analysis later and it was thought of as the most cost effective when compared to face-to-face interviews that would have involved many costs as observed in Bachrack and Scoble, (1967) and Moser and Kalton, (1971). This was administered to randomly selected customers and also to those purposively selected due to the loyalty towards the

organization meaning those that are the most active customers whether competition arises, the climate changes, they still stick around because the Lafarge brand is what they believe in. After the data was collected, the conclusions were subjected to the initial questions of the study.

4.9.1. Questionnaire

The researcher used a semi-structured questionnaire that dealt with the subject matter with selected customers from various outlets sellingsubjects Zambia Plc products. Quantitative approach to collecting data was used. The Likert scale self-explanatory questionnaire was administered and divided into two sections to gather quantitative research findings. The collection of data in research is very important, according to Oppenheim (1992), there are two decisions that must be made by the researcher regarding data collection. These are, the first being which data is relevant to the research purpose and from which sources.

Secondly which tool is the most suitable to collect data for this research, the researcher valued the relevance of obtaining data regarding understanding the customer satisfaction with service provision in such an industry as Lafarge Zambia Plc. As mentioned above, the researcher adopted a semi structured questionnaire. The structure of the Questionnaire used for this investigation was the Parasuraman, Zeithmal and Berry (1988) SERVQUAL model and its five dimensions of Tangibles, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance and Empathy the modified SERVQUAL model and modified Likert scale *(scale used to measure people's attitudes)* for service quality dimension measurement to enable respondents *(customers)* to rate their service experience with respect to the service dimensions in relation to their level of satisfaction with Lafarge's service provision.

The questionnaire was made of three (3) parts. Part A: personal and background information of the customers who participated in the study. Part B: included job performance on strategic alliances. Part C: included the overall perception of product quality and satisfaction by customers. In this section, customers were required to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with specific statements on a five (5) point scale as follows: strongly agree (1), agree (2), undecided (3) disagree (4) and strongly disagree (5). The questionnaires were distributed using the drop and pick later system by the researcher. Participation in the research was entirely voluntary and the whole process was carried out with great courtesy. 250

questionnaires were distributed. From the 250, 230 questionnaires were received representing a response rate of 92%.Questionnaires were employed because they allow for the collection of data from a large population at the same time (Marsden & Wright, 2010).

4.9.2 Interview Guide for Lafarge Plc outlets

The interview guide was used to collect information on whether outlet owners of various Lafarge outlets understood the concept of quality customer service provision and knowledge of customer satisfaction in service provision. The interview guide was used to investigate further responses from questionnaires. Interviews may be used as a follow-up to certain respondents to questionnaires, for example, to further investigate their responses (McNamara, 1999). The interview guide helped to collect detailed information from the owners of outlets on knowledge of the quality customer service provision and benefits of developing customer satisfaction. The interview guide helped the researcher to probe if Lafarge outlet owners had the relevant attributes to implement quality customer services and if customers were getting satisfaction from the service provided.

4.10. Validity, Reliability and Trustworthiness

In the following section, the researcher explains how validity, reliability and trustworthiness was applied in this study.

4.10.1 Validity

Validity is the accuracy and meaningfulness of inferences which are based on the research results (Mugenda and Mugenda, 1999). In other words, validity is the degree to which results obtained from the analysis of the data actually represent the phenomenon under study. There is content validity and construct validity. Content validity refers to the representativeness of the content of the instrument (De Vos, 2002). To ensure content validity, the content of the instruments of the study were reviewed by the supervisor and peers so that appropriate questions were included in the questionnaires and interview schedules.

Thus in this study, face validity was ensured by making use of the comments from the supervisor and a statistician to evaluate the questionnaire on completion. Construct validity, on the other

hand, is a measure of the degree to which the data obtained using an instrument meaningfully and accurately reflects or represents a theoretical concept. Mugenda and Mugenda (1999) explained that to assess construct validity, there should exist in a study a theoretical foundation regarding the concept to be measured.

In this case, the researcher made use of the literature as a secondary source of data, which supplemented the validation of the accuracy of the findings. The research ensured validity by using multiple methods of data collection. This is supported by Brewer and Patton (2002) who argued that the combination of methods complements each other by eliminating overlapping flaws. Thus, when methods are combined, which is known as triangulation, inconsistencies are taken care of, thus valid and reliable data emerges (Patton, 1990).

4.10.2 Reliability

Reliability refers to the accuracy and consistency of the measuring instrument (Burns & Grove 2001, p.395). In other words, reliability relates to the precision and accuracy of the instrument. If used on a similar group of respondents in a similar context, the instrument should yield similar results (Cohen et al 2000). The accurate and careful phrasing of each question to avoid ambiguity and leading respondents to a particular answer ensured the reliability of the tool. Therefore, the questionnaire was then given to the researcher's supervisor and colleagues with experience in compiling questionnaires and to the statistician to review. Then necessary amendments were made accordingly. Thereafter, a pilot study was conducted in Lusaka district, by making use of participants similar to the respondents and then amendments to the questionnaire were made accordingly. The following comments and suggestions were made by the pilot participants, they are indicated exactly as they were given by the participants; to make the instructions clear by indicating whether to tick or cross the correct answer.

According to DeVellis (2006), internal consistency reliability is the measure of reliability used to evaluate the degree to which different test items that probe the same construct produces similar results. It examines whether or not the items within a scale or measure are homogeneous. Kimberlin and Winter (2008), define internal consistency reliability as the estimate of equivalence of sets of items from the same test. The coefficient of the internal consistency

provides an estimate of the reliability of measurement and assumes that items measuring the same values must correlate.

For this research, the researcher used the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for measuring the internal consistency reliability. According to Shuttleworth and Wilson (2008), Cronbach's alpha coefficient is a statistic tool generally used as a measure of internal consistency or reliability of a psychometric instrument.

A reliability analysis was carried out on the perceived task values scale comprising 40 items. Cronbach's alpha showed the questionnaire to reach acceptable reliability, $\alpha = 0.72$. This figure suggests that internal consistency was excellent. Garson (2006) postulated that reliability of 0.60 is commonly acceptable in exploratory research. However, an overall alpha of at least 0.70 or higher is needed for an instrument to be accepted as reliable. Therefore, the instrument for this study was considered reliable as its alpha level at .72.

4.10.3 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness incorporates strategies for validation of qualitative studies. (Creswell, 2007) enumerated eight procedures of trustworthiness (Creswell, 2007) prolonged engagement and persistent observation in the field; triangulation and multiple sourcing of data; peer review and debriefing for external checks; negative case analysis; clarifying of researcher bias; member checking; thick description; and external audits. Lincoln and Guba (1985) used the terms credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability to group various procedures together under larger aims, and to offer alternative terms to positivist concepts. In this study, trustworthiness focused on credibility, dependability and conformability of the study. In order to validate the findings in this study, the researcher recorded some of the interviews so as to check for unclear information and then cross check with the respondents. During cross-checking, the researcher made use of the responses in order to verify the findings a made follow-ups on issues that needed clarity.

4.10.4 Credibility

The basis of any claim to trustworthy knowledge is credibility. Rather than assume that there is a "truth value" in the research, for example, for the singular truth to be uncovered, credibility

establishes that the representation constructed through research is indeed valid and believable (Seale, 1999) . In order to validate the findings in this study, the researcher cross checked with the respondents. During cross-checking, the researcher made use of the responses for the verification of the findings and made follow-ups on issues that needed clarity. In addition, the researcher compared the findings from the interviews, and questionnaires in order to check whether the analysed data represented the phenomenon under study.

4.10.5 Dependability and conformability

Dependability establishes the shared or common constructs by which research accounts can be assessed. Conformability finds out the degree to which findings of the study can be confirmed by ensuring a degree of replicability in qualitative and qualitative terms of any study. Credibility through prolonged engagement, diversity of data, disinterested peer review, and negative case analysis establishes the believability in the representation and findings generated by the research items, and to eliminate ambiguities or difficulties in wording (Cohen et al, 2002). In this study, disinterested peer reviews were done during postgraduate presentations seminar. The data was triangulated with multiple sources so that it could be credible.

4.11 Data Collection Procedure

The researcher got clearance from The University of Zambia Ethics Committee before data collection. Then the researcher obtained an introduction letter from the Director, Graduate School of Business at the University of Zambia to enable her to collect data in the field. Before meeting the participants, the researcher requested permission from them in order to distribute questionnaires. The researcher distributed questionnaires to outlets and customers and arrangements were made with them at a convenient time when completed questionnaires could be collected.

4.11.1. Primary Source of Data

Primary data can be defined as basically the original sources of raw data without any interpretation, synthesis or analysis which represents a position on a specific matter (Cooper & Schindler, 2008). In primary data collection the researcher collects the data using different methods appropriate for the research in question and the benefit of using primary data collection

is that the data is collected in a distinctive way in order to meet the objectives of the research. The study used primary data collected through self-administered questionnaires with both open and close ended questions.

4.11.2. Secondary Source of Data

Secondary data can be described as the existing data that has already been collected by somebody else for a similar or different purpose to answer the research questions. (Kervin, 1999) stated that secondary data include both quantitative and qualitative data and can be applied in descriptive, and explanatory research cited in (Saunders, 2007). Qualitative data involves words or text while quantitative data involves numbers, statistics and financial and may often be presented in graphical and tabular format. Secondary data for this research was collected from newspapers, online research articles, books, reports, bulletins, online blogs and in-house newsletters.

4.12 Data Analysis

As discussed earlier, this design consisted of one distinct phase: quantitative. In this design, a researcher first collects and analyses the quantitative (numeric) data. The qualitative (text) data are collected and analysed second in the sequence and help explain or elaborate on the quantitative results obtained in the first phase.

Patton (2002) described the process of data analysis as the organization of what is collected into patterns and categories while looking for relationships and linkages among the descriptive dimensions. Since this study was based on a mixed methods design, both qualitative and quantitative data analysis procedures were considered. Subedi (2016) pointed out that the holistic idea can be shown in the following tabulated form. The researcher managed to secure 230 of the responses from the 250 given out. The SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Scientists) was used to analyse the data.

4.12.1 Quantitative Data

Quantitative studies demand the participation of a sufficiently large number of individuals who are basically not required to extensively describe experiences and phenomena in the study

(Creswell, 2003 & Williams, 2007). The researcher used descriptive statistics to organise the data in such a way that it gives meaning and facilitate insight (Burns & Grove 2001: 499). Numerical descriptive measures provide precise, objectively determined values that can easily be interpreted and compared (Keller & Warrick 2000: 90). In this study, some data that was collected from questionnaires was analysed through the use of the statistical package for social sciences. The description of the data was be done by means of determining representative characteristics such as frequencies, percentages and means. The data was organized and presented by means of frequency distribution tables and graphs.

4.12.2 Qualitative Data

Qualitative data collection is usually dependent on interpretation. This study used the thematic analysis approach. Thematic analysis was used to analyse, classify and present themes (patterns) that are related to the data. It illustrates the data in great detail and deals with diverse subjects via interpretations (Boyatzis, 1998). In the case of thematic analysis, processed data can be displayed and classified according to its similarities and differences (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

The researcher also ensured that data transcription commenced as soon as data collection began in order to be familiar with the data that was collected and to allow for possible follow-ups in an event that the collected data lacked clarity. Familiarization and organization is done so that data can easily be retrieved. The researcher read and reread the data in order to have a thorough understanding of the data. After understanding the data, the researcher categorized it into themes. The process of coding, categorizing and developing themes was repeated for each transcript or set of data. All the collected data was grouped under prominent themes that came out. The next step the researcher examined all entries with the same codes and merged these categories into patterns by finding links and connections among categories and finally data was interpreted.

4.13 Ethical Consideration

Pera and Van Tonder (1996, p. 4) defined ethics as "a code of behaviour considered correct". It is crucial that all researchers are aware of research ethics. Ethics relate to two groups of people; those conducting research, who should be aware of their obligations and responsibilities, and the "researched upon", who have basic rights that should be protected. Ethical issues observed in a

study may include "informed consent, right to anonymity and confidentiality, right to privacy, justice, beneficence and respect for persons" (Brink & Wood 1998, p. 200-209).

In terms of the validity of the research design and time the mixed methods research combines quantitative and qualitative research, ethical considerations need to attend to typical ethical issues that surface in both forms of inquiry. In order to have a valid research design, the researcher read widely on mixed method research. Quantitative issues relate to obtaining permissions, protecting anonymity of respondents, not disrupting sites and communicating the purposes for the study, avoiding deceptive practices, respecting vulnerable populations, being aware of potential power issues in data collection, respecting indigenous cultures, not disclosing sensitive information, and disguising the identities of participants (Creswell, 2002). Therefore, individuals with diminished autonomy (in this research, each person that completes a questionnaire) were protected by not having their names or any form of identification disclosed in any way. The right to self-determination was guaranteed by ensuring the right of the participant to voluntarily participate in the research or to refuse to disclose information of any kind at any stage of the research.

Informed consent was obtained and the purpose the research was explained to all the participants will take part in this study. Informed consent is "a legal requirement before one can participate in a study" (Brink &Wood 1998, p.200). In this research, ethical considerations such as time spent with the participants, risks to the participants, invasion of privacy, confidentiality and reciprocity were addressed to ensure the quality of the data that was collected. People who declined to participate or who withdrew from the research were not treated with prejudice. All agreements between the researcher and the participants were honoured. Participants were at all times treated with respect and courtesy.

In an explanatory design, researchers may use a large quantitative database for the initial phase of the research. Some individuals may not want their quantitative data released. As a result, in this study, the researcher made sure the names of the people who participated in this study were kept confidential so that no harm or embarrassment will be done to them. Lankshear and Knobel, (2004) have argued that harm can range from people experiencing affronts to their dignity and being hurt by conclusions that are drawn about them all the way through to having their

reputations or credibility undermined publicly. Therefore, participants were referred to by codes or pseudonyms and not names in order for confidentiality to be upheld by such outlets and customers.

4.14 Summary

In this chapter, details on the methodology which were employed in the study have been explained, including research design, study area/site, target population, study sample, sampling techniques, research instruments, validity and reliability, data collection techniques, data analysis as well as ethical considerations. In the next chapter, the findings of the study are presented.

CHAPTER FIVE

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the presentation of the results has been done. These results are based on the data that was collected through questionnaires which were administered to customers of Lafarge Zambia products. The chapter begins with a description of the sample from which the data was collected by giving, demographic details relating to respondents before presenting the findings of each research question. A number of themes emerged from the data that was collected and were aligned as answers to the research questions and detail was added from the quantitative data that was obtained through the questionnaires. However, the analysis was strictly guided by the information which was answering the following research questions:

1. What is the quality of customer service provision at Lafarge based on the SERVQUAL model?
2. What is the extent of customer satisfaction with service provision at Lafarge?

5.2. Respondents Demographics

In this section, the researcher presents the demographics of the participants who took part in this study. All the groups that took part in the study were requested to provide background data regarding their gender, qualifications and number of years in business experience before they completed the questionnaires and took part in the interviews for the purpose of analysis. Questions two (1), (2), (3) and (4) from the questionnaire in Section A sought information on the type of business which they operated, the gender of the participant, years of business experience and the qualifications of the participants. Creating a profile of the respondents would help better understand and address issues with respect to the subject matter.

Two categories, namely gender and number of years of business experience were identified as the most important for the analysis. As seen in Table 5.1, out of the 250 respondents, majority (96%; n=240) were male and 4% were female (n=10). Table 5.2 presents a summary of frequency distribution of respondents' years of experience in business. The number of years of

experience of business relationship with Lafarge Zambia Plc in this study is a prerequisite to a good understanding in the implementation and engagement in quality customer service and it helped in relating the responses to the respective period performance of the company sales.

Although the majority of respondents are male in this study, there was no gender bias as Lafarge clients comprised of both gender involved in distribution and purchasing of cement. The difference is due to the fact that those that were willing to respond to the questionnaire were mostly males, and since ethical concerns and willingness were highly valued in the research hence the results obtained.

Table 5.1: Summary of Frequency Distribution of Respondents' Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	240	96
Female	10	4
TOTAL	**250**	**100**

Source: Field Survey 2017

Table 5.2 shows that as a prerequisite prior to the survey, the study solicited to know the age of business relationship of the respondents. The figure shows that out of a total of 250 respondents, 58 had a relationship in the range of 0-5 years, which translates into 23.2% of the total sample. The majority of respondents are in the range of 5 -10 years, which translates to 36.8% of the total sample. Then those in range of 10-15 years were 55 and Above 15 years represented had 22% and 18% respectively of the total sample.

The majority of the respondents were noted to have been doing business with Lafarge Zambia Plc for at least more than five years, therefore, it can be deduced that these respondents have much needed experience with the service provision of Lafarge Zambia Plc in turn provide credible data and ratings of their service experiences with Lafarge. The decline of Lafarge sales started in 2014; this means that over 77% of respondents were Lafarge customers by that time.

All other factors being constant, their responses would be strongly linked to the company performance because the majority of them where already customers at the time the sales begun to decline.

The results may reveal the reflection of the level of customer loyalty as they indicates that over 77% according to the consistence of relations and experiences were regular customers as they had been in relationship with the company for more than 5 years. Furthermore over 40% of customers were loyal with a loyalty period of over 10 years. The consistency exhibited in the study might not suggest that they were receiving good service as other factor will be explored further in the results.

Table 5.2: Summary of Frequency Distribution of Respondents' Years of Experience in Business Relationship with Lafarge

Years	Frequency	Percent
(0-5 years)	58	23.2
(5-10 years)	92	36.8
(10-15 years)	55	22.0
(above 15 years)	45	18.0
Total	**250**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey 2017

The Figure 5.1 shows the summary of the level of education of the respondents comprising of those running outlets and customers who purchase Lafarge Zambia Plc products which denotes that, 92% (n=230) of the respondent (20) indicated to have Certificate 8%, (43.4%) possessed Diploma as their qualification, those with Bachelors' Degree amounted to 80 (34.7%), for the Masters, 4.3% (n=10) while 1.7% (n=4) of the respondents had PHD. Those with others constituting 6.9 %(n= 16). Probing the level of education of respondents was important because it helped understand the reliability of the results.

The level of respondents' education levels means that the researcher interacted with individuals who are literate enough to understand what questions the researcher was asking and produced reliable information.
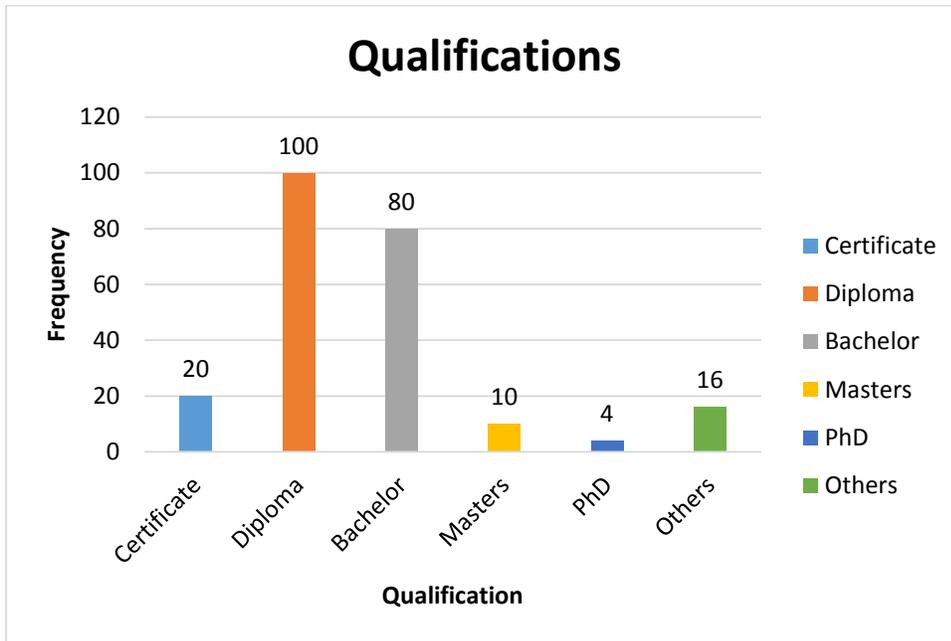
Figure 5.1: Summary of the Level of Education of the Respondents

Source: Field Survey 2017

5.3. Research Findings

As mentioned in chapter three, the research followed a mixed methods and descriptive survey design. In this design, the researcher started by collecting quantitative data and then collecting qualitative data to help explain or elaborate on the quantitative results. The researcher identified themes in relation to the research objectives as well as recurrent patterns in the opinions of the study participants and univariate analysis using SPSS was done for the quantitative data where graphical illustration in form of graphs and tables were made. The findings from the Lafarge outlet owners in Lusaka and Kafue have been presented alongside those from the customers of Lafarge Zambia Plc's products. Actual words said by respondents were used as much as possible in the descriptions, while other words have been paraphrased. It is important to note that some ideas presented were interrelated and could fall into more than one thematic section. Both quantitative and qualitative data sets were presented in a sequence.

Research question number one sought information from participants on how they understood the quality of customer service provision from Lafarge Zambia Plc.

5.4 Object 1. To Establish the Quality of Customer Service Provision at Lafarge Based On the SERVQUAL Model

Participants were requested to rate the quality of the services in terms of the cement products offered by Lafarge Zambia Plc, packaging, conformity to standards and feedback to customers in case of a problem, prompt service to customers, willingness to help customers, readiness to respond to customer's requests and if employees would instil confidence in customers.

5.4.1. Packaging of the Products and Conformity to Standards

The customers were asked to state if the packaging of the cement products produced by Lafarge Zambia Plc were satisfactory and of quality. They were also asked to state if quality of the cement was reliable for use and if instructions on the product were clearly stated. There were 2.1% (5) customers who stated that the quality was very poor to the above descriptions, 57% (131) stated that it was good while 21% (48) stated poor. The remaining 14.3% (33) rated the service average and 10% (23) noted that the service was excellent.

The majority of the customers' expectations are more or higher on the right side of the scale implying that the majority of the customers enjoy the quality of packaging material and appealing of Lafarge's physical facilities and logically the level of satisfaction can also be observed from the fact that high expectation is met. Therefore, this item of this service dimension had a positive (satisfaction) rating because the majority of customer's expectations were met by the quality of service provision offered by Lafarge Zambia Plc.

The result is an indication that customers were happy with the quality of customer service and one of the reasons being good quality of packaging materials. The good quality of packaging materials is responsible for customer satisfaction. The results from the study in Figure 5.2 clearly indicate that the quality of the cement products offered by Lafarge and services were meeting the expected standards. The customers expected the services to be of good standards and this was the case in all outlets.
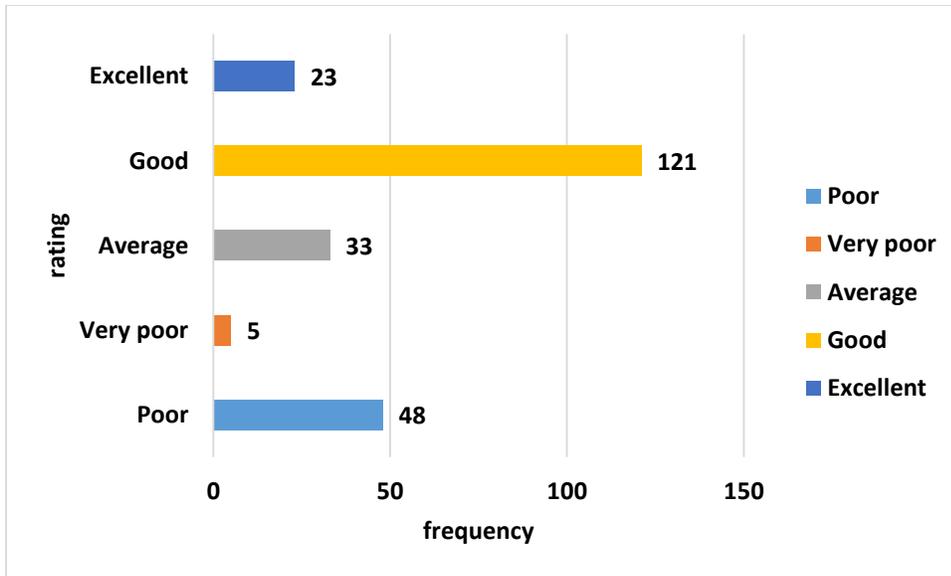
Source: Field Survey 2017

Figure 5.2: Responses on the quality of the cement products and services offered by Lafarge

5.4.2. Feedback to customers in case of a problem

Figure 5.3 shows that the study solicited to know the customer's expectations regarding feedback to customers in case of a Problem. In terms of customers' expectations the results reflects that majority of the respondents 91% rated the service to be good, 3% rated it very good, 1% rated it excellent, 3% rated it average while 2% rated it poor.

The majority of the customers' expectations are more or higher on the right side of the scale implying that the majority of the customers think that Lafarge's service provision is good and hence satisfied on this dimension with respect to receiving feedback in case of a problem. Logically the level of satisfaction can also be observed from the fact that high expectation is met. The minority on the left side of the scale who expressed dissatisfaction was due to delays in receiving feedback. Therefore, this dimension had a positive (satisfaction) rating because the customer's expectations were met by the quality of service provision offered by Lafarge regarding feedback in case of a problem.

This result answers the research objective of determining if customers were happy with the level of service provision. The result indicates that that over 92% respondents were happy with level of response from the company. The result shows a clear indication that customer service has an effect on customer satisfaction.
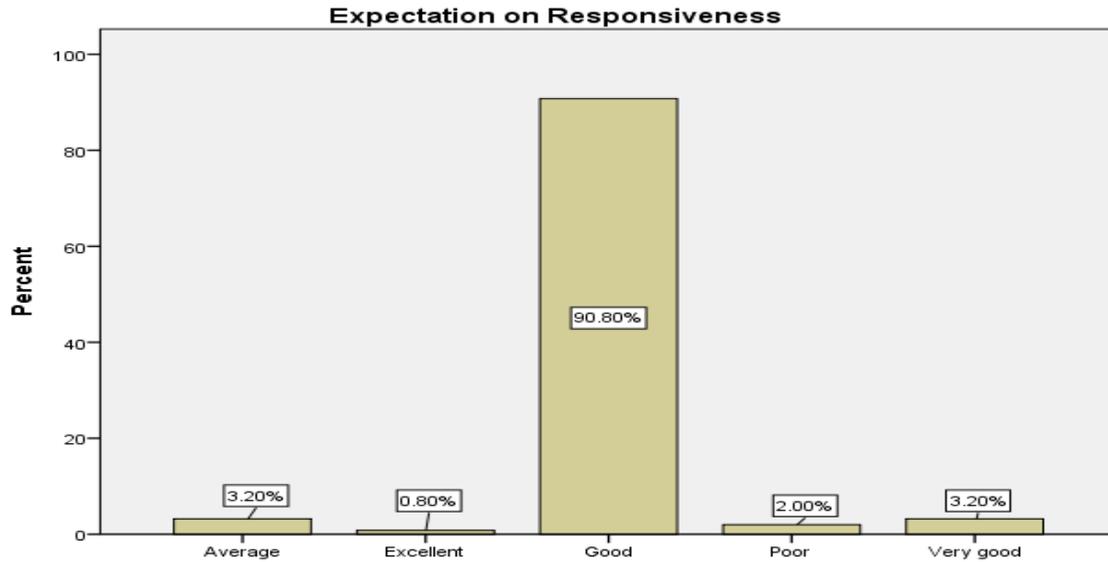
Figure 5.3: Rates for Responses and responsiveness

Source: Field Survey 2017

When interviewed to state their opinion if the quality of a service has any effect on customer satisfaction, most of the outlet owners indicated that they were aware that quality of service has significant contribution towards customer satisfaction. For example outlet one (1), three (3) and four (4) explained that;

> *The reason is customer satisfaction doesn't exclusively depend on quality of service. There are few factors that are involved in customer satisfaction. For example, customers are satisfied with our services because we give them on credit when they don't have cash available.*

On asking the question "Are both factors quality and satisfaction related to each other or not?" He responded:

up to some extent only they are related to each other. Quality of service has some certain contribution towards customer satisfaction but other factors effect as well.

Outlet 11, 13, 15,5,14 and 17 also added that;

Quality of service does affect customer satisfaction level. The way it is delivered and the way we deal with customer queries does affect the satisfaction level.

5.5. Levels of Customer Satisfaction towards the Type and Quality of Services provided by Lafarge

This section discusses customer's level of satisfaction with service management at Lafarge Zambia Plc. The result from the study indicated that out of the 230 respondents who are customers of Lafarge 77% indicated satisfaction with the company's service management while 23% expressed their dissatisfaction with the service management at Lafarge. The majority 77% of the customers are satisfied with Lafarge Zambia Plc's service management currently because they felt that Lafarge's services have been good and have been improving over time however, the minority 23% are dissatisfied with service management because of their inconsistencies. The results creates an impression that the majority of over 77% were happy and satisfied with service management and therefore indicating that service quality is good.

The customers had high expectations on the type and quality of service provided by Lafarge and the findings indicated that the perceptions for the expectations were mostly high to moderate with the majority satisfied in certain areas. This implies that most of the customers are happy with the type and quality of services provided Lafarge. The result indicates that level of satisfaction in service provision is over 76%. All other factors being constant, the quality of service provision is responsible for customers' satisfaction. The majority 76% of the customers are satisfied with Lafarge Zambia Plc's service provision because they felt that Lafarge's services have improved and have been good from the time they started doing business with Lafarge. On the other hand, this can be attributed to the fact that the majority of the respondents have been in business with Lafarge for more than five years and they have developed loyal relationship. The minority 24% are dissatisfied with service management because of Lafarge's inconsistencies in its service delivery or provision.

The researcher sought answers from question one (1) C of the interview which solicited what response they expected from a customer if he/she is satisfied with their services

Customer two (2), three (3), 14, 15, 17, 20 and 23 indicated that:

The word of mouth has a big effect both positive and negative as it's a best way to get new customer through other customer. I believe a happy customer tells other customers that we are very good and he recommends our services to others. It has a big impact as compare to other way if he/she is not happy he will switch to other service providers. A good rumour has a big effect then a bad rumour but it doesn't change the other customer if he has already heard that we do not treat our clients well.

In answering the same question, customer 30, 34, 67, 89 and 99 responded by stating that;

It's important that what people say to others about retail services and discus their relationship with the service providers. What people hear from others affects their level of expectations and perceptions about the product and services. Negative word of mouth has more strong influence on people's perceptions as compare to positive word of mouth.

5.5.1. Strategies to Enhance Customer Satisfaction in the Cement Manufacturing Industry (at Lafarge Zambia Plc)

When asked how to enhance customer satisfaction in an interview, most outlet customers made suggestions. For example, participant 100, 109 and 103 suggested by stating;

Lafarge should allow customers to give them their suggestions and opinions on any matters that they find not satisfactory on the process of service delivery; they should also make sure that the customers problems presented are solved immediately as possible.

On the same question, participants 157, 169 and 170 added their voices by suggesting the following;

Lafarge should improve logistics and transport facilities which they are using. Solving this can reduce late deliveries which can also improve the perceived quality of the services and satisfaction to the customers. Further, Lafarge should be conducting researches to know the necessary needs and expectations of their customers that way they

will be in a better position to know what to offer and reduce the rate of dissatisfied customers.

Commenting on the same issue on how to enhance customer satisfaction, participants 144 and 159 added that;

Lafarge should improve their service provision in areas of providing the promised services in a right way and at the right time to increase satisfaction to the customers.

In addition, Lafarge should increase experiences and training of its employees well to deliver services that their customer's wants as A matter of fact in today's world customer rule thus the service should be offered in a way that customers expect.

5.6. The Extent of Customer Satisfaction with Service Provision at Lafarge

In order to fulfil objective Two (2) which was to determine the extent of customer satisfaction with service provision at Lafarge. This section reveals results.

5.6.1. Responses on Levels of Familiarity with exact service terms

It was impotent to understand if the respondents had enough knowledge or were familiar with the type and quality of service offered by the Lafarge. The familiarity level helped to understand and relate the familiarity with the rated level of service quality. Table 5.3 shows that the study also required to know the level of the respondents' familiarity with terms of service provision of Lafarge because it was imperative to the effective determination of their satisfaction.

The results reveal that the majority, 61% of the respondents had a very good understanding of the service terms, while 26% of the respondents had a good understanding and only the minority, 13% had an understanding which was neither poor nor good but average. This means that the majority of the customers of Lafarge know well what services the company provides and how it should deliver those services to them. The summary of the results are presented in table 5.3.

5.6.2. Quality of Customer Service

The investigation's service provision questionnaire is explicitly conformed by the expectation section, in which the researcher decided to show the results for each of the six dimensions together, in order to give a better and clearer sight of the data gathered. It is important to bear in

mind that the researcher thought it was significant to show the variations in customer's expectations in relation to their overall satisfaction of Lafarge service provision. Based on the scale, the scale has three parts the **Left side** (the negative side with codes ranging from bad to poor), the **Average** (representing neither good nor poor) and the **Right side** (the positive side with codes ranging from Good to excellent). In other words, when the right side codes are higher than those on the left side they indicate satisfaction while those on left indicate dissatisfaction.

5.6.3. Expectation Knowledge and skills

In discussing how the respondents' expectations on the knowledge and skill of the Lafarge members of staff in providing quality of customer service. Table 5.3 shows that the study solicited to know the customer's expectations regarding Lafarge's employees to show expert knowledge/skill during service provision. In terms of customers' expectations table reflects that most of the respondents 79% rated the service to be good, 11% rated it very good, 2% rated it excellent and 8% rated it average based on their expectation. The majority of the customers' expectations are more or higher on the right side of the scale implying that the majority of the customers had good experience with Lafarge employees capability to show expert knowledge during their service provision and logically the level of satisfaction can also be observed from the fact that high expectation is met. Therefore, this item of service dimension had a positive (satisfaction) rating because the majority of customer's expectations were met by the quality of service provision offered by Lafarge.

This finding answers the research objectives of determining the level service provision, there is a clear indication that the respondents were happy with the level of customer service and that their expectations on skills and knowledge of members of staff were generally met as one of the factors which was responsible for their satisfaction. The result shows a clear indication that customer service has an effect on customer satisfaction

5.6.4. Expectation on Communication

The study sought if respondent's expectation was met in terms of members of staff's willingness to provide information to customers. The results for these results are incorporated in table 5.3 which shows the customer's expectations regarding Lafarge's employee's communication

(willingness to provide information to customers) with customers. In terms of customers' expectations table 5.3 reflects that majority of respondents 79% rated the service to be good, 18% rated it very good, none rated it excellent and 11% rated it average.

The results of the study imply that the majority of the customers' expectations are more or higher on the right side of the scale implying that the majority of the customers had good experience with Lafarge's' employees ability to communicate with them during their service provision and logically the level of satisfaction can also be observed from the fact that high expectation is met. Therefore, this item of service dimension had a positive (satisfaction) rating because the majority of customer's expectations were met by the quality of service provision offered by Lafarge.

The results answers the research objectivises of determining if customers were happy with the level of service provision. It is clear that 79% of respondents 'expectations on effective communication were met. Effective communication is one of the factors that lead to customer's satisfaction. All other factors being constant, the level of communication of members of staff to customers is responsible for customer satisfaction.

5.6.5. Expectation on Empathy

The study further probed the customer's expectations regarding Lafarge's employee's ability to understand customer's needs. In terms of customers' expectations in summary, Table 4 reveals that majority of respondents 56% rated the service to be good, 18% rated it very good, 12% rated it excellent, 8% rated it average, 7% rated it poor while 1% rated it bad.

The results suggest that the majority of the customers' expectations are more or higher on the right side of the scale implying that the majority of the customers enjoy Lafarge's employee's ability to understand their needs and logically the level of satisfaction is met. Therefore, this item of this service dimension had a positive (satisfaction) rating because the majority of customer's expectations were met by the quality of service provision offered by Lafarge. The result is an indication that empathy of members of staff is responsible for customer satisfaction.

5.6.6. Expectation on Reliability

Table 5.3 gives a summary of customer's expectations regarding Lafarge's ability to provide the promised service and the right way. In terms of customers' expectations the results reveal that majority of respondents 75% rated the service to be average, 17% rated it good, 2% rated it very good, 5% rated it poor while 1% rated it bad. The result proposes that the majority of the customers' expectations are more or higher on the centre of the scale implying that the majority of the customers feels that Lafarge is not very consistent with delivering the promised service and the right way ,this was followed by number of customers that enjoy the way Lafarge delivers this service although the minority on the left side show complete dissatisfaction due to the fact that they felt that Lafarge' does not deliver the service the right way. Therefore, this item of this service dimension had an average rating (neither satisfied nor dissatisfied) because the majority of customer's expectations were not fully by the quality of service provision offered by Lafarge. The result is an indication that customer satisfaction was affected by the reliability of service provision by members of staff.

Table 5.3: Levels and expectation of Service quality towards the type of customer services provided by Lafarge Zambia Plc.

Variable	poor	Good	Very good	Average	Excellent
Level of familiarity	0	26%	61.2%	12.8%	0
Expectation on Knowledge	0	78.8%	11.2%	8.0%	2.0%
Expectation of communication	0	78.8%	10.0%	11.2%	0
Expectation of empathy	6.0%	56%	18%	8.0%	12%
Expectation of reliability	5.2%	17.2%	3.2%	74.4%	0
Expectation on service accuracy	0.8%	7.8%	7.2%	12%	2.0%

5.6.7. Expectation on Service accuracy

This study further launched an inquiry in the customer's expectations regarding Lafarge's ability to perform the service accurately (right) the first time. In terms of customers' expectations Table 5.3 reflects that majority of respondents 78% rated the service to be good, 3% rated it very good, 1% rated it excellence, and 12% rated it average while 1% rated it poor. The results imply that the majority of the customers' expectations are more or higher on the right side of the scale implying that the majority of the customers enjoy Lafarge's employee's ability to perform the service accurately first time, followed by those that were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied because they were not confident that the services they got first time were accurate as agreed in the terms of service.

Although the minority on the left side had a negative experience of the service provision in this respect is average due to the fact that they felt that Lafarge's employees did not perform the service exactly as agreed when they were purchasing the products. Therefore, this item of this service expectation had a positive (satisfaction) rating because the majority of customer's expectations were met by the quality of service provision offered by Lafarge Zambia Plc. Service accuracy is therefore responsible for customer satisfaction.

The results for the independent variable, Expectation responsiveness *(M= 4.97, SD=.419)*, empathy *(M=5.22, SD= .967),* reliability (M= 4.18, SD=.565, accuracy (M=4.97, SD=.551) Knowledge of skills (M= 5.07, SD=.517 were statistically significant (t *(249)* = 18.436, *p < .001*). Additionally, customer's level of familiarity *(M= 5.48, SD= .712)*, communication *(M= 4.98, SD=.461),* (t *(246) = 77.866, p < .001*). Results of the Pearson correlation indicated that there was a significant positive association between customer expectations and communication, between accuracy and communication, knowledge skills, reliability and accuracy. Interestingly, the results indicated another positive association between the variable reliability and empathy as well as quality material and reliability, r *(60)* = *.94, p<. 001)* and moderately negatively correlated between quality of material and expectation responsiveness *r (230) = .51, p < .001)*. The level of the association among variables in this study results accepts the hypothesis HO.The summary of the statistics are presented in Table 5.4.

Table 2.4: Descriptive Statistics: SD and Correlations

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Expectation_Respo	4.97	0.419	.621**	1						
Communication	4.98	0.461	.519**	.693**	1					
Quality_Materials	5.48	0.772	.607**	.843**	.868**	1				
Empathy	5.22	0.967	.696**	.717**	.807**	.829**	1			
Reliability	4.18	0.565	.708**	.914**	.668**	.815**	.735**	1		
Accuracy	4.97	0.551	.692**	.845**	.777**	.835**	.833**	.850**	1	
Knowledge_Skills	5.07	0.517	.442**	.665**	.602**	.731**	.496**	.663**	.537**	1
Level_Familiarity	5.48	0.712	-.428**	-.678**	-.775**	-.837**	-.699**	-.665**	-.637**	-.884**	1

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

A Multiple Linear Regression Analysis was carried out to evaluate the predictive influence of the variables on the assessment of quality of customer service provision and satisfaction at Lafarge Zambia Plc that is, analysis on expectation responsiveness, communication, quality material, empathy, reliability, accuracy, knowledge of skills and level of familiarity. Years in business partnership with Lafarge; and quality of goods and services were the variables used to predict quality customer services variance. Table 4.4 illustrates both unstandardized and standardized regression coefficients of the predictors of tourism growth.

The general regression model was not statistically significant in the three data sets: on Years in business partnership with Lafarge, $F_{(6,243)} = 369.868$, $p = > .001$, empathy, $F_{(1,248)} = 757.450$, $p = .001$, reliability, $F_{(2,247)} = 432.633$, p = .001 and accuracy, $F_{(3,246)} = 303.908$, p = .001 with the three variables explaining about 81% ($R^2 = .901$), of the quality service variances. The regression results show that quality customer service had a significant impact on the customer satisfaction. Years in business partnership with Lafarge, and quality goods and services also had a statistically significant effect on the implementation of quality customer service refereeing to the respective largest proportions of variance accounted for R2. Table 5.5 shows the factors that are affecting the provision of quality customer services at Lafarge Plc.

Table 5.5: Multiple Linear Regression Results: Unstandardized and Standardized Beta Weights

Model	B	$.\beta$	P
Years of relationship exp	.986	-.684	.000
Quality of goods services	.216	.162	.000
Empathy	.206	.194	.002
Reliability	.442	-.243	000
Accuracy	.284	.153	.004

Note. The dependent strategic alliance benefits. R2 = .753, R2 =.778 and R2 = .785 and Adjusted R2 = .752, R2 = .776 and R2 = .785. B = Unstandardized Beta Coefficient and β = Standardized Beta Coefficient

5.7. Discussion of Key Findings

In the previous section, the findings for this study have been presented. In this section, the study findings will be discussed. The purpose of the discussion is to interpret and describe the significance of the findings in light of what was already known about the research problem being investigated, and to explain any new understanding or insight about the problem after taking findings into consideration. The discussion is based on the findings presented in chapter five as well as the theoretical framework guiding this study and other related literature in chapter two. Hence, in this study, the findings are discussed in relation to themes. Effort has been made to reflect, validate and broaden current knowledge and philosophy on an assessment of quality of customer service provision and satisfaction at Lafarge Zambia Plc. This had helped the researcher to interpret and outline what findings meant to the study.

5.7.1. The Quality of Customer Service Provision at Lafarge Based On the SERVQUAL Model

The study investigated the customer's level of satisfaction with the type of customer services provided by the Lafarge Plc. The current study is significantly similar to other studies conducted elsewhere by various researchers such as Deshphande et al (1993), who argue that the customer should be put at the heart of the business through a well-established customer orientated corporate culture in which individual employees should possess a set of values and beliefs that are likely to consistently reinforce and pervade the customer focus across the organization. Nevertheless, the scholars noted that much work needs to be done to measure customer satisfaction.

Iacobucci et al (1992) as cited by Oliver, (1997) notes that there is a model that is founded on empirical evidence and experiments that was realized in different fields of study but specifically refers to studies of customer satisfaction, it's determinants and consequences and also dynamic model has also been defined as well in order to interpret the customer firm relationship as a variety along with cognitive and behavioural constructs overlap. A major US market research firm states that customer satisfaction is the key to success and makes the emphatic statement that a satisfied customer is a repeat customer (In- Touch Survey Systems, 2003). Satisfaction is also known to lead to attitudinal loyalty (Lovelock et al, 2001).

It is assumed that high levels of attitudinal loyalty which is pre consumption are an outcome of high levels of satisfaction which in this case is post consumption but sometimes both attitudinal loyalty and satisfaction tend to be pre and post consumption especially in repeat purchases as in the case of the industry of cement production.

With regards to the objectives of this study, a specific conceptual framework was adopted which identified various factors which exist with respect to customer's needs also in relation to the service provision. These needs must be satisfied during service provision. Therefore it is imperative for every organization to understand the needs of customers and find ways of providing the services in a way that ensures customer satisfaction.

Through findings of previous studies some factors that leads to customer satisfaction were listed as accuracy, on-time delivery, strong/good communication, professionalism, physical attributes of the service provider, reliability, responsiveness, credibility, security, competence, courtesy, understanding/knowing the customer, and access. The results answer the research objective as to which factors leads to customers' satisfaction.

The above listed factors are those that have the ability to generate an impact on service quality, and they are very important in order to asses both customers' expectations and perceptions on the service they were receiving. All of these items were divided and categorically placed into five dimensions: tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, empathy and assurance. Various researchers have contributed but the most publicized service dimensions are these dimensions identified by Parasuranam, Zeithaml and Berry (1988).

In this study, the factors within the service dimensions are the independent variables, the other factor of customer expectations is the controlling/determinant variable while customer satisfaction is the dependent variable. These are the factors that are linked to and leads to customer satisfaction if they are present and delivered in a way that exceeds customer perceptions.

The findings of the study reveals that the level of service provision to customers at Lafarge Zambia Plc is satisfactory *(good)* because the majority (76%) of customers' expectations of the service provision are met hence the satisfaction with the current level of service provision, although the minority(24%) is dissatisfied. This is also in line with the findings of the study by Chang and De Run (2009), which stress that, to the organization a good way of retaining customers is through the meeting of customer expectations during service provision, with purpose of keeping a loyal customer, satisfied and furthermore high levels of performance in the marketplace.

On the other hand, Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1988) made a connection between service provision and satisfaction by only three possible ways: when the expected service is superior than perceived service, the perceive quality of the service is not acceptable; when the expected service is equivalent to the perceived service, the perceive quality is acceptable; and when the expected service is lower than the perceived service, the quality of the service results as

satisfactory. Therefore, Lafarge Zambia Plc requires to improve on its services provision to those customers who are dissatisfied by improving specifically on items such as delivery time (deliver products on time and keeping the promise of the service, introducing better transport facilities and logistics, keep the distribution network sound and effective) so as to avoid loss of business of customers to the competitors. Perhaps it will also recapture and increase it's a market share from the current 58%.

Further, the results of the study indicate that all the null hypotheses have been accepted while the alternate hypotheses have been rejected and therefore conclude that Empathy moderately associated with customer satisfaction at Lafarge; Responsiveness is associated with customer satisfaction at Lafarge; Assurance is associated with customer satisfaction at Lafarge; Reliability is associated with customer satisfaction at Lafarge; and Tangibles is associated with customer satisfaction at Lafarge.

5.7.2. The Relationship between Service Provision and Customer Satisfaction in the Cement Manufacturing Industry

The study also sought to determine the relationship between service provision and customer satisfaction in the cement industry. The majority of the Customers at Lafarge Zambia Plc are satisfied with the services they received from the company. The majority's expectations of the service provided by Lafarge were met and in some instances exceeded in relation to the various factors within the service dimensions at Lafarge Zambia Plc. Although there is an average experience on an item of reliability dimension specifically the Lafarge's ability to perform the promised service the right way (in the case of late delivery customers were asked to get products from the other customers/distributors thus in the process a loss of business occurred). Therefore, customers suggested that Lafarge Zambia Plc must improve their services like transport facilities, performing the agreed/promised services on time and the right way to increase the level of satisfaction in this area.

In a related study by Mohammad et al. (2011) which its aim was to examine the relationship between service provision and satisfaction of customers, the study revealed that quality of service provision as perceived by customers in the cement industry has effect on customer satisfaction. Service quality measure was based on SERVQUAL proposed by parasuraman et al.,

(1988) which involve five dimensions namely reliability, responsiveness, empathy, assurance and tangibles. Therefore, the result indicates that to improve the elements/factors of service quality is an important antecedent of customer satisfaction. The results of this study are in tandem with the current study.

Also Ali (2007) when assessing the effect of the independent factors within the service dimensions to the perceived quality service that Lafarge offers to satisfy customers contends that for service to have good quality must confirm to the expectations of customers. It can therefore be concluded that, customer's perceived service quality at Lafarge has to spread in dimension such as logistics and customer's oriented-ness with employee's attitudes and skills in providing the service, then competence which is associated with providing reliable service to customer, tangibles, and convenience which relates to convenience of Lafarge's location and spread. Ultimately, results of this study gives us an impression that the relationship between service provision and customer satisfaction at Lafarge is good and customer satisfaction will always be dependent on the quality service provision.

This research also noted that number of years in doing business with Lafarge determined the perception of the products and services. The regression analysis revealed that the number of years in business partnership with Lafarge, and quality goods and services also had a statistically significant effect on the implementation of quality customer service refereeing to the respective largest proportions of variance accounted for R2. Although the Dissonance theory fails as a complete explanation of consumer satisfaction; however, it has contributed to the understanding in this study of the fact that expectations are not static in that they may change during a consumption experience. This implies that as customers' progress from one encounter to the next, say from retails reception to the ability to respond to customer's requests, their expectations about the product may be modified due to the performance of the previous encounter (Danaher & Arweiler, 1996).

5.7.3. Levels of Customer Satisfaction towards the Type and Quality of Services provided by Lafarge

The study investigated the customer's level of satisfaction on the quality of services provided by Lafarge Plc. The quality was measured in terms of tangibility for instance, quality of products,

packaging, conformity to standards taps functioning properly, feedback to customers in case of a problem, expectations, willingness to help customers and readiness to respond to customer's requests. The results showed that customers were satisfied with the services and all the cement products by Lafarge Plc as they were meeting expected standards. The ability of employees to instil confidence in customers and knowledge and skills of service providers was measured in terms of reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. A number of customers felt that there was readiness to respond to customer's requests was effective and prompt. This confirms the fact proposed by the Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory as explained by Oliver (1977) that, consumers (in this case, the customers) purchase goods and services with pre-purchase expectations about the anticipated performance of those goods and/or services. Customer's high expectations concerning quality services were met with satisfaction as majority of the respondents admitted that there were of good quality services at Lafarge Zambia Plc.

To measure customer services offered by Lafarge Zambia Plc, this study domesticated the Service quality measure which was based on SERVQUAL in order to understand the quality of customer service at Lafarge Zambia Plc. Most of the responses revealed that customers considered the services good, moderate and very good. The low responses on the scale of poor and excellent cannot be ignored in this study as it should suggest mixed satisfaction among customers of which should be taken into consideration. In line with the Discrepancy theory which claims that satisfaction is related to the extent to which real outcomes match the expectation of the individual this means that, the closer the match, the higher the person's satisfaction with it. In this regard, importance is placed on discrepancy theory is in finding how to measure and reduce this perceived ''gap'' between project outcomes and desires. Large negative gaps result in dissatisfaction, while smaller ones result in satisfaction. Large positive gaps vary in impact, depending on the nature of the item and its utility as expressed by the stakeholder. As the measures considered in this research were all desirable ones without detriment if expectations were exceeded, a positive gap was always of value.

Unlike this study which measured service quality and customer satisfaction, Teas (1993) developed the Evaluated Performance model which measures the gap between perceived performance and the ideal amount of a dimension of service quality, rather than the customer's expectation. This was to solve some of the criticism of some previous models Gronroos.

Negi, (2009) and Ladhari, (2009) state that various models have been developed to measure service quality following these approaches either attitude-based measures or disconfirmation models. According to Shahin (2007), it is very important to measure service quality because it allows for comparisons before and after changes, identifies quality related problems, and helps in developing clear standards for service delivery, his views are in line with the aim of this study. Among other models developed to measure customer quality service, another model named the SERVPERF model was developed by Cronin & Taylor, (1992). It focused on the uses of performance approach method which measures service quality based on customer's overall feeling towards service. Although not used in this study, this model is good to measure service quality but does not provide information on how customers will prefer service to be in order for service providers to make improvements.

Most dimensions mainly focus on the human aspects of service delivery (responsiveness, reliability, assurance, and empathy) and the tangibles of service. According to study carried out by Ladhari, (2009), it is recommended that the SERVQUAL model is a good scale to use when measuring service quality in various specific industries but that it is appropriate to choose the most important dimensions of this model that fit to that particular service being measured in order to assure reliable and valid results. In this regard, this model was utilized because it takes into account customer's expectation of a service as well as perceptions of the service which is best way to measure service quality in service sector (Shahin, 2005, p.3). Buttle, (1996, p.8) makes mentions of several researchers that have used the SERVQUAL model in various industries (retailing, restaurants, banking, telecommunication industry, airline catering, local government, hotels, hospitals, and education).

SERVQUAL model which is a Gaps Model of Service Quality. The framework was applied to establish the quality of customer service provision at Lafarge Plc by measuring customer satisfaction levels in light of the dimension of service quality through customer expectations and perceptions.

5.7.4. Strategies to Enhance Customer Satisfaction in the Cement Manufacturing Industry (at Lafarge Zambia Plc)

Customer satisfaction is based on the level of service quality delivered by the service providers (Saravanan & Rao, 2007, p.436) which is determined by the consumer's cumulative experiences at all of the points of contact with company (Cicerone et al., 2009, p.28). This shows that there is some link between service quality and customer satisfaction which highlights that importance of customer satisfaction when defining of quality (Wicks & Roethlein, 2009 p.83).

William and Dargel, (2004, p.310) coined the term, servicescape which is more in service setting because of the unique characteristics of services (intangibility, perishability, inseparability and heterogeneity). Summarily, servicescape is very important in the delivery of services and affects perceived service quality which further leads either customer satisfaction or not. Service quality is an important area to academicians because of its relevancy to service companies and therefore many researchers have tried to develop various models to measure it, even though some claim it is hard to measure because of its intangibility which is hard to quantify (Eshghi et al., 2008, p.121); (Douglas & Connor, 2003, p.171).

This is why as services are intangible in nature, evaluating the customer's perception of quality can be done through the interaction with the personnel offering services, (Magi & Julander, 1996, p.35). From their suggestion, interaction between consumer and service provider is very important when measuring service quality because through that interaction, the service provider could easily understand the consumer better and identify what he/she exactly wants.

Sureshchander et al, (2002, p.373) state that "The veritable gains of a quality revolution come only from customer delight, which again to a very great extent depends on the customer's perceptions of overall service quality. This is why it is very imperative to understand how consumers perceive service quality and how these perceptions could affect their repurchase behaviour because through this way organisations can be able to identify whether or not gaps exist and do take corrective actions to improve upon their activities. In this way, organisations can implement appropriate quality systems which could result to customer satisfaction.

Service quality is an important area for practitioners because according to (Douglas & Connor, 2003, p.167), (Saravanan & Rao, 2007, p.435) the need for survival and growth in ever increasing competitive markets are main critical factors in the search for providing superior service quality and achieving customer satisfaction. Researchers have proven that providing good service quality to customers retains them, attracts new ones, enhances corporate image, positive word-of-mouth recommendation and above all guarantees survival and profitability.

The results of this study as suggested by participants recommends that Lafarge should allow customers to give them their suggestions and opinions on any matters that they find not satisfactory on the process of service delivery. Respondents further suggested that Lafarge should also make sure that the customers problems presented are solved immediately as possible. On the other hand, participants added their voices by suggesting the following that Lafarge should improve logistics and transport facilities which they are using. Solving this can reduce late deliveries which can also improve the perceived quality of the services and satisfaction to the customers. Further, Lafarge was advised to be conducting researches to know the necessary needs and expectations of their customers that way they will be in a better position to know what to offer and reduce the rate of dissatisfied customers.

Commenting on the same issue on how to enhance customer satisfaction, participants added that Lafarge should improve their service provision in areas of providing the promised services in a right way and at the right time to increase satisfaction to the customers. In addition, Lafarge should increase experiences and training of its employees well to deliver services that their customer's wants as a matter of fact in the present world customer rule thus the service should be offered in a way that customers expect. Cement manufacturer must therefore, invest in strategies that enhance trust, communication, commitment and supplier competencies in order to satisfy its customers who will in turn contribute to customer cooperation and loyalty.

5.7.5. Relationship among the Independent and Dependent Variables

The main objective of the study was to measure the customer's satisfaction with the type and quality of service offered by Lafarge Plc. The expectation of customers towards the type and quality of services provided by Lafarge Plc was generally just as high as the perceptions encountered establishing a business relationship with them. All the expectation levels were

measured in light of the fifth gap of service quality which is perceived service and expected service. Drawing from the conceptual framework it is evident that the quality of services influences customer satisfaction. Similarly, state of the products influence customer satisfaction.

In this research, more emphasis was placed in service quality and customer satisfaction by using the SERVQUAL model to assess them in LafargI Zambia Plc retail stores. Service quality and customer satisfaction have received a great deal of attention from most scholars and practitioners because of their relevancy and relationship. According to Eshghi et al., (2008) the main reason for focusing on these issues is improving overall performance of organisations (Magi & Julander, 1996, p.40). Customer satisfaction has been studied by some researchers using a single item scale Cronin & Taylor, (1992) means customer's overall feeling towards a service is asked to measure satisfaction while others use a multiple item scale Parasuraman et al., (1985, 1988) satisfaction is measured using various dimensions for example the SERVQUAL dimensions.

The current study in agreement with other past studied confirm a relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction but contradicts with Asubonteng et al., (1996, p.66) who according to them state that there is no agreement on the exact kind of relationship between the two constructs and points of out that most researchers agree that service quality and customer satisfaction have attributes that are measurable. This is why study employed the SERVQUAL instrument with its dimensions to measure these concepts such as service quality and customer satisfaction and for the fact that service quality leads to customer satisfaction according to Negi (2009) assumption were made in this research in order to measure customer satisfaction.

Customer satisfaction is defined as a function of the customer's expectations and perceptions of performance according to the expectancy - disconfirmation paradigm (Tse & Wilton, 1988) and it is a construct closely related to perceived service quality (Magi & Julander, 1996, p.34) .Various studies that focused on a link between satisfaction and quality argued for different views in terms of relationship. Some think that quality leads to satisfaction, McDougall & Levesque, (1996, 2000); Negi, (2009) and others support that satisfaction leads to quality (Cronin & Taylor, 1992). Some researcher propose that quality and satisfaction are determined by the same attributes like Parasurman et al., (1988, p.16) tried to relate customer satisfaction to service quality since what SERVQUAL model struggles to measure is attitude. They see

customer satisfaction as transaction specific meaning consumers get satisfied with a specific aspect of service while perceived service quality is a global judgement or attitude to a service.

Since the SERVQUAL model was made of ten dimensions of service quality when created; tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, communication, credibility, security, competence, courtesy, understanding the customer, and access, Parasuraman et al., (1985, p.47-48).

This study used the possibility that these dimensions be reduced to five because some dimensions were overlapping (communication, credibility, security, competence, courtesy, understanding customers and access) and it included, Tangibles- physical facilities, equipment, and staff appearance and communication materials. Reliability- ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately and honours its promise; Responsiveness- willingness to help customers and provide prompt service, it also includes readiness of employees to provide service, it further embraces prompt response and quick problem solving; Assurance- knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence, it's a combination of competence, courtesy, credibility and security; Empathy- caring, individual attention the firm provides its customers (Parasuraman et al., 1988, p.23). This was a combination of access, communication and understanding the customer.

Results of the Pearson correlation in this research indicated that there was a significant positive association between customer expectations and communication, between accuracy and communication, knowledge skills, reliability and accuracy. Interestingly, the results indicated another strong positive association between the variable reliability and empathy as well as quality material and reliability, and moderately negatively correlated between quality of material and expectation responsiveness. The level of the association among variables in this study results rejects the hypothesis HO.

5.8. Summary

In chapter five, the research findings of this study based on the research questions and research objectives have been presented. The findings that were arrived at both through the qualitative and quantitative data sets strongly suggested that all the sampled customers are experiencing a good customer service from Lafarge Plc. Some customers indicated that there were facing a few

challenges as they were receiving customer services from Lafarge outlets. The discussion of the results was done under themes emerging from the findings of the study which are informed by the objectives and conceptual framework. The themes presented what the study established from the findings. These emerging themes were that; quality customer service has been considered to attribute to customer satisfaction by Lafarge Plc. However, the evaluation of quality customer services in 250 Lafarge outlets which were under study reveals that there is a positive high correlation between quality customer service and customer satisfaction among Lafarge customers. In the next chapter, conclusions of the study and some recommendations based on the research findings were made.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1. Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher presented the summary of the main research findings which answered the research questions and finally recommendations are given. Furthermore, the study's recommendations and some suggestions on areas for future research have been presented. The aim of this study was to assess the quality of customer service provision and satisfaction at Lafarge Zambia Plc.

6.2. Conclusion

Business in the manufacturing industry such a Lafarge Zambia Plc has been greatly influenced by the inclusion of concepts such as service quality, excellent customer service and relationship marketing. These concepts are among the most crucial determinants of customer satisfaction. Nowadays there are a lot of cement companies that offer services to their clients' such as individuals and corporate firms. Service quality is the measure of the extent to which the customer is experiencing the level of service that he/she is expecting or the ability of a service to bear on it the total features and characteristics that satisfy customer needs. Quality of service in the manufacturing industry is defined by the availability or absence of the quality dimensions. The absence of these quality dimensions result in service gaps. The service gaps are a result of variations or deviations of customer service delivered from customer service expectations. In this type of industry, customer service is determined by factors such as time, dependability, communication and convenience.

Customer satisfaction is commonly defined as a post-choice evaluation which varies along a hedonic continuum from unfavourable to favourable, in terms of whether or not the experience of a specific purchase was at least as good as it was supposed to be, it can also be broadly defined as a difference between customers' expectations and experience performance after using a service and/or product at a certain period. Customers compare perceived service with expected service in which if the former falls short of the latter the customers are disappointed.

Customer satisfaction is the primary focus for all service providers but it comes with the challenges of meeting customer expectations which differ depending on the client and the type of industry in which the client operates.

Customer service may mean different things to various organizations since Lafarge also has the logistics part on which products are delivered to customers, emphasis was placed on having a product available at the time, at the place and in the quantities desired, and management may also concentrate on improving the condition of goods delivered to customers.

This study assessed the quality of customer service provided to Lafarge customers and to find out if customer in general were satisfied with the service or not. In this study, the influencing factors of customer satisfaction were measured and the study revealed that there are a number of factors or elements of service provision that determine customer satisfaction in the cement industry. These factors are assurance, responsiveness, reliability, tangibility and empathy. The study also established that customer satisfaction is highly influenced by the customer's expectations of the quality of the services provided or delivered to them. The objectives to establish the quality of customer service provision at Lafarge was based on the SERVQUAL model so as to determine the extent of customer satisfaction with service provision at Lafarge.

The SERVQUAL model was used to help in the questionnaire design and data analysis. The findings from the study indicated that the majority of the customers of Lafarge knew very well on what services the company provides and how it should deliver those services to them.

The result indicates that that over 91% respondents were happy with level of response from the company. There was clear indication that the respondents were happy with the level of customer service and that their expectations on skills and knowledge of members of staff were generally met as one of the factors which was responsible for their satisfaction, the rating was over 90%. The result also answers all the research questions and can therefore conclude that the expectations on knowledge and skill of members of staff were met.

Further 95% of respondents 'expectations on effective communication were met. Effective communication is one of the factors that lead to customer's satisfaction. All other factors being constant, the level of communication of members of staff to customers was met. Similarly the research questions have been adequately answered from this result. Customers were happy with the quality of packaging materials hence the rating was over of 95%. Over 93% were happy with

the level of empathy exhibited by the members of staff; similarly customer satisfaction was met by members of staff. Furthermore, over 93% of respondents were happy with that the members of staff were reliable in provision of quality customer service. Over 94% of respondents were happy with the accuracy of service provision by the members of staff.

The general picture of the service level is that 77% were happy and satisfied with service management and another 76% were happy with level of satisfaction in service provision. All other factors being constant, service provision has an effect on customer satisfaction. Based on the finding discussed above, the general picture on the assessment of customer service quality provision at Lafarge is good because all five of null hypotheses were accepted. This is an indication that the customer satisfaction is affected by the quality of service provision

6.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings, analysis, discussion and conclusion on the study, the following are recommendations for high quality service provision for increased customer satisfaction and market share that can also result into good and long term relationship between Lafarge Zambia Plc and its customers;

i. Lafarge Zambia Plc should make an arrangement at a certain period of time to conduct research on their customers toward the service they received from the complaints which can put Lafarge Zambia Plc in a better position to know the expectations from their customers in order to take measures to improve the services they received at the company.

ii. Lafarge Zambia Plc should proceed to improve the services and which can become the best way to cope with the competition in the cement industry as the more advanced and reliable they may be the more they increase the satisfaction level of their customers and the more they can reduce level of dissatisfied to their customers.

iii. Customer's opinions should be taken the priority to the company; the company should be quick in solving the company customer's problems. Service should be offered at the aim of meeting customer's expectation that way customers can be satisfied, through this it is easier to build strong and long term relationship between the company and customers. Moreover motivations should be given to the staff members that way they can be in a better position to

offer good services as it is known that once employees are satisfied it is easy for them to satisfy the customers.

iv. Lafarge Zambia Plc should strive to improve its logistics in the company especially for customers who can't provide their own transport. A well organized and improved transport service can increase the speed of product delivery and reduce some complaints to the customers. On the other hand, it should strive to improve service provision in terms of reliability specifically on providing the promised service and rightly to customers and also deliver the products on time using the agreed channels.

v. Lafarge Zambia Plc should be conducting training and education for the both staff and customers frequently in a different ways so as to make staff aware of thinking in ways of delivering services and to educate the customers on the service offered by the company and to make easy ways of the customers to receive such services so that they can meet their personal company needs while keeping the customers satisfied at various levels of service provision.

vi. The company should monitor and evaluate the quality of its service provision from time to time in order to synchronize its services with various specific customer's needs and in order to tailor and provide services that exceed customer expectations at various dimensions of the quality of services they provide .This can lead to service provision that increases customer satisfaction leading to increased and desired market share.

6.4 Areas for further research

The coverage of this study was to find the relationship between service provision and customer satisfaction, specifically in the cement industry for the case of Lafarge Zambia Plc. During the study the researcher was able to observe other areas of the study that the findings would show potential significance to the cement industry. Cement manufacturers need the customers in the Cement industry as it is the world of competition most customers want to experience quality quick service and afterwards they can rush to their entrepreneurial activities. It should be understood that without full consideration of the requirements by customers in this industry, will have dissatisfied customers ,therefore there is need to conduct a study on how innovations such as internet and mobile applications can effectively be used by the customers to achieve their purchase(order placement) and delivery needs keeping in mind the way the service is delivered

as it affects the customers satisfaction hence they should modify their ways of delivering services so as to keep on meeting and exceeding customer's expectations and satisfy them.

REFERENCES

Abdullah, F, Abdurahman, A, & Hamali, J (2013), 'The Dimensions of Customer Preference in the Foodservice Industry', *Business: Theory & Practice*, 14, 1, pp. 64-73, Business Source Complete, EBSCO*host*, viewed 3 December 2013.

Azman, I. & Yusrizal, S.M.Y. (2016) 'Service quality as a predictor of customer satisfaction and customer loyalty.

Allen, M. (2008) Quality control Handbook. 4th ed., New York: McGraw Hill

Anderson, E.W., Fornel, C. and Lehmann, D.R. (1994), "Customer satisfaction, market share and profitability", Journal of Marketing, Vol. 56, pp. 53-66.

Ausbonteng, P., McCleary, K. & Swan, J., (1996). 'SERVQUAL Revisited: a Critical Review of Service Quality', The Journal of Services Marketing, 5(6), pp. 52-81.

Azman I., Hafizah O.Z., Ilyani R.R., 2016.Interlinkages between service quality, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty in Malaysia? A case study of Armed Forces Medical Organizations 7(7), 47-59.

Babakus, E. and Boller, G.W. (1992), 'An empirical assessment of the SERVQUAL scale', *Journal of Business Research*, 26 (6), pp. 253–68.

Brogowicz, A.A., Delene, M.M. and Lyth, D.M. (1990) 'A Synthesized Service Quality Model with Managerial Implications', *International Journal of Service Industry Management*, 1 (1), pp. 27–45.

Brown, T.J., Churchill, G.A. and Peter, J.P. (1993) 'Research note: improving the measurement of service quality', *Journal of Retailing*, 69 (1), pp. 126–39.

Battini, D, Faccio, M, Persona, A, & Sgarbossa, F (2012), 'Design of an integrated quality assurance strategy in production systems', *International Journal Of Production Research*, 50, 6, pp. 1682-1701, Business Source Complete, EBSCO*host*, viewed 13 March 2014.

Biong, H (1993), 'Satisfaction and Loyalty to Suppliers within the Grocery Trade', European Journal Of Marketing, 27, 7, pp. 21-38, Business Source Complete, EBSCOhost, viewed 2 December 2013.

Bitner, M, Faranda, W, Hubbert, A, & Zeithaml, V (1997), 'Customer contributions and roles in service delivery',*International Journal Of Service Industry Management*, 8, 3, p. 193, Business Source Complete, EBSCO*host*, viewed 30 March 2014.

Blumber, B., Cooper, D. & Schinder, P., (2008), 'What are research ethics?'. En: Business research methods. Berkshire: McGraw Hill, p. 154.

Bogomolova, S (2011)., 'Service quality perceptions of solely loyal customers', *International Journal Of Market Research*, 53, 6, pp. 793-810, Business Source Complete, EBSCO*host*, viewed 16 March 2014.

Bojanic, D, & Shea, L (1997), 'Segmentation for a Mutini Resturant Operaton', *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly*, 38, 4, p. 56, Publisher Provided Full Text Searching File, EBSCO*host*, viewed 2 December 2013.

Bolton, R.N. and Drew, J.H. (1991), "A multistage model of customers' assessment of service quality and value", Journal of Consumer Research, Vol. 17, pp. 375-384

Brown, A (2013), 'Quality: where have we come from and what can we expect?', *TQM Journal*, 25, 6, pp. 585-596, Business Source Complete, EBSCO*host*, viewed 13 March 2014.

Brown, G., Bull, J. & Pendleburry, M., (1997), 'Assessing student learning in higher education'. First ed. New York: Routledge.

Bruce, C (1994), 'Research students' early experiences of the dissertation literature review', Studies In Higher Education,

Chang Ee, L, & de Run, E (2009), 'Satisfaction and Loyalty: Customer Perceptions of Malaysian Telecommunication Service Providers', *ICFAI Journal Of Services Marketing*, 7, 1, pp. 6-18, Business Source Complete, EBSCO*host*, viewed 30 March 2014.

Chaudhuri, A. (1999), "Does brand loyalty mediate brand equity?", Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice, Vol. 7 No. 2, pp. 136-45

Claridy, S (2009), 'What is Customer Service?', *Consortium Journal Of Hospitality & Tourism*, 14, 1, pp. 103-108, Hospitality & Tourism Complete, EBSCO*host*, viewed 10 March 2014.

C.N. Krishna Naik, Service Quality (Servqual) and its Effect on Customer Satisfaction in Retailing, European Journal of Social Sciences – Volume 16, Number 2 (2010).

Cooper, D. R & Schindler, P.S (2006) Business Research Methods.

Cooper, R. and Kaplan, R.S. (1991), "Profit priorities from activity-based costing", Harvard Business Review, Vol. 9 No. 3, pp. 130-5.

Cronin Jr., J, & Taylor, S (1992), 'Measuring Service Quality: A Reexamination and Extension', *Journal Of Marketing*, 56, 3, pp. 55-68, Business Source Complete, EBSCO*host*, viewed 2 December 2013.

Cronin, Jr, J.J., Bardy, M.K. and Hult, G.T.M. (2000), "Assessing the effects of quality, value, and customer satisfaction on consumer behavioural intentions in service environments", Journal of Retailing, Vol. 76 No. 2, pp. 193-218

Crosby, L.A., Grisaffe, D.B. and Marra, T.R. (1994), "The impact of quality and customer satisfaction on employee organisational commitment", Marketing and Research Today, February, pp. 19-30.

Dick, A.S. and Basu, K. (1994), "Customer loyalty: toward an integrated conceptual framework", Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, Vol. 22 No. 2, pp. 99-113.

 Domegan, C. & Fleming, D., (1999), 'Marketing Research in Ireland: theory and practice'. First ed. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan LTD.

Mohd, N.,Mohd, N., Ahmad ,T., Haron, Z., Abd, H., Kamarul, A., Mohamad, K., and Yusnizam, B. (2014) :Improving Integrated Practice through Building Information Modeling-Integrated

Project Delivery (BIM-IPD) for Malaysian Industrialised Building System (IBS) Construction Projects, Malaysia Construction Research Journal (MCRJ), Vol. 15(2). (2014).

Dotzel, T, Shankar, V, & Berry, L (2013), 'Service Innovativeness and Firm Value', Journal Of Marketing Research (JMR), 50, 2, pp. 259-276, Business Source Complete, EBSCOhost, viewed 10 March 2014.

Douglas, L, & Connor, R (2003), 'Attitudes to service quality-the expectation gap', Nutrition & Food Science, 3-4, p. 165, Academic OneFile, EBSCOhost, viewed 30 March 2014.

Martins, E. (2017). Why Excellent Customer Service is Crucial to Improving Sales accessed on 6th January 2018 from

Erevelles, S. and Leavitt, C. (1992), "A comparison of current models of consumer satisfaction/ dissatisfaction", Journal of Consumer Satisfaction, Dissatisfaction and Complaining Behavior, Vol. 5 No. 10, pp. 104-114.

Farrell, A, Souchon, A, & Durden, G.(2001). 'Service Encounter Conceptualisation: Employees' Service Behaviours and Customers' Service Quality Perceptions', Journal Of Marketing Management, 17, 5/6, pp. 577-593, Business Source Complete, EBSCOhost, viewed 16 June 2018.

Fornell, C. (1992), "A national customer satisfaction barometer: the Swedish experience", Journal of Marketing, Vol. 56 No. 1, pp. 6-21.

Garver, M.S. (2009). 'A maximum difference scaling application for customer satisfaction researchers', International Journal Of Market Research, 51, 4, pp. 481-500, Business Source Complete, EBSCOhost, viewed 20 April 2014.

Garvin, D. (1983). 'Quality on the line', Harvard Business Review, 61, 5, pp. 64-75, Business Source Complete, EBSCOhost, viewed 18 March 2014.

Garvin, D. (1987). 'Competing on the eight dimensions of quality', Harvard Business Review, 65, 6, pp. 101-109, Business Source Complete, EBSCOhost, viewed 15 March 2014.

Ghylin, K. (2006). 'Clarifying the dimensions of four concepts of quality'. Theoretical Issues in Ergonomics Science, 9(1), pp. 73-94.

Golder, P, Mitra, D, & Moorman, C. (2012). 'What Is Quality? An Integrative Framework of Processes and States', Journal of Marketing, 76, 4, pp. 1-23, Business Source Complete, EBSCOhost, viewed 12 March 2014.

Gricaliunaite, V, & Pileliene, L. (2013). 'Customer Satisfaction with Catering Services in Lithuania', Region Formation & Development Studies, 11, pp. 75-87, Business Source Complete, EBSCOhost, viewed 21 April 2014.

Gronroos, C. (2000). Service Management and Marketing. Lexington Books, Lexing- ton, MA.

Gummesson, E. (1994). 'Service Management: An Evaluation and the Future. International Journal of service Industry management, IV (1), pp. 77-96.

Gruber, T., Fub, S., Voss, R., & Gluser-Zikuda, M. (2010). Examining Student Satisfaction with Higher Education services:Using a new measurement tool. International Journal of public sector Management, 23, 2:105-123

Hair, J., Busg, R. & Ortinau, D., (2003). 'Marketing Research: Within a Changing Information Environment'. Second Ed. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Hara, T, Arai, T, & Shimomura, Y. (2009). 'A CAD system for service innovation: integrated representation of function, service activity, and product behaviour', Journal Of Engineering Design, 20, 4, pp. 367-388, Business Source Complete, EBSCOhost, viewed 11 March 2014. 103.

Hardie, N, & Walsh, P. (1994). 'Towards a better understanding of quality', International Journal of Quality & Reliability Management, 4, p. 53, Academic OneFile, EBSCOhost, viewed 12 March 2014.

Hass, T.J. (2008). 'Building success and momentum in food-service', Amelia Island, FL: Thomas J. Hass Assoc. Inc.

Hoffman, D. & Bateson, J., (2001). 'Marketing: an Introduction'. En: Essentials of Services Marketing. Mason: South-Western, p. 3.

Homburg, C, Wieseke, J, & Bornemann, T (2009). 'Implementing the Marketing Concept at the Employee–Customer Interface: The Role of Customer Need Knowledge', Journal Of Marketing, 73, 4, pp. 64-81, Business Source Complete, EBSCOhost, viewed 20 April 2014

Honey, P. & Mumford, A., (1992), 'The Manual of Learning Styles'. Third ed. Maidenhead: Peter Honey.

Horațiu-Cătălin, S, Radu, I, Mihai, G, & Bogdan, C (2013), 'Approaches to Quality Management at European Level', Annals Of The University Of Oradea, Economic Science Series, 22, 1, pp. 1654-1663, Business Source Complete, EBSCOhost, viewed 12 March 2014.

Huddleston, P, Whipple, J, Mattick, R, & So Jung, L .(2009), 'Customer satisfaction in food retailing: comparing specialty and conventional grocery stores', International Journal Of Retail & Distribution Management, 37, 1, pp. 63-80, Business Source Complete, EBSCOhost, viewed 28 April 2014.

Ismail A., Yunan Y.M., (2016). Service quality as a predictor of customer satisfaction and customer loyalty.

Johns, N. (1999). 'What is this thing called service?' European Journal of Marketing, 33, 9/10, pp. 958-973, Business Source Complete, EBSCOhost, viewed 10 March 2014.

Johns. N., Howards, A. (1998). 'Customer expectations versus perceptions of service performance in the foodservice industry', International Journal of Service Industry Management, 9, 3, p. 248, Business Source Complete, EBSCOhost, viewed 4 December 2013.

Kerlinger, F. & Lee, H., (2000). 'Foundations of behavioral research'. Fourth ed. London: Harcourt College Publishers.

Kolb, D., (1994). 'Experiential Learning: Experience as The Source of Learning and Development'. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall. 104

Kothari, A, & Lackner, J (2006), 'A value based approach to management', Journal Of Business & Industrial Marketing, 21, 4/5, pp. 243-249, Business Source Complete, EBSCOhost, viewed 29 March 2014.

Kumar, M., Kee, F. T. & Manshor, A. T. (2009). Determining the relative importance of critical factors in delivering service quality of banks; An application of dominance analysis in SERVQUAL model, *Managing Service Quality,* Vol. 19, Number 2, p. 211-228.

Kotler , P, & Keller, K. (2006) Marketing Management 12th edition

Kotler, P., (2003). 'Marketing Management'. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Leblanc, G, & Nguyen, N (2001) Corporate Image and corporate reputation in consumer's retention decisions in services. Journal of Retailing and consumer services.

Lee, H, Lee, Y, & Yoo, D (2000), 'The determinants of perceived service quality and its relationship with satisfaction', The Journal of Services Marketing, 2-3, p. 217, Academic OneFile, EBSCOhost, viewed 9 May 2014

Lee, KE, Shanklin, CW, Johnson DE (2003), 'Development of service quality measurement for foodservice in continuing care retirements communities'. Foodservice Research International, 14, pp. 1-21.

Michael C. Handrinos, Dimitrios Folinas and Konstantinos Rotsios 'Using the SERVQUAL model to evaluate the quality of services for a farm school store' Journal of Marketing & consumer behavior in emerging markets 2015.

Markovi´c, S and Raspor, S (2010) 'Measuring perceived service quality using servqual, A case study of the Croatian Hotel Industry.

Malhotra, N.K & Birks, D. F (2007). Marketing Research, An applied approach (3rd ed)

McCollin, C, Ograjenšek, I, Göb, R, & Ahlemeyer-Stubbe, A (2011), 'SERVQUAL and the process improvement challenge', Quality & Reliability Engineering International, 27, 5, pp. 705-717, Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost, viewed 20 April 2014.

Meirovich, G, & Little, L (2013), 'The Delineation and Interactions of Normative and Predictive Expectations in Customers Satisfaction and Emotions', Journal Of Consumer Satisfaction, Dissatisfaction & Complaining Behavior, 26, pp. 40-54, Business Source Complete, EBSCOhost, viewed 16 March 2014.

Minjoon, J, & Shaohan, C (2010), 'Examining the relationships between internal service quality and its dimensions, and internal customer satisfaction', Total Quality Management & Business Excellence, 21, 2, pp. 205-223, Business Source Complete, EBSCOhost, viewed 16 March 2014.

Mohsen, N, Mohammadreza, D, & Majid, S (2012), 'Prioritizing the Effective Factors to Customer's Satisfaction',International Journal Of Business And Management, 2, Directory of Open Access Journals, EBSCOhost, viewed 20 April 2014.

Molina-Castillo, F, Calantone, R, Stanko, M, & Munuera-Aleman, J (2013), 'Product Quality as a Formative Index: Evaluating an Alternative Measurement Approach', Journal 105

Mukesh, K, Fong Tat, K, & Amat Taap, M (2009), 'Determining the relative importance of critical factors in delivering service quality of banks: An application of dominance analysis in SERVQUAL model', Managing Service Quality, 19, 2, pp. 211-228, Business Source Complete, EBSCOhost, viewed 25 March 2014.

Negi, R (2009), 'Determining Customer Satisfaction Through Perceived Service Quality: A Study Of Ethiopian Mobile Users', International Journal Of Mobile Marketing, 4, 1, pp. 31-38, Business Source Complete, EBSCOhost, viewed 26 March 2014.

Neuman W. L. (2003), Social research methods, qualitative and quantitative approaches, 5th Edition, Allyn and Bacon, Boston MA

Occhiocupo, N (2011), 'Innovation in foodservice: the case of a world leading Italian company',Marketing Review, 11, 2, pp. 189-201, Business Source Complete, EBSCOhost, viewed 21 April 2014.

Of Product Innovation Management, 30, 2, pp. 380-398, Business Source Complete, EBSCOhost, viewed 13 March 2014.

Oliver, R.D. and Swan, J.E. (1989), "Consumer perceptions of interpersonal equity and satisfaction in transactions: a field survey approach", Journal of Marketing, Vol. 53,pp. 21-35.

Oliver, R.L. (1999), "Whence consumer loyalty?", Journal of Marketing, Vol. 63 No. 4, pp. 33-44.

Parasuraman, A, Zeithaml, V, & Berry, L (1985), 'A Conceptual Model of Service Quality and Its Implications for Future Research', Journal Of Marketing, 49, 4, pp. 41-50, Business Source Complete, EBSCOhost, viewed 18 March 2014.

Parasuraman, A, Zeithaml, V, & Berry, L (1988), 'SERVQUAL: A Multiple-Item Scale for Measuring Consumer Perceptions of Service Quality', Journal Of Retailing, 64, 1, pp. 12-40, Business Source Complete, EBSCOhost, viewed 16 March 2014

Peppers, D. and Rogers, M. (1997), The One to One Future: Building Relationships One Customer at a Time, Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing, New York, NY.

Pizam, A. and ElIis, T. (1999), "Customer satisfaction and its measurement in hospitality enterprises", International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, Vol. 11 No. 7, pp. 326-339.

Reichheld, F, & Sasser Jr., W (1990), 'Zero defections: Quality comes to services', Harvard Business Review, 68, 5, pp. 105-111, Business Source Complete, EBSCOhost, viewed 26 March 2014.

Ridley, D., (2008), 'The Literature Review: A Step-by-Step guide for students'. first ed. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Rotaru, I (2012), 'The Concept Of "Quality Management" Impact In Education - Local Perspectives', Annals Of Eftimie Murgu University Resita, Fascicle II, Economic Studies, pp. 439-442, Business Source Complete, EBSCOhost, viewed 13 March 2014.

Saravanan, R, & Rao, K (2007), 'Measurement of service quality from the customer's perspective - an empirical study', Total Quality Management & Business Excellence, 3-4, p. 435, Academic OneFile, EBSCOhost, viewed 9 May 2014.

Saunders, M., Lewis, P. & Thornhill, A., (2009), 'Research methods for business students'. Fifth ed. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.

Schneider, B, Holcombe, K, & White, S (1997), 'Lessons learned about service quality: What it is, how to manage it, and how to become a service quality organization', Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice And Research, 49, 1, pp. 35-50, PsycARTICLES, EBSCOhost, viewed 20 April 2014.

Schraeder, M (2013), 'Insights for Creating a Renewed Sense of Significance for the Basic Concepts of Quality', Journal For Quality & Participation, 36, 2, pp. 4-7, Business Source Complete, EBSCOhost, viewed 12 March 2014.

Scotti, D, Harmon, J, & Behson, S (2009), 'Structural Relationships Between Work Environment And Service Quality Perceptions As A Function Of Customer Contact Intensity: Implications For Human Service Strategy', Journal Of Health & Human Services Administration, 32, 2, pp. 1-40, Business Source Complete, EBSCOhost, viewed 17 March 2014.

Shapiro, B.P., Rangan, V.K., Moriarty, R.T. and Ross, E.B., (1987), "Manage customers for profits (not just sales)", Harvard Business Review, Vol. 65 No. 5, pp. 101-8.a

Simmons, J. & Fitzsimmons, M., (2011), 'Service Management: Operations, Strategy, Information Technology'. 7th Ed. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Siu, N.Y.M. and Cheung, J.T. (2001), "A measure of retail service quality", Marketing Intelligence and Planning, Vol. 19 No. 2, pp. 88-96.

Sivakumar, K, Mei, L, & Beibei, D (2014), 'Service Quality: The Impact of Frequency, Timing, Proximity, and Sequence of Failures and Delights', Journal Of Marketing, 78, 1, pp. 41-58, Business Source Complete, EBSCOhost, viewed 10 March 2014.

Swinton, L. (2018). Management for the rest us, accessed on 5th January, 2019 on https://mftrou.com/quality-customer-service/

Tam, J (2007), 'Managing customer expectations in financial services: Opportunities and challenges', Journal Of Financial Services Marketing, 11, 4, pp. 281-289, Business Source Complete, EBSCOhost, viewed 29 March 2014. 107

Terzioglu, B, & Chan, E (2013), 'Toward Understanding the Complexities of Service Costing: A Review of Theory and Practice', Journal Of Applied Management Accounting Research, 11, 2, pp. 29-44, Business Source Complete, EBSCOhost, viewed 10 March 2014.

Titko, J, & Lace, N (2012), 'Bank Value: Comparing Customer And Employee Perceptions', Business, Management & Education / Verslas, Vadyba Ir Studijos, 10, 1, pp. 66-76, Business Source Complete, EBSCOhost, viewed 29 March 2014

Trisga, G (2013), 'The Sources of Customer Expectations and the Customer Level of Familiarity with the Service Provider', Analele Universitatii 'Eftimie Murgu' Resita. Fascicola II. Studii Economice, pp. 286-295, Business Source Complete, EBSCOhost, viewed 29 March 2014

Tse, D.K., Nicosia, F.M. and Wilton, P.C. (1990), "Consumer satisfaction as a process", Psychology and Marketing, Vol. 7 No. 3, pp. 177-193. 547

Wicks, A, & Roethlein, C (2009), 'A Satisfaction-Based Definition of Quality', Journal Of Business & Economic Studies, 15, 1, pp. 82-97, Business Source Complete, EBSCOhost, viewed 15 March 2014.

Yi, Y., (1990), 'A Critical Review of Consumer Satisfaction'. Review of Marketing, American MArketing Association, Volumen V, pp. 63-123

Zeithaml, V, Berry, L, & Parasuraman, A (1996), 'The Behavioral Consequences of Service Quality', Journal of Marketing, 60, 2, pp. 31-46, Business Source Complete, EBSCOhost, viewed 16 March 2014.

Zikmund, W., (2003), 'The nature of surveys'. En: Business research methods. Mason: Thomson South-Western, p. 175.

APPENDICES

Appendix I: Informed Consent Form for Participants

THE UNIVERISTY OF ZAMBIA, GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

Please read this document carefully. Sign your name below only if you agree that you should participate in this research and if you fully understand your rights. Your signature is required for your participation. For you to sign on this form, you must be a dealer of Lafarge Plc cement products, Lafarge agent or customer of the stated Lafarge cement products. If you desire a copy of this consent form, you may request one and we will be very happy to provide it.

Dear Respondent,

My name is **Chipo Nkhata**, a Masters student from the University of Zambia currently undertaking research.

Description of the Study: You have been randomly invited to participate in this study on the **assessment of quality of customer service provision and satisfaction at Lafarge Zambia plc.** The aim of this study is mainly to investigate customer service provision and satisfaction specifically at Lafarge Plc in Lusaka and Kafue District. The study will also attempt to measure the level of customer service derived from SERVQUAL model and these are assurance, responsive, reliability, tangibility and empathy. The study will furthermore provide an evaluation of their performance and additionally propose answers to the vital questions which will lead in the filling up of the gap that is in the service provision of Lafarge Plc which has a major impact on customer satisfaction.

Safety of the study:

We wish to assure you that, during and after the tasks, this study does not pose any physical, mental or other risks to you. The nature of the tasks is that you will be required to answer certain

industry related questions. This, therefore, requires your consent which is a very important step in this study.

Time Involvement:

Some time may be lost from your work schedule as it is necessary that you are fully explained to how this study will be conducted. In addition, there is a questionnaire for you to which are expected to respond. This is very important as well because we need to get information from you regarding the status quo in quality of service provision. Secondly, you will also be withdrawn from your busy schedule for a couple of minutes when being interviewed.

Activities for the respondant

Responding to a questionnaire and interview

Foreseeable Benefits:

We cannot guarantee that you and you will receive any direct benefits from this study. However, as a participant, you will have an opportunity to contribute to the improvement quality service provision in the named sector, a contribution that will benefit this nation a great deal. You will also learn one or two other things about your industry which educationists and researchers are interested in.

Participant Rights:

• Participation in this study is purely voluntary so if you decide to withdraw yourself at any point, you may freely do so, and there will be no consequences for that decision. However, we are very interested in working with you.

• All personal identifying information about you will be kept confidential and the data sheets will be kept in secured lockers in accordance with the standards of the University of Zambia Research and Ethics Committee. If the results of this study are required for publication as we hope to do, your identity will still be kept very private. This is the standard way of conducting this type of research.

• Feel free to ask any question so that you fully understand this whole important activity.

Signatures:

I,…………………………………….(respondant)to ……………………………….(name of firm) have read and understood the above information. My signature testifies that I understand the nature of this study, consent process and management of confidentiality as indicated above. I also understand that I can withdraw myself at any time during this study.

Signature of participant's parent:…………………………………………

Phone Number:…………………………………………………………….

Date…………………..

Name of Witness:………………………………………………………….

Signature of Witness:……………………………………………………..

Phone Number:…………………………………………………………….

Date……………………………………………………………………….

Name of Researcher:………………………………………………………

Signature of Researcher:………………………………………………….

Phone Number:……………………………………………………………

Date…………………………………………………………………………

Contacts For further clarifications about this research, please you may contact the following person who is my supervisor in this research.

Dr. L. Habazooka,

Graduate School of Business,

University of Zambia,

 P.O. Box 32379,

Lusaka, Zambia.

Appendix 2: Questionnaire for the respondents

THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA, GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE QUALITY OF CUSTOMER SERVICE PROVISION AT LAFARGE ZAMBIA PLC

Dear Respondent,

You have randomly been chosen to take part in this research whose aim is to assess the quality of customer service provision at Lafarge Plc. Your views, experiences and suggestions as a respondent will provide the necessary information which will help Lafarge Plc to provide quality services in future. To insure confidentiality, anonymity of the respondent is assured and all responses are sorely for academic and research purposes as they shall be treated with strict confidentiality they deserve.

Section A: Biographical Data

1. Name of company or type (optional): .... 2.Code of respondent: …………… 3. Gender: ....…… 4. Number of years of doing business with Lafarge.............................

5. Level of Education……………………………………………….

Section B:

INSTRUCTIONS
Please select your answer by ticking on the option in the box provided

1. Are you familiar with the exact service terms of Lafarge? Yes ☐   No ☐

2. **EXPECTATIONS**

   This section is about your expectations (opinions of Lafarge service provision).For each question show the extent to which you believe Lafarge provides the service described by the statement.

Scale	1	2	3	4	5
Grade	Poor	Very poor	Average	Good	Excellent

What is your level of satisfaction by the services offer by Lafarge Plc?

	Cement Products		Poor	Very poor	Average	Good	Excellent	score	
a.	packaging	■							

b.	Quality of the cement							
c.	Instructions of the product							
d.	Technical support							
e.	usability							
f.	Conformity to standards							

3. With regards to **RESPONSIVENESS** defined as below; rate your service provider in the following categories;

a.	Feedback to customers in case of a problem							
b.	Expectations							
c.	Prompt service to customers							
d.	Willingness to help customers							
e.	Readiness to respond to customer's requests							
f.	Employees will instil confidence in customers							

4. With regards to **ASSURANCE** defined as below; rate Lafarge Zambia in the following categories;

a.	Employees ability to show expert knowledge/skills during service provision							
b.	Making customers feel safe in their transactions							
c.	Employees who are constantly courteous							
d.	Employees who have the knowledge to answer customer's questions							
e.	Communication with customers*(willingness to provide information to customers)*							

5. With regards to **TANGIBILITY** defined as below; rate Lafarge Zambia in the following categories;

a.	Quality of packaging material							
b.	Visually appealing of physical facilities							
c.	Modern equipment							
d.	Visually appealing materials associated with							

	service							
c.	Employees who have a neat, professional appearance							

6. With regards to **EMPATHY** defined as below; rate Lafarge Zambia in the following categories;

a.	Ability to understand customer's needs							
b.	Giving customers individual attention							
c.	Employees who deal with customers in a caring fashion							
d.	Having the customer's best interest at heart							

7. With regards to **RELIABILITY** defined as below; rate Lafarge Zambia in the following categories;

a.	Ability to provide the promised service the right way							
b.	Dependability in handling customer's service problems							
c.	Performing services right the first time							
d.	Providing services at the promised time							
e.	Maintaining error free record							

8. Using the given service **dimensions** above, rate their importance according to your satisfaction;

Dimension	Not Important	Slightly Important	Important	Very Important
Reliability				
Assurance				
Tangibility				
Empathy				
Responsiveness				

End of the questions. Thank you for your help.

Appendix 3: Interview Guide for Lafarge Outlet Operators

THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA, GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE QUALITY OF CUSTOMER SERVICE PROVISION AT LAFARGE ZAMBIA PLC

Gender: ……… **Business type or Name (if want to disclose) optional**: …………………
Qualification: …………….. ….**Total years of experience in a business:** …………………

1. In your opinion does the quality of a service has any effect on customer satisfaction?

 b) What differentiation strategy is used in your business that makes a customer loyal towards the products offerings?

c)What response you expect from a Lafarge if you are satisfied with their services?

d) To which extend the following factors can affect the customer perceptions and expectations about the quality of service?

i) Positive or negative word of mouth ii) Personal needs and desires ii) Service Performance

2. How important is to manage the quality of service effectively in a business?

b) Does Lafarge offer customer benefits (such as incentives and promotions)?

4)Do you consider service mapping (equipments, pattern of performances, physical environment) a way to improve service system design?

5. Which is the most important feature of a service offering that customer value most and should be highly focused by the firms in delivering services to the customers?

6. How important is to develop efficient customer services in the business? And why?

7. What do customers basically expect from service providers/ firms?

a)Do you believe that fulfilling customer's expectations are just enough or company should do something to go beyond the expectations?

b) If yes, how can the business can go beyond the customer's expectation in order to gain competitive edge?

c)Studies show customers are reluctant to complain in general, why is like that in your opinion?

d) In your opinion what can be done to encourage customers to record their voice or complaints?

8. How much customer feedback system helps the business in improving service related expectations and quality standards?

9.To which extend does Lafarge fulfil the promises that are made with the customers through different channels (by employees, management, media, advertisement)?

10. What do you think should be done in the future in order to improve the service quality that can best satisfy the customers by Lafarge?

Thank you for your time and consideration