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Research Dissertation

RESM 8419

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BA Honours Strategic Brand
Communications

“How Customer Service Impacts Brand
Loyalty in the Durban Privately Owned
Restaurant Industry”

Declaration

I hereby declare that the Research Report submitted for the BA Honours Strategic Brand Communications degree to The Independent Institution of Education is my own work and has not been previously submitted to another University or Higher Education Institution for degree purposes.

Acknowledgments

I would like to hereby dedicate this dissertation and all the hard work that went into it to my loving parents, without whom none of my achievements would have been possible and I would not be the incredibly blessed person I am today. Thank you for the endless support and belief in me, I hope I have made you proud.

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Glossary of Terms

Assumptions	Factors out of the researcher's control that, if missing, would result in the study being irrelevant
Confirmability	How seamlessly the findings flow from the study where the data collected supports the findings
Credibility	The accuracy with which the researcher interprets the received data
Data	The unprocessed data that then becomes processed into coherent and relevant pieces of information
Delimitations	Factors which determine the boundaries or scope of the study and which are within the researchers control
Dependability	The integration levels of the data collection methods, data analysis and theory generated from the study
Epistemology	Beliefs about knowledge and how knowledge is generated
Limitations	Potential weaknesses or limits the study possesses that are out of the researcher's control
Methodology	The collective tools and techniques used to conduct research
Ontology	Assumptions about the nature of phenomena and reality
Paradigms	An approach to research and how the study is conducted
Reliability	The degree to which the study produces consistent and stable results
Sample Frame	A comprehensive list of the entire target population that the researcher wants to study

Sample Size	The total number of individual samples that are tested in the study
Transferability	The ability to apply the findings to a similar situation and acquire similar results
Validity	The degree to which a research study measures what it intends to measure

Abstract

The following study into the impact of customer service on brand loyalty in the Durban privately owned restaurant industry serves to explore customer service as an influencing factor in restaurant's business success due to the opportunity for restaurants to leverage their customer service offering to gain business success. The study followed a Qualitative, Interpretivistic approach with a reinforcing Quantitative element by using interviews and surveys to collect data and the content analysis approach to draw findings and conclusions from the collected data.

The study uncovered insight into the direct relationship between customer service, levels of satisfaction derived from this service and the influence this has on customer's propensity towards repeat patronage and brand loyalty. The study also gained insight into customer service itself as a factor influencing customer's repeat patronage and finally, prominent customer values and expectations of a restaurant's customer service were uncovered.

Conclusions from the study allowed for various recommendations to be made for restaurant owners and managers to allow them to improve their offering to encourage business success. It is recommended that restaurants focus more on the outlined factors that customers expect and value from them as well a focus on engaging with customers for their feedback to ensure alignment between customers and the restaurant.

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Chapter One: Overview of the Study

1.1. Introduction

The research study serves to explore the impact that customer service, including the quality and factors that make up customer service, has on brand loyalty, which can be measured by customer's feelings of propensity towards repeat patronage. The study is focussed on the restaurant industry, specifically privately owned restaurants in the Durban area, to investigate each chosen restaurant, their customer service, their customer's customer service experience and their customer's desire to support and visit the restaurant again. Through the measurement of these variables, valuable data is collected that will facilitate conclusions and insights into the relationship between customer service and brand loyalty and these insights will serve to further understanding and guide decisions of this nature.

1.2. Background

Customers are a vital aspect to every business, this is due to the fact that without customers, the business could not operate and be successful and without a transaction of goods and services between the business and customers, there is no business at all (Suttle, n.d.). Customers determine the success or failure of a business through their decision to purchase from and support the business or not, where business success is determined by the financial success of a business, created through product or service sales. Customers can then be considered integral stakeholders in every business where the business needs to satisfy and consider their customers' needs and expectations in order to meet and exceed them and encourage repeat purchases and support from customers to achieve the ultimate goal of business wealth and success.

Customers often will choose to return to businesses that give them excellent customer service instead of competitors, who's customer service levels are not as good, making customer service a strategic competitive advantage for every business (Suttle, n.d.). The importance of good customer service is also in its advantage of saving businesses money, because good customer service aids in customer retention and word of mouth

marketing which means less resources need to be put into marketing and new customer acquisition as the retained, loyal customers will aid in the growth and success of the business (Suttle, n.d.).

Satagopan (2014), a renowned businessman, identifies how excellence in customer service results in brand loyalty from customers, where customers repeatedly purchase from the business because they trust the service and quality that they will receive due to previous experiences with the business. Brand loyalty is what every business strives towards with their customers because customers with loyalty to the business are a competitive advantage as they give the business word of mouth advertising and repeat patronage.

The restaurant industry is a service based industry, meaning it does not offer products, but rather services for customers to purchase. The service industry is directly impacted by a country's economy and so the South African restaurant industry faces a stressful time with South Africa's current status of recession (Rossouw, 2017) and the resultant changes in consumers buying behaviour. Todd (2008) discusses consumers changed behaviour and how consumers are experiencing having less disposable income and a declined intention to spend on services and "luxury" items such as eating out. The restaurant industry is a highly saturated market that Allen (n.d.) discusses as seeing extensive future growth in South Africa, adding onto the already competitive market of over 85 000 operating restaurants.

Restaurants offers a select menu of food and a dining experience to customers in return for their support and patronage. Therefore the restaurant industry relies heavily on customer service to create brand loyalty and service quality is a primary deciding factor for consumers when deciding on a restaurant. When restaurant customers experience good customer service, they are more likely to choose to support that restaurant again and this is concluded to be brand loyalty. The restaurant industry relies heavily on return customers rather than new customers as the regular return customers are what keep the business financially viable and successful through the off-peak seasonal fluctuations of the service industry (Higuera, n.d.) ; (Gyaan, 2016).

Therefore it's important for restaurant owners and managers to understand the importance of customer service to the success of the business and to understand what

customers expect from their customer service experience in order to best meet and exceed these expectations to encourage repeat patronage and business success.

1.3. Preliminary Literature and Reason for Choosing the Topic

The purpose of this study is to discover insightful information into customer expectations and the link between customer service quality and brand loyalty in terms of customer dining experiences and restaurants in Durban. Every business wishes to be successful or grow their success, especially in terms of profitability. It is therefore important for businesses to know how to grow success in order to implement, improve and capitalise on these factors.

Good customer service is said by Morris (2014) and Customer Care News (2015) to increase customer retention, which translates to increased brand loyalty, which ultimately increases business success and profitability as it is more costly for businesses to attract new customers than it is to retain existing customers (Morris, 2016). Therefore this study will prove beneficial to every business manager or owner, but especially those in the hospitality and tourism industries where emphasis is placed on customer service, as a guideline or example on a particular tactic to encourage business success and profitability.

The study can be used by various people for a variety of different functions, for instance other researchers may use this study as a case study or to draw upon for their own research, restaurant owners and managers could use this study as a guide to alter or improve their customer service practices in order to facilitate the success of and brand loyalty to their businesses, any business owner or manager can use this study to gain insight into customers' expectations of a business's customer service offering and what factors of customer service customers value most and finally anyone within the field of business and branding may use the study to further their own knowledge and use as a relatable comparison or source for other business phenomena and processes.

Brand loyalty is an effective sustainable competitive advantage for a business and therefore requires awareness and attention from business managers in order to ensure the creation of brand loyalty, this is highlighted and discussed in the study and therefore allows for business managers reflection on their levels of brand loyalty as

well as creation of awareness around the impact brand loyalty has on a business (Rodrigo, 2012).

The study will add to the body of knowledge surrounding business operations and branding by offering insight and evidence not only into the practices of customer service and what customer service means to businesses but also into branding and how brand loyalty is created and the impact it has on business.

This study of explaining the impact that customer service has on brand loyalty in Durban based, privately-owned restaurants, will be of great benefit to the bodies of knowledge concerning not only customer service in organisations and brand loyalty but also to the body of knowledge concerning the restaurant industry and businesses in South Africa.

This study will provide information concerning the effects of customer service on brand loyalty from a South African perspective which will be beneficial to foreigners looking to gain insight into South African business operations while also being beneficial to South African businesses as the conclusions drawn from the study can be used to guide business customer service offerings in South Africa as well as help businesses identify where they may be lacking in terms of their customer service offerings and what customers expect and value from this offering and help identify customer service experiences as a probable cause of the brand loyalty levels within their business.

This study will also serve to reinforce or debate other information or studies within the relevant bodies of knowledge as it provides information that can be compared or added to other information within the existing body of knowledge.

This study contributes to the researchers field of study, brand communications, by not only adding to the extensive body of knowledge regarding branding, communications and all their aspects, but by building on the knowledge of specific aspects of brand's communications in terms of how they relate with one another. Branding and communication needs to be thoroughly understood in order to be a good brand manager and therefore research concerning these topics and the elements of customer service and brand loyalty, which are vital elements of any business or brand, greatly benefits the body of knowledge that needs to be understood in order to succeed in the field of branding and business communications. This study also contributes towards the Honours Degree of Strategic Brand Communications by

providing a relevant, concise example that allows for thorough understanding of customer services impact on brand loyalty through the use of a simple to understand and well known system such as the restaurant business.

1.4. Research Problem

1.4.1. Objectives

- To further elaborate on the link between customer service and brand loyalty.
- To determine if service quality effects customers propensity towards repeat patronage.
- To gain insight into the most prominent customer expectations of customer service.

1.4.2. Research Questions

- What service quality factors are most important to customers?
- How does the customer service experience impact customer's propensity towards repeat patronage?
- How does the customer service experience impact customer's perception of the brand?

1.5. Theoretical Framework

The study corresponds closely with Bagozzi's Appraisal → Emotional Response → Behaviour Framework as it serves as a framework that can be successfully adapted to the relationship between customer service and brand loyalty, under investigation in this study. Bagozzi's Framework defines the basis for explaining the direct relationship between customer service and brand loyalty in the restaurant industry where Appraisal is the previous positive or negative customer service experience customers had at a particular restaurant, Bagozzi's Framework then depicts how this experience has unavoidably created either a positive or emotional response or feeling of satisfaction from the customer, who then, based on this emotional satisfaction response, decides and reinforces the behaviour to either visit the particular restaurant again or not.

This is further elaborated on in chapter two of the study, along with other theories and models to support the study.

1.6. Structure of the Dissertation

The structure of this dissertation is divided into five chapters, the first chapter serves to give background and understanding to the study while defining the purpose, problem statement and objectives of the study.

The second chapter serves to discuss and analyse previous literature related to the topic of customer service and its relationship with brand loyalty as well as discussing relevant theories, frameworks and models that can be applied to the study.

The third chapter breaks down and explains the research methodology and design of the study in terms of the population, sampling methods, data collection methods and data analysis methods.

The fourth chapter is where the results and findings from the study are presented and analysed and the validity, reliability and trustworthiness of these findings assessed.

The final fifth chapter serves to deliver the conclusions drawn from the results of the study while also highlighting opportunities for relevant future research from the assumptions, limitations and delimitations of the current study. This chapter also serves to address the ethical implications of this study and how they have been addressed.

1.7. Conclusion

The study is outlined to discover insight into the impact of customer service on brand loyalty in the Durban, Privately Owned restaurant industry. This study will contribute important information to the overall body of knowledge of customer service, brand loyalty and the restaurant industry and therefore is also valuable to restaurant owners and managers to guide their decisions and operations. The study will serve to answer the set forth objectives and questions in order to ensure full analysis and understanding of the topic at hand. The following chapter will analyse and discuss current literature relating to customer service and brand loyalty in order to draw relevant similarities and differences that will drive the study forward.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1. Discussion of Relevant Literature

In this section previous literature will be reviewed in order to overview and gain information about the elements relevant to this study, including: customer service, brand loyalty, customer satisfaction and moderators that influence these elements. The literature analysed includes recent and relevant information that will allow for the collection of knowledge and deeper insight into the elements and overall topic of the study where the analysis in this literature review will guide understanding of the impact of customer service on brand loyalty in the privately owned restaurant industry and will aid in the answering and further understanding of the objectives of this study, which are:

- To further elaborate on the link between customer service and brand loyalty.*
- To determine if service quality effects customers propensity towards repeat patronage.*
- To gain insight into customer service factors that customers find the most valuable.*

There is an extensive amount of literature relating to this topic and its elements, the vast amount available highlights the importance and relevance of such a topic where it is deemed worthy of investigation from multiple angles and for multiple industries. There is always room for expansion to the body of knowledge on this topic where the study of customer service and its impact on brand loyalty can be applied to any industry, where there would then be subsequent differentiations in the study and its results. This study pertaining to the privately owned restaurant industry will allow for further knowledge generation in a field that is growing in value and relevance for businesses where businesses are realising the worth of customer service, customer satisfaction and brand loyalty. The extensive amount of research results in extensive repetition and overlap of ideas and information, therefore only the most relevant literature pertaining to the highlighted themes has been analysed. The literature to be discussed will cover the overarching topic of the impact of customer service on brand loyalty, linked to the privately owned restaurant industry as well as the link between

the elements under investigation, namely customer service, customer satisfaction and brand loyalty and how these elements impact one another and interact with one another (Mostert, et al., 2016); (Srivastava, 2015); (Garga & Bambale, 2016); (Chang, et al., 2009); (Kumar Rai & Srivastava, 2014); (Singh, et al., 2017); (Wang, 2015). The literature will also be analysed in terms of the moderators or influencing factors of customer service and brand loyalty that are identified by the authors Srivastava (2015), Kumar Rai & Srivastava (2014), Stocchi, et al (2015) and Singh, et al (2017). Analysis of the literature also revealed discussion of the idea of heightened brand loyalty resulting in profit, growth and business success by (Srivastava, 2015); (Madanoglu, 2004); (Singh, et al., 2017); (Rust, et al., 1995).

It is important to define relevant terms before analysing literature to ensure a thorough understanding of the concepts under investigation where different authors may have different definitions of the same concepts for each particular study. Some terms can be used interchangeably due to their identical core purpose and definition. For instance customer service and service quality are essentially the same concept, defined as the overall characteristics and impression a customer has about the degree to which the product or service meets or exceeds the customer's needs (Garga & Bambale, 2016) (Wang, 2015). Madanoglu (2004), who has done extensive research in this field, further defines customer service as having two factors: intangible factors such as the atmosphere and attitude of the server and tangible factors such as the look and feel of the actual product or service while Kumar Rai & Srivastava (2014) elaborate on the link between customer service and brand loyalty where customer service is an antecedent of brand loyalty and so brand loyalty is directly linked to and affected by the service experience of the customer.

Customer satisfaction is defined by multiple authors, including Chang, et al (2009) and Garga & Bambale (2016) as the customer's emotional viewpoint on the perceived value of the product or service they received where satisfaction is felt when the customer feels the reward (the product or service) is equal to or greater than the sacrifices they make in terms of money, time and energy released in return for the reward. Therefore customer satisfaction is dependent on the relationship between the supplier and the customer but the concept of customer satisfaction is held by the customer.

Brand loyalty and customer loyalty are used interchangeably due to the fact that the concept of customer loyalty is defined by Wang (2015) as behaviour exhibited by the customer whereby they express loyal behaviour and preference of a business or service over its competitors. Loyal behaviour includes repeat patronage and word of mouth referral, when a customer chooses to support a particular business through customer loyalty, they are then also directly supporting the brand, which is inseparable from the business and this is why the two terms can be used interchangeably. Both Wang (2015) and Singh, et al. (2017) highlight brand loyalty as an emotional attachment of a customer to a particular business or brand, most often created through positive service experience. Brand loyalty is heavily influenced and determined by customer service and the resultant customer satisfaction level following a service experience where customers with higher levels of satisfaction are most likely to become loyal to the brand and business.

All of the analysed literature confirms the positive correlation of the direct link and relationship between the elements of customer service, customer satisfaction and brand where brand loyalty results in business profit, growth and success. Kumar Rai & Srivastava (2014), established theorists, reiterate the link between service quality or the customer service experience and customers loyalty status where customer service is seen as the primary factor in influencing customers decision to return to the business again or not. This is further supported by Wang (2015) and Kumar Rai & Srivastava (2014) who state that customer service quality mediates customer loyalty to a brand while Garga & Bambale (2016) highlight a different perspective of customer patronage and loyalty as the reason for the existence of any business and that the existence is then justified through the creation of a good quality customer service experience to create customer satisfaction that results in repeat patronage and customer loyalty. This cycle from customer service to brand loyalty is clearly highly important to every business and therefore research that aids in the understanding of the elements of this cycle will aid the business community in understanding their customers, how to ensure customer satisfaction and how to create business success.

Experts in the field of customer service, Chang, et al. (2009) and Madanoglu (2004) highlight the importance of the service quality of customer service in the service industry, especially the restaurant industry, where the market is continually growing, increasingly saturated and highly competitive which results in service quality being a

primary determining factor in customer decision making. It is stated by the authors Singh, et al (2017) that customers who have positive, higher quality service experiences will seek these positive experiences again and therefore will participate in brand loyalty in the expectation to receive continued positive service and satisfaction experiences. Restaurant owners and managers need to therefore continually be adapting and improving their customer service in order to remain competitive and encourage customer loyalty to their brand.

Moderators are variables or factors that can influence or change the strength of the relationship between customer service and brand loyalty. Extensive studies have been conducted around these moderators and the impact they have on the link between customer service and brand loyalty. There are multiple variables at every step of the customer service-customer satisfaction-brand loyalty chain that all of them cannot possibly be identified and researched. Because the chain relationship under investigation in this study involves customers, there are various moderators that can influence the chain that is specific and personal to each customer and therefore is difficult to extrapolate to every customer, Srivastava (2015) identifies switching cost, gender, income, age, involvement, certainty, perceived risks and knowledge and expertise as moderators influencing customers propensity towards brand loyalty while Singh, et al (2017), Kumar Rai & Srivastava (2014) and Stocchi, et al (2015) focus their studies and literature on researching single moderators and their impact on the chain of elements whereas Singh, et al (2017) explores the effect of employee-customer emotional engagement as a moderator and Kumar Rai & Srivastava (2014) explore trust, commitment and corporate image as moderators.

The literature discussed in this study explores and explains the relationship and interconnectedness of the elements of customer service, customer satisfaction and brand loyalty from varied approaches and perspectives. From an overview of the literature it becomes evident that each element in the customer experience is a precondition for the next where the quality of customer service determines the satisfaction customers feel about their experience which determines the level of brand loyalty the customer exhibits and this results in the level of growth and success of the business. It is evident then that by management changing or influencing one of these factors of the chain will cause an effect across the rest of the chain. This conclusion

allows restaurant managers and owners to view the importance of managing the quality of their customer service to ensure end result business success.

Bagozzi's Appraisal → Emotional Response → Behaviour Framework

Chang, et al (2009) discusses Bagozzi's appraisal → emotional response → behaviour framework, based on Bagozzi (1992)'s reformation of attitude theory, where appraisal is described as past experience with the product or service that elicits an emotional response (feelings of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the product or its service quality) which then results in a consequent behaviour in terms of a coping response to the emotional situation created by the product or service experience. This adapted framework can be applied to the previously discussed customer experience chain where appraisal is the customer service experience that leads to customer satisfaction, otherwise defined as an emotional response and brand loyalty is the resultant chosen response behaviour of the customer.

SERVQUAL Model

The SERVQUAL questionnaire is a measurement system designed for the hospitality industry to evaluate customer service. Garga & Bambale (2016) describe the SERVQUAL model as 22 questions posed to customers concerning different dimensions including reliability, responsiveness, empathy, assurance and expectation and performance tangibles. Respondents rate the performance they experienced on a Likert scale from 1-7 where the continuum begins at 1-strongly disagree and goes to 7-strongly agree concerning statements made about service elements. This model is reliable and useful to this study as it is a tested system for the evaluation of customer service that can be easily adapted to the restaurant industry and this study in particular.

Herzberg's Motivational Theory

The Herzberg motivational theory can also be applied to this study and is discussed, defined and adapted by Patient & Brown (2014). The theory identifies motivational and hygiene factors in the workplace that affect employee motivation where motivational factors are positives that encourage motivation and hygiene factors are negatives that discourage motivation. Patient & Brown (2014) also discusses how Herzberg's theory can be easily applied to the concept of customer service where motivating factors encourage customer satisfaction and brand loyalty and hygiene factors lead to

customer dissatisfaction and disloyalty. Hygiene and motivation factors are not correspondent to each other but rather operate individually where the opposite effect of a hygiene factor is not necessarily a motivation factor. In terms of customer service and satisfaction, Patient & Brown (2014) state that motivation factors for customers of restaurants would be considered free products, convenient support channels and exceptional moments in service transactions while hygiene factors would include long response times when contacting the business, inconsistency in messages and offensive service encounters.

With any phenomena under investigation it is impossible to cover every element and variable related to the phenomena, in the same sense this study is limited, where the varied and extensive amount of literature available depicts the various interpretations and elements associated with customer service and brand loyalty that can still be investigated. In order to gain deep, valuable knowledge, the variables under investigation needs to be limited, as if too many variables are considered and investigated, it can result an exorbitant amount of shallow data of little value. The literature analysed for this study avoids this pitfall by only considering a few key moderators or variables associated to their investigation and only studies these variables in terms of a singular industry in order to develop valuable data. Chang, et al. (2009), Garga & Bambale (2016), Srivastava (2015), Madanoglu (2004), Mostert (2016) and Wang (2015) all conduct their investigations and develop their literature around a single industry, from the nursing home industry to the e-service industry and to ensure the same valuable knowledge creation, this study will be limited to the restaurant industry when investigating customer service and its impact on brand loyalty.

2.2. Conclusion

The analysis of the relevant literature has allowed for insight into the areas of customer service, customer satisfaction and brand loyalty where various insights into these elements in multiple industries was discovered. The literature analysis allowed for insight into understanding and meeting each of the studies objectives where the link between customer service and brand loyalty was extensively explored and highlighted, the literature reviewed also provided insight into customers' expectations of customer

service while also identifying moderators that can influence customers satisfaction or loyalty to the brand.

The literature depicted a strong, directly proportional relationship between customer service and customer loyalty to a brand where it was found that good customer service resulted in heightened levels of customer satisfaction which in turn resulted in the satisfied customers propensity to seek further satisfying experiences with the brand through continuous purchasing and support of the brand and its products and services. Good customer service was seen to result in increased business profit, growth and success as business success is determined by the amount of products or services sold.

The relevance and importance of investigation into the relationship between customer satisfaction and brand loyalty was extensively highlighted as it was identified as being a complex topic that can be altered by multiple variables and has proven to be extremely helpful to business owners in different industries to guide them in ensuring successful customer service and why it's important to work towards good customer service experiences for their customers, in order to grow their business.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

3.1. Introduction

Methodology is the collective tools and techniques used to conduct research (MacIntosh, 2009). Quantitative research Methodology uses techniques that determine data and statistics while Qualitative research uses techniques that determine in depth subjective knowledge.

3.2. Research Design

Paradigms are an approach to research and how research is conducted and therefore the chosen paradigm governs how the study is conducted (ReadingCraze.com, 2014).

There are three main research paradigms, namely Positivism, Interpretivism and Critical Realism. Positivism is used to study phenomena and only considers objective, verifiable facts while Interpretivism observes that people cannot be studied in the same way as phenomena or objects and so attempts to understand human behaviour. Critical Realism is a mixed method approach to research where the aim is to expose, critique and change society. (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014).

The paradigm best suited to the research at hand is the Interpretivism paradigm which developed out of seeming limitations of the Positivism paradigm where it was determined that humans cannot be studied in the same way as objects as humans are susceptible to influence from their environment in a way that objects are not. The main aim and focus of Interpretivism is to gain extensive understanding of social actions and experiences and the only way to do this is to develop close connections and relationships with those who are being studied. Interpretivistic research is characterised by open-ended research questions in an attempt to collect qualitative data that meaningful conclusions can be drawn from. (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014)

There are two major research approaches that can be followed, namely: Qualitative and Quantitative, with Qualitative being best suited to the Interpretivistic paradigm. Both approaches can be defined and differentiated from one another in terms of their Ontology, Epistemology and Methodology.

Ontology is defined by Macintosh (2009) as assumptions about the nature of phenomena and reality, while Maree (2007) further identifies Ontology into the realist or nominalist positions where, respectively, reality is objective or reality is merely in the names and associations in each individual's consciousness. In Quantitative research the Ontology is realist where it is clear, objective and identifiable whereas Ontology in Qualitative research is nominalist and follows the belief that reality is subjective and different in the perspective of each individual.

Macintosh (2009) defines epistemology as beliefs about knowledge and how knowledge is generated where knowledge can be viewed as being tangible and able to be measured (positivist) or intangible and open to individual interpretation (interpretive) (Maree & Van Der Westhuizen, 2007). Epistemology in Quantitative research is positivist where knowledge is expressed in facts and data whereas in Qualitative research, knowledge is seen to be indeterminable and individualistic.

It is evident how the two research approaches differ in terms of these elements and how they can be differently defined from one another. Quantitative research can be seen to be the use of data and statistics to create objective, factual knowledge that adds to the understanding of a single, collective reality while Qualitative research is seen to be the use of in-depth, descriptive information to create knowledge from a specific perspective around a phenomena to aid in the understanding of individual realities (McLeod, 2008).

The most suitable paradigm for the study of the impact of customer service on brand loyalty in the restaurant industry is the Interpretivistic research paradigm following a Qualitative approach (Maree & Van Der Westhuizen, 2007)

The nature of both the Interpretivistic paradigm and the Qualitative approach better suits the needs of the study, as the concepts of customer service and brand loyalty, that the study is based on, are very subjective terms that may be interpreted differently by different individuals, meaning that the study's aim is to generate knowledge on a subjective phenomenon. While a Quantitative element can be introduced into the study in the form of a survey to analyse levels of customer satisfaction and service and the relationship these have with brand loyalty to restaurants, it will not provide the same level of complex understanding but will serve to collect valuable data to depict and justify customers perceptions.

The concepts under study and their relationship with one another have complex connections between each other and in order to effectively understand these connections, a Qualitative approach to the study will be most effective with a quantitative supporting element. A Qualitative research approach produces holistic, subjective, descriptive knowledge around the concept being studied, which is in line with the Interpretivistic paradigm.

This type of knowledge is the most effective type of knowledge to be produced for those whom the study will impact or concern as it is important in the restaurant industry to not only have information on what happens but also more varied information that will provide deep insight into the situation to help guide decisions. For this study restaurant owners and managers will need insight into what customers' expectations of customer service quality are, supported by statistics about the importance of good quality customer service, in order to understand their customers and formulate the best way for the restaurant to meet these expectations to ensure customer satisfaction and brand loyalty.

3.3. Sources of Data

Difference BTW (2015) defines data as the unprocessed data that then becomes processed into coherent and relevant pieces of information. Data, in terms of a research study, would then be considered the unprocessed gathered statistics and responses before it is organised, analysed and conclusions drawn. Data collection is an important part of any research study and therefore needs to be properly planned and considered to ensure the most useful and relevant data is collected using the best method/s possible (StudiousGuy, 2017). Data can come from both primary sources and secondary sources and there are specific methods to obtain data from these sources. StudiousGuy (2017) identifies primary data sources as including the likes of questionnaires, surveys and photographic collections and secondary data sources including published books, journals, internet sources and newspapers.

The methods used to collect data from their multiple sources is directed by the research paradigm as the different methods will deliver the kind of results best for the different paradigms purposes. Rhodes (2014) highlights the differences of the different types of data needed by discussing quantitative research as needing data that describes the effects of phenomena across entire large populations but which can still

be summarised to reflect the impact on smaller groups and people while qualitative research studies require data that can deeply and comprehensively describe phenomena and relationships. Because each type of study requires different kinds of data, the required data is collected from different types of sources, for instance, quantitative data is sourced using methods such as surveys, experiments and interviews while qualitative data is sourced using methods such as focus groups, questionnaires and interviews (Surbhi, 2016).

3.4. Sampling

3.4.1. Population

The population of this study will be restaurants in the Durban area where the unit of analysis will be individuals in terms of the customers of the restaurants who form part of the population. The target population will include 10 customers from each of the 4 selected restaurants. The restaurants selected include full time, family orientated, privately owned restaurants in the Durban area who will hereon be referred to as restaurant A, B, C and D.

The Durban population was also chosen as the Durban area is a relatively small area that hosts large amounts and variations of restaurants that therefore has the best offering for this study. The Durban area contains the best population for this study as it is a rapidly growing city in terms of its tourism, hospitality and economy, a well suited area to the study of customers and restaurants (Mail & Guardian, 2015). This city is well chosen, as Mail & Guardian (2015) states, as it is considered South Africa's fastest growing city and a "must-see" city worldwide (Lombard, 2016).

3.4.2. Sample Frame

A sample frame is described by Andale (2014) as a comprehensive list of the entire target population that the researcher wants to study where a population is general in nature but a sample frame's nature is specific in identifying useful participants for the study.

The sample frame for this particular study includes:

Customer 1 from restaurant A	Customer 1 from restaurant B
Customer 2 from restaurant A	Customer 2 from restaurant B
Customer 3 from restaurant A	Customer 3 from restaurant B

Customer 4 from restaurant A
 Customer 5 from restaurant A
 Customer 6 from restaurant A
 Customer 7 from restaurant A
 Customer 8 from restaurant A
 Customer 9 from restaurant A
 Customer 10 from restaurant A

Customer 4 from restaurant B
 Customer 5 from restaurant B
 Customer 6 from restaurant B
 Customer 7 from restaurant B
 Customer 8 from restaurant B
 Customer 9 from restaurant B
 Customer 10 from restaurant B

Customer 1 from restaurant C
 Customer 2 from restaurant C
 Customer 3 from restaurant C
 Customer 4 from restaurant C
 Customer 5 from restaurant C
 Customer 6 from restaurant C
 Customer 7 from restaurant C
 Customer 8 from restaurant C
 Customer 9 from restaurant C
 Customer 10 from restaurant C

Customer 1 from restaurant D
 Customer 2 from restaurant D
 Customer 3 from restaurant D
 Customer 4 from restaurant D
 Customer 5 from restaurant D
 Customer 6 from restaurant D
 Customer 7 from restaurant D
 Customer 8 from restaurant D
 Customer 9 from restaurant D
 Customer 10 from restaurant D

Manager/Owner of restaurant A
 Manager/Owner of restaurant B
 Manager/Owner of restaurant C
 Manager/Owner of restaurant D

3.4.3. Sampling Design

Sampling can be done through either Probability sampling, which is best suited for quantitative research as it allows every unit of the population a chance to be included in the sample or Non-Probability sampling, when the entire population cannot be used or accessed (Pascoe, 2014). This research study will use Non-Probability sampling where the researcher will choose those to be part of the sample from the population, those chosen will still fall within the population parameters and therefore allow for a deep idiographic understanding of the customer service experienced by each but will also serve to still meet the sample requirements of the study as this study is not dependent on sample size in order to accurately reflect the research findings.

Purposive sampling best suits this particular study as Crossman (2017) describes it as the method that chooses participants based on knowledge of the population and the purpose of the study where the most appropriate participants for the sample are chosen. Purposive sampling is effective in reaching target populations quickly (Crossman, 2017).

3.4.4. Sample Size

Sample size is defined by Zamboni (2017) as the total number of individual samples that are tested in the study where it is vital to have a sample size that accurately represents the population under study (Maree & Pietersen, 2010). Selecting the correct sample size is of paramount importance as it needs to allow for the collection of enough data and data that depicts various perspectives for it to be an effective extrapolation of an entire population (DePaulo, 2011) while also being a sample size that doesn't waste or be limited by available resources (Lenth, 2011).

Due to time and resource constraints this study will use a sample size of 4 Durban based privately owned restaurants, where the sample that data is collected from includes 10 customers and 1 owner or manager from each. The restaurant and restaurant customers population in Durban is homogenous in nature and therefore the sample is small in size. The lowered sample size is also due to restrictions on interference with customers dining experience that could negatively impact their perception of the restaurant. The chosen sample size is still effective in allowing for accurate and necessary amounts of data collection that will provide insightful results and conclusions.

3.5. Data Collection

3.5.1. Data Collection Methods

University of Minnesota (n.d.) explains the various different forms of data collection techniques available to a researcher to collect data for the purpose of the study. This study employs a Qualitative, Interpretivistic approach while incorporating a small reinforcing Quantitative element. Qualitative data for this study is collected from primary sources, customers and managers of the various restaurants, using the methods of short semi-structured interviews while secondary sources include analysis of journal articles, customer reviews, social media sites and internet websites. Small

amounts of Quantitative data is collected using customer feedback surveys to reinforce the collected Qualitative results.

The survey will ask customers to rate their experience from 1-5 where 5 is the best, in terms of food, atmosphere, cost value, their satisfaction levels and their desire to dine at the restaurant again. The customer interview aims at collecting information about the reasons for choosing the particular restaurant, factors that the customers disliked or enjoyed and their perception of the restaurant as a brand. The interviews directed at managers or owners of the different restaurants aim at collecting information about the restaurant and brand itself and what internal perceptions of customer service are in order to compare the identity and image and what is perceived from both perspectives.

3.5.3. Advantages and Disadvantages of Interviews and Surveys

The advantages of interviews, as discussed by Evalued (n.d.), are that they allow for the collection of information about respondent's perceptions and opinions while also allowing for further, more insightful follow up questions to be immediately asked. Interviews allow for exact respondent answers to be gathered through recording of the interview and detailed, specific questions to be asked. Interviews also have the advantage of allowing questions and ambiguities to be clarified in a one-on-one situation that respondents may feel more comfortable in.

Evalued (n.d.) however mentions that interviews can be very costly and time consuming to conduct, transcribe and analyse and the answers they collect can be understood and transcribed differently depending on the researcher.

Surveys are advantageous as they are described by Sincero (2012) as they receive high response rates and therefore can be effectively used to target large populations. Surveys are a cheap data collection method that is convenient for both the researcher and respondents and has high statistical value for studies. The advantage of using surveys is also that they eliminate the researcher's bias while providing precise results.

However, surveys also have certain disadvantages, which Sincero (2012) highlights as they have inflexible designs in terms of how they are administered and answered, they limit the types of questions which can be asked as their questions need to be

general in nature for the larger population and finally, they are not useful in collecting data concerning controversy as respondents cannot answer in detail.

3.5.4. Pre-Testing

Meta Connects (n.d.) states the importance of pre-testing data collection methods in order to analyse which questions are best, which did not work well, which need to be adjusted and whether or not the respondents understand them before conducting the study in order to ensure the best results.

The interview schedule is pre-tested through a practice interview with the researcher's colleague which aided the researcher in refining certain questions and assessing the time the interview would take to complete in order to inform respondents.

The survey is pre-tested through a pilot run where printed versions were given to the restaurants and staff were asked to include them in customer's bill folders and collect completed ones for collection two weeks later. The pre-test exposed the inefficiency of this survey method as staff and restaurant customers did not participate. The survey digitally adapted to allow for the researcher to manually collect immediate responses by respondents filling out the survey in front of the researcher on a portable tablet, this eliminated the initial problems with the survey.

3.6. Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis is described by Nieuwenhuis (2010) as an iterative and continuous process where findings and conclusions are identified from the data, interpreted and then reflected upon. Content analysis is the most suitable analysis technique for this study as it is used for analysing Qualitative data and analysing message content where the content can come from multiple sources, in this case interview responses and survey responses. Content analysis is best for this study as the technique examines the differences and similarities between the data in the content in order to analyse and reinforce or disprove conclusions (Nieuwenhuis, 2010). The inductive process of content analysis examines the extensive raw data and discerns conclusions from it, for this study that means analysing the interview transcripts and customer feedback results to analyse the brand identity, customer perceptions, customer expectations and propensity for repeat patronage at each

restaurant that will result in the identification of valuable insights that are useful for the study.

This method of data analysis involves many steps whereby the data or feedback collected from the study is processed in order to derive findings and conclusions. Due to the qualitative nature of this study and the customer feedback, the analysis of the data will be subjective in nature as it will be influenced by the researcher and the way they think or come to conclusions (Bezuidenhout & Cronje, 2014). Data analysis of any kind follows a system of steps in order to process the raw data. The steps the content analysis process follows are:

Step 1 involves preparation of the data where if necessary, the data is transcribed and all the data and feedback is collected together for initial analysis where the researcher can determine what information is useful or not. For this study, customer's questionnaires and survey answers will be collected together and a brief overview of the general responses will be acquired.

Step 2, as defined by Bezuidenhout & Cronje (2014) involves the definition of the coding unit being analysed where data is broken down into smaller pieces or groups for easier analysis. The customer response questionnaires will be grouped into each restaurant first and then further into each question and its relative answer while the survey responses are grouped by SurveyMonkey into each question and its relative response.

Bezuidenhout & Cronje (2014) discuss step 3 as the developing of the categories and the conceptual framework in order to facilitate ease of comparison of data where data can be grouped or identified in terms of conceptual themes or trends. This step will be applied to this study by grouping the data in terms of themes that emerge from customer responses in terms of their propensity to support the restaurant again following their experience and what they value in terms of customer service.

Step 4 involves testing the coding themes on a sample of data to make sure they don't need to be revised or changed and that they are effective. This study will test its coding themes first on a data sample of 1 restaurant's customer responses before applying it to the other 3 (Bezuidenhout & Cronje, 2014).

Coding all the data is the next step where all the data is analysed accordingly. For this study content analysis will be used as the extensive data in the form of restaurant customer and manager responses will be analysed and similarities and differences highlighted (Bezuidenhout & Cronje, 2014).

Bezuidenhout & Cronje (2014) identify step 6 simply as assessment of the coding consistency to make sure no data was missed or coded incorrectly. For this study this means checking the results and coding of data over before moving onto the next step.

Step 7 is the interpretation of the data where conclusions are drawn and meanings of data identified in order to consolidate results. In terms of this study, which is subjective in nature, the researcher will draw conclusions from the broader context of the study and the literature on the topic in order to avoid bias and false interpretations when consolidating results and developing conclusions based on the results (Bezuidenhout & Cronje, 2014).

The last step involves reporting of the methods and findings of the study as accurately as possible. For this study this means discussing how the findings determine the impact customer service has on brand loyalty in the restaurant industry through the collection and interpretation of data (Bezuidenhout & Cronje, 2014).

3.7. Conclusion

In conclusion, the study follows a Qualitative, Interpretivistic approach with a small Quantitative element and uses surveys and interviews to collect data. The study uses Non- Probability, Purposive sampling on four privately owned restaurants in the Durban area and ten respondents from each. The data and study results are analysed using the Content Analysis method and this will be discussed further in the following chapter.

Chapter Four: Presentation and Analysis of Results and Findings

4.1. Introduction

The content analysis method of analysing data will allow for deep insights and conclusions to be drawn from the data where the following chapter involves the unpacking and analysis of the data as well as the presentation of the findings deduced from the data at hand and the collected responses.

4.2. The Objective Questions Matrix

Table 1: The Objective Questions Matrix

	Manger or Owner Questions	Customer Questions	Customer Survey Questions
Objective 1: To Further Elaborate on the Link Between Customer Service and Brand Loyalty	Question 1,	Question 1, Question 7	Question 1
Objective 2: To Determine if Service Quality Effects Customers Propensity Towards Repeat Patronage	Question 6, Question 7	Question 4, Question 5, Question 6	Question 6, Question 7
Objective 3: To Gain Insight Into the Most Prominent Customer Expectations of Customer Service	Question 3, Question 4, Question 5	Question 2, Question 3	Question 2, Question 3, Question 4, Question 5

4.3. General Information on Respondents

The respondents for this study included Durban, South Africa restaurant owners, managers and customers. A larger portion of respondents was female compared to male and all respondents were between the ages of 25 and 50 and of white ethnicity. All of the respondents are considered to fall into the middle class and higher LSMs as

they can afford to dine out. The respondents all enjoy eating out with friends and family and can therefore be determined to be outgoing and social people.

4.4. Presentation of Findings

4.4.1. Objective One: To Further Elaborate on the Link Between Customer Service and Brand Loyalty.

The results and findings from the study show high levels of consistency where responses were often the same and led to similar findings. Both customers from all four restaurants enjoyed a positive customer service experience. The study found that there was a correlation between the atmosphere that the restaurant was trying to achieve and the atmosphere that customers were picking up on and that the atmosphere of the restaurant added to the service experience. All customers interviewed also expressed that the positive customer service experience they had resulted in a desire to return to that particular restaurant again for repeat patronage and that they would expect the same standard of service and would be inclined to support every branch of the restaurant and therefore the brand as a whole.

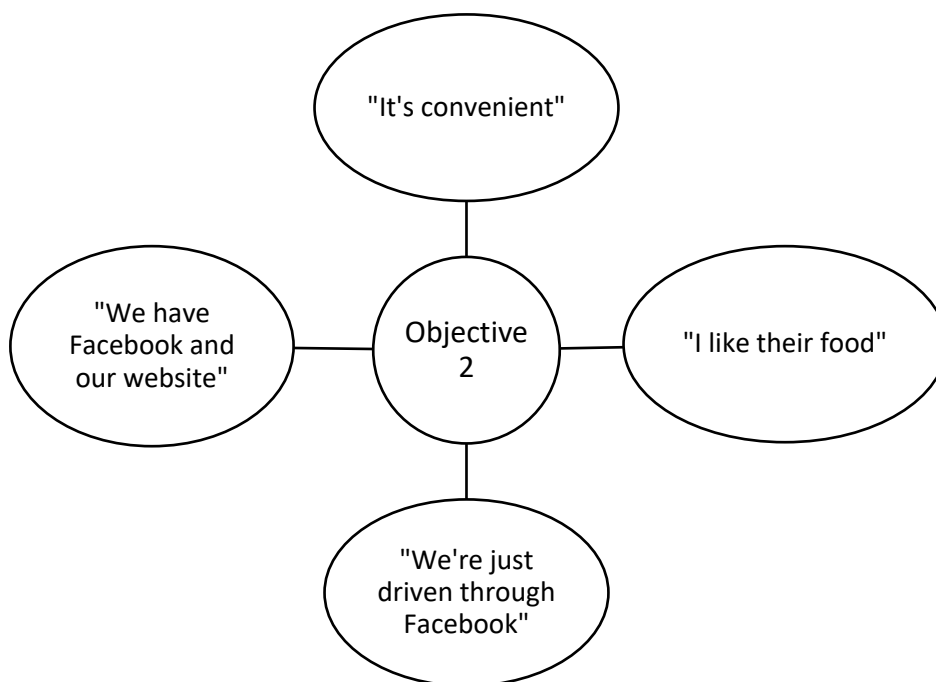
Figure 1. Objective One Word Chart



4.4.2. Objective Two: To Determine if Service Quality Effects Customers Propensity Towards Repeat Patronage.

The study found that neither the restaurant managers or customers consider customer service or service quality as a reason to visit the restaurants in the study, instead managers considered their restaurant style, location, menu that caters to everyone and the quality of the food as factors that influence customers repeat patronage while the restaurants customers would choose to dine with them again based on the atmosphere, convenient location, prices, the friendliness of staff and the quality of food. This study also revealed that restaurants focus their marketing and advertising efforts around their websites and Facebook pages with little to no other forms of advertising to support business.

Figure 2. Objective Two Word Chart

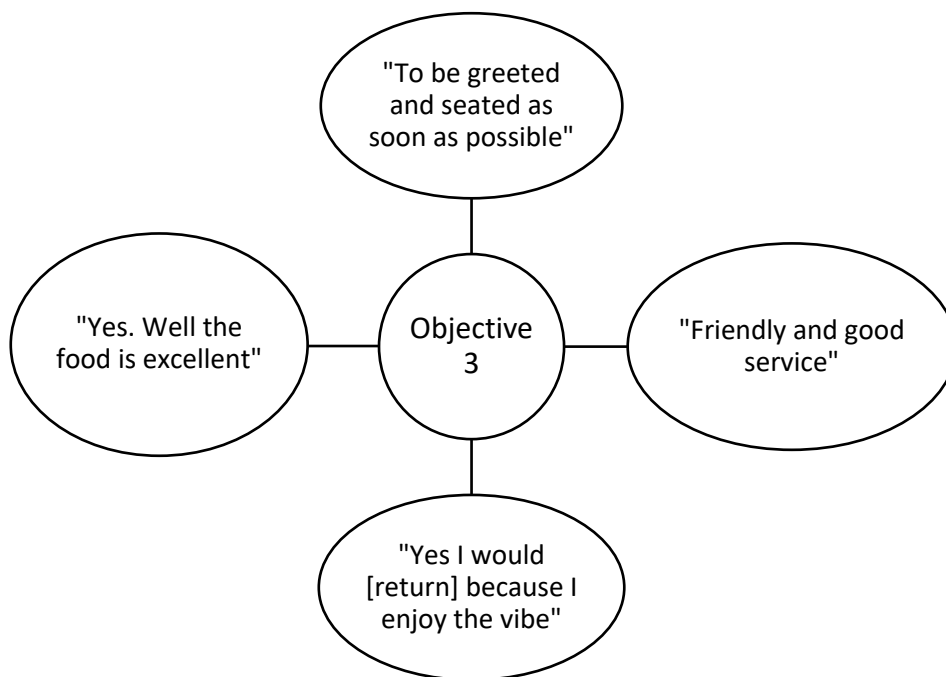


4.4.3. Objective Three: To Gain Insight into the Most Prominent Customer Expectations of Customer Service.

The study resulted in the unexpected findings of customer expectations of service from restaurants where multiple customers considered being greeted upon arrival and quickly seated as an expectation of restaurant service that they value and desire. However the rest of the results were unsurprising where customers said they valued

and expected friendly staff, timely service of their food and drinks, good quality food and drinks, timely and professional waitron service, a welcoming atmosphere and value for money. These results, along with the results and findings derived for Objective Two, identify correlations between customer's service expectations and their reasons for their repeat patronage. The study's results and findings also determined that there is no correlation between how staff handle dissatisfied customers and impression of customer service as well as determining a lack of correlation between where the restaurants feel they could improve and where customers feel they could improve. The results of the study identified very little correlation or similarity between what the restaurant managers and owners feel they do very well and what customers enjoyed the most.

Figure 3. Objective Three Word Chart



4.4.4. Survey Results

Table 2: Restaurant A Survey Results

Questions	1 Star	2 Stars	3 Stars	4 Stars	5 Stars
Overall Service Experience	0	0	0	5	5

Food Quality	0	0	5	1	4
Value for Price	0	0	4	1	5
Atmosphere	0	0	3	4	3
Waitrons Service	0	0	0	3	7
Overall Satisfaction	0	0	0	5	5
Propensity to Dine Again	0	0	1	4	5

Table 3: Restaurant B Survey Results

Questions	1 Star	2 Stars	3 Stars	4 Stars	5 Stars
Overall Service Experience	0	0	1	5	7
Food Quality	0	1	4	1	7
Value for Price	0	0	4	3	6
Atmosphere	0	0	2	2	9
Waitrons Service	0	1	0	8	4
Overall Satisfaction	0	0	1	7	5
Propensity to Dine Again	0	0	2	4	7

Table 4: Restaurant C Survey Results

Questions	1 Star	2 Stars	3 Stars	4 Stars	5 Stars
Overall Service Experience	0	1	1	5	8
Food Quality	0	1	5	5	4

Value for Price	0	0	3	9	3
Atmosphere	0	0	1	5	9
Waitrons Service	0	2	1	7	5
Overall Satisfaction	1	0	1	7	6
Propensity to Dine Again	0	1	1	5	8

Table 5: Restaurant D Survey Results

Questions	1 Star	2 Stars	3 Stars	4 Stars	5 Stars
Overall Service Experience	0	0	1	4	8
Food Quality	0	0	1	4	8
Value for Price	0	0	5	2	6
Atmosphere	0	0	0	3	10
Waitrons Service	0	1	1	4	7
Overall Satisfaction	0	0	1	3	9
Propensity to Dine Again	0	0	2	3	8

4.5. Validity

Psued8 (2011) describes validity as “the degree to which a research study measures what it intends to measure.” Validity is used to measure the usefulness of a study as the results of the study need to be valid in order to make the research meaningful and worthwhile. Validity occurs both internally within the study to measure the test and study itself and externally to measure the ability of the results and study to be

generalised to the target population. Psued8 (2011) continues to explain the four types of internal validity, which will be analysed to determine the validity of this study.

Face Validity is described by Research Methodology (n.d.) as the initial impression of the researcher and or other persons of the validity of a study without any scientific justification. This study can be determined to have face validity as the researcher deems it to be valid, as does a third party person who read the questions asked to respondents to assess that they would measure what the researcher was intending them to measure.

Research Methodology (n.d.) defines Construct Validity as the assessment of the appropriateness of the tools used to measure that which is under investigation. For this study interviews and surveys were used to measure customer service, customer service perceptions and the link between customer service and brand loyalty. These methods create Construct Validity by effectively assessing the variables under investigation in the study.

Criterion-Related Validity measures the correlation of the study's results across the different tools or sources used to gain the results (Research Methodology, n.d.). This study has Criterion-Related Validity as the results from both the surveys and the interviews correlate and reinforce each other.

Finally Formative Validity is described by Research Methodology (n.d.) as the measures or tools effectiveness in collecting results that can improve the phenomena under study. This study has Formative Validity because the tools used gathered information on which aspects of customer service customers value the most and will result in repeat patronage, this improves the overall study of the impact of customer service on brand loyalty.

4.6. Reliability

Research Methodology (n.d.) discusses Reliability as the degree to which the study produces consistent and stable results, meaning that if the study was repeated, the same results would be acquired. There are four categories of research reliability:

Test-Retest Reliability is when the test is repeated, with the same sample of group twice over time (Research Methodology, n.d.). This study does not have this category

of reliability as the study has only been performed once due to multiple limitations, discussed in a later chapter.

Parallel Forms Reliability is described by Research Methodology (n.d.) as the same sample group being tested using multiple forms or analysis tools. This study exhibits this category of reliability as both interviews and surveys were done to collect results.

Research Methodology (n.d.) discusses Inter-Rater Reliability as the study being done by two different assessors or researchers to ensure reliability. This study does not possess Inter-Rater Reliability as it was conducted by a single researcher.

Lastly Internal Consistency Reliability involved repeatedly assessing a certain factor in the test to ensure respondents answers are the same (Research Methodology, n.d.). This category of reliability was not ensured in this study due to the limitations discussed in the following chapter.

Reliability will be further ensured by the researcher who conducts the study ethically, keeping in mind to ensure reliability and validity of results.

4.7. Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness (Koonin, 2014) is an over-arching term that encompasses the overall validity and reliability of a qualitative study as validity and reliability is used in assessing Quantitative studies but due to the differing natures of Quantitative and Qualitative studies, Qualitative studies need to be assessed differently. Therefore Qualitative studies are assessed in terms of trustworthiness, which is made up of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Koonin (2014) goes on to define credibility as the accuracy with which the researcher interprets the received data where credibility is increased by extensive time with participants, triangulation (the use of more than one research method) and by the believability of your findings from the participants perspective. Koonin (2014) defines transferability as the ability to apply the findings to a similar situation and acquire similar results, in effect, the ability of the findings and analysis to be applied beyond a single particular study. Dependability can be defined as the integration levels of the data collection method, data analysis and theory generated from the study while confirmability is how seamlessly the findings flow from the study where the data collected supports the findings. (Koonin, 2014).

Trustworthiness of a qualitative study such as this one is important as it ensures the meaningfulness of the study and its overall findings to the body of knowledge as well as ensuring that the information collected and presented can be relied on to be accurate and worthwhile. Because this study is Interpretivistic in nature and serves to provide insight into the effects of customer service on brand loyalty in Durban based, privately-owned restaurants, it is vital that the findings gathered and presented are trustworthy as the fact that the study follows an Interpretivistic paradigm means that the information gathered and findings deduced from the data is subjective in nature and therefore is often open to misinterpretation, making the assurance of trustworthiness vital to ensure that the interpretations and conclusions made from the findings can be trusted and relied upon as useful and accurate. The ensured trustworthiness of this study is also important due to the fact that it will provide information that can be practically used by the population to guide or inform certain decisions or behaviour and in turn the information and findings provided need to be trustworthy so that decisions or behaviour that is based on the insights and conclusions of the study allows for accurate guidance and correct decision making.

In terms of this particular research study, trustworthiness will be ensured at each aspect. In terms of credibility, the study will ensure credibility through the believability of the findings from the participant's perspective where the study will aim to portray the service quality of the restaurant and the propensity of customers to return to the restaurant in a way that honestly reflects the reality and therefore that the participants, the customers and managers of the restaurants, can believe is accurate and credible. Credibility will be ensured by acquiring feedback that is extensive and reflective of the customers experienced reality or service experience so that the findings reflected are an accurate representation of this reality. Transferability is evident in the study as many restaurants in the industry globally have similar service offerings, and therefore the presented findings from the study can be assumed to be similar as the situation is similar and will therefore produce similar results. Dependability will be ensured in the study by analysing and checking the integration of each related part within the study, both before and after the findings are gathered, to ensure they coincide and support one another. Confirmability will be ensured in this study by extensively describing the research process to allow for findings to flow from the collected data and others who view the study to arrive at similar conclusions.

4.8. Conclusion

Content analysis unpacked the findings and results to both discuss and visually represent the data collected from respondents. The validity, reliability and trustworthiness of the study is assessed and ensured in terms of how the study has been conducted and results collected. The following chapter serves to draw conclusions and make recommendations based on the results findings.

Chapter Five: Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1. Introduction

The purpose of a study and the collection of data and results is to devise and draw conclusions from the data collected to answer or explain that which is under investigation, in this instance, the impact of customer service on brand loyalty in the Durban privately owned restaurant industry. The following chapter will serve to do exactly that by analysing and drawing conclusions from the literature collected in chapter two and the respondents results collected in the previous chapter.

5.2. Objective One: To Further Elaborate on the Link Between Customer Service and Brand Loyalty

Customer service levels are determined by the customer and not by the restaurant where the satisfaction or impression of customer service that the customer feels is dependent on the restaurant and what they offer their customers. For customers to feel satisfied with the service they receive from a restaurant in all aspects, the customer must feel that they have received appropriate value or worth for their money, energy and time.

Research from the study showed that restaurants attempted to create a specific atmosphere for customers and that this was successful and added to the customer service experience customers had. The customers felt that their enjoyable customer service experiences encouraged them to return to those restaurants in particular to enjoy the positive service experiences again as the positive customer service experience resulted in customers trust in receiving that same service in the future.

It can be concluded from both the previously discussed literature and findings that customer service experience directly impacts customers desire to return to a particular restaurant and that the atmosphere created by restaurants directly impact the nature of the customer service experience customers receive. This means that restaurant owners and managers should carefully choose and create the desired atmosphere in their restaurant to encourage positive customer service experiences and repeat

patronage. This conclusion reinforces the link between customer service experiences and customer's desire towards repeat patronage and brand loyalty.

5.3. Objective Two: To Determine if Service Quality Effects Customers Propensity Towards Repeat Patronage

The literature discussed in chapter two discusses how customers with higher levels of satisfaction, who have received a positive customer service experience, are more likely to be brand loyal and offer repeat patronage to the brand or restaurant. The literature discusses the positive correlation between a positive customer service experience and repeat patronage that directly results in brand loyalty. Previous literature also discusses the importance positive customer service in the competitive and highly saturated restaurant industry to retain and keep customers coming back.

The research results concluded that positive customer service experiences and the meeting of customer's expectations and desires results in customers desire to dine at that particular restaurant again and to support the restaurant as a brand by supporting any of the brand's branches while expecting the same level of customer service. Primary research and findings also determined that marketing and advertising is not a priority for restaurants and is not something that would encourage positive customer service responses, repeat patronage or brand loyalty from customers.

In conclusion customer service quality and the customer service experiences customers have can be directly linked to customers desire towards repeat patronage and brand loyalty as customers derive heightened feelings of satisfaction from positive customer service experiences and this results in both the desire to dine at that restaurant again but also the expectation that all the restaurant branches under that brand name produce the same positive customer service experiences and feelings of satisfaction, leading to brand loyalty and support.

5.4. Objective Three: To Gain Insight Into the Most Prominent Customer Expectations of Customer Service

Previous literature highlights the prominent expectations customers have of their service at restaurants can be broken down into the variables or factors that influence the customer service experience and influence customer's propensity towards repeat

patronage and brand loyalty. The literature identifies switching costs, gender, income, age, involvement, certainty, perceived risks, knowledge, employee-customer emotional engagement, trust, commitment and corporate image as variables which influence customer service and in result, brand loyalty. The discussed variables influence the level of customer satisfaction customers derive from their service experience, not all necessarily pertaining to the restaurant industry as those variables are derived from the primary research conducted in this study.

Findings from the study revealed that there was disparity between the restaurants and the customers in terms of what customers valued in their restaurants, where the restaurants feel they are exceling, where customers feel the restaurants are exceling and why they chose to dine there. From the results gathered from respondents, customers identified greeting and quick seating upon arrival, friendly staff, timely service of their food and drinks, good quality food and drinks, timely and professional waitron service, a welcoming atmosphere and value for money as the most prominent customer expectations of customer service from a restaurant and the variables that encourage their repeat patronage and loyalty to the brand.

In conclusion customers desire and expect certain factors and needs to be met when dining at a particular restaurant and having these factors to offer customers results in repeat patronage and brand loyalty from customers which ultimately determines business success. These findings also determined that restaurant owners and managers are not aware of what customers want and value and in turn, offering the customers desired variables, is coincidental. It can also be concluded from the differences in what previous literature determined as valuable factors and what results from this study determined as valuable factors, are inherently different to each particular industry.

5.5. Recommendations

This study and the results and conclusions there from lead to a number of various recommendations that can be made for restaurant owners and managers to aid in the growth and success of their restaurants through the creation of repeat patronage and brand loyalty.

Firstly restaurants should focus on creating a specific, desirable, enjoyable atmosphere for their restaurants that customers will respond positively to and that will draw customers to the restaurant and encourage repeat patronage to the restaurant in particular.

Restaurants should also ensure they focus on creating an enjoyable customer service experience for their customers. While this is inherent when establishing a restaurant, it is also important to manage the restaurant effectively to ensure consistency in terms of every customer receiving the same level of service quality and similar customer service experiences, only by ensuring consistency can brand loyalty be achieved.

While it is necessary for restaurants to maintain some sort of external communication channel with their customers, it is not necessarily effective in the restaurant industry to advertise or market using channels such as Websites and Facebook. However if restaurants would want to focus on advertising and marketing their business, multiple channels should be used and extra effort be put into creating positive customer service experiences that will encourage effective word of mouth advertising.

It is recommended, due to the study's results and conclusions, that restaurants focus on meeting the most prominent of customer's expectations and needs in order to effectively encourage repeat patronage and brand loyalty. This would require restaurants to focus on the initial greeting and seating of customers, the service provided by the waitron staff in terms of their friendliness; professionalism and timeliness, the quality of the food and drinks being prepared and the prices restaurants are charging to ensure customers are receiving sufficient value for their money.

Lastly, due to the disparity determined by the study between the restaurant's and customer's perceptions of the restaurant itself and its service, it is recommended that restaurants conduct research and gain feedback from their customers in terms of their desires and expectations for their dining experience in order to effectively satisfy them and ensure business success.

5.6. Assumptions, Limitations and Delimitations

Simon (2011) defines assumptions as factors, out of the researchers control, that if missing would result in the study being irrelevant. For instance in the case of this research study, It is assumed that restaurants create and can control customer service

and how their customers experience this as restaurants have control over their offerings and daily operations. In the case of this study it is also assumed that respondents answer truthfully and that the chosen set of respondents are adequate and share the thoughts, views and opinions of the larger population as respondents were ensured of their anonymity, confidentiality and ability to withdraw from the study at any given time.

Limitations are defined by Simon (2011) as potential weaknesses or limits the study possesses that are out of the researcher's control. In the instance of this study, the limitations would include the fact that the chosen respondents were only those available at the chosen restaurants on a specific day, meaning that their responses can only be suggested to be consistent with that of the entire population of people who have visited that particular restaurant.

Delimitations are factors which determine the boundaries or scope of the study and which are within the researcher's control (Simon, 2011). The delimitations of this study include the restricted scope of the study to only include Durban, Privately owned restaurants due to the inability of the researcher to study every restaurant, franchise and café in the entirety of Kwa-Zulu Natal or South Africa. Another delimitation of this study is the nature of the restaurant industry and customers where customers who are dining at a restaurant may feel irritated and their perception of a restaurant and its customer service negatively impacted by being asked to participate and answer lengthy questionnaires or interviews for a study, meaning therefore that the researcher had to ensure and use the shortest and most convenient methods of data collection from respondents. Other delimitations of this study include the research questions and objectives chosen by the researcher as these create the boundaries and steer the study.

5.7. Opportunities for Future Research

This study allows for many avenues of further research where different research could focus on merely one factor of customer service effect on brand loyalty such as the cost value, business environment and or front of house employees attitudes. Further research could pursue the effects of customer service on brand loyalty in different business environments to the restaurant environment in Durban. The study of customer service's impact on brand loyalty could also be conducted quantitatively

rather than qualitatively, as is done in this study, in order to create statistical information on the subject that could be used to reinforce the conclusions drawn from this study. Similarly this study could spark further research into customer service and corresponding research could be done to examine what other factors impact brand loyalty, which would result in the highlighting of this study which clearly examines customer service as a factor that effects brand loyalty.

This study focuses on the restaurant industry in Durban in particular and often geographical areas and the prominent cultures within those areas influence how people behave, therefore the same study of customer service's impact on brand loyalty could be conducted across multiple different geographical areas in order to generate more area specific results and conclusions. Further research could also be conducted by altering the research question to focus on examining the importance of customer service for a business or organisation rather than focusing on the sole aspect of the relationship between customer service and brand loyalty.

This same study could be conducted using more extensive triangulation to further reinforce the findings and the conclusions drawn from the current study where the use of many multiple data collection methods such as formal interviews and focus groups and ethnographic data collection would create a more thorough collection of data and findings. Lastly this same study could also be done longitudinally, rather than cross-sectionally, in order to gain deeper insight into the dynamic phenomenon that is both customer service quality and brand loyalty as a result of, as human behaviour and interactions between these elements change so frequently and so would benefit from consistent analysis to create a more stable overall picture of the relationship between the two.

5.8. Conclusion to the Study

This research study has served to explore the impact that customer service, including the quality and factors that make up customer service, has on brand loyalty, which can be measured by customer's feelings of propensity towards repeat patronage. The study focussed on the restaurant industry, specifically privately owned restaurants in the Durban area, and investigated each chosen restaurant, their customer service, the customer service experienced by their customers and their customer's desire to support and visit the restaurant again. Through the measurement of these variables,

and carefully chosen research design of the study, valuable data was collected that facilitated conclusions and insights. The study gained insight into the relationship between customer service and brand loyalty, the direct effect restaurants customer service quality has on customer's propensity towards repeat patronage and lastly, highlighted the prominent expectations customers have for a restaurants customer service.

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