

**FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO QUALITY OF CUSTOMER  
SERVICE IN NAKUMATT SUPERMARKET IN EAST AFRICA**

**BY**

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REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF BUSINESS  
ADMINISTRATION, SCHOOL OF BUSINESS, UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI.**

**NOVEMBER, 2011**

**DECLARATION**

To the best of my Knowledge, I declare that this is my original work and has never been presented to any other university for any academic credit purpose.

Signature.....

Date.....16/11/2011.....

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**D61/76079/2009**

This research proposal has been submitted for examination with my approval as the students' supervisor

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this piece of work to my beloved mother and father for giving me a reason to work hard, to do everything to the best of my abilities, my aunties, uncles and cousins for constantly encouraging me to aim for the sky and most importantly to Donald Omengo who has positively challenged me and subconsciously made me to put myself out and venture into achieving my goals in life.

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## ABSTRACT

Today, companies are faced with rapidly changing marketing environment. They make efforts to adopt themselves to some control changes in the external environment that has implications to marketing. In particular, customer expectations are increasing in relation to marketing knowledge, speed of response, breadth and depth of communication, customization of information and product/service offerings. Despite the wealth of research on the elements of customer service, the definition of customer service still remains blurred. Managers and academics have thus become more concerned about customer service with respect to its contribution towards service quality. Several studies have been carried out on service quality in different areas. However, none of the studies has touched on the factors contributing to quality of customer services in Kenyan supermarkets. This study therefore seeks to find out the elements of customer service in supermarkets in terms of their contribution towards service quality.

The researchers adopted the case study design for this study with Nakumatt chain of supermarkets being the case of analysis. The study was limited to the Nakumatt stores within the Nairobi CBD. The data was collected using an interview schedules that was administrated personally by the researchers. The study gathered both quantitative and qualitative data from which a descriptive analysis was done. This study found that the keystone to Nakumatt marketing strategy is grouping customers into segments with common sets of needs, Outsourcing of services, Building long-term partnerships with all stakeholders, well trained personnel, strategic positioning of the stores, sensitivity of the pricing to the market price changes, availability of a variety of products as depicted by "If you need it we have it" slogan and a greater customer focus in tracking complaints and implementing service standards based on customer requirements

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and expectations. However, the researchers noted the supermarket depends largely on the manufacturers promotions and has very few product promotions. This makes the supermarket not any different from its competitors. The researchers therefore recommend that the management of Nakumatt keenly look into promotional strategies in order to cultivate a competitive advantage over its competitors.

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the study

Today, companies are faced with rapidly changing international environment. These companies make efforts to adopt themselves to some respects, control changes in the external environment that has implications to management (Dyer and Singh, 1998. Eisenhardt 2002; Harrigan 2001). External environmental forces that are rapidly changing include customers, competitors, technology, ethical and legal forces.

Customer expectations continue to ratchet upward due to changing International environments. Evidence of this can be seen in declining customer satisfaction ratings for many organizations, even as they invest heavily in process improvements and customer relationship management (CRM) technology. In particular, customer expectations are increasing in relation to International business knowledge, speed of response, breadth and depth of communication, and customization of information and product/service offerings. Indeed, customer expectations change, often faster than organizations can effectively respond (Colletti and Chonko (1997). Failure to adapt and respond is likely to lead to obsolescence of the sales force, and, indeed, some have questioned whether the sales force is in the process of becoming obsolete (Jones et al 2004).

In order for International expertise people to meet the rapidly changing customer expectations, they must know more-faster. Technology enables marketers to store, retrieve, and analyze customer data and make specific recommendations that are customized for long-term business solutions. Technology also helps marketers manage important information during sales cycles. The need for marketers to communicate in real time with their companies and teammates is ever increasing. Technology advances the practice of selling and the maintenance of inter-

organizational relationships in many ways but also creates substantial additional burdens on salespeople. As previously mentioned, although it facilitates more rapid and frequent communication, it increases the demand on marketers to provide information and services needed by customers in real time (Keillor et al. 1997).

The ethical and legal environment can constrain the organization's ability to effectively pursue certain internationalized activities. As corporate scandals fill the pages of the business press and class-action lawsuits become commonplace, the public demands greater transparency in corporate operations and more ethical, as well as more effective, leadership. International Managers have a responsibility to ensure that marketers become more cognizant and vigilant with regard to the representations they make to customers. As a result, organizations are placing standards and limitations on claims that can be made and standards that must be upheld in selling. Thus, in highly competitive selling situations, international expertise people must be particularly careful about the arguments they use and inducements they offer in attempting to win sales.

### **1.1.1 International business**

International business is a term used to collectively describe all commercial transactions (private and governmental, sales, investments, logistics, and transportation) that take place between two or more regions, countries and nations beyond their political boundary. Usually, private companies undertake such transactions for profit; governments undertake them for profit and for political reasons (Colletti and Chonk, 1997). It refers to all those business activities which involves cross border transactions of goods, services, resources between two or more nations. Transaction of economic resources include capital, skills, people etc. for international production of physical goods and services such as finance, banking, insurance, construction etc.

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A multinational enterprise is a company that has a worldwide approach to markets and production or one with operations in more than a country. An MNE is often called Multinational Corporation or transnational company. Well known MNCs include fast food companies such as McDonald's and Yum Brands, vehicle manufacturers such as General Motors, Ford Motor Company and Toyota, consumer electronics companies like Samsung, LG and Sony, and energy companies such as ExxonMobil, Shell and BP. Most of the largest corporations operate in multiple national markets (class notes). International business is business whose activities involve the crossing of national borders. No country is self-sufficient no matter how good their resources are hence the need to export its surpluses and thus it would involve itself in international business.

### **1.1.2 The concept of customer service**

According to Kotler and Armstrong (2004), Customer service refers to identifiable, but essentially intangible activities that are offered by a seller in conjunction with a product such as delivery and repair. These activities may be priced separately but usually are not and are provided only with a product that is being sold. These activities are not to be confused with intangible products (services), the types of products for which the activity is the primary purpose of a sale. The sale of service products may be accompanied by the provision of customer services, an example being the courteous treatment a customer receives in a shopping mall.

Customer service is needed in all types of organizations i.e. supermarkets, hospitals, restaurants, and businesses. These organizations face the problem of gaining and retaining the patronage of customers. Building long-term relationships with customers has been given a high priority by the majority of most successful enterprises. These companies realize that customer satisfaction is an



important key to success (Lunch, 2004). "Customers are important to an organization and business, because they provide the profit". Customer service is provided to children, family members, employers, co-workers, or people needing help in a grocery store. Essentially customer service is provided to everyone in one way or another. Lunch (2004) states "Treat each customer as if he or she is your favorite customer."

Excellent customer service is achieved by a three-dimensional process that includes a well-conceived service strategy, customer-driven systems, and customer-friendly people (Zemke, 1985). Each dimension must reflect the important needs and wants of the customer. The "service triangle" can be developed for any type of business. Each piece of the triangle is explained in the following sections. A well-conceived service strategy includes three important elements: market research to discover the customers' needs and wants; a clear vision of the firm's "reason for being"; and clearly stated beliefs and values that guide the enterprise (Zemke 1985). The creation of a sound set of beliefs and values can give stability to an organization. Customer service priorities also become clearer.

Customer-friendly systems are designed to make things easy for customers. Complaints should be handled in a timely fashion. Returning or exchanging products should not be difficult. Requests for assistance should be handled in a courteous and efficient manner. Customer-friendly systems add value and build customer loyalty. They have a certain level of maturity and possess the social skills needed to build customer loyalty.

The ultimate purpose of every business should be to satisfy the customer. Increased levels of competition require a greater commitment to customer service. Firms that invest the time, energy, and money needed to achieve excellent customer service will be the ones that thrive and grow.

The American customer satisfaction reveals that customer satisfaction with service in the retail environment in the USA has decreased with as much as twelve percent between 1996-2001. Apparently more than 69% of retail customers shop hop as direct consequence of unsatisfactory customer service. This spells disaster because customer service may in many instances be the only differentiating factor between competitors (Joslyn, 2002).

Despite the wealth of research on the elements of customer service, the definition of customer service still remains blurred. Managers and academics have thus become more concerned about customer service with respect to its contribution towards service quality. Those involved agree that it needs to add memorable and satisfactory value to the purchasing experience on personal and non personal levels to enhance customer satisfaction and overall perception of service quality. Taylor (1996) confirms that interest in the conceptualization and measurement of service quality and consumer satisfaction has two distinct concepts, which emphasizes that retail managers need to be clear about whether their aim is to have satisfied consumers or whether they want to deliver customer service in terms of super service quality. The above difference needs to be well understood and researched because both service quality and customer satisfaction are crucial in terms of a competitive advantage with the aim of enhancing customer loyalty.

Service quality literature maintains that there is a distinction in the standards by which these two constructs are evaluated. Customer satisfaction is based on predictive expectations that may refer to experience based on norms while service quality is judged by what consumers feel should be

provided. Unlike satisfaction which pertains to a specific service transaction, service quality concerns customer's judgment of overall excellence or superiority encompassing a general attitude toward service in general. Previous research reveals a direct correlation between customer satisfaction and service quality and the likelihood that satisfaction will result in more favorable perception of service quality.

### **1.1.3 Supermarkets retail business**

Retailing covers all of the activities involved in the sale of products to the customers. Retailers are directly involved with the final consumer. In Kenya, supermarket retail business is not a new phenomenon. The first supermarket arose in the 1960's and rapidly grew taking the market shares away from traditional food retailers such as kiosks, green grocers, over-the counter shops, market stalls and street hawkers (Kullen, 1996). Over the years, retail business has experienced tremendous growth and changes in scope, efficiency, technology, variety of products and customer base (Saunders, 2006). This has been attributed to a number of factors such as rapid urbanization triggering movement of people to urban areas. Most notably, the rivalry between leading chains of supermarkets became important growth drivers.

The changing International environment in information technology, competition, changing customer preferences resulted in customers demanding for better quality services when purchasing the products/services. The retail businesses with high quality service are perceived when the customer or retailers enjoys a better competitive advantage against the competitors and are able to sustain customer loyalty even in a changing environment (Cullen, 2006). In earlier years, products were limited to consumer products but today, supermarkets are retailing almost

everything including furniture, clothing, and high unit value appliances as well the small household units. This has made them to occupy large space and employ large number of staff (F, Zehrs 2006).

#### **1.1.4 Nakumatt Supermarket in East Africa**

Nakumatt supermarket started in 1965 as a family concern dealing with furniture and bedding. In 1970, the family business was incorporated as Nakuru mattresses limited. After incorporation, the company extended in the rural areas selling consumer items to schools, hospitals and other organization, this was characterized by competitive pricing and the provision of excellent services, which led to an increase in demand for its product range thus creating the need for retail outlet (Nakumatt Profile Issue 1 smart news PP3, (1972)

Nakumatt holding limited was established in 1987 to provide centralized administration and management of the core business. In 1992, it opened its first branch in Nairobi Nakumatt Mega along Uhuru Highway since then; it has gradually grown to a chain of Super stalls with 19 branches spread country wide. Nakumatt currently has 22 branches countrywide, one branch in Rwanda and has ensured that all branches are located to the convenience of their customers. Their expansion strategy is 'going closer to the public whenever possible where potential is identified'( Ramamurthy 2002). By the end of 2015 Nakumatt Management intends to have 25 branches in the country.

They hope to achieve this by opening medium sized stalls and shall be done without adjusting any counter prices such that items will cost the same in the store regardless of the location. They

hope to increase the range of goods available in the country and at affordable rates. These will be achieved through market research on consumer needs which are not yet satisfied. This will help them to achieve their slogan "you need it we've got it". They also hope to invest more in training and development of staff to ensure performance and job satisfaction. This will attract more customers as it will enhance quality, exceptional service and hence enhance lifestyle (Nakumatt Profile Issue 2 2005, PP 9).

Nakumatt supermarkets have formed strategic alliances with various organizations such as Bata, professional shoe shiners, chemists, books first, cosmetic shops, Barclays and Equity Bank and Phone Express. These alliances create competitive strength by providing a fuller range of customers therefore availing a one-stock shop. These enable to tangibilize its slogan "all under one roof" (Ramamurthy, 2005). Other alliances include Nakumatt with AMREF, UNICEF; Adopt a Light, The Mater Hospital and Child Life Trust. This allows participating in social responsibility which markets the supermarket allover the country. In addition, Nakumatt has partnered with Pesa Point which makes cash readily available for the customers while doing their shopping.

## **1.2 Research problem**

Several studies have been carried out on service quality in different areas. Mazrui (2003) carried out a research on service quality in the service sector. Kandie (2002) in his research on quality service concentrated on passenger transport while Muthoke (2004) based his research on hotel industry. None of the above studies has touched on the factors contributing to quality of customer services in Nakumatt Supermarket. This study therefore seeks to find out the elements of customer service in supermarkets and in terms of their contribution towards service quality. To

the best of my knowledge, no similar study has been done on factors contributing to quality of customer service in Nakumatt Supermarkets in Kenya.

Customer service (also known as Client Service) is the provision of service to customers before, during and after a purchase. According to Turban et al, 2002, "Customer service is a series of activities designed to enhance the level of customer satisfaction – that is, the feeling that a product or service has met the customer expectation." Its importance varies by product, industry and customer. As an example, an expert customer might require less pre-purchase service (i.e., advice) than a novice. In many cases, customer service is more important if the purchase relates to a "service" as opposed to a "product". Customer service may be provided by a person (e.g., sales and service representative), or by automated means called self-service. Examples of self service are Internet sites.

Customer service is normally an integral part of a company's customer value proposition. Some argue that the quality and level of customer service has decreased in recent years, which can be attributed to a lack of support or understanding at the executive and middle management levels of a corporation and missing of a customer service policy.

### **1.3 Research Objectives**

To identify the factors contributing to the quality of customer service.

### **1.4 Value of the Study**

The research is going to help provide information to supermarkets on how customer service elements influence their businesses. It is also going to provide information on the elements of customer service that lead to service quality in supermarkets.

The research will also provide references in the field of study and open up new areas for further study. The research brings to light the elements of customer service that lead to quality service delivery in Nakumatt supermarkets in Kenya and Africa as a whole. It will assist other students who will prefer to take similar research in future.

## 1.5 Definition of Key Terms

### *Customer*

A customer is someone who makes use of or receives the products or services of an individual or organization. The word historically derives from "custom," meaning "habit"; a customer was someone who frequented a particular shop, who made it a habit to purchase goods there, and with whom the shopkeeper had to maintain a relationship to keep his or her "custom," meaning expected purchases in the future.

### *Service*

Work done by one person that benefits another. It can also be taken to mean a type of business that sells assistance and expertise rather than a tangible product. For example, the field of management consulting is a service industry. After-purchase assistance that is offered by the manufacturer to maintain the quality of the product during its use. Service is often the main selling point for big-ticket items such as cars, washing machines, and television sets.

### *Customer Service*

Customer service (also known as Client Service) is the provision of service to customers before, during and after a purchase. Customer service is a series of activities designed to enhance the level of customer satisfaction – that is, the feeling that a product or service has met the customer expectation.

### *Supermarket*

A supermarket is defined as any large, departmentalized retail establishment that primarily sells food items.





### ***Management***

Management comprises directing and controlling a group of one or more people or entities for the purpose of coordinating and harmonizing that group towards accomplishing a goal. Management often encompasses the deployment and manipulation of human resources, financial resources, technological resources, and natural resources.

### ***Organization***

An organization is a social arrangement which pursues collective goals, which controls its own performance, and which has a boundary separating it from its environment.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Concept of Customer Service**

According to Kotler (1999), some companies have positioned themselves as speed leaders serving customers who need faster service. He continues to state that service marketers can distinguish themselves by offering faster service (Diler, R. 2007). Lovelock (1996) defines customer service as a task oriented activity other than proactive selling that involves interactions with the customers in person by telecommunication or by mail. Later in 1997, Brassington and Pettit defined customer services as the interaction of all factors that affect the process of making products and services available to the buyer (Goldberg, J. & Burdick, K. 2008). We concur with the latter definition because it brings together all elements of the service making mix. It also deals with the interaction of all factors in the service marketing elements as opposed to Lovelock's definition which involves interaction with the customer only.

In 2001, Dibb and Simpkin defined customer service as a physical distribution that focuses on product availability, promptness and quality. On the other hand it focuses on two elements of the service marketing mix (place and product) and leaves out the most important elements of the services marketing mix (people). The above definition lead us to conclude that customer service refers to task oriented activities that involve interaction of all factors of the service marketing mix that affect the availability of products and services in the buying process (Diler, R. 2007).

#### **2.1.1 History of Customer Service**

The quality movement can trace its roots back to medieval Europe, where craftsmen began

organizing into unions called guilds in the late 13th century (Diler, 2007). Until the early 19th century, manufacturing in the industrialized world tended to follow this craftsmanship model. The factory system, with its emphasis on product inspection, started in Great Britain in the mid-1750s and grew into the Industrial Revolution in the early 1800s. In the early 20th century, manufacturers began to include quality processes in quality practices. After the United States entered World War II, quality became a critical component of the war effort: Bullets manufactured in one state, for example, had to work consistently in rifles made in another. The armed forces initially inspected virtually every unit of product; then to simplify and speed up this process without compromising safety, the military began to use sampling techniques for inspection, aided by the publication of military-specification standards and training courses in Walter Shewhart's statistical process control techniques (Goldberg, & Burdick, 2008).

The birth of total quality in the United States came as a direct response to the quality revolution in Japan following World War II. The Japanese welcomed the input of Americans Joseph M. Juran and W. Edwards Deming and rather than concentrating on inspection, focused on improving all organizational processes through the people who used them. By the 1970s, U.S. industrial sectors such as automobiles and electronics had been broadsided by Japan's high-quality competition. The U.S. response, emphasizing not only statistics but approaches that embraced the entire organization, became known as total quality management (TQM). By the last decade of the 20th century, TQM was considered a fad by many business leaders (Young & Michalak, 2010).

But while the use of the term TQM has faded somewhat, particularly in the United States, its practices continue. In the few years since the turn of the century, the quality movement seems to

have matured beyond Total Quality. New quality systems have evolved from the foundations of Deming, Juran and the early Japanese practitioners of quality, and quality has moved beyond manufacturing into service, healthcare, education and government sectors (Diler, 2007).

### **2.1.2 Factors contributing to growth of customer service in International Environment**

Internationalization is seen as a growing industry in Africa. In recent years, socio-economic trends, such as changing social patterns and technological advances, have favored the development of international. Marketers are entering an era of individualization in which many of today's consumers are informed buyers. To understand consumers' reasons for direct purchasing, focus has been placed on consumers' buying motives (Diler, (2007).

Increasing competition (whether for-profit or nonprofit) is forcing businesses to pay much more attention to satisfying customers, including by providing strong customer service. (It may help the reader to notice the role of customer service in the overall context of product or service development and management. Customers are increasingly knowledgeable and intelligent in their buying habits. Depending on the nature of the product or service, a warranty (or promise of ongoing repair and/or support for some period of time) can greatly reassure customers when considering the purchase of your products (Goldberg, & Burdick, 2008)

Not only can high-quality customer service earn a strong reputation for your business and products, it can also support continued purchases and revenue (and even new ideas for new products and services) from current customers. Customers are turning their backs to businesses that do not deliver value. And great customer support adds value! There's no way around it. No

shortcuts. Customers demand value for money, or they are out of the door. And if that customer feels bad about how he or she has been treated, she will tell her friends about it. Or even worse, drop a note in a user group or other forum that is heavily trafficked. Before you know it, you're out of business! On the other hand, if you deliver legendary customer support, this same mechanism could work really well for you. In the meantime, you're converting ordinary customers into lifetime customers, just by delivering extraordinary service (Quinn, B. 2007).

### **2.1.3 Factors Contributing to Customer Satisfaction**

Customer satisfaction, a term frequently used in marketing, is a measure of how products and services supplied by a company meet or surpass customer expectation (Young A. & Michalak, E. 2010). Customer satisfaction is defined as "the number of customers, or percentage of total customers, whose reported experience with a firm, its products, or its services (ratings) exceeds specified satisfaction goals. In a survey of nearly 200 senior marketing managers, 71 percent responded that they found a customer satisfaction metric very useful in managing and monitoring their businesses. It is seen as a key performance indicator within business and is often part of a Balanced Scorecard. In a competitive marketplace where businesses compete for customers, customer satisfaction is seen as a key differentiator and increasingly has become a key element of business strategy (Young & Michalak, 2010).

Within organizations, customer satisfaction ratings can have powerful effects. They focus employees on the importance of fulfilling customers' expectations. Furthermore, when these ratings dip, they warn of problems that can affect sales and profitability. These metrics quantify an important dynamic. When a brand has loyal customers, it gains positive word-of-mouth marketing, which is both free and highly effective. Therefore, it is essential for businesses to

effectively manage customer satisfaction. To be able to do this, firms need reliable and representative measures of satisfaction.

In researching satisfaction, firms generally ask customers whether their product or service has met or exceeded expectations. Thus, expectations are a key factor behind satisfaction. When customers have high expectations and the reality falls short, they will be disappointed and will likely rate their experience as less than satisfying. For this reason, a luxury resort, for example, might receive a lower satisfaction rating than a budget motel—even though its facilities and service would be deemed superior in “absolute” terms (Goldberg, & Burdick, 2008).

#### **2.1.4 Elements of Quality customer service**

Many writers, due to the difficulty of giving one definition of service that will encompass all services have attempted to classify services and this has been done in several ways. They have been classified as either people based or equipment based. The people based services involve professionals like accountants and car mechanics or unskilled labor (messengers and tea girls). The equipment-based services are those, which are rendered through the use of equipment. Such equipment may be purely automated like in the case of automatic vending machines or equipment that needs to be operated (maize mills and computers). Equipment based service is mostly oriented towards people because it is the people who operate the equipment.

According to Chase, services can be classified by whether or not or to what degree a client's presence is necessary in the provision of the service. Where the client is present and the seller of the service is in direct contact with the buyer, the former must add something to the service in order that it may attract a repeat purchase by the buyer. This “something” may be in the

form of personalization of the service. The retail service industry has a high level of interaction between the buyer and the seller of the service in the area of trade facilitation and the various other services rendered in handling of products. For this reason, this classification is of great importance in this study.

Services can be classified as four –fold according to the motive of the service provider. Service providers have been to be either profit maximizes or non-profit oriented entities and either public or private organizations. In our case, we deal with profit maximizing organizations Nakumatt Supermarkets. Roger and Paul (2000) viewed that retail organizations offer goods and services to the customer for personal use. They argue that many retailers concentrate on physical products and offer services as a back-up. Other organizations however concentrate on providing services .e.g. Banks, insurance companies and estate agents provide primary services.

Kotler and Armstrong (1996) viewed customer service as an important international tool for a firm or company. Many companies set up string customer services, maintenance service, technical service and consumer information. An active customer service department coordinates all the company's services, creates consumer satisfaction loyalty and helps the company to further set itself apart from competitor. Many companies have not been as successful as they would have liked in achieving customer focus through their international activities. Success has evaded many organizations in their customer service initiatives.

## 2.2 Empirical Review

According to C.WA, (1982), research on customer service quality in supermarkets reveals that, a customer exercises the option to rather go to another supermarket close by when they are not satisfied with the customer's service of a specific supermarket. Supermarkets will therefore have to determine how customers evaluate specific elements of customer service in their supermarkets in order to improve so that customer service as a whole is more acceptable. He found out over emphasis on one element such as price might not necessarily convince customers to become loyal customers. The findings suggest that consumers cannot compensate for an unacceptable attribute (expensive products) but they do prioritize customer services elements and that they compare alternative supermarkets and select the supermarkets that perform best.

According to Areni (2003), service quality is the ability to get the desired services from the chosen provided at the right price, might perhaps best describe the challenge that retailers are faced with the findings of this study identified certain shortcomings in customer service in supermarkets. It became evident that certain supermarkets delivers better service than others and that customers are not particularly store loyal. The majority of the participants admitted that they did shop hopping on a regular basic.



## 2.3 Quality Customer Service Variables

Quality customer service is influenced by a several variables. These variables have been categorized as follows:-

**Place related variable** these are the variables that depict the physical aspects that relate to the supermarket and can be identified as follows: Condition of the store trolleys, in-store temperature, cleanliness of the store, and the convenient location of the store.

**Personnel related variables** these attributes pertain to the interpersonal relationship between the supermarket staff, supervisors, managers and any other staff member who interact with the customers of the supermarket. These attributes can be generalized as those which the supermarket staff carries out so as to satisfy customer needs such as assisting shoppers inside the supermarket, response to customer complaints and packaging of customers' shopping, speed; fastness, courtesy, attitude, knowledge, reliability and helping nature of the personnel.

**Product related variables** variable classified under this category are those that mainly relate to the products offered by the supermarket. These variables are as follows: variety of products offered, availability of new products as well as quality control of products offered at the supermarket.

**Promotion related variables** these variables are those that relate to mainly to the promotion of the supermarket services as well as products offered so as to attract more customers. This could be through putting regular advertisements in the media and giving out free samples to customers, discounts and price reductions, loyalty programs etc.

Process related variables these are variables that are undertaken by the supermarket so as to improve their services and at the same time appeal to a wide range of customers hence boosting their service quality. They are as follows; provision of quality carrying bags. queues or waiting times and providing credit and debit card facilities.

## **CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Research Design**

Research designs are concerned with turning the research question into a testing project. The best design depends on one's research questions. Every design has its positive and negative sides. The research design has been considered as a "blueprint" for research, dealing with at least four problems: what questions to study, what data are relevant, what data to collect, and how to analyze the results. The research design of this study was a case study. The case study design is appropriate for this study as it will help the researcher to get in depth information about the unit being studied.

### **3.2 Data Collection**

Data was collected using an interview guide that will be administrated personally by the researchers. The interview guide included three sections: Background information of the company, elements of quality customer service in supermarkets and questions on factors that affect quality of customer service in supermarkets within the region. The interviewees included the management, the staff members and the customers.

### **3.3 Data analysis**

Data analysis is the representation of data gathered. This study gathered qualitative data. The researcher calculated the percentage of the people that responded to a particular question. It is from this data a descriptive analysis was made. Other data presentations that were used included tabulation, bar graphs of pie charts.

Sampling is easier and less costly method of sampling and can conveniently be used in the case of a large population. The other limitation is the literature review. Data may be not available concerning customer service quality at the supermarkets. There may be very few publications about the subject also which may constrain data gathering.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The importance of elements of customer service with regards to service quality and customer loyalty was discussed in chapter two. The construct identified through a study of various sources

were used to structure the initial contents of the final questionnaire in terms of attributes that represent certain elements of customer service. The researcher held discussions with Nakumatt managers and supervisors so as to gain more insight on elements of customer service that influence service quality as well as customer loyalty. This was done prior to the new and additional element construct that might have been overseen or excluded during the literature review. This part of the research project was qualitative in kind.

**4.2 Gender**

The researcher selected participants of ages twenty and above who reside in Nairobi and who will be willing to take part in the exercise. The age limitation was merely to ensure that participants would have had a memorable amount of experience with supermarket shopping.

**Table 1: Gender of Participants**

GENDER	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Male	8	38.1
Female	13	61.9
Total	21	100%

**Figure 1: Percentage of Participants Gender**



Table 1 and Figure 2 reflect the gender distribution of the participants in this research project. The majority was female, which supports the general belief that women are usually held responsible for the majority of grocery shopping. During focus group interviews that were held in the initial stage of this study, most married men indicated that the primary responsibility for household tasks such as buying of groceries still belonged to their wives.

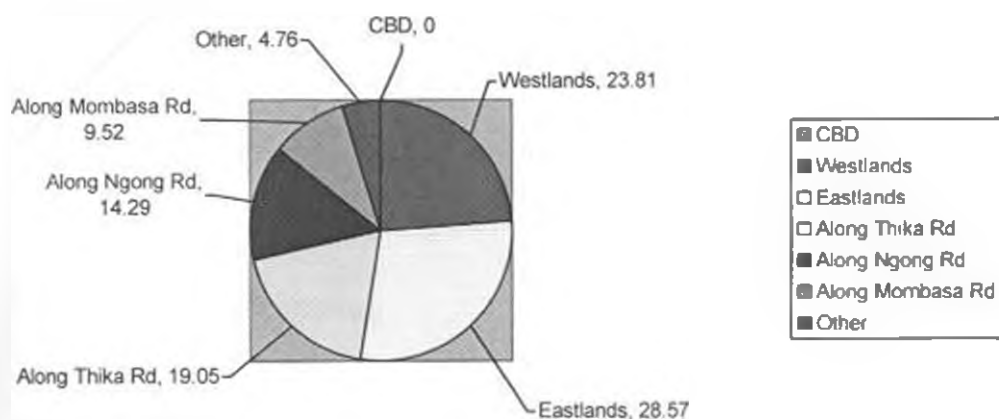
### 4.3 Geographical Area

The initial idea was to include only participants who resided near the supermarket but it was later found that some of the participants resided elsewhere but worked close to the supermarket and consequently shopped in there because it was convenient. It was then decided to include all individuals who that shopped in at Nakumatt irrespective of their place of residence in Nairobi as indicated in table 2 and visualized in figure 2.

**Table 2: Area of Residence**

AREA	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
CBD	0	0
Westlands	5	23.81
Eastlands	6	28.57
Along Thika Road	4	19.05
Along Ngong Road	3	14.29
Along Mombasa Road	2	9.52
Other	1	4.76
TOTAL	21	100

**Figure 2: Percentage of Participants Residential Areas**



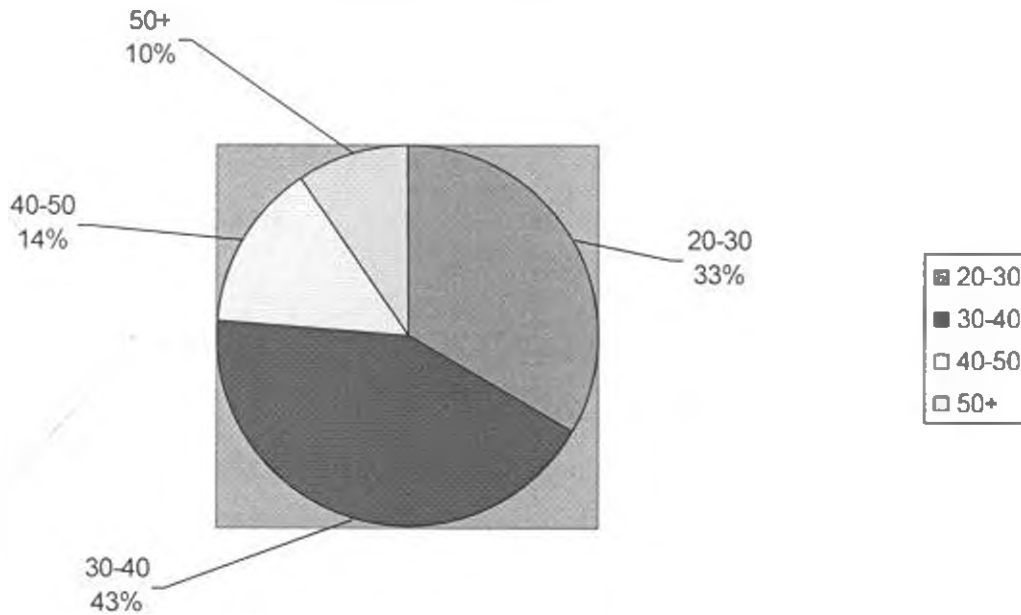
### 4.4 Age

The minimum age for participation in the research project was 20 years. Almost half of the participants were between the ages of 30-40 years as indicated in table 3 and visualized in figure 3. This majority was closely followed by the age bracket of between 20-30 years of age. The least was those who were above fifty years of age who made up ten percent of the participants.

**Table 3: Age of Participants**

AGE GROUP	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
20-30	7	33.33
30-40	9	42.86
40-50	3	14.29
50+	2	9.52
	21	100

**Figure 3: Percentage of Participants' Age Distribution**



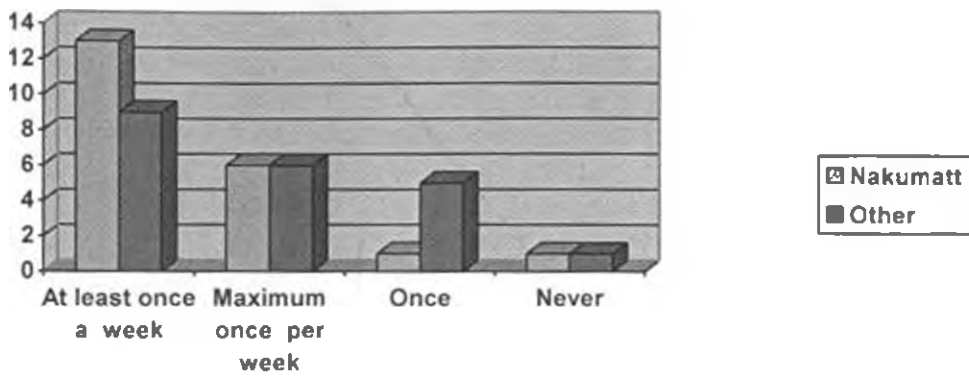
**4.5 Frequency of Shopping**

Table 4 below shows the frequency of shopping at Nakumatt and other supermarkets on the basis at least once a week, maximum once per week, once and never.

**Table 4: Frequency of Shopping**

	At least once a week	Maximum once per week	Once	Never
Nakumatt	13	6	1	1
Other	9	6	5	1

**Figure 4: Frequency Distribution of Shopping**



From the data gathered it was found that majority of the shoppers did their shopping at least once a week and most of them indicated that they shopped at Nakumatt. Out of those interviewed only one of them indicated that they have never shopped at Nakumatt and one of them also indicated that they have never shopped in other supermarkets.

#### **4.6 Family Members Involvement in Shopping**

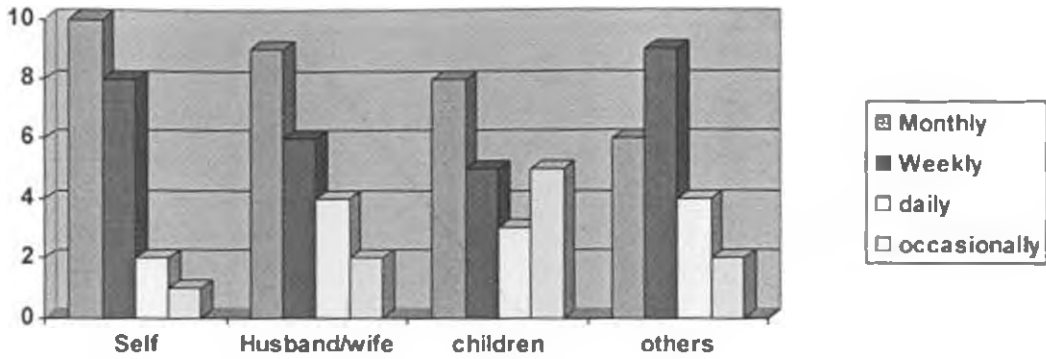
Table 5 and figure 5 illustrate family members' involvement in supermarkets shopping. The majority indicated that they did their shopping themselves on a weekly and monthly basis. Children as well as other family members apart from those indicated rarely did the shopping.

**Table 5: Family Members Involvement in Shopping**

	Self	Husband/wife	children	others
Monthly	10	9	8	6
Weekly	8	6	5	9
daily	2	4	3	4
occasionally	1	2	5	2

**Figure 5: Family Members Involvement in Shopping**





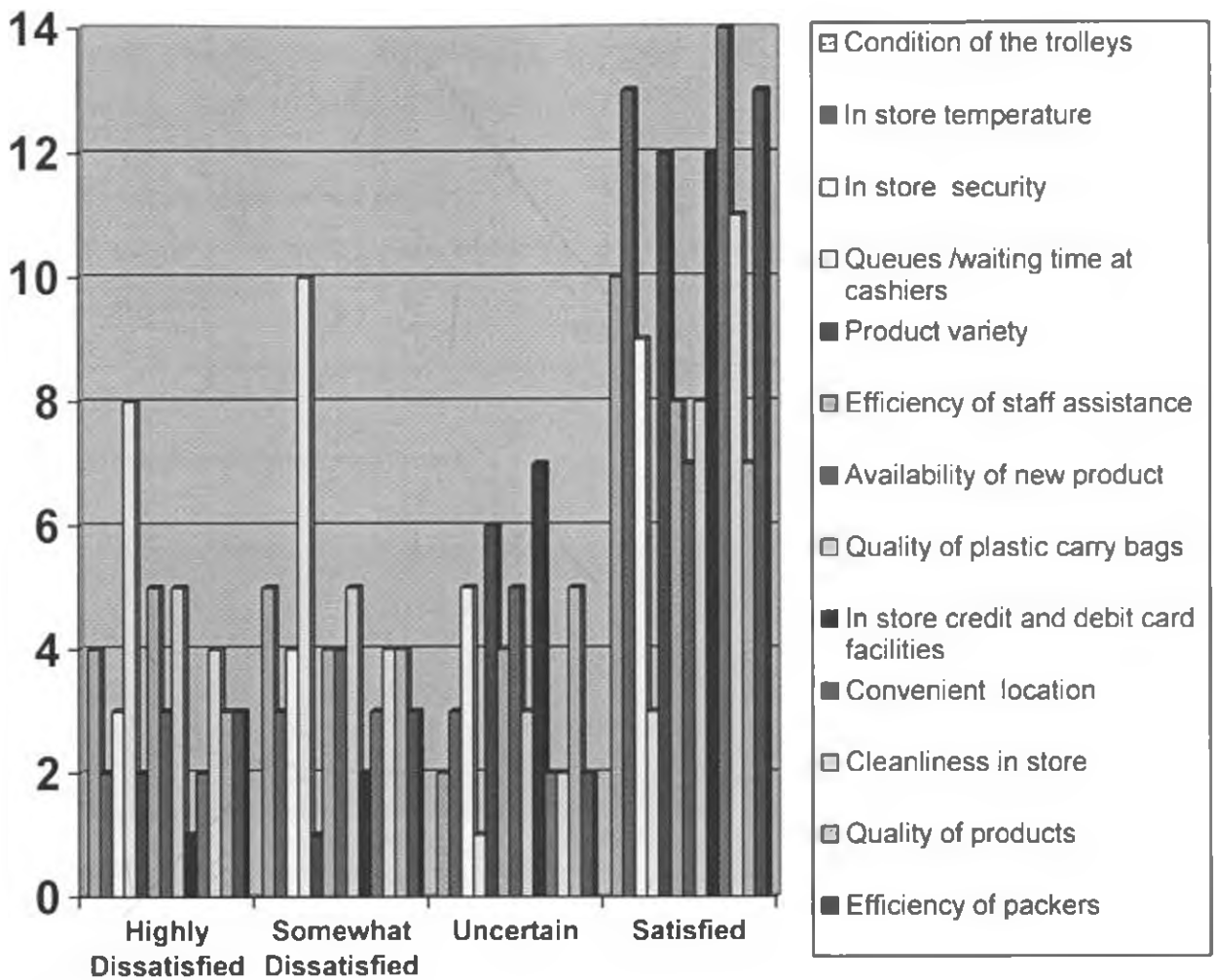
#### 4.7 Satisfaction with Attributes of Customer Service

In this section, customers were given an opportunity to indicate their satisfaction with attributes of customer service in the supermarket they frequented. Table 6 shows how the various attributes were rated by the customers. The attributes were categorized as highly dissatisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, uncertain and satisfied.

**Table 6: Satisfaction with Attributes of Customer Service**

ATTRIBUTES OF CUSTOMER SERVICE	Highly Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Uncertain	Satisfied
Condition of the trolleys	4	5	2	10
In store temperature	2	3	3	13
In store security	3	4	5	9
Queues /waiting time at cashiers	8	10	1	3
Product variety	2	1	6	12
Efficiency of staff assistance	5	4	4	8
Availability of new product	3	4	5	7
Quality of plastic carry bags	5	5	3	8
In store credit and debit card facilities	1	2	7	12
Convenient location	2	3	2	14
Cleanliness in store	4	4	2	11
Quality of products	3	4	5	7
Efficiency of packers	3	3	2	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>128</b>
<b>Mean</b>	<b>3.54</b>	<b>4.08</b>	<b>3.69</b>	<b>9.85</b>
<b>Standard deviation</b>	<b>1.74</b>	<b>2.06</b>	<b>1.86</b>	<b>2.96</b>
<b>Upper Limit</b>	<b>5.28</b>	<b>6.13</b>	<b>5.55</b>	<b>12.80</b>
<b>Lower Limit</b>	<b>1.80</b>	<b>2.02</b>	<b>1.84</b>	<b>6.89</b>

**Figure 6: Satisfaction with Attributes of Customer Service**



From the figure majority of the participants were highly satisfied with place related attributes such as convenient location, in store temperature, cleanliness of the store. Personnel related attributes and specifically the efficiency of the packers highly rated by the customer, an indication that they were satisfied. The product related attributes varied from one element to another. Whereas the customers were satisfied with the product variety, they were not satisfied by the quality of the products offered.

The process related attribute in this case the queues experienced at the supermarket was identified by majority of the participants as not satisfactory.

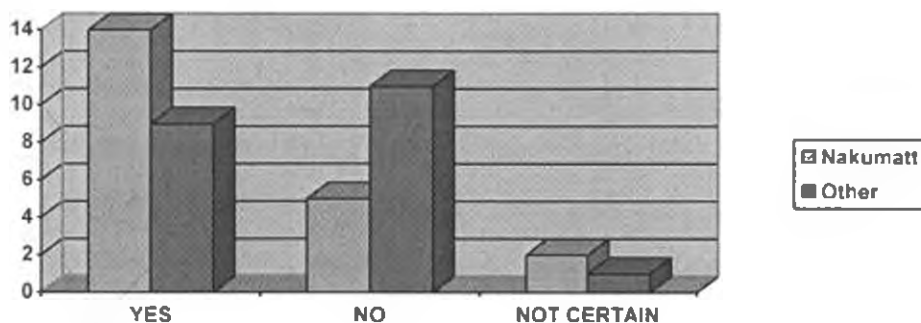
## 4.8 Recommendation

The following data indicates the response got from participants when they were asked which supermarket they would recommend to their friends.

**Table 7: Recommendation to Friends**

	YES	NO	NOT CERTAIN
Nakumatt	14	5	2
Other	9	11	1

**Figure 7: Recommendation to Friends**



Nakumatt was recommended by more than half of the participants. Almost half of the participants indicated that they would not recommend other supermarkets.

Out of the participants two of them were not certain on whether they would recommend Nakumatt whereas only one was not certain on whether he could recommend other supermarkets.

## 4.9 Summary

Satisfaction with various supermarkets in the section B of the questionnaire participants had to indicate their satisfaction with the customer service of the various supermarkets in the geographical areas as an indication of how differently or similarity they experienced different supermarkets in general. It was assumed that the higher the level of customer satisfaction experienced the greater it would be for the customer to frequently visit that supermarket in terms of excellent customer service. Noteworthy also is the number of participants who were uncertain of the customer service in the supermarket. This probably indicates uncertainty due to non- patronage of the supermarket.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The main objective of this research was to examine the various elements of customer service in supermarkets in terms of their individual and collective contribution towards service quality and to determine which elements or attributes of customer service are considered crucial in terms of repeat purchase behavior and probable store loyalty. Data collection was done through a structured questionnaire. The analysis of the data and interpretation of the results were done in accordance with the objectives that were formulated.

### **5.2 Summary of Findings**

This research was done to identify the elements of customer service that may be relevant to service quality in supermarkets. These elements were used to structure the questionnaire which was used to interview the supermarket shoppers who were willing to participate. These elements were categorized as follows: product related, personnel related, promotion related, process related and place related elements.

#### **5.2.1 Elements of Customer Service in Accordance with Customer Satisfaction Theory**

Those elements of customer service that were considered by customers as satisfactory were mainly place related elements (Condition of the store trolleys, in-store temperature, cleanliness of the store, and the convenient location of the store). On average more than 57 % of the customers were satisfied by the place related elements.

Attributes mentioned by the customers as below the satisfactory mark in this case shown by the highly dissatisfied and somewhat dissatisfied category were queues/waiting time at the cashiers and the provision of quality carrying bags which are all process related attributes.

#### **5.2.2 Elements of Customer Service in Accordance to System Theory**

The view taken was that customer satisfaction would result from consumer's total experience rather than their experience of one or more specific customer service such as price. It has been

found in this research and is postulated in this theory that emphasis on one element such as price might not necessarily convince customers to become loyal. It has also been found that customers prioritize the customer service elements.

### **5.2.3 Elements of Customer Service With Respect to the Service Satisfaction Theory**

Customer satisfaction implies consistently doing something of value for customers in the way they want or expect it to be done or simply always doing the right things right. Consumer satisfaction therefore benefits retailers and producers in the sense that it might motivate customers to return to the store and to purchase the same products again. From this research it has been found that those elements which the customer found satisfying in the supermarket are the ones that made the customers frequent the particular supermarket. In this case place related elements that were rated as satisfactory by a majority of the customers contributed highly to the frequency of shopping at the same supermarket.

### **5.2.4 Elements of Customer Service With Respect to the Customer Loyalty Theory**

Store loyalty will refer to a consumer loyalty towards a retail store in terms of a commitment to repeat purchase behavior at a store irrespective of the offerings at other stores. From the research it was found that only when customers perceive the customer service as whole to be acceptable might they become loyal. This is to say that one attribute cannot make a customer loyal and that one acceptable attribute cannot compensate for an unacceptable attribute.

## **5.3 Conclusions of the study**

The researcher is confident that all objectives were attended to and addressed in a satisfactory manner. It was possible to make relevant conclusions based on the data that were generated in terms of all the objectives that were set. The questionnaire did not produce any unexpected problems along the way.

It is important to have a key person in the organization who stimulate and facilitate the whole process. This should be a person who has an excellent knowledge of the quality process and who has the necessary support to implement the program effectively. Other issues of importance as pointed out in the findings are empowerment of staff and a fundamental culture change. This study shows the significance of the issues that are have to be looked into by middle management in any radical move towards a new way of managing supermarkets. The change in role from "power holders" to facilitators must be supported.

Quality frameworks are useful tools in achieving the change necessary for quality customer service in the supermarket industry. Such frameworks should complement and encompass pre-existing approaches. With appropriate adaptation and simplification they ca be used at an operational level within the entire supermarket's chain of outlets.

#### **5.4 Recommendations for policy and practice**

The findings of this study confirmed that consumers' patronage of supermarkets and their store loyalty extends beyond the purpose of buying products. The customer normally has the option of exercising their right to choose from which supermarket they will do their shopping. Customers will therefore choose to do their shopping in those supermarkets which offer satisfactory customer service. Supermarkets will therefore have to determine how customers evaluate specific elements of customer service in their supermarket in order to improve so that customer service as a whole could be more acceptable.

## **5.5 Limitations of the study**

Due to the fact that the study was done in one supermarket limits the researcher from generalizations. This is because these findings could only apply for Nakumatt or vary widely across other supermarkets which would act as a spotlight into the variety of customer service quality measures for the entire supermarket industry in Kenya.

Time and financial resources was also another limiting factor in this study in that with more of such, the study would have incorporated the views of the customers and professionals in giving their broader opinion in what they consider to gauge the quality of a service once rendered.

## **5.6 Suggestion for further research**

Based on the researchers experienced gained during the project and the findings of the study, the following are suggested for future research:

A study of gender roles in households with regards to purchasing of groceries to determine whether there is a difference in terms of how the sexes interpret and evaluate customer service.

A study to determine the knowledge and competence of personnel in supermarkets in terms of what is expected in terms of excellent service delivery.

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# Appendix

## Appendix 1 Questionnaire

### Interview details

Date-----

Time-----

Venue-----

### SECTION 1: SPECIFIC NAKUMATT SUPERMARKET BRANCH DATA

- 1) Name of the supermarket branch-----
- 2) Name of interviewee (optional)-----
- 3) Please indicate your position in the supermarket-----
- 4) Please indicate when this Nakumatt started operating-----

### SECTION 2: ACTIVITIES INVOLVED IN PROVIDING QUALITY SERVICES.

This section is designed to highlight the activities the management get involved in to provide quality service to its customers.

- 5) List the activities that contribute to quality service in your supermarket
  - i. Place related activities  
How does the location of your branch contribute to quality service
  - ii. Process related activities  
What process related activities do you have in place that contribute to quality customer service
  - iii. Personnel related activities  
What do you have to ensure that your personnel contributes to quality customer service

iv. Product related activities

How does the way you display your products contribute to quality customer service variety

v. Promotion related activities

What promotional activities do you have in place to ensure quality customer service

6) From the points listed above arrange them in order of importance i.e. from most important to least important.

- i. -----
- ii. -----
- iii. -----
- iv. -----
- v. -----
- vi. -----
- vii. -----
- viii. -----

**SECTION 3: CHALLENGES OF IMPLEMENTING QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE PROGRAM.**

i. Place related challenges

-----

ii. Process related challenges

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-----  
-----  
-----

-----  
iii. Personnel related challenges

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-----  
-----

iv. Product related challenges

-----  
-----  
-----

v. Promotion related challenges

-----  
-----  
-----

Rank them here below in order of the most to the least challenge

i. -----  
ii. -----  
iii. -----  
iv. -----  
v. -----

**THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOU TIME**