Full Length Research Paper

Investigating service quality dimensions in South African motor vehicle servicing

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The motor industry plays a critical role in the economy of South Africa, with respect to both GDP and employment. Service quality is a fundamental aspect of service provision, and this is especially the case with motor vehicles, where substantial profits are generated in the servicing of vehicles. The study was conducted using a convenience sample of 761 respondents who were owners of various brands of motor vehicles. The questionnaire was a self-completion questionnaire which consisted of three sections. Factor analysis of the research indicated that five service quality factors could be identified. Apart from the tangible factor, the factors identified differ from the dimensions of service quality proposed by Parasuraman et al. (1988). The dimensions identified also were differed from other studies conducted into service quality dimensions in this context, highlighting the variable nature of service quality in this context. The implications of this study are that the customer perceives the way in which the service is delivered as critical in evaluating service quality.

Key words: Motor industry, service quality, servicing, service quality dimensions, servqual.

INTRODUCTION

There are numerous challenges facing the industry and organisations in SA regarding service quality experienced. One industry where this is of critical importance is the motor industry.

Service quality has received extensive attention in the literature, with studies being carried out in a wide variety of industries such as the hospitality industry and tourism (Saleh and Ryan, 1992; Fick and Ritchie, 1991), hospitals (Babakus and Mangold, 1992; Soliman, 1992) and banking (Kwon and Lee, 1994). The studies have also been carried in less obvious industries such as libraries (Cook et al., 2003) and the public sector (Wisniewski, 2001).

Limited published research has been conducted into service quality in the motor industry with respect to the servicing of vehicles. This means that the issue of service quality in the motor industry is a largely unknown factor, making this study exploratory in nature.

The motor industry in South Africa

The motor vehicle industry is important to the economy of South Africa. Currently, it accounts for 7.6% of the country's GDP and the total industry (including associated industries) creates approximately 10 000 jobs (Anon, 2006). It is estimated that there are more than 30 brands of vehicles on the market, with over 1000 model variants (Anon, 2006). Foster (2006) goes so far as to say that there are 42 brands in South Africa, with over 1200 models from which customers can choose.

The motor vehicle industry in SA, and specifically passenger motor vehicles, has experienced rapid growth in the last years, with record sales of all brands being experienced. Sales of passenger motor vehicles in 2006 saw an increase of 13.3% (Anon, 2007). While this situation has slowed in 2008, increased sales present a challenge to the motor industry as the purchasers of these vehicles are required to service them at an authorised dealership, and the dealership is required to deliver service quality to these car buyers.

The motor vehicle industry in South Africa consists of local manufacturers such as Toyota, Volkswagen (VW) and Ford, as well as vehicle importers such as Peugeot, Tata and Kia. The manufacturers and importers sell brand franchises to various groups such as the unitrans group, McCarthy retail, imperial group and the consolidated motor holdings. In total there are six main retail motor groups that serve the South African market, to-

gether with a number of independent operators.

Motor vehicle servicing takes place after purchase in order to maintain the vehicle. It becomes the contact point between the dealership and the customer as the activities of the sales executive have been completed upon the sale of the vehicle. The challenge facing dealerships in SA is the quality of the service offered to custommers, with the current shortage of technicians to service the vehicle and the high volumes of vehicles having to be serviced. Service quality is important to these motor dealerships as they are franchised dealerships, and if they do not provide quality service, the motor manufacturer may remove the franchise (Rogan, 2006; Swartz, 2005).

SERVICE QUALITY

Service quality defined

Service quality has been defined as the degree and direction between customer service expectations and perceptions (Newman, 2001). Perceived service quality is defined as the evaluation of the service across the episodes when compared to some explicit or implicit standard (Storbacka et al., 1994). Further, it can be seen as how well a service satisfies the expectations of customers (Bouman and van der Wiele, 1992).

The importance of service quality is seen in the effect that it has on the organisation as a whole. It is seen in the following ways:

1) Service quality has an effect on customer satisfaction (Arasli et al., 2005; Zeithaml and Bitner, 2003; Kandampully, 1998). Using the confirmation model, satisfaction will be experienced by the customer, should the perceptions (of the actual experience) exceed the expectations of customers.
2) Service quality has an effect on customer loyalty (Heskett, 2002; Kandampully, 1998). Loyalty is experienced by the organisation when the perceived service quality experienced by the customers exceeds that which is offered by the competitors. The delivering of service quality to customers is required in the long term if the organisation is to experience the benefits of customer loyalty (Kandampully, 1998).
3) Service quality creates competitive advantage for organisations and is associated with successful organisations (Kandampully, 1998). It has been said that many organisations sell a similar product of similar quality, and that the differentiator between them is the service quality that is offered to the customer (Arasli et al., 2005).
4) Service quality affects relationships and relationship marketing, as customers are willing to build relationships with organisations that provide service quality (Zeithaml and Bitner, 2003).
5) Service quality has an effect on profitability and costs (Buttle, 1996). As service quality impacts on customer satisfaction, this also impacts on customer retention, re-

duction of costs and increased profitability (Zeithaml et al., 2006).

The dimensions of service quality

Various views on the dimensions of service quality can be identified. The process orientation of Grönroos views service quality from the perspective of what the customer receives. This orientation identifies other components to service quality, namely technical quality, functional quality and reputational quality (Buttle, 1996; Johnson et al., 1995). Technical quality is concerned with the outcome of the service received by the customer. In the case of the workshop of the motor dealership, the evaluation refers to whether the car was adequately repaired. Functional quality refers to the way in which the service is offered and the actions of the employees in this interaction. In the case of the motor dealership, the customer would indicate if the employees were courteous and friendly. Reputational quality refers to the image of the organisation in the marketplace with respect to the service quality offered (Buttle, 1996; Johnson et al., 1995). In the case of the dealership, this refers to the reaction of others (such as family and friends) to mentions of the dealership.

Other dimensions of service quality have been proposed by Sasser et al. namely materials, facilities and personnel (Johnson et al., 1995). Lehtinen and Lehtinen have identified equipment, image and interaction as key factors in delivering service (Johnson et al., 1995).

The abovementioned perspectives of service quality have not received the same attention and empirical testing as those of Parasuraman et al. (1988) which has impacted on the way in which service quality is measured by researchers.

The research conducted by Parasuraman et al. (1988) initially identified ten dimensions associated with service quality, which were later reduced to five dimensions. The dimensions identified include reliability, assurance, tangibles, empathy and responsiveness (Zeithaml et al., 2006; Parasuraman et al., 1988), and are discussed briefly below.

Reliability: This is refers to the extent to which the service provider (the dealership) delivers on the promises made to the customer (O'Neill and Palmer, 2003; Buttle, 1996). Dealerships are known to contact the customer, promising that the vehicle will be ready for collection at a specific time. Upon arrival at the dealership, the customer is told that the vehicle is "nearly ready", much to their frustration. Reliability is regarded as the most important dimension of service quality (Chowdhary and Prakash, 2007; Zeithaml et al., 2006).

Assurance: this is refers to the degree of confidence and trust that the dealership is able to engender in the customer, based on the interactions between the parties (Zeithaml et al., 2006; O'Neill and Palmer, 2003; Buttle,

1996). In the case of the dealership, the main source of assurance is with the service adviser. Their knowledge and manner of interaction with the customer inspires trust in the organisation.

Tangibles: This is refers to the physical cues that are part of the service delivery process (Zeithaml et al., 2006; O'Neill and Palmer, 2003). They are used to communicate to the customer about the service that can be expected. Tangible cues that form part of this dimension include the signage, parking and layout of the dealership itself.

Empathy: Here, the customer is treated in such a way that they feel important to the organisation, and that their needs are important to the organisation, such as that they receive caring, individualised attention (Zeithaml et al., 2006; O'Neill and Palmer, 2003) . In the case of the motor dealership, this can be seen in the interactions between the organisation and the customer, and the nature of this interaction.

Responsiveness: this is refers to the willingness on the part of the service provider to deliver assistance to the customer (Zeithaml et al., 2006; O'Neill and Palmer, 2003). In the case of the motor dealership, this refers to the changes that have been observed in service hours from just being weekdays to include weekend and night services, due to the changes in the needs of customers.

While service quality has been identified consistently as being relevant in service industries (Kang and James, 2004; Grönroos, 2001; Asubonteng et al., 1996), there is no agreement on the specific dimensions or on the number of dimensions associated with it. There is little agreement on the exact nature and content of the dimensions of service quality (Kang, 2006). Further, it has been suggested that there are between one and eight dimensions (Chowdhary and Prakash, 2007; O'Neill and Palmer, 2003).

This study has used the Parasuraman et al. (1988) approach by measuring both expectations and perceptions. This approach has a theoretical basis (Long and McMellon, 2004), which resulted in this approach being "institution-nalised" (Buttle, 1996), while also having widespread empirical support.

MEASURING SERVICE QUALITY

SERVQUAL

Various ways of have been suggested to measure service quality, the most well-known being that of the servqual instrument (Parasuraman et al., 1988) . This instrument for measuring service quality is based on the differences between the perceptions and expectations of customers regarding the dimensions of service quality (Athanassopoulos et al., 2001). The expectations are linked to a specific category of service providers (dealer-

ships) and the specific service provider (e.g. Dealership A) (Buttle, 1996). The difference between the perceptions and expectations indicates the existence of a gap. The instrument was developed with 22 statements reflecting each of the dimensions identified, but this has been adapted depending on the industry in which the research has been conducted. Associated with the servqual instrument is servperf. This instrument is based on the same dimensions as the servqual, however it only measures the service performance (Cronin and Taylor, 1992). This means that only perceptions are measured.

Other methods of measuring service quality

In the light of the criticisms regarding the servqual methodology, other methods have been developed that can also be used, including topsis and the service quality loss method (or loss function) (Mukherjee and Nath, 2005).

Topsis refers to the "Technique for Order Preference by Similarity to Ideal Solution". It is a method that assists in identifying and selecting the attributes of the service that would result in customer satisfaction (Mukherjee and Nath, 2005). It enables the organisation to determine the ideal solution (all the best values of attainable criteria) and the negative ideal solution (all the worst values) (Mukherjee and Nath, 2005) . This algorithm seeks to find the chosen solution should have the "shortest distance from the positive ideal salutation and the longest distance from the negative ideal solution" (Lai et al., 1994).

The Service quality loss or loss function method examines that which the organisation would lose due to poor service quality, and hence the organisation that suffers the least would deliver the best quality (Mukherjee and Nath, 2005). The perspective of this approach thus refers to what harm the organisation would suffer due to the poor service quality offered to the customer.

Other methods have been developed that have been used in specific environments, such as the PP Picker Patient Experience Questionnaire (PPEQ) which evaluates service quality in the medical context (Jenkinson et al., 2002).

Criticisms of the use of servqual

Despite its extensive use in measuring service quality, the servqual instrument is not without criticism. Cronin and Taylor have specifically commented on the measurement of the expectations and perceptions in the servqual instrument (Cronin and Taylor, 1992). Further, the criticism includes the comments that the instrument is based on the gaps model approach to service quality, which does not have an empirical basis (Teas, 1994; Cronin and Taylor, 1992). Further operational and theoretical criticisms have been identified, largely linked to the interpretation and implementation of the instrument (Newman, 2001; Buttle, 1996). It has also been suggested that servqual does not have a universal applicability

Table 1. Reliability of the factors identified in the study

Original servqual dimensions	Factors identified	Cronbach's alpha
Empathy/Assurance, Reliability/Responsiveness	Factor 1:Customer kindness	0,920
Tangible	Factor 2: Tangibles	0,800
Reliability/Assurance	Factor 3: Faith	0,760

(Bouman and van der Wiele, 1992).

Table 2. Reliability of the factors identified in the exploratory study

Original servqual dimensions	Factors identified	Cronbach's alpha
Empathy/Assurance	Factor 1: Employee/commitment quality	0,939
Tangible	Factor 2: Tangible quality factor	0,877
Reliability/ Responsiveness	Factor 3: Promise/delivery quality factor	0,853
Empathy	Factor 4: Communication/interaction quality factor	0,813

(Berndt and Herbst, 2006).

(Svensson, 2004). The focus of servqual has also been criticised, as it is on the service-delivery process, rather than the service-encounter outcomes (Kang, 2006). Another criticism that has been levelled against servqual is the inability to connect the perceptions in the model to specific attitudes, and also not connecting to fields of study such as psychology and economics (O'Neill and Palmer, 2003).

Despite the criticisms that have been levelled against servqual, it remains an instrument that is used in all areas of business and industry, including the non-profit sector, such that its use has largely been "institutionalised" (Buttle, 1996).

There is less criticism with regards to Topsis and Loss function methods, limiting their use. Topsis and the Loss function methods are quantitative decision making tools. Further, it has been suggested that Topsis does not consider the relative importance of the distances that are part of the model (Mukherjee and Nath, 2005) and that Loss function does not provide an optimal solution.

Previous service quality research into the motor industry

The initial study into service quality within motor servicing was conducted by Bouman and van der Wiele (1992), using a questionnaire that utilises the dimensions identified by Parasuraman et al. (1988). The sample was 226 customers of motor servicing outlets. Factor analysis indicated three factors, but these are not clearly linked with the original dimensions (Bouman and van der Wiele, 1992). The three factors identified and their associated Cronbach's alphas are reflected in Table 1.

Previous service quality research into the motor industry in South Africa (2006): An exploratory study

Exploratory research was conducted into the nature of

service quality in the motor industry in South Africa. In this study, the research of Bouman and van der Wiele (1992) was adapted to the local environment and a factor analysis was done. This factor analysis identified four factors that could be used to evaluate service quality. These factors were identified as employee/commitment quality, tangible quality, promise/delivery quality and communication/interaction quality (Berndt and Herbst, 2006). The link between these dimensions with the initial dimensions and the reliability of these dimensions (Cronbach Alpha) are reflected in Table 2.

The research problem

It has been proposed that different service dimensions are important in different industries (Long and McMellon, 2004), and in the motor industry in South Africa, there is no definitive study which identifies the important dimensions. It is necessary to investigate service quality in specific industries or contexts (Svensson, 2006). In order to determine the dimensions for this context, this research was undertaken.

The increase in the sales of motor vehicles has made motor vehicle servicing a critical issue in the motor Industry and in the future success of the motor vehicle brands. Poor service quality in motor vehicle servicing has not received attention and due to its importance, it is necessary to examine this topic. Further, little published research has been undertaken associated with the issue of service quality in South Africa, indicating the importance of this research. This provides the following research questions: What is the nature of service quality in the motor industry? Do the dimensions identified by Parasuraman et al (1988) exist within this context?

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The purpose of research objectives is to provide an indi-

cation of the goals to be achieved by the research (Zikmund and Babin, 2007).

Primary objective

The primary objective in this research was to determine the nature of service quality in the motor industry.

Secondary objectives

Two secondary research objectives were derived from the primary objective, namely:

1) . To determine customer perceptions of the dimensions of service quality (responsiveness, reliability, assurance, tangibles and empathy) .
2). To determine the existence of the dimensions of service quality in the motor industry

RESEARCH DESIGN

The purpose of research design is to present the master plan that will specify the methods and procedures for collecting and analysing the information (Zikmund and Babin, 2007). Quantitative research is defined as the techniques involving relatively large numbers of respondents who provide "descriptive information" that cannot easily be projected on the population as a whole (Dillon et al., 1994). In this study, use was made of survey research which meant that quantitative research was carried out.

The research instrument

The research made use of a SERVQUAL instrument (in the form of a self-completion questionnaire). There were three components to the questionnaire used in this study.

Section A: This was a biographical section in order to obtain information about the consumer of the service. The questions posed related to the respondents' age, gender and income, as well as the period in which they had been associated with a specific dealership identified by the respondent. The categories used for age, income and occupation were based on those used by Stats SA in the national census. Where appropriate, categories were combined for greater clarity.

Section B: This was a customer service evaluation using the servqual formulation. The servqual instrument is regarded as a relationship survey as it attempts to determine the nature of the customer's relationship with the organisation (Zeithaml and Bitner, 2003). The servqual instrument was developed by Parasuraman et al., (1988) to determine the service attributes, and servqual groups them into the five dimensions of service quality. Further,

this questionnaire had been developed by Bouman and van der Wiele (1992), and adapted to the South African environment by Berndt and Herbst (2004). A total of 39 statements were used in this research. A 5-point scale was used in this servqual instrument.

Section C: These questions attempted to determine the overall perceptions that the customer had regarding the relationship quality with the specific dealership, but do not form the focus of this paper. Dimensions used in this section are based on the work of Roberts et al., (2003), but do not form part of this paper.

Sampling

A convenience sample is a non- probability sample where the sample is determined based on the fact that it is easy to collect (McDaniel and Gates, 1998). Use was made of a convenience sample to collect the data.

Data collection

There are various ways in which data can be collected, including postal, electronic and personal collection methods (McDaniel and Gates, 1998). In this research, use was made of field workers who distributed and collected the questionnaires but who were not required to assist in the completion of the questionnaire as it was a self-completion questionnaire. Personal contact resulted in the increase in the response rate received. A total of 761 questionnaires were distributed and due to personal contact with the field workers, a realisation rate of 100% was achieved. These questionnaires were analysed and a factor analysis was used to indicate the factors indicated by those servicing their vehicles at various dealerships.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Respondent profile

Responses were received from 761 respondents who are motor vehicles owners and responses were received regarding their servicing and specifically service quality. The typical respondent has the following profile; The respondents were most likely to be:

• In the age group between 20 and 29 years of age (37.4%).
• More likely to be female (54.2%).
• Have a university degree (38.2%).
• More likely to own a VW (24.9%) or Toyota (24.1%) (the manufacturers which have the largest market share in SA (Anon, 2009).
• Service their vehicle at a dealership (80.1%).
• Servicing for less than five years at the specific dealership (89.3%).

Table 3. Total variance

	Initial Eigenvalues	
Factor	% of variance	Cumulative %
1	38,755	38,755
2	6,714	45,469
3	4,881	50,350
4	4,123	54,473
5	3,426	57,899

Table 4. Cronbach's alpha of the factors identified

Factor	Cronbach's alpha
Factor 1: Customer-focused quality	0.886
Factor 2: Tangibles	0.876
Factor 3: Delivery quality	0.908
Factor 4: Communication quality	0.833
Factor 5: Customer care quality	0.773

Service only one vehicle at the dealership (78.8%).

Specific analysis

Further analysis was conducted on the responses received to determine the existence of specific factors in service quality. Use was made of factor analysis which made it possible to summarise the findings into a number of dimensions (Diamontopolous and Schlegelmilch, 2000). In this instance, use was made of Varimax rotation, and in this analysis, five factors were identified which accounted for 57.899% of the responses. Only items with a factor loading exceeding 0.4 are included (Bradley, 2007). The total variance is reflected in Table 3.

The factors identified

As indicated, five factors were identified associated with servicing in the motor industry, which have been identified as follows:

Factor 1. Customer-focused quality: Statements relating to this dimension reflect the organisation's contact with the customer and the way in which they interact with the customers. The statements link to assurance and empa-thy. These statements account for 38.755% of responses, making it the dominant factor in this factor analysis.

Factor 2. Tangibles: Statements that are grouped in this dimension all relate to the physical evidence in a dealership and the perceptions of customers regarding these aspects.

Factor 3. Delivery quality: Statements that form this fac-

tor reflect the way in which the core service is presented (namely car servicing).

Factor 4. Communication quality: The statements reflecting this dimension reflect the way in which the service department specifically communicates with the customer regarding the servicing of the vehicle that has taken place.

Factor 5. Customer care quality: The statements indicate the ways in which the dealership can show care to the customer regarding the servicing arrangements.

A detailed analysis of the statements associated with each factor is seen in Annexure A.

Reliability of the results

Reliability refers to the degree to which an instrument (or measure) is free from random error, and is thus able to provide consistent data (McDaniel and Gates, 1998). Use was made of Cronbach's alpha to determine the reliability of the findings presented. A Cronbach alpha was determined for each dimension reflecting the overall reliability of the statements for each dimension. While one indicates perfect reliability, the value of 0.7 is regarded as the lower level of acceptability (Hair et al., 1998). The reliability for the factors identified is reflected in Table 4. This is consistent with the reliability scores that have been found in other servqual studies (Badri et al., 2005; Anthony et al., 2004; Asubonteng et al., 1996), indicating the relative reliability of these results. Further, the reliability of this survey is comparable to that of the exploratory study refer to Table 2 (Bouman and van der Wiele, 1992).

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Annexure A. Factors identified in motor vehicle servicing

Servqual dimension	Description	Factor 1	2	3	4	5
Empathy	The interest of the customer is considered	0,773				
Empathy	Requests/instructions of customers are honoured	0,667				
Assurance	The customer is informed what service level can be Expected	0,609				
Reliability	The dealership focuses on solving customer Complaints	0,608				
Assurance	The dealership gives good advice regarding Maintenance	0,586				
Assurance	Employees are courteous	0,580				
Empathy	Customers are known by name	0,380				
Tangibles	There is clear signage at the dealership		0,679			
Tangibles	The infrastructure is neat		0,672			
Tangibles	There is sufficient space to sit in the waiting area		0,636			
Tangibles	Promotional material is attractive		0,611			
Tangibles	The dealership's grounds are neat		0,608			
Tangibles	Employees are well groomed		0,595			
Tangibles	Cars are clean after servicing		0,491			
Tangibles	There are enough parking places		0,453			
Responsiveness	The telephone is answered promptly		0,387			
Tangibles	Warrantee agreements are clearly explained		0,382			
Reliability	The service personnel are reliable			0,639		
Assurance	The dealership has competent employees			0,605		
Empathy	Service personnel provide personal attention			0,575		
Responsiveness	Complaints are dealt with quickly			0,569		
Empathy	Customers are attended to in a friendly way			0,560		
Reliability	Repairs are error free			0,549		
Reliability	Appointments are kept			0,504		
Responsiveness	The customer receives prompt attention on arrival			0,495		
Reliability	The vehicle is ready at the promised time			0,468		
Responsiveness	The dealership explains why repairs are carried out			0,363		
Assurance	Customers are contacted when the repair becomes more expensive than estimated				0,648	
Reliability	Customers are contacted when additional repairs have to be done				0,602	
Reliability	The invoice is explained to the customer				0,577	
Tangibles	A checklist of repairs carried out is provided				0,491	
Tangibles	Invoices are neat and distinctive				0,474	
Empathy	Operating hours are convenient				0,440	
Assurance	Customers know which mechanic repaired their car				0,399	
Tangibles	A replacement vehicle is available					0,750
Responsiveness	The service adviser delivers the car					0,535
Empathy	Customers are able to deliver their vehicles outside normal operating hours					0,534
Empathy	The level of satisfaction of customers is monitored					0,467
Empathy	Agreement is reached beforehand on the payment method					0,374

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THIS STUDY

The objective of the study was to determine the nature of service quality in the motor industry and to determine customer perceptions of the established dimensions of service quality. This study is one of a few that have been

Table 5. Comparison of factors identified in vehicle servicing

Bouman and van der Wiele (1992)	Berndt and Herbst Exploratory study (2006)	Factors identified Current study (2007)
Customer kindness	Employee/ commitment quality	Customer-focused quality
Tangible	Tangible quality factor	Tangibles
Faith	Promise/ delivery quality factor	Delivery quality
	Communication/ interaction quality factor	Communication quality
		Customer care quality

conducted in this specific area. From the study, five dimensions of service quality were identified in motor servicing. The dimensions identified in the factor analysis do not fit into the original dimensions (apart from the tangible aspects associated with motor vehicle servicing). While these are different from those identified by Parasuraman et al. (1988), it is possible to compare the dimensions identified in this sector to those identified in earlier studies. This study indicates the importance of the service delivery process within the service situation and the effect this has on the perceptions of service quality. Customer focus is a dominant dimension, and hence the organisation needs to ensure that they pay close attention to the aspects such as focus on the customer's needs and dealing with the issues raised by the customer. Service managers need to investigate ways in which these processes can be changed to be more customer-centric in order to satisfy customer needs. These actions link specifically to aspects relating to empathy and assurance (in the original dimensions) that are exhibited by employees towards the customers.

Limitations of this study

The findings of the study cannot be generalised across all motor manufacturers as some have wider representation than others. The sample is also an educated one, which does not reflect the market as a whole.

The factor analysis indicates that while five factors have been identified, these factors are not clean factors, and that further research needs to be conducted into these factors and their use within the motor industry in South Africa. The factors identified in this study through factor analysis differ from the previous study, and hence further research is needed into this area.

Service quality in the motor industry in the light of previous studies

A further objective of the study was to be able to compare the findings of various studies to determine whether common dimensions of service quality can be identified. The results of studies done in vehicle servicing with regard to service quality are summarised in Table 5. The Cronbach's alphas associated with each of these factors in all

of the previous studies are regarded as acceptable (as discussed earlier). This indicates the validity of these factors in the studies conducted.

From the various factors identified in Table 5, the following commonalities can be identified:

i)The consistency of tangibles across all the studies undertaken.
ii) The identification of delivery quality and communication quality in both studies undertaken in South Africa.

A major difference in the studies undertaken includes the difference in the number of factors identified in the studies, with three, four and five being identified. The identification of these varying factors indicates that while there is a high degree of agreement of factors, there is no unanimity thus far in the research into this field. This indicates that further research needs to be conducted to clarify these dimensions.

Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to determine service quality in vehicle servicing in South Africa, specifically due to the increasing sales figures that have been recorded. The research has indicated that while the statements associated with a traditional servqual can be used to evaluate service quality, the dimensions (as reflected in the factors identified) are not clear. For this reason, alternative dimensions have been proposed in the South African context, and these can be used to improve the customer experience.

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