

**SERVICE PROVISION IN THE SOL PLAATJE MUNICIPAL AREA  
FROM A TOURISM PERSPECTIVE**

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# DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENT WORK

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## DECLARATION WITH REGARD TO INDEPENDENT WORK

I, ELIZABETH SUSAN OLIVIER, identity number [REDACTED] and student number 209081953, do hereby declare that this research project submitted to the Central University of Technology, Free State for the Degree MTECH TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT, is my own independent work; and complies with the Code of Academic Integrity, as well as other relevant policies, procedures, rules and regulations of the Central University of Technology, Free State; and has not been submitted before to any institution by myself or any other person in fulfillment (or partial fulfillment) of the requirements for the attainment of any qualification.

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SIGNATURE OF STUDENT

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DATE

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# ABSTRACT

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## **SERVICE PROVISION IN THE SOL PLAATJE MUNICIPAL AREA FROM A TOURISM PERSPECTIVE**

Globally, tourism is increasingly referred to as the world's biggest industry. As tourism increases so the consumer's demand for quality in all its related products and services increase. Superior customer service can therefore be viewed as one of the most effective strategies to create a sustainable competitive advantage. The delivery of excellent service is crucial if a tourism destination such as the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area in the Northern Cape, South Africa, is to enhance its visitors' experience and ensure their extended stay. One of the key constraints to tourism growth that has been identified is the lack of product and service quality.

The primary goal of the study therefore was to investigate the perceptions of tourists on the quality of tourism service in the Sol Plaatje Area. Another primary goal was to determine the quality of service by conducting unstructured interviews with role-players in the local tourism industry. Secondary objectives were set, namely to determine the service needs of foreign and domestic tourists, and to make recommendations and suggestions to increase service quality in the Sol Plaatje Area.

A questionnaire was used as a measuring instrument and distributed to domestic and foreign tourists. Three sampling points were selected to conduct the survey (250 questionnaires), namely the departure hall of Kimberley Airport, the Big Hole and the McGregor Museum. Results indicated that although the majority of tourists (83.4% of domestic and 93.8% of foreign respondents) were generally satisfied with the service they received and would promote the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area as a tourist destination, a large number of respondents (32.1%) rated their satisfaction with service delivery as average to poor. This is an indication that improvement is needed in the delivery of quality service.

Unstructured interviews (conducted by the researcher) with 20 major role-players in the local tourism industry indicated that the majority (60%) perceived the service delivery in

the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area as average to poor and not exceeding the expectations of tourists. Overall, the results indicated the need for the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area to improve its tourism service delivery in order to exceed tourist expectations and compete with other destinations locally and abroad.

The findings of this study contribute valuable information and insights into the quality of service delivery in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area. It will therefore be beneficial to all tourism stakeholders to provide visitors with the best service experience in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area.

# OPSOMMING

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## DIENSLEWERING IN DIE SOL PLAATJE- MUNISIPALE GEBIED VANUIT 'N TOERISME-PERSPEKTIEF

Toerisme word toenemend as die grootste bedryf in die wêreld gesien. Die verbruikers sal beter kwaliteit toerisme-verwante dienste en produkte vereis namate die belangrikheid van toerisme toeneem. Uitmuntende kliëntediens kan dus beskou word as een van die mees doeltreffende strategieë om 'n volhoubare, mededingende voordeel te handhaaf. Goeie dienslewering is dus van uiterste belang indien 'n toerisme-bestemming soos die Sol Plaatje- Munisipale Gebied in die Noord-Kaap, Suid-Afrika, besoekers se ervaring van die streek wil verbeter, en verseker dat hul langer bly. Een van die belangrikste beperkinge wat die groei van toerisme beïnvloed, is die gebrek aan toerisme-produkte en dienslewering van goeie gehalte.

Die primêre doel van die studie is om toeriste se ervaring van gehalte-dienste in die toerismebedryf van die Sol Plaatje- Munisipale Gebied te ondersoek. Die persepsie van rolspelers in die plaaslike toerismebedryf is ook ondersoek deur middel van ongestruktureerde onderhoude. Verdere sekondêre doelwitte is opgestel, naamlik om die diensbehoefte van buitelandse en binnelandse toeriste te bepaal, en om aanbevelings en voorstelle te maak om die gehalte van dienslewering in die Sol Plaatje- Munisipale Gebied te verbeter.

'n Vraelys is aan binnelandse en buitelandse toeriste versprei om vas te stel wat hul persepsie van dienslewering is. Drie streekproefpunte is gekies om die opname (250 vraelyste) uit te voer, naamlik die vertreksaal van Kimberley-Lughawe, die Groot Gat, en die McGregor-Museum. Die resultate het aangedui dat alhoewel die meerderheid van toeriste (83.4% van binnelandse en 93.8% van buitelandse respondente) oor die algemeen tevrede was met die diens wat hulle ontvang het en die Sol Plaatje- Munisipale Gebied as 'n toeriste-bestemming sou bevorder, het 'n groot aantal van die respondente (32,1%) hul tevredenheid met dienslewering as gemiddeld tot swak beskryf. Dit is 'n aanduiding dat die gehalte van dienslewering verbeter moet word.

Die navorser het ongestruktureerde onderhoude met twintig hoofrolspelers in die plaaslike toerismebedryf uitgevoer. Die onderhoude het aangedui dat die meerderheid rolspelers (60%), dienslewering in die Sol Plaatje- Munisipale Gebied as gemiddeld tot swak beskou, en nie die verwagtinge van toeriste oorskry nie. Oor die algemeen dui die resultate daarop dat dit noodsaaklik is vir die Sol Plaatje- Munisipale Gebied om dienslewering aan toeriste te verbeter en op die manier verwagtinge te oorskry en met ander plaaslike en oorsese bestemmings mee te ding.

Die bevindinge van die studie verskaf waardevolle inligting en insig in die gehalte van dienslewering in die Sol Plaatje- Munisipale Gebied. Die studie sal dus voordelig wees vir almal met 'n belang in toerisme in hul pogings om die beste diens te lewer aan besoekers tot die Sol Plaatje- Munisipale Gebied.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The importance of tourism as a sector of South Africa's economy is well documented. According to South Africa's former Tourism Chief Executive Officer, Moeketsi Mosola (Van Schalkwyk, 2008: 3), more than R60.5 billion foreign direct spending was generated in 2007, making it one of South Africa's fastest growing sectors. During his speech at the opening of Tourism Month (September 2008) in Rustenburg, the Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, Marthinus van Schalkwyk, stated that overall foreign arrivals to South Africa grew by 7.6% in the first quarter of 2008 to reach a total of almost four million. As part of his speech Van Schalkwyk also acknowledged that the industry faces certain challenges, with the most important being service excellence: 'The single most important factor, in my opinion, that will continue to motivate tourists to visit a destination or return to it is service excellence' (Van Schalkwyk, 2008: 3).

This challenge is also documented in the South African Annual Tourism Report (Department of Tourism, 2007: 62), where it is noted that only 27% of foreign tourists that visit South Africa experienced good service levels. The results from both consumer and industry surveys showed that service levels are an area that now needs to become a core focus area for the industry (Department of Tourism, South Africa, 2005 - 2010: 68).

Swarbrooke and Horner (2007: 237) state that service quality is neither a fact nor a reality, but a perception in the mind of the customer. Williams and Buswell (2003: 47) define the concept of service quality as the degree of excellence intended to meet the customers' requirements. According to George (2001: 277), service quality is the delivery of excellent or superior service relative to consumer expectations.

George (2001: 274) claims that all industries are dependent on customers, but leisure and tourism, as a service industry, relies more than most on its ability to provide good customer service. It is a highly competitive industry and businesses which cannot provide customer satisfaction will suffer at the expense of rival companies (Williams & Buswell, 2003: 9). Customers who believe that a particular company will give them quality, service and value for money will be more likely to repeat their purchases and become loyal to the company's brands (Burke & Resnick, 2000: 250).

Understanding domestic and foreign tourists' perceptions and experiences of service quality during their stay are therefore of paramount importance as it plays a valuable role in marketing a country, province and city as a top tourist destination. According to the South African Tourism Global Competitiveness Programme (Department of Tourism, 2005 - 2010: 55), personal experience from previous visits and 'word-of-mouth' recommendations were key influences on which foreign tourists based their decision to visit South Africa in 2003.

Furthermore, Williams and Buswell (2003: 21) state that future research needs to focus on the behaviour, attitudes and needs of existing and prospective urban tourists to reduce the gap between their expectations and the service delivered. The approach adopted by the tourism industry needs to be more proactive in its pursuit of high-quality visitor experiences, rather than reactive and focused on individual problems that arise as a result of tourist dissatisfaction after a visit. Swarbrooke and Horner (2007: 61) further believe that past experiences of tourists are among the factors that influence their decision to buy tourism products.

According to Burke and Resnick (2000: 250), tourism companies improve and maintain service quality or add new services in order to capture customer interest and loyalty; service excellence is used to differentiate their products and services from those of competitors. Bennet (2000: 300) also states that customers form perceptions of service quality by comparing their prior expectations of the service to what they receive.

The most critical step in delivering service quality is to determine exactly what customers need. When the organisation does not know exactly what the customers' needs are, they cannot possibly hope to supply it (Bennet, 2000: 284). Therefore, when

service goals are formulated, they should be in line with customer expectations and needs. According to Bennet (2000: 291), procedures are too often the result of management decisions based on assumed perceptions of guest preferences, rather than the true results of careful research on what the targeted markets really want. Furthermore, Brooks (2002: 64) states: 'What matters is what your customers need and what they think about what you do. Your performance is your customers' reality but your reality is their perception of your performance'.

According to Williams and Buswell (2003: 9), the future of tourism will not lie in the mass, standardised and packaged industry of recent decades but will become much more customer-orientated and integrated, with an emphasis on meeting individual needs and expectations. It is therefore important that the suppliers of tourism products at a destination provide the leadership and commitment to make service quality work.

### **1.1.1 Tourism in the Northern Cape, South Africa**

The Northern Cape is a unique part of South Africa, which from a tourism point of view, has not yet capitalised on its full potential as a destination of choice. This has led to the Province remaining undiscovered to both the sizable domestic market and the high yield international market (Northern Cape Department of Tourism, Environment and Conservation, 2004: 1). According to the South African Annual Tourism Report (Department of Tourism, 2007: 55), the Northern Cape remains the least visited province with a 2.5% share of total foreign arrivals and 1.6% of domestic arrivals. The Northern Cape captured only 1.8% of total foreign revenue and 2% of the total domestic revenue (Department of Tourism, 2005: 10).

According to the White Paper on the Development and Promotion of Tourism in the Northern Cape (2005: 1), the province has substantial tourism potential, given the range and depth of assets the Northern Cape has to offer. The Northern Cape Satellite Account (2006: 69) indicated that tourism grows faster than other economic sectors in the province and, if well managed and funded, will increase the market, both domestically and internationally. There is no doubt that tourism, as a major job creator, could become a powerful vehicle for social and economic change and therefore forms

an important part of the strategy for economic growth in the Northern Cape. This province, and in particular the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area which includes Kimberley (the capital city), is in a position to develop into a successful and competitive tourism destination within South Africa as well as in the international market space (Northern Cape Department of Tourism, Environment and Conservation, 2004: 1).

One of the key constraints to tourism growth identified in The White Paper on the Development and Promotion of Tourism in the Northern Cape Province (Northern Cape Department of Economic Affairs, Tourism, Environment and Conservation, 2005: 24) is the lack of product and service quality. The report states that the levels of service in the tourism industry are in some instances unacceptable and reflect the lack of a true service culture.

The city of Kimberley, known as the 'Diamond Capital of the World', is situated in the north eastern corner of the Northern Cape (Northern Cape Tourism Authority, 2009). Sol Plaatje Municipality services the city of Kimberley and is the largest municipality in the Frances Baard District Municipality with just over 200,000 inhabitants (91% residing in Kimberley) (Sol Plaatje Municipality, 2006). Kimberley occupies a position of significance as it is home to the first flying school, the first stock exchange and the first city in the Southern Hemisphere to install electric street-lighting. It also includes the world famous landmark, the Big Hole (Frances Baard District Municipality, 2009).

Map 1.1 below indicates the capital city of Kimberley in the Northern Cape Province of South Africa.

**Figure 1.1: Northern Cape, South Africa**



Source: African Destiny (2010)

### **1.1.2 Purpose of Study**

Against the above-mentioned background, the main purpose of this study is to determine the level of service quality of the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area, from the perspective of the tourist and the tourism industry. This study will deliver insights into, and create an awareness of the quality of service delivery in the tourism industry by investigating the perceptions and experiences of tourists visiting the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area.

## **1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

The Northern Cape recognises tourism as one of the most important sectors of the South African economy in its quest for economic growth and development (Northern Cape Department of Tourism, Environment and Conservation, 2004: 1). Owing to the

fact that tourism generates economic benefits of foreign exchange (for international tourism), income, employment, and government revenues, it is of vital importance that the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area (Kimberley) as a tourist destination takes a proactive approach in identifying and addressing key issues, so as to effectively plan and develop the tourism industry in the region. One of its challenges is to enhance the visitor experience and to ensure their extended stay, return and the 'word-of-mouth' marketing of Kimberley as a tourist destination. The single most important factor which will continue to motivate tourists to visit a destination, or return to it, is service excellence (Van Schalkwyk, 2008: 3). Superior customer service can therefore be viewed as one of the most effective strategies to create a sustainable competitive advantage. One of the key constraints to tourism growth identified in The White Paper on the Development and Promotion of Tourism in the Northern Cape Province (Northern Cape Department of Economic Affairs, Tourism, Environment and Conservation, 2005: 24), is the lack of product and service quality. The report states that the levels of service in the tourism industry are in some instances unacceptable and reflect the lack of a true service culture. The main purpose of this study is therefore to determine the level of service quality of the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area, from the perspective of the tourist and the tourism industry.

This study aims to make a valuable contribution to the Northern Cape Tourism Department and local product owners by providing an insight into current service quality gaps and service needs in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area. If addressed, it could lead to the increase in tourism numbers and quality experience of tourists to the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area. In addition, this study can compliment future research in quality service delivery in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area, the Northern Cape and South Africa in its endeavor to become a destination of choice.

### **1.3 EXPECTED OUTCOMES**

The primary goal of the study is to investigate the perceptions of tourists on the quality of tourism service in the Sol Plaatje Area.

In solving this problem, the following secondary objectives will be addressed:

- To determine the needs of foreign and domestic tourists.
- To conduct a comprehensive literature review to discuss the concepts of service quality (Chapter 2), and to investigate benchmarks in quality service set by South Africa and foreign destinations (Chapter 3).
- To determine the quality of service by conducting unstructured interviews with role-players in the local tourism industry.
- To make recommendations and suggestions to increase service quality in the Sol Plaatje Area if applicable.

#### **1.4 METHODOLOGY**

A literature and empirical study was conducted. The literature study provides an overview of current trends in tourism service quality in South Africa. The major components and characteristics of service quality as part of the tourism experience will be identified.

The empirical study involved firstly the assessment of service quality as perceived by domestic and foreign tourists. A questionnaire of structured and open-ended questions was used as a measuring instrument to determine service quality as perceived by tourists. The questionnaire contained questions on demographics, perception of service quality, overall experiences and expectations of the quality of service in Kimberley, as well as suggestions for improvement.

The convenience sampling technique was used in order to select an appropriate sample. Three sampling points were selected to conduct the survey, namely the departure hall of Kimberley Airport, the Big Hole and the McGregor Museum, which form the cornerstones of tourism in the study area. A total of 250 questionnaires were distributed to both domestic and foreign tourists, with 100 questionnaires distributed at the Big Hole and Kimberley Airport and 50 at the McGregor Museum. The reason for this is that more tourists visit the Big Hole and Kimberley Airport.

The questionnaires were completed and distributed with the assistance of fieldworkers at the various locations mentioned above. Personal interviews will enable possible misunderstandings to be immediately clarified. The fieldworkers were orientated and trained by the researcher before the collection of the research data.

The time span over which these questionnaires were completed varied according to season, arrival and departure timeslots at the airport and attractions. Tourists were selected randomly on different time slots and days of the week. Data was analysed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) version 2007 software package. The questionnaire was tested for clarity and length by means of a pilot study. The pilot study was conducted during November 2009 amongst 25 senior students in Tourism Management at the National Institute of Higher Education (NIHE). The actual study was conducted over a two week period in December 2009.

Additionally, unstructured interviews with role-players involved in the local tourism industry were conducted by the researcher in order to obtain insight into their perceptions of service levels in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area. The role-players represent the different sectors in the tourism industry and provided valuable information about current trends experienced in the delivery of quality service. A qualitative analysis technique was used where open-ended responses are categorised into meaningful categories through content analysis, and a purposive sample used. According to Jennings (2001: 139), purposive sampling involves the researcher making a decision about whom or what study units will be most appropriate for inclusion in the study based on the potential study units' knowledge base. Hussey and Hussey (2003: 147) state that the participants are selected by the researcher on the strength of their experience of the phenomenon under study.

Role-players that were targeted represented the following different sectors (Table 1.1):

**Table 1.1: Interviews with role-players representing the Tourism Sectors in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area**

	<b>Sectors:</b>	<b>Respondents:</b>
1.	Tourist Attractions	Project Manager of the Big Hole  Manager of McGregor Museum
2.	Accommodation	Director of the Kimberley Guesthouse Association  Manager of Big Hole Protea Hotel
3.	Transportation	Owner of Newton Bus Tours
4.	Travel Organisers	Northern Cape Provincial Registrar: Tour Guiding  Private Tour Operator in the Northern Cape  Branch Manager of Astra Travel Agency  Branch Manager of Rennies Travel Agency
5.	Destination organisers	<u>Northern Cape Tourism Authority:</u>  Marketing Director  Marketing Officer  Chief Executive Officer  <u>Northern Cape Tourism Department (NCTD):</u>  Director of NCTD  Deputy Director for Tourism Policy &

		<p>Research</p> <p>Manager: Partnership and Industry Development</p> <p>Client Service Desk Officers</p> <p>Tourism Information Officer</p> <p>Tourism Information Clerk at Frances Baard District Municipality</p>
6.	Commercial & Industrial	<p>Chief Executive Officer of Chamber of Commerce and Industry (NOCCI)</p> <p>Manager of Sol Plaatje Information Centre</p>

## 1.5 DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following section defines some key terms that are used throughout the study. Concepts that will be defined include total quality management, service quality, customer care, customer satisfaction, service encounter, service value chain, and tourist experience.

### 1.5.1 Total Quality Management

Total Quality Management is a management philosophy that integrates all organisational functions to focus on meeting customer needs and organisational objectives (Saayman, 2002: 54; Swarbrooke & Horner, 2007: 279).

### 1.5.2 Service Quality

According to Saayman (2002: 71); Williams & Buswell (2003: 47) and George (2004: 310), service quality is the delivery of excellent or superior service relative to consumer expectations.

### **1.5.3 Customer Care**

Customer care can be defined as the way in which an organisation handles the interactions between itself (staff) and its customers (Hayes & Dredge, 1998: 6). Good customer care is about exceeding the customer's expectations (Lyons, 2002: 2; Cook, 2002: 32; Cook *et al.*, 2006: 87).

### **1.5.4 Customer Satisfaction**

The concept of customer satisfaction can be defined as: 'The feeling people experience when their needs and expectations have been met'. If the customer's expectations are not met, customer dissatisfaction will result (Cook, 2002: 88; Brooks, 2002: 79; Cook *et al.*, 2006: 88).

### **1.5.5 Service Encounter**

This is the psychological encounter between staff and customers and varies greatly across the leisure and tourism industry (Williams & Buswell, 2003: 104). This interaction has been referred to as 'the moment of truth' (Murphy, 2001: 120; Williams & Buswell, 2003: 71; George, 2004: 309; Bennett, Jooste & Strydom, 2005: 288; Cook *et al.*, 2006: 83; Swarbrooke & Horner, 2007: 215; Barrows & Powers, 2009: 649).

### **1.5.6 Service Value Chain**

The value chain describes the full range of activities that firms and workers do to bring a product from its conception to its end use and beyond (Global Value Chains, 2009). Any person, process, product or brand that adds value (tangible or intangible) to a product or service constitutes a value chain (Mascarenhas, Kesavan & Bernacchi, 2004: 486).

### **1.5.7 Tourist Experience**

According to Saayman (2001: 372) and Ryan (2002, 63), the travel experience consists of an ongoing stream of related and integrated services, which are purchased over a period of time, often in many different geographic areas.

## **1.6 REVIEW OF RELATED RESEARCH**

There is a paucity of literature on related research studies based on tourist perceptions of service quality in a specific tourism destination. Many researchers devoted considerable attention to the development and testing of models for the measurement of service quality in retail banks, long distance telephone companies and credit card companies (Zeithaml, Parasuraman & Berry, 1990). As far as could be determined through internet searches, service quality research within the tourism industry included consumer services at a tourist information centre, domestic airlines, amongst hospitality employees and a private game reserve. Other research was based on service quality in sport tourism with a specific focus on the Berg River Canoe Marathon. Another study focuses on the concept of service quality in the Hospitality Industry, the use of a Quality Management System (ISO9000/1) in a sample of five South African hotels to show how ethics and employee motivation are vital ingredients to service quality. Further research conducted investigated the service expectations of consumers at International Convention Centres in South Africa. It can be concluded that no study was previously conducted that focused on tourists' perceptions of service delivery at a specific tourism destination such as the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area.

## **1.7 CHAPTER CLASSIFICATION**

This study will consist of five chapters. The following section included a brief outline of what can be expected from each of the chapters.

Chapter 1 includes an overview of the research project in terms of the introduction, problem statement and objectives. The importance of service quality, the need to

improve service levels, current trends and the significance of the study is the focus of this section.

Chapter 2 defines the concepts of customer service, service quality and describes the significance, and barriers to service quality. In addition a descriptive review of the criteria used to assess customer service and the tools of customer service measurement will be discussed. It provides an overview of the relevant academic texts on the current trends in service quality in the tourism industry, the Gaps model of service quality and the use of the SERVQUAL instrument.

Chapter 3 aims to assess the trends and characteristics of service quality within South Africa and on an international level. It investigates and analyses the measurements taken by foreign destinations such as Singapore, Malaysia and Germany to improve their level of service. In addition, this section highlights the challenges and opportunities faced by such destinations and its relevance to the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area.

Chapter 4 reports, presents and summarises the aspects relating to the perceptions of tourists on the quality of tourism service in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area. This chapter further includes a summary of the unstructured interviews that will be conducted by the researcher with role-players in the local tourism industry.

Chapter 5 summarises the specific factors that have a direct influence in ensuring quality service at Sol Plaatje Municipal Area. It stipulates relevant suggestions to improve and promote service quality in the region. Key challenges and opportunities that influence the level of service quality are also discussed.

## CHAPTER 2

### SERVICE QUALITY IN THE TOURISM INDUSTRY

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The competitive nature of urban tourism is increasingly being reflected in the growth in marketing and promotion efforts by destinations as they compete for a share of international and domestic tourism markets (Ryan, 2002: 113). This has led to tourists' demands for higher standards of service provision and improved quality in the tourist experience (George, 2007: 116). According to Williams and Buswell (2003: 8) and Cook (2002: 3), the higher priority given to leisure pursuits and holidays by individuals has led to an increasingly complex, sophisticated and differentiated tourism market. Furthermore, Williams and Buswell (2003: 8) suggest that the increasing familiarity of holiday-takers with destinations is forcing operators and authorities to upgrade their facilities and to deliver higher standards of service. Research has also shown that as customers feel they have less leisure time, they expect more from what time they have (Cook, 2002: 3; Williams & Buswell, 2003: 8).

The above-mentioned factors bring the tourism industry to the point where destinations such as Northern Cape Province, especially the Sol Plaatjie Municipal Area, have to acknowledge these changes to become competitive and focused on raising the standards in their service quality in order to compete with other destinations.

In an attempt to address the above-mentioned demand for a higher standard of service delivery, this chapter explores the concepts of service quality in the tourism industry. This chapter is structured as follows: the characteristics of a Service Offering is discussed, followed by the concept of Total Quality Management, the definition of Service Quality, its advantages and barriers to Service Quality, followed by a brief discussion of Quality as a goal. This is followed by an overview of Customer Care and its elements namely: customer satisfaction, tourist satisfaction process, people skills and customer communication that includes face-to-face communication, building

rapport, building the right attitude, telephone manners, listening skills, customer relationships and dealing with customer complaints. In addition, the literature gives a descriptive review of key aspects in the Service Encounter and the Service Value Chain. This chapter then considers a framework for the analysis of the Tourist's Experience of service quality in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area. Having reviewed these features, the chapter concludes with a discussion on Customer Service Measurement where the gaps model of Service Quality and the use of the SERVQUAL instrument have been undertaken.

In order to assess the service quality perception of tourists in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area, a survey was conducted using questionnaires (Appendix 1A) and interviews (Appendix 1B). This qualitative approach allowed for flexibility in terms of setting questions specific to the components of service quality, as outlined in Chapter 2 below.

## **2.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF A SERVICE OFFERING**

The marketers of service offerings need to be concerned with four basic characteristics that distinguish the marketing of service offerings from the marketing of manufactured products i.e. intangibility, variability, inseparability and perishability (Naumann, 1995: 89; Bennett, 2000: 232; Williams & Buswell, 2003: 86; George, 2004: 23; Horner & Swarbrooke, 2005: 16; Kolb, 2006: 209):

- **Intangibility** describes the fact that services are products the consumer cannot touch, feel, see, smell, or hear in the same way as a tangible product (Kolb, 2006: 209). Consumers therefore tend to rely on 'word-of-mouth' from other people's experiences. The marketer has the task of promoting the intangible benefits of the tourism and hospitality offering, such as relaxation, education, entertainment, or feeling superior (George, 2004: 23).
- **Inseparability** is defined as instances where a service and provision occur at the same time with both provider and consumer involved in the process of delivery (George, 2004: 24). The hotel guest cannot experience counter service if the receptionist is not available, nor can the receptionist render the service if there is

no guest (Williams & Buswell, 2003: 86). The tourism and hospitality offerings are manufactured and consumed simultaneously. Therefore, in order to ensure improved customer service there is a need for stricter selection and training of the service provider's personnel (Naumann, 1995: 91).

- **Variability** indicates a service performance that is unique to each consumer. Therefore the characteristics and quality of each service product tends to vary much more than with a tangible product. The experience of visiting a city will tend to vary because of issues outside the control of tourism officials, such as weather, transportation strikes, and a change in the quality of local hotels and tourist attractions (Kolb, 2006: 211). Even from the same service provider, a guest may receive outstanding service one day and average service another day (George, 2004: 25). To ensure excellent service delivery, standardisation, managing variability, strict quality control measures, and development of customer care programmes and systems are therefore essential (George, 2004: 25).
- **Perishability** describes offerings that cannot be saved, stored, resold, or returned. They are perishable. If a hotel room is not booked that day, the revenue from that room is lost for that day and cannot be recovered (George, 2004: 25). Because of the perishable nature of tourism and hospitality offerings they are very often discounted, especially at the last hour. This implies that it is imperative for marketers to be ready with extra, last-minute promotional efforts or reduced pricing to ensure that the services are sold (Kolb, 2006: 211).

From the above-mentioned characteristics, the standardisation of products (that is the aim of manufacturing companies) is impossible to achieve in tourism. In tourism, the customer wants to feel that their experience will be different to other people and tailor-made to match their tastes (Swarbrooke & Horner, 2007: 211). The tourism marketer will also find this information critical in developing a successful marketing strategy because this affects the production, pricing, promotion and distribution of a product (Kolb, 2006: 208).

## **2.3 TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT**

### **2.3.1 Defining Total Quality Management**

Total Quality Management (TQM) is a management philosophy that seeks to integrate all organisational functions to focus on meeting customer needs and organisational objectives (Saayman, 2002: 54; Swarbrooke & Horner, 2007: 279). The concept entails continual improvement of the quality of the organisation's products, services, people, processes and environment (Drummond & Yeoman, 2001: 37). It gained widespread recognition during the 1990s and since then became a standard for most tourism and hospitality organisations (George, 2004: 310).

According to Drummond and Yeoman (2001: 12) and Feigenbaum (cited in Williams & Buswell, 2003: 42), quality management is 'that aspect of the overall management function that determines and implements the quality policy, and as such, is the responsibility of top management'. Strydom (2004: 16) defines TQM as 'the adoption of processes and procedures that will provide customers with the right product at the right price'.

The concept of quality can be defined in a variety of ways:

- 'Quality is in its essence a way of managing the organisation' (Feigenbaum, cited in Drummond & Yeoman, 2001: 12).
- 'Quality is whatever the customers say it is, and the quality of a particular product or service is whatever the customer perceives it to be' (Strydom, 2004: 15).
- 'Quality is the customer's perception of excellence' (Peters, cited in Williams & Buswell, 2003: 44).

According to Saayman (2002: 54) and Williams and Buswell (2003: 191), one of the strategic reasons for an organisation to adopt a total quality philosophy is the recognition that the customer is the alpha and omega of quality. In addition,

organisations which implemented quality management systems reported improvement in employee satisfaction, customer satisfaction, profit margins and operational costs savings, relative to their counterparts with less successful quality management (George, 2004: 310).

The five key principles of TQM are listed below (Williams & Buswell, 2003: 135; George, 2004: 311; George, 2007: 117):

- **Commitment to quality:** William and Buswell (2003: 135) and George (2004: 311) suggest that the manager and the company must be committed to the TQM process in order for it to be successful. Participation in quality training and a focus on all other managerial aspects of TQM are therefore important to ensure total commitment to quality.
- **Focus on customer satisfaction:** Organisations must recognise that consumers care about quality, and the product owner has to make specific efforts to establish what levels of service quality the consumers want. Once established, every effort must be made to meet or exceed those standards (Lyons, 2002: 2; Cook, 2002: 32; George, 2004: 311; Cook, Yale & Marqua, 2006: 87).
- **Assessment of organisational culture:** It is important that an organisation have a 'quality culture' (Murphy, 2001: 72; Drummond & Yeoman, 2001: 37; Cook, 2002: 30; William & Buswell, 2003: 142). An organisation must examine how consistent its existing culture is with the principles of TQM. This assessment will usually involve top executives and employees who will conduct an assessment over a period of months (William & Buswell, 2003: 137).
- **Empowerment of employees and teams:** In the TQM enterprise, employees receive substantial amounts of training and education, in order to function confidently at higher levels of authority and responsibility (Ryan, 2002: 107; Williams & Buswell, 2003: 196). It is also expected of them to accept the culture of continuous improvement and to look for ways in which the work may be done better (Murphy, 2001: 198; Cook, 2002: 179; Ryan 2002: 109). Furthermore,

empowerment speeds up the decision-making process where disputes may be settled immediately, especially in the area of customer service (Saayman, 2002: 51).

- **Measurement of quality efforts:** The results of quality improvement efforts must be measured to be evaluated. This means measuring consumer satisfaction levels, employee performance and other indicators of service quality (George, 2004: 311).

It is evident from the above that the organisation should focus on satisfying the customer and not the maintenance of management systems that have evolved over time to suit the organisation (Drummond & Yeoman, 2001: 12). Furthermore, the ultimate goal of TQM is to build employee ownership into service excellence, that is, employees should wish to deliver the best service without repeated prompting (Hayes & Dredge, 1998: 19; Cook, 2002: 179; Ryan, 2002: 109; Williams & Buswell, 2003: 25; Cook *et al.*, 2006: 90).

TQM is therefore a management technique that any tourism and hospitality organisation can adapt to measure and improve service quality. The next section will focus on the concept of 'service quality' in the tourism industry.

## 2.4 UNDERSTANDING SERVICE QUALITY

### 2.4.1 Defining Service Quality

The concept of service quality has been one of the focal points of both managers and academics since the early nineteen eighties (Bennet, 2000: 230). At the time there was little agreement about what exactly service excellence was, or how customers form perceptions of service quality. Grönroos (cited in Bennet, 2000: 230) concluded that “The term ‘service quality’... is never defined in a way which could guide management decisions... Today we have no service quality concept.”

Furthermore, Williams and Buswell (2003: 47) state that service quality management academics have not addressed the specific issue of quality in tourism and leisure services; as a result, specific definitions of quality have not been attributed to this particular industry. This has led managers and even academics to believe that service quality cannot be properly managed and controlled by managers.

Since then, a number of different ‘definitions’ as to what is meant by service quality emerged. Various authors (Saayman, 2002: 71; Williams & Buswell, 2003: 47; George, 2004: 310) contend that service quality is the delivery of excellent or superior service relative to consumer expectations. Furthermore, service quality, as perceived by customers, can be defined as the extent of discrepancy between customers’ expectations or desires and their perceptions (Zeithaml, Parasuraman & Berry, 1990: 18; Swarbrooke & Horner, 2007: 212), and ‘consistently meets and exceeds customer expectations’ (Barrows & Powers, 2009: 290). In other words, service quality is in the eye of the beholder.

Whether or not a tourist will perceive a product as a quality product will depend upon the following (Swarbrooke & Horner, 2007: 212):

- Their individual attitudes, expectations and previous experiences as a consumer.
- The benefits they are looking for from the particular purchase in question.

According to Saayman (2001: 371), the traditional concept of 'quality of service' tended to focus on tourist satisfaction with respect to a specific service transaction. While this approach may be appropriate for understanding and managing many types of services, it does not entirely lend itself to the tourism field. Saayman contends that in the tourism industry, the travel experience consists of an ongoing stream of related and integrated services, which are purchased over a period of time, often in many different geographic areas. Furthermore, it is the combination of contextual factors and satisfaction with each service in the ongoing stream of services purchased over time as the experience unfolds, that together determine the overall level of satisfaction with the holistic experience (Saayman, 2001: 372; Ryan, 2002: 99). All the tourism role-players in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area should therefore combine their efforts to provide a quality experience for visitors.

Grönroos (cited in Drummond & Yeoman, 2001: 64; Saayman, 2002: 72; Page, 2009: 389) has distinguished between two approaches to managing the quality of services: those driven by technology, and those founded in customers' needs. The technical and functional (or customer-oriented) approaches to service quality are discussed below.

- **Technical approach**

This approach to quality is often expressed as performance criteria specified for elements in the service delivery system. Underlying this approach are the twin assumptions that consumers experience a service as a series of events, while managers see the service as a set of elements which require skilled co-ordination, and resource control, in delivering specified standards to clients (Drummond & Yeoman, 2001: 64).

- **Functional or customer-oriented approach**

This approach to service quality can best be understood in terms of customers' expectations of satisfaction, against which they evaluate their subsequent individual experiences during the service (Drummond & Yeoman, 2001: 65). In addition, it also reflects marketing theory that argues that customers' experiences with any purchase give rise to outcomes for them varying from satisfaction to dissatisfaction.

The functional approach to service quality is more difficult to measure and to manage than conformance to specification. The motivation for this is that individuals experience varying degrees of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with a given service (Drummond & Yeoman, 2001: 65; Brooks, 2002: 79; Cook *et al.*, 2006: 88). Managers must therefore incorporate flexibility into the design of their services so that staff can respond effectively to the individual needs of their clients (Drummond & Yeoman, 2001: 65).

For the purpose of this research, service quality refers to the discrepancy between customers' expectations and perception. If the expectation is greater than performance, then perceived quality is less than satisfactory and hence customer dissatisfaction occurs (Ryan, 2002: 99; Brooks, 2002: 79; Cook *et al.*, 2006: 88).

#### **2.4.2 The advantages of service quality**

A tourism organisation that provides superior service quality can gain several competitive advantages that include the following factors (George, 2004: 311; Swarbrooke & Horner, 2007: 238):

- **Customer loyalty.** A quality product and service create loyal consumers and increase word-of-mouth advertising.
- **Price advantage.** Satisfies customers are willing to pay more for the satisfaction they derive from better service.
- **Selling costs.** It is easier to make a repeat sale than to conclude a first-time sale with a new customer. Much less time is spent in persuading the customer to buy.
- **Brand loyal.** Satisfied customers are less likely to change to a competitor's product, or to abandon the traditional supplier for a new one whose products are cheaper.
- **Marketing tool.** It leads to positive word-of-mouth recommendation of the product to friends and relatives, which in turn brings in new customers.
- **Less wasted effort.** Dealing with complaints is expensive, time-consuming and bad for the organisation's reputation.

From the above it is evident that service quality is one of the keys to success and has become a tool that can be used by tourism and hospitality organisations to gain a competitive advantage in the marketplace (George, 2004: 310; Swarbrooke & Horner, 2007: 238).

### **2.4.3 Barriers to service quality**

Often, the factors that influence product quality or customer satisfaction are outside the control of the leisure manager; this is a major problem for the tourism industry. These factors are identified below (Horner & Swarbrooke, 2005: 283):

- Factors which are outside the control of the tourism organisations, but which nonetheless contribute to the quality of the consumer's experience. Such factors might include the following (Horner & Swarbrooke, 2005: 283):
  - The weather which can delay flights and ruin holidays.
  - The attitudes and expectations of the customers themselves.
  - Strikes that affect tourists such as air traffic controllers and ferry crews.
- The capital cost of product improvements may be very high, such as in the hotel and airline sectors, or where the organisation is a local authority whose expenditure is controlled by central government.
- The level of quality an organisation provides must be in equilibrium with the price its customers wish to pay for the product.
- Some organisations can be constrained when they seek to be seen as providers of a quality product if their history and existing culture has given them the opposite reputation.
- The lack of agreement on what quality achievement is and its purely subjective nature in leisure makes it very difficult to develop effective, simple performance indicators for quality in the tourism industry.

- The concept of quality is always changing, and today's effective quality management system will become tomorrow's obsolete system.

Any of these factors listed above may cause tourist dissatisfaction with a holiday experience and they are outside the control of the tour operator that sold the holiday.

#### **2.4.4 Quality as a goal**

To examine quality as a goal requires an understanding of concepts such as 'excellence' and 'continuous improvement' in order to appreciate the factors that help to formulate an organisation's approach to service quality management. According to Williams and Buswell (2003: 25), customer care forms the basis of these concepts – meeting customer's different and changing needs.

It is generally acknowledged that the only appropriate goal in the quality function of the organisation is continuous improvement (Hayes & Dredge, 1998: 20). According to Murphy (2001: 198) and Woods, Hebron and Bradley (2001: 198), this is the concept of never being satisfied with what the organisation is delivering and striving to do 'better' to meet customers' needs. This is also known in some literature as a 'customer-orientated quality' whereby customers are central not only to the organisation but to all aspects of the operational procedures and decision making (Woods *et al.*, 2001: 179; Cook, 2002: 30; Williams & Buswell, 2003: 21).

## 2.5 CUSTOMER CARE

### 2.5.1 Defining customer care

Customer care can be defined as the way in which an organisation handles the interactions between itself (staff) and its customers (Hayes & Dredge, 1998: 6). Good customer care is about exceeding the customer's expectations (Lyons, 2002: 2; Cook, 2002: 32; Cook *et al.*, 2006: 87). Customer service starts with understanding what good service is from the customer's point of view. The Tourism Enterprise Programme (2008: 5) defines good service as:

- An experience for every customer that they will remember well.
- Giving customers what they expect and meeting their individual needs.

Customers don't just buy products or services. They also buy the many intangible things which go with the selling of a product or service – friendliness, goodwill, a caring attitude, and a whole range of other behaviours and emotions which together create the package called 'Good Customer Care' (Burton, 1994: 3; George, 2004: 23; Kolb, 2006: 209). The cumulative effect of really good customer care is therefore greater than the sum of the separate parts.

According to Hayes and Dredge (1998: 9) and Tourism Enterprise Programme (2008: 5), 'good service' needs to be driven by customer's needs and expectations. If organisations tap into that recognition of an unfulfilled need, they can create a strong and lasting bond with their customers; superior customer care can also be used to differentiate their products (Cook, 2002: 2).

Mansfield (cited in Ryan, 2002: 106) identifies four key principles in the development of customer care within tourism companies, namely:

- Customer care starts at the top; commitment to the principle of customer care must emanate from senior management levels within an organisation.
- Customer care involves everyone within the organisation.

- Care for your staff and they will care for your customers.
- Improving the experience of the staff encourages a better service and a better experience for customers.
- It's a continuous process; customer care is not a quick fix project but a long-term plan.

### **2.5.2 Customer satisfaction**

The concept of customer satisfaction can be defined as: 'The feeling people experience when their needs and expectations have been met' (Cook, 2002: 88; Brooks, 2002: 79; Cook *et al.*, 2006: 88). If the customer's expectations of product quality, service quality and price are exceeded, a firm will achieve high levels of customer satisfaction and will create 'customer delight'. If the customer's expectations are not met, customer dissatisfaction will result. The lower the satisfaction level, the more likely the customer is to stop buying from the firm (Naumann & Giel, 1995: 5; Ryan, 2002: 99; Brooks, 2002: 79; Cook *et al.*, 2006: 88).

Studies have found that customers who are highly satisfied become more valuable customers (Cook *et al.*, 2006: 88). Delighted customers tend to disseminate many more positive word-of-mouth messages than do customers who are merely satisfied (Swarbrooke & Horner, 2007: 213). Furthermore, these highly satisfied customers are also more likely to purchase again and spend more in the future than customers whose expectations were met but not exceeded (Cook, 2002: 88; Cook *et al.*, 2006: 88).

Customer satisfaction is regarded as the major performance indicator of service quality (Swarbrooke & Horner, 2007: 211). It is also impinged upon by all aspects of the service delivery processes (for example, encounters with staff; time it takes for the service to be delivered) as well as the outcomes of the experience (Williams & Buswell, 2003: 61).

Furthermore, William and Buswell (2003: 66) contend that customer satisfaction is a complex phenomenon to monitor, as it is a collection of events and emotions, many of

which are outside the control of the service provider. These factors influencing or attributing to customer satisfaction are summarised in Figure 2.1.

### 2.5.2.1 The tourist satisfaction process

Figure 2.1 illustrates a simplified view of the process by which tourists are satisfied or not.

**Figure 2.1: The tourist satisfaction process.**



Source: Swarbrooke & Horner (2007: 214)

In light of the above figure, it is evident that the likes, dislikes, perceptions and experiences of tourists influence the level of customer satisfaction and contribute significantly to shape the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area into a preferred tourism destination. This poses specific challenges for the tourism industry in the management of service delivery interaction and service quality (Jones & Haven-Tang, 2005: 7).

### 2.5.3 People skills

The ability to deal professionally and competently with immediate queries, problems and complaints is an attribute that is rated very highly among customers of tourism organisations (Ryan, 2002: 107).

According to Blem (1995: 109), a lack of training is probably the most common cause of poor service in South Africa. Staff are often employed as poorly paid temporary staff,

with little training and working long hours (Swarbrooke & Horner, 2007: 216). Since the tourism industry is also known as a 'people's industry', it is crucial that staff must be empowered with the means to deal with all types of people (Murphy, 2001: 120; Swarbrooke & Horner, 2007: 216).

To answer customer queries efficiently and effectively, front-line and support staff needs to know procedures, have product knowledge and regular updates (Cook, 2002: 177; Ryan, 2002: 107). They also should all have been trained sufficiently to work effectively and utilise all their potential (Murphy, 2001: 160; Cook, 2002: 168; Swarbrooke & Horner, 2007: 216). Training and development not only helps organisations to be more flexible, proactive and customer focused in the face of fierce competition, but it is also a prime motivational tool (Cook, 2002: 167; Ryan, 2002: 107; Williams & Buswell, 2003: 196).

The skills that underlie successful interpersonal behaviour, such as eye contact, facial expression, hand movements, and body language are generally learned skills and, hence, readily teachable (Barrows & Powers, 2009: 656). Excellent interpersonal behaviour is characterised by warmth and friendliness and a manner that imparts to the guest a sense of being in control (Barrows & Powers, 2009: 656). Furthermore, it is important for employees to put themselves in the other person's shoes; they need empathy (Hayes & Dredge, 1998: 131; Ryan, 2002: 87; Cook *et al.*, 2006: 87).

From the above it is evident that service quality training should be applied to every employee in the tourism industry. This will include the following (Murphy, 2001: 162; Cook, 2002: 177-178):

- Listening and questioning skills
- Assertive communication
- Dealing with difficult customers
- Written communication skills
- Teamwork
- Complaint handling
- Managing pressure and stress

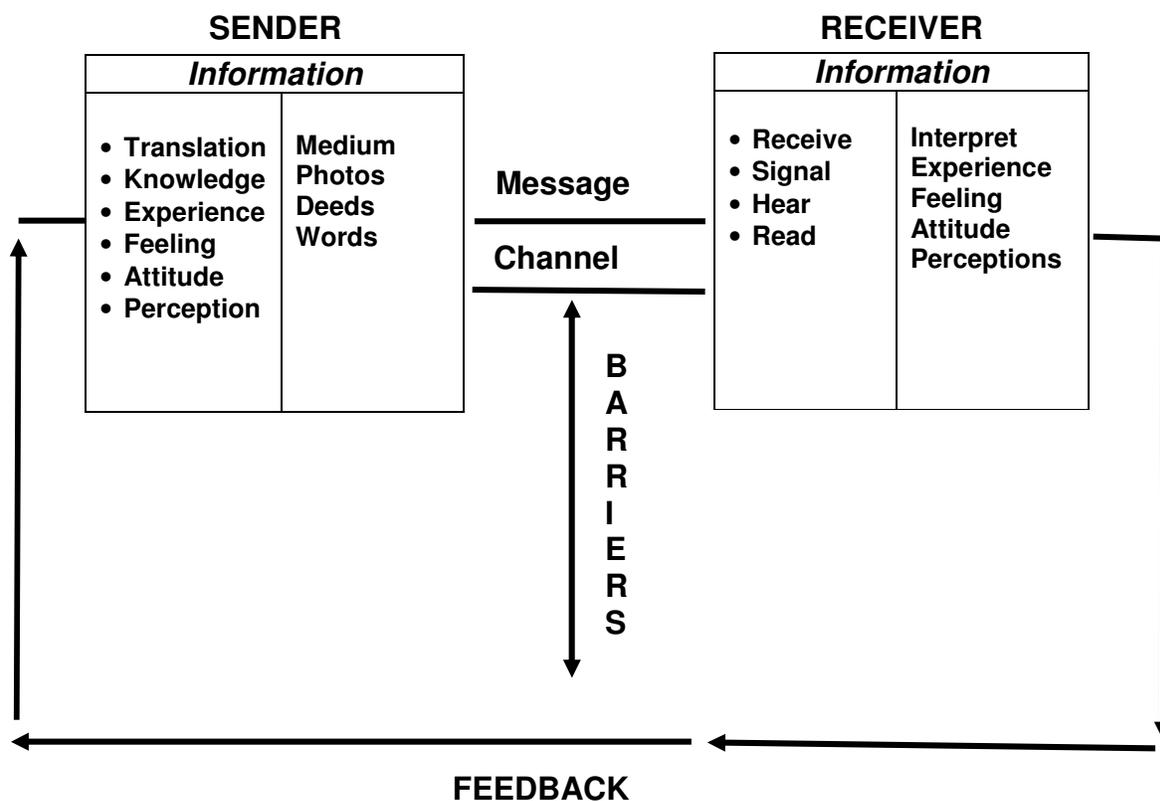
- Problem-solving in teams

The majority of the above-mentioned skills will be discussed in the sections that follow.

#### 2.5.4 Customer communication

One area which is vital in meeting tourists' expectations is communication. Cook (2002: 191) describes communication as the life-blood of developing and sustaining a service initiative. Saayman (2002: 156) defines communication as the transfer of information and understanding from one person to another person. He further contends that communication is also a two-way process, as is indicated in Figure 2.2 below. Business communication on the other hand, is the process of transacting meanings through written, oral and non-verbal messages, internal and external to organisations of people working together to produce and market goods and services (Saayman, 2002: 157).

**Figure 2.2: The communication process**



Source: Saayman (2002: 156)

According to Lyons (2002: 12), effective communication leads to:

- Customer satisfaction
- Staff satisfaction
- Increased organisational efficiency
- Increased organisational effectiveness

Communication is vital in giving customers and potential customers a good impression of a business. All staff must therefore be aware of the importance of good communication with customers, as all employees of an organisation will be seen as part of that business by the customer (Lyons, 2002: 6).

When people are listening or speaking, the impact of what they are trying to communicate comes from (Woods *et al.*, 2001: 68):

- The words they use (7%)
- The tone of their voice (38%)
- Their body language (55%)

To communicate effectively, each of the following principles must be applied (Saayman, 2002: 163):

- Regulate flow of information. Managers often lose valuable information because they are overloaded with information. Messages must thus be received and dealt with according to priorities.
- Encourage feedback. Verbal and non-verbal feedback must be followed up so that the aims can be achieved. If no feedback takes place the manager will not be able to determine the effectiveness of communication.
- Simplify messages. This is especially aimed at plain language that will be understood by the involved employees.

- Control emotions. Managers as well as subordinates must guard against messages being incorrectly interpreted as a result of their emotional conditions.
- Use verbal communication. The sender's verbal and non-verbal messages must support each other and not be confusing. Feelings can also be better communicated with non-verbal communication.
- Formulate thoughts clearly. That which has to be communicated must be analysed until it is clear. Organise thoughts and discuss them with others before sending the message.
- Take notice and be aware of the social climate or specific situation. Timing is very important. The physical situation also influences the effectiveness of communication. Culture and habits must be borne in mind when sending messages.
- Advantages for the receiver ought to be included in the communication.
- The tone as well as the content of the message must be taken into consideration. Tone of voice, facial expression and reaction to feedback, are of particular importance for personal communication.
- If goodwill and respect are offered and deserved, communication will be more successful. Insight and comprehension must be shown for the receiver's point of view.

#### **2.5.4.1 Face-to-face communication**

Communicating face-to-face has many advantages over other forms of communication and includes the following (Hayes & Dredge, 1998: 50; Woods *et al.*, 2001: 69; Cook, 2002: 198):

- It is possible to form a better understanding of what the customer means and also what type of personality they are by observing their body language as well as listening to what they say.
- More time is available to explore customer needs.
- Putting a face to a name often creates a personal bond between customer and company.

Face-to-face communication helps to build rapport by creating a sense of 'personal connection' (Hayes & Dredge, 1998: 53). Poor face-to-face customer contact is usually symptomatic of deeper problems. According to Blem (1995: 123), this may be the result of poor supervision, bad equipment, or unsuitable working conditions.

#### **2.5.4.2 Building rapport**

Building and maintaining rapport is the foundation of good communication. It can be defined as a 'harmonious' and 'understanding relationship' (Hayes & Dredge, 1998: 52). Building rapport also means 'getting off on the right foot' with the customer and it often happens in that short period of time after the initial greetings are over (Woods *et al.*, 2001: 70).

To create a successful rapport with customers, the following must be borne in mind (Hayes & Dredge, 1998: 52; Woods *et al.* 2001: 70; Lyons, 2002: 6):

- **Eye contact.** When an individual makes eye contact with someone, he or she immediately registers that the person is interested in what he or she has to say.
- **Smile.** Smiling shows a friendly, non-threatening interaction with the other person.
- **Touch.** A firm handshake confirms the positive messages that eye contact and smiling have established. A limp handshake does little to convince a customer that the person has any interest in his or her business.

- **Stance.** An open body stance (facing the customer and using open-palm gestures) indicates that a person is relaxed and confident. A closing body stance (crossing arms or legs, hunching shoulders or half turning away), on the other hand, will make the customer feel uneasy.
- **Gestures.** All cultures have a system of gestures containing meaning which either accompany spoken language or can stand alone to convey a message. A person for example nods his head to say 'yes' and shakes it to say 'no'.
- **Posture.** Posture gives one clues not only to such things as a person's age and background but also to that person's thoughts and feelings.

It is important that customers feel valued by the organisation. This means treating them politely and respectfully as well as empathising with their feelings (Hayes & Dredge, 1998: 52).

#### 2.5.4.3 Choosing the right attitude

Attitude is the way someone communicates their mood to other people. People can either be optimistic (expect the best) when showing a positive attitude, or pessimistic (expect the worst) when showing a negative attitude (The Tourism Enterprise Programme, 2008: 14).

Employees should therefore adapt a positive approach when dealing with customers. In Table 2.1 below, Woods *et al.* (2001: 97) points out how an employee can change their approach to ensure a positive approach to customer service.

**Table 2.1: Positive approach**

Don't say	Do say
I'm sorry, I can't help you	Let's see what other options there may be
I don't know	Let me check and find out
Your last name is what?	Can you help me with the spelling of your

	last name?
Wait for a minute and I'll come back to you	It may take me a few minutes to get that. Are you able to wait while I check?
I would like to help but I am very busy	I would like to help and I am very busy, so what I can do is...

Source: Adapted from Woods *et al.* (2001: 98).

Furthermore, it is important to remain professional, but with a personal touch. Hayes and Dredge (1998: 50) and Cook (2002: 15) contend that what is memorable to the customer in terms of service experience is the personal touch rather than the material aspect of the service. To provide excellent service, a balance is therefore needed between both personal and technical or material needs.

#### **2.5.4.4 Telephone manners**

The telephone is probably the most popular form of communication used in business today, and it is possibly the most effective if used properly. The way in which it is answered can have a profound impact on the image of the organisation; this is often a first impression (Murphy, 2001: 1210). Woods *et al.* (2001: 74) outline the importance of the telephone below:

- Customers can achieve more in a five-minute call to an organisation than in an hour of travel to its premises.
- The telephone can be used for general queries, even when a customer usually does business on a face-to-face basis.
- It's cheaper to use the phone than traveling to a meeting.
- With shorter contact times, more customers can be dealt with in the same space of time.

There are some well established guidelines for dealing with both incoming and outgoing calls and these will be discussed below.

## Incoming calls

Some guidelines for dealing with incoming calls are listed below (Burton, 1994: 64; Blem, 1995: 131; Hayes & Dredge, 1998: 68; Woods *et al.* 2001: 74; Tourism Enterprise Programme, 2008: 22):

- **Answer promptly.** Business is frequently lost because of an unanswered telephone. Many organisations, therefore, instruct their staff to pick up the telephone call within three to four rings.
- **Welcome customers politely.** Those first few seconds of contact are vital. An unwelcoming attitude can irritate or unnerve the customer unnecessarily.
- **Help customers contact the correct person easily.** It's essential that the person customers first speak to spends time helping the customer make contact with his or her correct destination. If the right personnel cannot be located, the employee should offer to deal with the enquiry, if possible.
- **Take messages.** Messages should be taken down accurately and passed on to the correct person promptly. All messages should provide the customer's name and telephone number and a brief summary of the customer's enquiry.
- **Provide information.** Customers need to know that they are through to the right company, person or department.
- **Closing the call.** When closing the call, the following questions should be asked to confirm the purpose of the call:
  - Has the employee answered all the customer's questions for the moment?
  - The employee should ask if he or she can assist the customer with anything.

## Outgoing calls

It is important to plan the call beforehand; this means the employee can take more control of the call and will reduce the possibility of failing to get the message across. The employee needs to convey a clear and professional image (Murphy, 2001: 121). The following formula can be used for outgoing calls (Hayes & Dredge, 1998: 72; Woods *et al.* 2001: 77; Cook, 2002: 159):

- state clearly who is calling
- provide the name of the organisation
- explain the reason for the call

If the employee can't get hold of the right person, a clear message must be left (Woods *et al.* 2001: 77; Cook, 2002: 159).

### 2.5.4.5 Listening skills

Listening to customers is vital if organisations wish not to only attract new customers but also to retain existing ones (Cook, 2002: 80). Most people only listen to about 25 percent of what they hear (Tourism Enterprise Programme, 2008: 16). According to Cook (2002: 81), it has been proven that by actively listening to customers, companies can save rather than expend money. Active listening includes facial expression, responding appropriately, exercising patience and not interrupting (Blem, 1995: 125).

There are two basic things to consider about the art of listening (Woods *et al.* 2001: 92):

- **The acknowledgement.** This is usually the initial phase of a conversation. You need to set the right ambience (or mood) to gain your customer's confidence.
- **Obtaining information and responding to feelings.** It is important to concentrate on collecting the relevant information while responding positively at all times to the customer, even though your customer may be angry or even threatening.

Good service involves listening, understanding and responding to customers. Some practical tips for effective listening are outlined below (Tourism Enterprise Programme, 2008: 16):

- If the information is complicated, the employee can show their understanding by repeating what was said. For example: 'Mr Simelane, you've made a number of requests and I want to make sure I understand. You said that you...'
- The employee must ask questions if not sure about something.
- Important information must be repeated (for example, telephone numbers and names).

### **2.5.5 Customer relationships**

Tourists expect to be treated in a courteous and respectful manner, appropriate to the type of relationship that has developed between the organisation and themselves (Ryan, 2002: 89). Various authors (Brooks, 2002: 107; Cook, 2002: 11; Cook *et al.*, 2006: 89) also emphasise the importance for the organisation to show genuine interest in its customers and care about them. Good communication is essential in building strong relationships that will ensure customer loyalty (Drummond & Yeoman (2001: 30).

The relationship an organisation creates with its existing customers determines the 'goodwill' customers feel towards the company and hence the quality of its reputation (Cook, 2002: 11; Cook *et al.*, 2006: 87). Cook (2002: 11) suggests the following main sources of gaining positive goodwill:

- **Making the best of the occasional and inevitable bad experiences.** For example, delays, bad weather or running out of food, empathising with problems and turning them to advantage.
- **Showing and demonstrating concern for others.** For example, children, old people, the disabled and anxious.

- **Encouraging, reinforcing, and wishing customers a ‘good trip’ or a ‘good holiday’.**
- **Unsolicited ‘giving’ by the staff.** For example, spontaneous talking, sitting next to a passenger and sharing conversation.
- **Problem-solving by staff** is important, particularly asking about the problem and showing empathy and understanding.

### 2.5.6 Dealing with complaints

Complaints can be a positive benefit to a business, provided they are handled effectively (Murphy, 2001: 94; Woods *et al.*, 2001: 147; Cook, 2002: 81; Cook *et al.*, 2006: 93; Swarbrooke & Horner, 2007: 218). They can act as a warning sign that the organisation is not meeting customers’ expectations, and often are the first indication that customers are unhappy and may be considering moving their business (Murphy, 2001: 94; Lovelock, 2000: 163; Woods *et al.*, 2001:147; Cook *et al.*, 2006: 93). A complaint is therefore a valuable source of information for an organisation.

How well a firm handles complaints and resolves problems may determine whether it builds customer loyalty and increases satisfaction, or watches customers take their business elsewhere (Linton, 1995: 145; Lovelock, 2000: 163; Murphy, 2001: 94; Swarbrooke & Horner, 2007: 217). Cook (2002: 82) states that for every bad experience of service, customers tell ten other people.

Complaints may take several forms (Woods *et al.*, 2001: 146):

- A verbal statement of the facts
- A written statement of the facts
- A request to speak to someone ‘in charge’

Most customers are hesitant about voicing complaints (Hayes & Dredge, 1998: 6; Lovelock, 2000: 164; Cook, 2002: 81; Cook *et al.*, 2006: 93). Furthermore, only four

percent of customers complain and when they do communicate their dissatisfaction, managers may not hear about complaints made to customer-contact personnel (Hayes & Dredge, 1998: 123; Lovelock, 2000: 164; Williams & Buswell, 2003: 172).

Employees should therefore be trained in order to deal with a customer complaint promptly and efficiently (Murphy, 2001: 160; Cook, 2002: 168; Swarbrooke & Horner, 2007: 216). Hayes & Dredge (1998: 119), Tourism Enterprise Programme (2008: 20) and Page (2009: 391) suggest the following guidelines to assist staff in dealing with complaints:

- **Listening to gain an objective overview.** Full concentration should be given to the customer's story so that staff acts on facts and not assumptions. It is also necessary to remain calm and open-minded to get to the bottom of the problem.
- **Empathising with the customer.** If customers feel the attention they receive is genuinely caring and tailored to meet their needs, it is far more likely that they will develop trust and confidence in the organisation.
- **Apologising and 'owning' the problem.** When a customer complains, it is essential that the customer service representative dealing with him or her apologises for what has happened and makes a commitment to put things right.
- **Taking action to resolve the complaint.** The complaint should be investigated and resolved promptly.
- **Follow up the complaint to ensure satisfaction.** The complainer needs to be contacted with an explanation, offer of compensation, description of how the problem will be corrected or a rejection of the complaint.

Finally, it should be an ongoing philosophy of a tourism organisation that customer care is a part of every decision, in all of the processes implemented as well as during service delivery (Williams & Buswell, 2003: 24). Lewis (cited in Williams & Buswell, 2003: 24) and Cook (2002: 30) state that customer care strategies require substantial investments

of time, money, including management commitment to customer care and the creation of an appropriate culture.

As Lewis (cited in Williams & Buswell, 2003: 24) pointed out, customer care is expensive and if financial efficiency is the main priority for an organisation, this can lead to conflicting organisational objectives. Furthermore, ethical business practices need to be central to the organisation for a culture of reliability and customer care to reign.

## **2.6 THE SERVICE ENCOUNTER**

The level of psychological encounter between staff and customers varies greatly across the leisure and tourism industry but its importance in achieving customer satisfaction is well documented (Williams & Buswell, 2003: 104). One of the key tasks for tourism marketers is to manage the relationship between staff and consumers to ensure that consumers receive a quality offering. This interaction has been referred to as a 'service encounter' or even as 'the moment of truth' (Murphy, 2001: 120; Williams & Buswell, 2003: 71; George, 2004: 309; Bennett, Jooste & Strydom, 2005: 288; Cook *et al.*, 2006: 83; Swarbrooke & Horner, 2007: 215; Barrows & Powers, 2009: 649). Bennett *et al.* (2005: 287) and Ryan (2002: 99) describe the service encounter as 'the moment when the customer interacts with the service firm' or 'a period of time during which a consumer directly interacts with a service'.

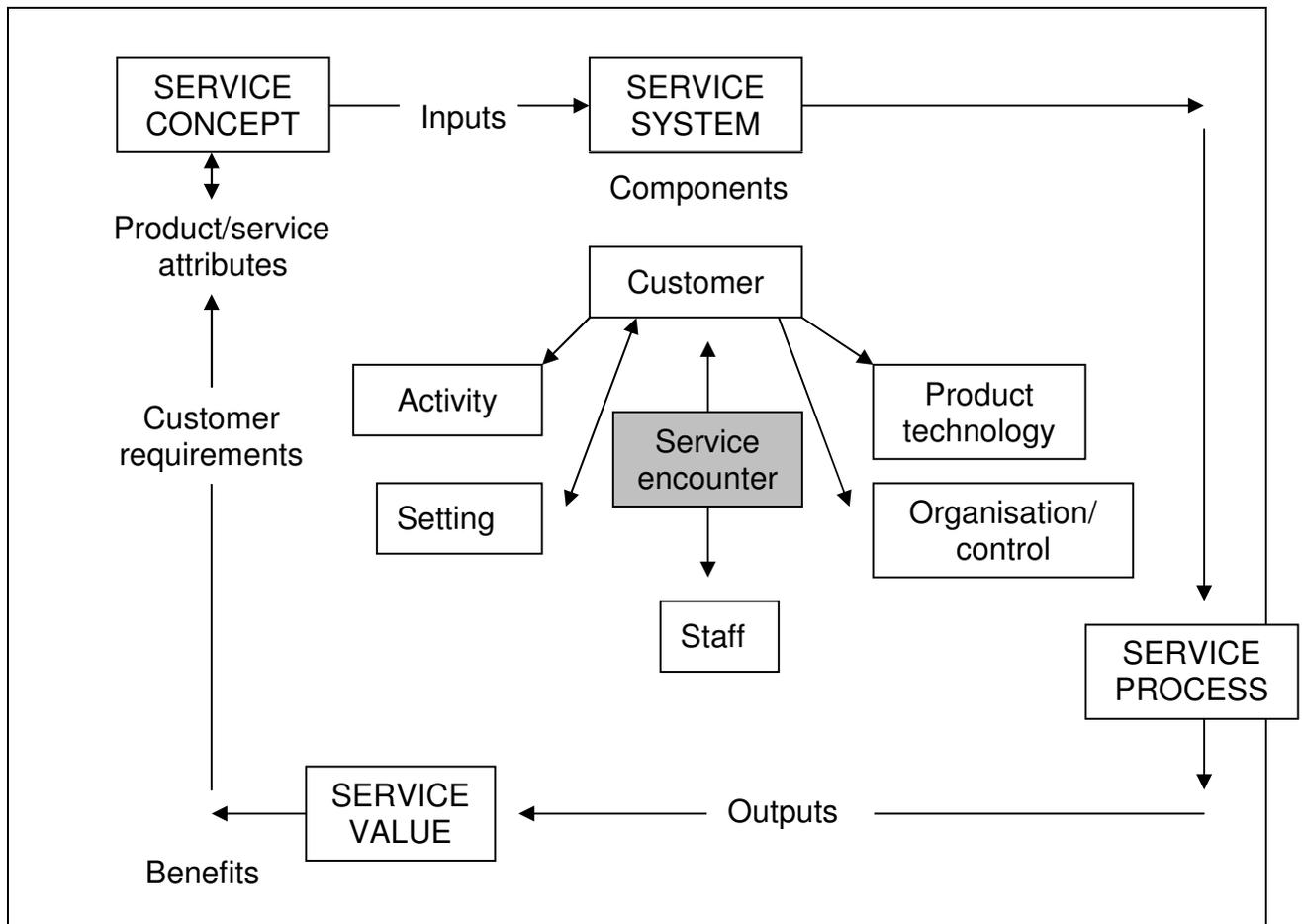
As the model of service design and delivery in leisure and tourism in Figure 2.3 shows, the most memorable impression of services, from the customer's perspective, occurs in the service encounter (Williams & Buswell, 2003: 97; Cook *et al.*, 2006: 82). It is during these encounters that consumers receive a snapshot of the company's service quality and each encounter contributes to the consumer's overall satisfaction and willingness to return to do business with the company.

The measurement of service quality through service encounters involves the following four steps (Saayman, 2001: 370):

- 1) Determination of the tourist's critical encounter path in the service delivery process.

- 2) Collection of data on events along this service encounter path.
- 3) Determination of importance and/or relevance of events or experiences for tourists.
- 4) Evaluation of service quality at specific contact points, for specific phases or episodes, as well as for the overall transaction through the tourist.

**Figure 2.3: Model of service design and delivery in leisure and tourism.**



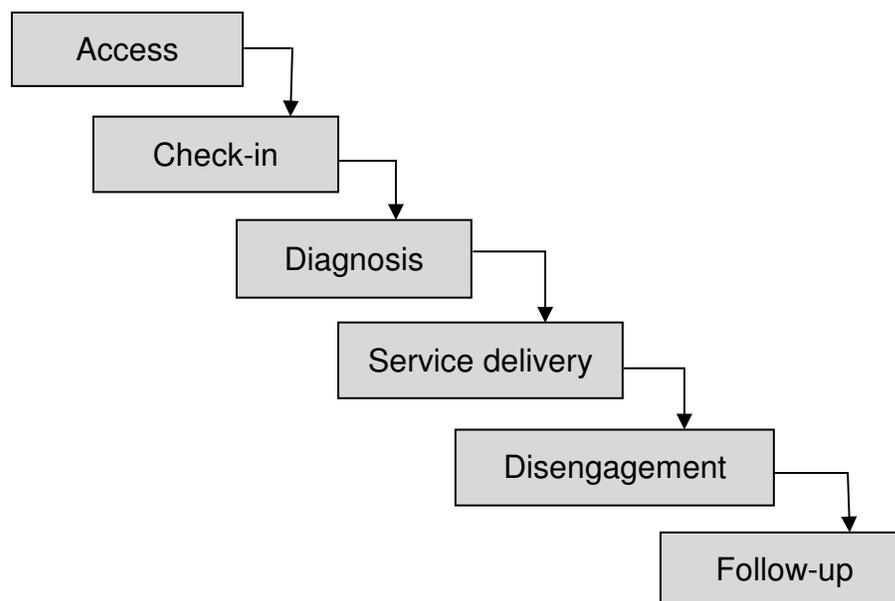
Source: Williams & Buswell (2003: 97)

Most services delivered by the travel and tourism business consist of a number of encounters. These encounters are referred to as a service encounter cascade (see Figure 2.4) (Bennett *et al.*, 2005: 291).

Bitran and Lojo (cited in Ryan, 2002: 81) developed a framework for analysing service encounters consisting of six stages, arguing that while every service encounter will be

unique for both the client and the service provider, such encounters tend to possess the common themes identified in Figure 2.4. However, the length and nature of the interaction at each stage can vary considerably. Any problems that occur during the early stages of the process are critical and may result in the consumer evaluating the company negatively (Cook *et al.*, 2006; 87). There should therefore be consistency in meeting customer expectations and minimisation of the occasions when customers are disappointed (Ryan, 2002: 99).

**Figure 2.4: Typical stages of a service encounter**



Source: Ryan (2002: 81)

### 2.6.1 The employees' role in the service encounter

In a service-oriented business, the quality of service delivered is inextricably related to the quality of the establishment's staff – their attitude, training, competence, skills, and level of job satisfaction (Bennett *et al.*, 2005: 297; George, 2007: 117). According to George (2004: 274) and Barrows and Powers (2009: 668), people are becoming a way that companies differentiate themselves to gain a competitive advantage in the market place. Tom Baum (cited in Swarbrooke & Horner, 2007: 216) describes the role of staff as 'making or breaking the tourist experience'. All the employees in a company therefore have a crucial role to play in the provision of service quality. This is

particularly vital in the tourism industry, which is often described as a 'people industry' (Williams & Buswell, 2003: 104; Barrows & Powers, 2009: 66). Tourism businesses in the Sol Plaatje Municipal should therefore focus on employing staff with adequate knowledge and the necessary skills to ultimately enhance the visitor experience.

The significance of the psychological encounter between staff and customers suggests that much of the marketing that takes place is of an interactive nature. There is an opportunity to influence customers at each point of contact, to encourage them and receive feedback and opinion, which constitute valuable market research for the tourism business (Williams & Buswell, 2003: 191; Cook *et al.*, 2006: 93).

The importance of front-line staff to the delivery of quality service and, ultimately customer satisfaction, is widely accepted (Gabbott & Hogg, 1999: 76; Ryan, 2002: 99). Some employees therefore play a more important role in the service encounter process than others, depending on the situation and the level of interaction they have with consumers. Staff can be divided into four types namely: contactors, modifiers, influencers, and isolateds (George, 2004: 275). It is briefly discussed below.

- **Contractors**

This group of people has frequent contact with consumers and hold key positions that involve selling and consumer service. They need to be well-trained and motivated to serve consumers on a day-to-day basis. Examples of contractors include travel agent consultants, tour guides and holiday representatives.

- **Modifiers**

Modifiers, while not directly involved with the company's traditional marketing activities, have frequent consumer contact. They have a crucial role to play in companies and so need to develop high levels of consumer relationship skills. Modifiers require ongoing training and include receptionists and restaurant floor staff.

- **Influencers**

Influencers have infrequent or no contact with consumers. However, they are very much a part of the company's marketing strategy. Opportunities to enhance the level of consumer contact should be programmed into their activities. Examples of influencers include those with roles in product development and market research.

- **Isolateds**

These people perform various support functions and have neither frequent contact with consumers nor a great deal to do with a company's marketing activities. Examples of this group include secretaries and other administration staff such as data processors.

It is evident that the staff that deal directly with the public and are perceived by customers as the public face of the organisation, have a particular responsibility for service quality. It is therefore important that every service encounter must be seen as an opportunity to please a customer, to encourage them to return and pass around 'the good message'.

## **2.7 THE SERVICE VALUE CHAIN**

The performance of a tourist organisation or destination depends on its ability to create value. Beech and Chadwick (2006: 218) state that resources need to be combined or processed in a way to get value out of them, and therefore they are the inputs for capabilities, that is, how things get done to deliver a tourism product or service. Therefore the method and extent to which value is created by a tourist organisation or destination will depend on the resource inputs and their processing and sale for end-consumption by the tourist (Beech & Chadwick, 2006: 218).

The value chain describes the full range of activities that firms and workers do to bring a product from its conception to its end use and beyond (Global Value Chains, 2009). Furthermore, any person, process, product or brand that adds value (tangible or

intangible) to a product or service constitutes a value chain (Mascarenhas, Kesavan & Bernacchi, 2004: 486).

Porth (cited in Beech & Chadwick, 2006: 218) suggests that the value chain helps managers to 'visualise and analyse value-creating activities' and to pursue strategies which offer 'lower prices than competitors for equivalent benefits or provide unique or differentiated benefits that more than offset a higher price'.

Porter's (1985) value chain model, shown in Figure 2.5, can be used to assess value creation in tourism (Beech & Chadwick, 2006: 218). Piercy (cited in Beech & Chadwick, 2006: 219) suggests 'we are in an era of value strategy' through 'value innovation' based on three assumptions:

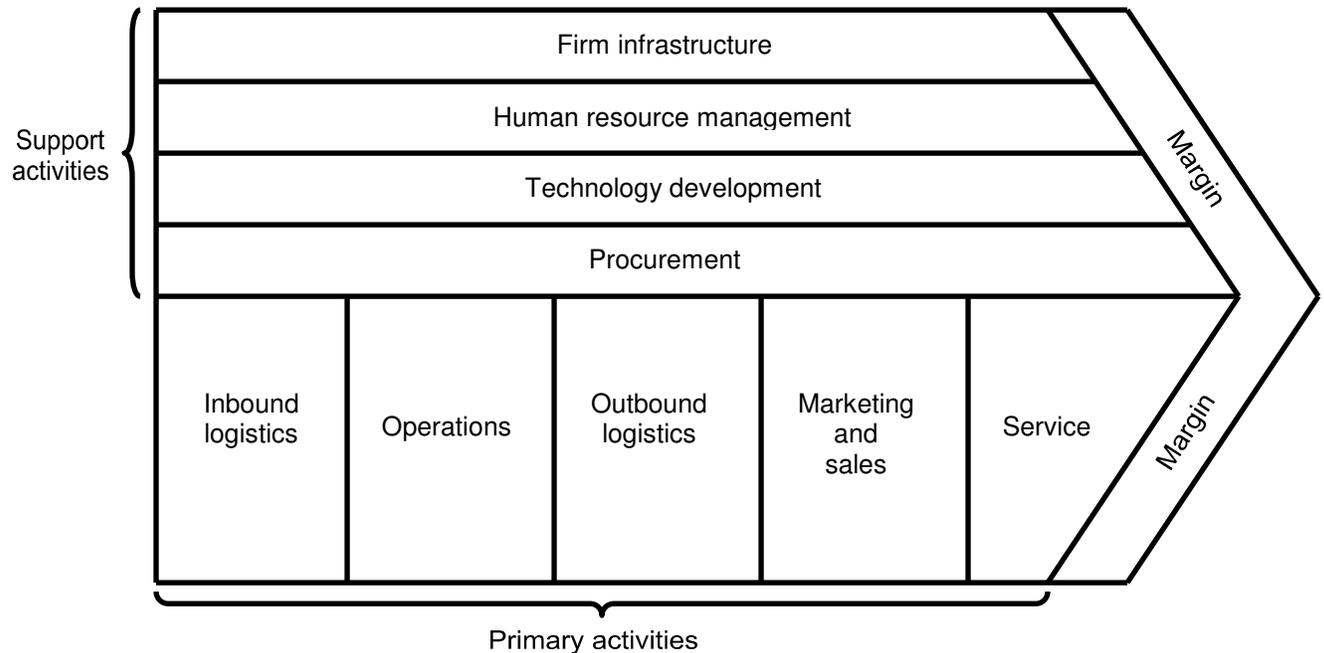
- **Operational excellence** – reliable products and services at competitive prices, delivered with minimal difficulty and inconvenience, for example an airline that flies people to destinations at realistic prices and with few or no delays;
- **Customer intimacy** – precisely tailored offerings for niches, for example holidays for 18-30 year olds, which do not interfere with the enjoyment of families or senior citizens;
- **Product leadership** – offering leading-edge products and services that competitors have difficulty catching up with.

Recent research has begun to apply the value-chain model to the overall tourism industry and highlights the fact that an industry value chain is often composed of many different companies, such as airlines, rental cars, tour operators, hotels, and travel agents (Enz, 2009: 124). In tourism, production and consumption are often in the same place such as the destination or resort. Therefore, attempts to develop a collective value chain for tourism may be flawed (Beech & Chadwick, 2006: 220).

Six primary activities constitute the value chain in tourism: transportation to the destination; tourism services available and supplies at the destination; the packaging and/or bundling of services into specific tourism service packages; tourism marketing;

tourism distribution; and finally customer services (which constitute special or added services on top of the basic or core services offered at all destinations) (Saayman, 2001: 361).

**Figure 2.5: Porter's value chain**



**Source:** Beech & Chadwick (2006: 219)

## 2.8 THE TOURIST EXPERIENCE

According to Ryan (2002: 119), the 'tourist experience' is a useful term to identify the experience of an individual which may be affected by individual, environmental, situational and personality-related factors as well as the degree of communication with other people. It is this outcome that researchers and the tourism industry constantly evaluate to establish whether the actual experience met the tourist's expectations (Brooks, 2002: 99, Ryan, 2002: 119 and Cook *et al.*, 2006: 88).

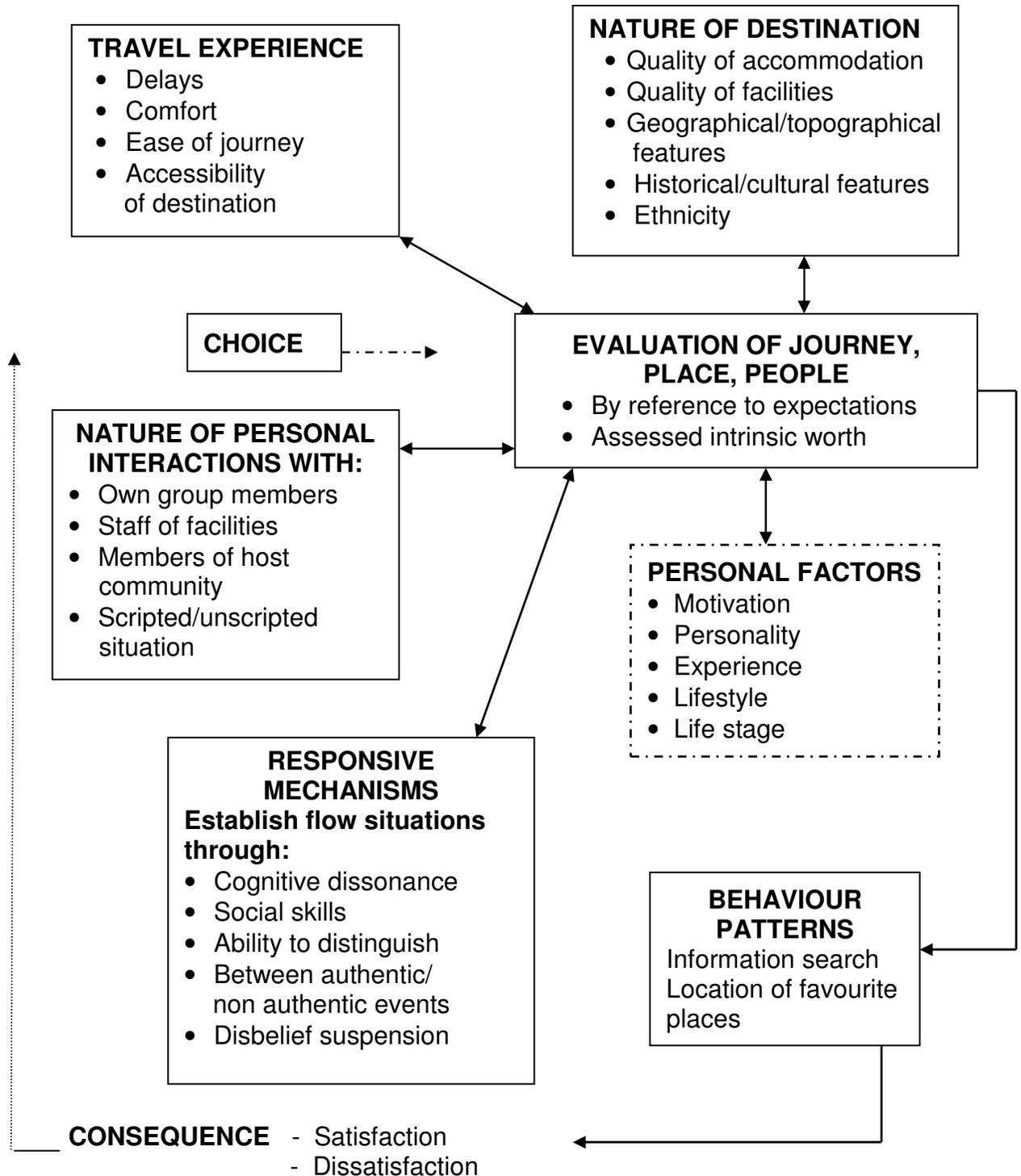
According to Saayman (2001: 372) and Ryan (2002, 63), the travel experience consists of an ongoing stream of related and integrated services, which are purchased over a period of time, often in many different geographic areas. Thus, a visitor's experience at a destination is a function of more than just the sum of the quality service and

experience delivered by each individual tourist service. Therefore from a managerial point of view, it is clear that the tourism system by itself does not control all of the factors that contribute to a 'quality experience'. The best a tourism organisation can hope for is to try and make the various contexts as favourable as possible while seeking to ensure satisfaction with each service in the 'experience stream' (Saayman, 2001: 372).

Figure 2.6 condenses the tourist experience as a whole. In this illustration (Ryan, 2002: 63), emphasis is placed on the destination and what it has to offer the tourist, the travel experience with regards to getting to the destination, the interaction with locals and own group members, choices to be made based on the journey, the place and its people, personal factors which influence the choice of holiday, and the level of satisfaction as experienced by the tourist. According to Figure 2.6, the nature of the destination, specifically the quality of their services, will influence the tourist experience at a destination and therefore, their level of satisfaction (Ryan, 2002: 63). Therefore, tourism researchers at the Sol Plaatje Municipality need to constantly evaluate whether the actual experience meets the tourist's expectations.

Figure 2.6 below, outlines the Tourist Experience, indicating in a flow diagram how the travel experience and destination interact with personal factors and as well as responsive mechanisms, coupled with various choices, to contribute to the evaluation of the experience as a whole.

**Figure 2.6: The Tourist Experience**



Source: Ryan (2002: 63)

Ryan (2002: 119) and Williams and Buswell (2003: 14) highlight several factors that are becoming increasingly important in managing the quality of the consumer experience. These factors include issues such as:

- **The carrying capacity of facilities and resources.** Overcrowding can impair the enjoyment of consumers in a range of contexts and it is the task of product providers to regulate numbers where they can.
- **Seasonality** is another problem for many leisure and tourism operators and can test the capacity and the flexibility of locations.
- **Safety** is another factor that is at the forefront of consumers' minds (Ryan, 2002: 136; Swarbrooke & Horner, 2007: 218). For example, crime in South Africa has received some bad publicity in recent years and could influence tourists' experiences.
- **The environment** has a symbiotic relationship with service quality in leisure and tourism. Many activities or destinations are a result of the very beauty or attractiveness of the location but then risk impairing that beauty because of overuse.
- **The packaging** of the product can also be a factor where there are several elements that might have different standards.
- **Technology** has a profound effect on product and service development and enhances both the product and the way it is delivered. For example, new ways of obtaining information and making bookings are impacting on service quality.

Various authors (Saayman, 2001: 360; Ryan, 2002: 142; Jennings & Nickerson, 2006: 11) pointed out that there is a growing desire for 'authenticity' of the travel experience. Tourists increasingly express a desire for their travel experiences to include events, ceremonies, activities and facilities that are integral and unrehearsed dimensions of the destination visited. Tourists thus want a genuine experience of a different culture or

way of life. The destination marketers for the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area should therefore present and market an authentic product experience to the visiting tourist.

The approach adopted by the tourism industry needs to be more proactive in its pursuit of high-quality visitor experiences rather than reactive towards individual problems that arise as a result of tourist dissatisfaction after a visit (Ryan, 2002: 136).

## **2.9 CUSTOMER SERVICE MEASUREMENT**

### **2.9.1 The SERVQUAL model**

Given the importance of service quality in the tourism industry, the quality of offerings need to be controlled and measured regularly. Service quality can be measured with the SERVQUAL model and the quality gap model (Bennett, 2000: 248; Drummond & Yeoman, 2001: 66; Saayman, 2002: 72; Ryan, 2002: 88; Williams & Buswell, 2003: 178 and George, 2004: 311). This widely used approach to understanding customers' judgements of service quality seeks to identify gaps between their expectations and their perceptions of the service that they received (Drummond & Yeoman, 2001: 66 and Williams & Buswell, 2003: 178). Other service quality models found in related literature include the Haywood-Farmer's Model of Service Quality (1983) and Kano's model of Customer Satisfaction (1994) (Saayman, 2002: 79-84).

Although it has been subjected to severe criticism, the SERVQUAL model continues to serve well in two important respects: it highlights unequivocally the centrality of quality in service research and management, and it emphasises the complexity of managing service experiences (Drummond & Yeoman, 2001: 67).

The conceptualisation of service qualities and the services marketing literature have resulted in the enumeration of five important service dimensions which can equally be employed in the production and distribution of tourism services (Saayman, 2002: 72). The five most important elements a customer expects from a quality service are reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangibility (Christopher, 1998: 27; Bennett, 2000: 248; George, 2004: 311; Cook *et al.*, 2006: 87; Horner & Swarbrooke,

2007: 239). Ryan (2002: 85) contends that for each of these determinants, tourists develop a set of expectations based on previous experience, personal needs, promotional material and word-of-mouth references.

In addition, Zeithmal *et al.* (1990: 21) and Drummond and Yeoman (2001: 156) identify ten dimensions of service quality, which between them cover the whole service experience from the customer's point of view. The ten dimensions, namely reliability, responsiveness, competence, access, courtesy, communication, credibility, security, understanding and tangibles, were eventually reduced to the five previously mentioned dimensions. All the above-mentioned dimensions of service quality are presented in Table 2.2 below.

**Table 2.2: The dimensions of Service Quality**

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Description</b>
Reliability	Ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately. It involves accuracy in billing, accuracy in record keeping and performing the service at the designated time.
Responsiveness	Willingness to help customers and provide prompt service. It includes: mailing information immediately, getting back to the customer as soon as possible and setting up appointments as soon as possible.
Competence	Possession of the required skills and knowledge to perform the service, involving properly trained, capable and well-informed staff.
Access	Accessibility of communication, infrastructure and waiting time.
Courtesy	Politeness, respect, consideration and friendliness of personnel, including the special treatment of all tourists, clean and neat appearances of staff, et cetera.
Communication	The way a message is sent and received, involving friendly, polite and effective communication with different cultures.

Credibility	It involves trustworthiness, believability and honesty while having the customer's interests at heart.
Security	Freedom from danger, risk, or doubt, involving physical safety and confidentiality.
Understanding/knowing	Making the effort to understand the customer's needs. This includes knowing different cultures, learning the tourist's specific requirements and providing individual attention.
Tangibles	Includes the physical component of the service such as the décor, physical facilities, appearance of staff and equipment used.
Assurance	It refers to employees' knowledge and courtesy, the assurance that the employees have the ability to convey trust and confidence. For example, trustworthy hotel staff dealing with a guest's financial and personal security must be trusted by that guest.
Empathy	It relates to guests being given caring, individual attention. Employees need to treat the visitors as individuals, by using their names, knowing their preferences and interests, and offering them customised services.

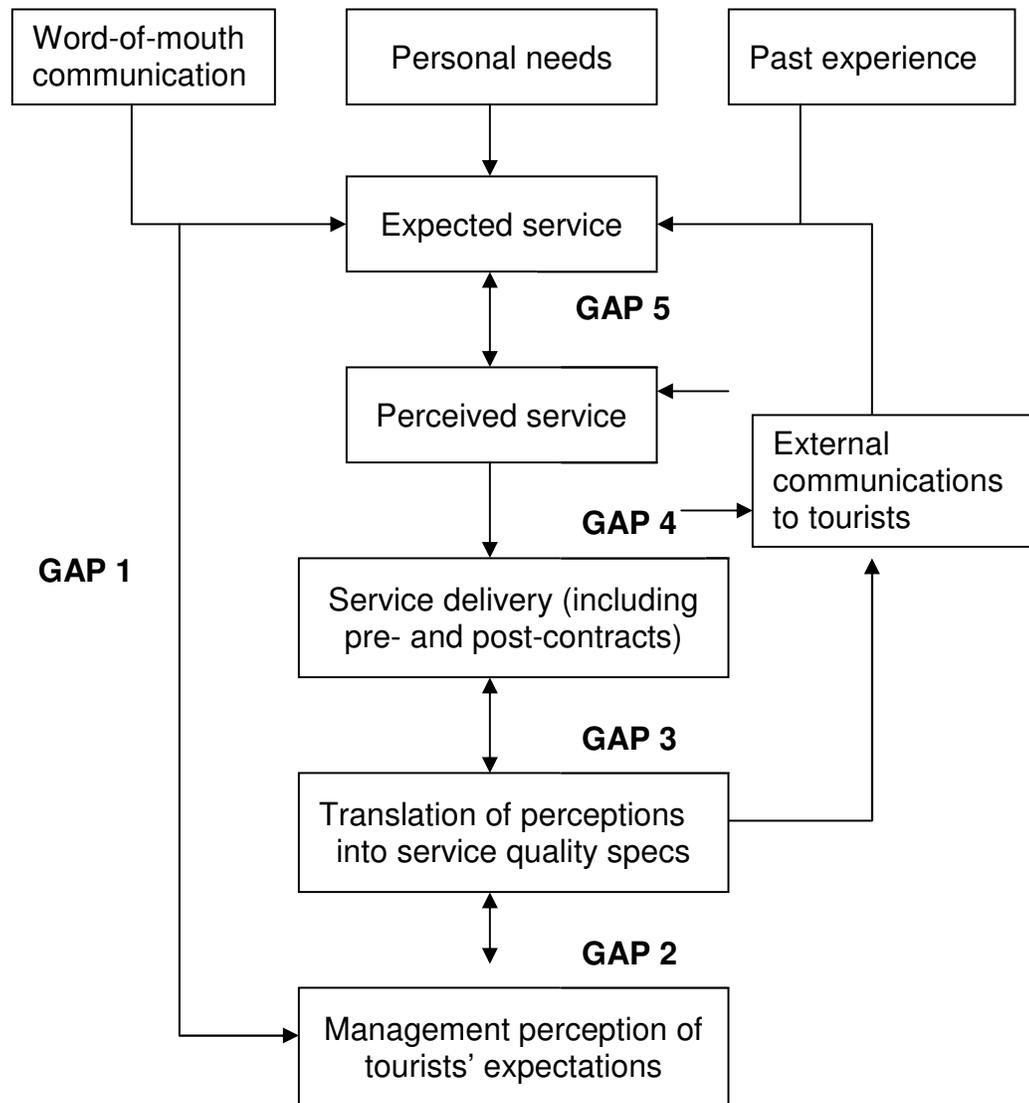
Source: Adapted from Zeithman *et al.* (1990: 21); Saayman (2001: 368); Drummond & Yeoman (2001: 156); George (2004: 311).

### **2.9.2 The service quality gap model**

Service quality involves a continuous process of constant evaluation. Without it, it is difficult to determine whether or not service quality is provided. Given the importance of customer care in the tourism industry, it is important that the quality of offerings (especially service delivery) is controlled and measured regularly. The SERVQUAL model, the most common tool for measuring service quality, was first introduced by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry in the 1980s. They attempted to develop an instrument that would measure service quality across a range of service industries (Bennett, 2000: 232; Swarbrooke & Horner, 2007: 214). Today it is also referred to as

the *Gaps* model because of the five gaps associated with it (Murphy 2001: 108; Bennett, 2000: 236; Saayman, 2001: 367; Ryan, 2002: 133; Swarbrooke & Horner, 2007: 240). A graphic illustration of the model is provided in Figure 2.7.

**Figure 2.7: The SERVQUAL model**



Source: Saayman (2001: 366)

The gaps model provides a framework for developing a better understanding of service quality problems within an organisation in the tourism industry. Parasuraman (cited by Saayman, 2001: 367) describe service quality as follows: 'service quality depends on the size and direction of the gap between expected and perceived service, which in turn depends on the nature of the gaps on the service provider's side, associated with the design and delivering of services'.

The following five gaps may lead to unsuccessful service delivery (Murphy, 2001: 108; Bennett, 2000: 236; Saayman, 2001: 367; Ryan, 2002: 133; Swarbrooke & Horner 2007: 240):

- **Gap 1: The gap between customer expectations and management perceptions of these expectations.**

This is present when the business does not know what the tourist expects. Management's opinion of what the tourist wants and what is delivered can differ considerably, especially when no effort has been made to determine the needs of the market. Market research must thus be done in order to avoid this gap.

- **Gap 2: The gap between management perceptions of customer expectations and the firm's service quality specifications.**

This situation is present when wrong standards are set. The main reason for this gap is a lack of a management agreement to quality service, too much emphasis on short-term objectives, and neglecting to determine the visitor's view of the facility or attraction.

- **Gap 3: The gap between service quality specifications and actual service delivery.**

This refers to a service delivery gap. It represents the difference between the standards that are set and the actual service rendered. In other words, the business does not meet its standards, and the gaps must thus be identified and corrected. This problem is the easiest to intercept.

- **Gap 4: The gap between actual service delivery and external communications about the service.**

This gap indicates empty promises and it originates between service delivery and external communication. A specific message is communicated, which creates an expectation. This expectation is not met. In such a case effective communication plays

an important role. This is a problem that regularly occurs in tourism when brochures and other communication mediums create a wrong impression.

- **Gap 5: The gap between the quality a customer perceives in a service and his expectations.**

Seen from the visitor's or tourist's point of view, this gap is the potential discrepancy that originates between the expected and observed service.

Bennett (2000: 250) contends that the first four gaps are identified as functions of the way in which service is delivered, whereas Gap 5 pertains to the customer. Research into Gap 5 of the SERVQUAL model is important since it reveals how customers rate a particular organisation's service quality. It is particularly important to establish the expectations of tourists with regard to the services offered by the establishment in question. It is also essential to assess how well the organisation has lived up to these expectations.

The SERVQUAL model may therefore be a powerful tool for tourism managers in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area to obtain valuable insights as to how to improve service quality in the tourism sector.

## **2.10 SUMMARY**

From this chapter it is apparent that there is a greater demand for higher standards of service provision and improved quality in the tourism industry. The Northern Cape, specifically Sol Plaatje Municipal Area, therefore has to recognise the vital importance of quality service if it wants tourists to have a memorable experience when visiting the region.

It is also evident that customers who are highly satisfied become more valuable customers, as they are more likely to purchase again and spend more in the future than customers whose expectations were met but not exceeded. The long-term and mutually satisfying relationship with the customer is therefore achieved through the

development of a service culture that focuses on best practice initiatives. In addition, since the tourism industry is also known as a 'people's industry', it is crucial that staff be empowered with the means to deal with all types of people.

An approach should therefore be adopted by the tourism industry that is more proactive in its pursuit of high-quality visitor experiences rather than reactive towards individual problems that arise as a result of tourist dissatisfaction after a visit. Furthermore, tourists want a genuine experience of a different culture or way of life. The destination marketer for the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area should therefore present and market an authentic product experience to the visiting tourist.

The SERVQUAL model was identified as the most reliable and trusted measure of customer service. It measures almost all aspects of customer service using five generic dimensions of service quality, i.e. reliability, responsiveness, assurance, tangibles and empathy. The Gaps model identifies seven key discrepancies relating to managerial perception of service quality, and tasks associated with service delivery to customers. The model is an important determinant of the gap between expected and perceived quality.

It is apparent from this chapter that service quality is one of the keys to success. To gain a competitive advantage in the marketplace, it is important to measure service quality at the accommodation establishments, transportation, restaurants and attractions in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area. The service indicators (discussed in Chapter 2) of accommodation establishments include the following: staff attitude, respect from staff, efficiency, presentability and effectiveness of staff together with good communication skills. The various service indicators of the transport sector include the attitude of staff, willingness to provide assistance, promptness of service, the efficiency and good interpersonal skills of employees. The service quality components at restaurants are: friendliness, efficient handling of complaints, friendliness, physical appearance and ambience of the restaurant. Finally, the service indicators of the attraction sector include: staff efficiency, friendliness, cleanliness, learning atmosphere and accessibility of the establishment, together with good value for money. All the above-mentioned components of service quality will be measured for the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area and reported on in Chapter 4.

The theoretical aspects of service quality that were discussed in Chapter 2 therefore form the basis for the compilation of the questions in the visitor questionnaire (refer to page 178) and interview questionnaire (refer to page 183).

## CHAPTER 3

### SERVICE QUALITY: NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

In view of the recent global financial crisis, the need to refocus on customer satisfaction and service quality has become more imperative as countries strive to reinvent themselves and their market strategies to pitch their appeal to tourists (Iswaran, 2009).

With the 2010 World Cup Soccer just behind us, South Africa is in a position to use the opportunity to position the country as a world class quality service destination and to ensure repeat visits. In light of this and to support the country's economic growth objectives, service quality has been declared a national priority. In addition, at the unveiling ceremony of the 2010 FIFA World Cup emblem in Berlin, ex-president Thabo Mbeki entered the nation into a service level agreement when he stated: 'We will host the most successful FIFA World Cup and we will keep that promise' (South African Service Quality Initiative, 2009). Looking forward, the challenge is to build on the successes achieved and recognise the service gaps and problems that surfaced during the hosting of this event.

In order to achieve a position as a world class quality service destination, it is important that South Africa look at international destinations such as Singapore, Malaysia and Germany to provide benchmarks for spectacular service. The destinations of Singapore and Malaysia have shown exceptional growth in their tourism industries over the past ten years. In addition, Germany hosted the 2006 World Cup Soccer and faced similar challenges in service quality to South Africa in its preparation for the 2010 World Cup Soccer.

This chapter therefore explores a national and international perspective on the concept of Service Quality and gives a descriptive review of key measures taken by specific countries in their quest to improve service quality and meet world class standards. In

addition, this chapter highlights the challenges and opportunities faced by provincial and foreign destinations, and its relevance to the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area.

## **3.2 NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON SERVICE EXCELLENCE**

### **3.2.1 The current situation**

Tourism plays a major role in the growth of the South African economy. According to the Minister of Tourism, Marthinus van Schalkwyk, South Africa recorded a total of more than 9.9 million foreign arrivals in 2009, compared to approximately 9.6 million in 2008 (South African Government, 2010). Foreign direct spenditure grew by 23.4% from R60.1 billion in 2007, to R74.2 billion in 2008. The total revenue generated by tourism in 2008 also showed an excellent growth rate of 23.5%. Van Schalkwyk acknowledged that weak service levels are currently one of the biggest challenges faced by the tourism industry (Van Schalkwyk, 2008: 3). In addition, in his opening speech at the annual National Tourism Conference in 2008, he stated that a skills audit undertaken in 2007 by the former Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism reflected that service excellence was one of the most crucial ingredients in achieving sustainable tourism growth in South Africa.

Furthermore, according to an Accenture Report (19 June 2007) entitled 'Leadership in Customer Service', South Africa's service delivery standard is the lowest in the world (Accenture Report, 2007). According to the report, the lack of customer service is on soft skills such as business etiquette, customer care and service attitude. In his speech at the 2008 Annual National Tourism Conference, Moeketsi Mosola, the former Chief Executive Officer of South African Tourism, acknowledged that there are pockets of excellence in the Tourism Industry but that the level of consistency with which it is delivered is not acceptable (Mosola, 2008:4). The authors Williams and Buswell (2003: 19) have suggested that if a customer's perception of a service is that it is 'excellent' and that it consistently meets their needs, the organisation can achieve and deliver excellent quality.

Other key findings of the 2007 Accenture Report include the following (Accenture Report, 2007):

- One of the most important critical skills lacking is customer service.
- There is an urgent need to develop a Customer Service Programme.
- Lack of an underlying service ethos prevailing across the industry consequently results in poor service delivery.
- The essential skills needed for good customer relations and service, should be introduced as part of every tourism qualification.

Consequently, the results of the 2007 Accenture Report prompted the former Deputy President, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, to declare service quality as a national priority in 2007 during the launch of a multifaceted programme called the 'South African Experiment' (South African Government, 2009). Furthermore, a draft Strategy for Service Excellence was presented at the 7<sup>th</sup> annual National Tourism Conference held on 3 November 2008. The theme of the conference was 'Building a Service Excellence Culture and Partnership in Tourism for 2010 and beyond' and served as an ideal platform for international benchmarking and dialogue between public and private sectors on service excellence (South African Government, 2009).

As part of her speech at the 2008 Annual National Tourism Conference, former Deputy President, Baleka Mbete said: 'The challenge with customer service in South Africa is not one of processes, but one of attitude, mindset and possibly culture. I see leadership, structure, technology, and training as the key ingredients in developing and maintaining a service excellence culture' (Mbete, 2008: 4). She further contends that such an approach will send a clear signal that South Africa recognises the importance of service excellence and is doing something about it. In her speech at the 2009 Global Conference in Service Excellence held in Singapore, Wildlife Reserves chief executive, Fanny Lai, emphasised the need to 'make service the corporate culture and DNA' of a company. She further states that companies need to have the 'philosophy that customer care is the right thing to do' (Chew, 2009).

It is therefore evident that South Africa needs to pay attention to service excellence, particularly if it wants to maintain current growth and provide a memorable experience beyond the 2010 FIFA World Cup.

The importance of a memorable customer experience is emphasized in the Disney Organisation's 'Model of Customer Care'. The Disney philosophy is to 'exceed customer expectation and pay attention to detail', with the visitor at the centre of all elements that drive business activities (Page, 2009: 393). In addition, staff needs to know their customers and understand them in terms of psychographics (consumer's lifestyle, characteristics, et cetera.). On the basis of this information, Disney develops a service theme (the type of service their guest wants), which has four key service standards, namely: safety, courtesy, show (to provide a seamless experience) and efficiency (to ensure smooth operations) (Page, 2009: 393).

An important issue that surfaced at the 2008 Annual National Tourism Conference is the shortage of and the need to develop necessary skills in the tourism industry. According to a media statement released by the Department of Tourism on 28 April 2010, South Africa is ranked 62<sup>nd</sup> out of 124 countries by the World Travel Tourism Council on its customer service delivery standards (Department of Tourism, 2010). The report further states that the inability to provide excellent service levels is affected by issues which include the lack of customer service culture by some frontline staff, inadequate job training, and a lack of urgency, an imbalanced focus on technical job skills as opposed to interpersonal 'customer and people' skills development (Department of Tourism, 2010). In her speech at the 2008 Annual National Tourism Conference, Nhlumayo said: 'We as South Africa has the best products, we have the best infrastructure, but when it comes to people issues, we're not doing so well' (Nhlumayo, 2008: 4).

Furthermore, Mbete highlighted that Universities need to be elevated to become dominant centres of excellence, emphasizing the art of service and introducing e-learning modules for tourist guides. In addition, Skills Development Initiatives have been prioritised through the 'Joint Initiative for Priority Skills Acquisition' (JIPSA). The focus of JIPSA will be on skills required in the sectors that were prioritised such as the Tourism Sector (Mbete, 2008: 2).

According to Page (2009: 388), the challenges facing the tourism industry will only be met successfully by a well-educated, well-trained, bright, energetic, multi-lingual and entrepreneurial workforce. He further states that a high quality of professional human resources in tourism will allow organisations to gain a competitive edge and deliver added value with their service (Page, 2009: 388). Evidently, without a steady supply and development of people, growth for the tourism sector in South Africa will come under severe threat.

### **3.2.2 Challenges**

Moeketsi Mosola, former Chief Executive Officer of South African Tourism stated at the 2008 Annual National Tourism Conference that global competitiveness and service excellence are no longer 'nice to haves', but that they are fundamental for the development and transformation of an ever-growing number of South Africans (Mosola, 2008: 5). South Africa therefore needs to be competitive in order to grow as a destination, to attract more foreign and domestic spending and for the creation of jobs.

According to the South African Marketing Tourism Growth Strategy (Department of Tourism, 2008: 107), South Africa was marketed in the past in terms of what products were on offer, with little reference to the desired experience of the consumer or a brand positioning for the country. The report further states that South Africa must be able to differentiate itself from its competitors in order to achieve sustained growth. According to Strydom (2004: 33) the service efficiency and personal attention offered to customers make a crucial difference in gaining leverage in the marketplace. He further states that businesses that deliver superior service over their competitors have a real competitive strength. Service excellence is therefore one way in which the South African tourism industry may choose to differentiate itself from competitors in the future.

In her speech at the 2008 Annual National Tourism Conference, former Deputy President of South Africa, Baleka Mbete, states that excellence in customer service is the key driver of bottom-line results, in answer to the question, 'Why Service Excellence?' (Mbete, 2008: 4).

The following was required to attain a highly satisfactory experience to tourists during the 2010 Soccer World Cup event (Focus Group Report, 2008: 11):

- The appropriate skills and service levels within the tourism industry;
- The appropriate service levels at key consumer touch points outside the tourism industry (for example, embassies and immigration); and
- A general public that are friendly and play a welcoming host to visitors during the event.

In addition, tourists seek a quality 'experience chain' that links together the many service components of a complex travel experience. The challenge facing the tourism industry is therefore to ensure not only high-quality links in the experience chain, but an enjoyable, hassle-free passage from one link to another (Goeldner & Ritchie, 2006: 570).

A dynamic world market requires constant innovation which means businesses need to constantly invest in upgrading their performance against consumers' ever changing needs and choices. The South African Marketing Tourism Growth Strategy (2008: 44) states that an alignment within the tourism sector must be created. The tourism industry needs to redefine and upgrade products and services to deliver against the promise offered by the marketing message. This is emphasised by the Disney Organisation's 'Model of Customer Care' which is constantly reinventing itself and seeking ways to stay ahead of the competition (Page, 2009: 394). According to Page (2009: 394), management research has termed this 'business re-engineering' – seeking to reintegrate processes (for example, tasks, labour and knowledge) to make continuous improvements to its business performance.

Furthermore, the Global Competitiveness Programme for the tourism industry in South Africa (2005 - 2010: 68) was also developed to, amongst others, examine South Africa's competitiveness in areas such as quality service. According to the programme, results from both consumer and industry surveys show that service levels and human resource skills are areas that now need to become a core focus of the industry. There is also an indication from tourists that are dissatisfied (mostly business travellers), that service

levels are an issue. The report states that in 2004, 53 percent of business travellers and 50 percent of leisure travellers rated 'quality' as a characteristic that fails to meet their expectation. In addition, 69 percent of business travellers compared to 34 percent leisure tourists rated 'service levels' as a characteristic that fails to meet their expectation (Department of Tourism, 2005 - 2010: 68). It is therefore apparent that South Africa is in need of an integrated service excellence strategy if it wants to compete with world class standards.

### **3.2.3 Action plans or measures taken**

The Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT), together with role players in the tourism sector, have put in place the following measures to improve tourism service delivery in the country:

#### **3.2.3.1 The 'Welcome Campaign'**

It is estimated that every person that comes as a tourist to South Africa goes home and tells eight other people of his or her experience. As the Tourism Industry is therefore particularly vulnerable to perception, word-of-mouth marketing is thus important to make sure each visitor to South Africa goes home with a positive experience of the country, people, services and hospitality products (Mosola, 2008: 9).

It is with this in mind that the South African Tourism's Welcome Campaign was launched at the 2004 Tourism Indaba and aims to persuade South Africans to be good hosts. In his speech at the annual National Tourism Conference in November 2008, Moeketsi Mosola, said, 'At the heart of the Welcome Campaign is the commitment to tell every South African from every walk of life that tourism is everyone's business and therefore, every South African must play their part'. Furthermore, it is important to ensure that everyone who is involved with tourists and form part of the tourism value chain is equipped with the knowledge and skills to make visitors feel welcome.

The annual Welcome Awards is a prestigious event and open to four main categories: accommodation, tour operators, tourist attractions and tourist guides. According to

Mosola, ‘...the various category winners represent the cream of what our destination offers visitors in terms of outstanding service, luxurious experiences, efficiency and professionalism’ (Mosola, 2008: 4).

### **3.2.3.2 The ‘South African Experiment’**

This multi-faceted programme, referred to as the ‘South African Experiment’, was launched in 2007. This countrywide strategic intervention programme aimed to boost sustainable economic growth, reduce government-private sector mistrust and increase service delivery ahead of the 2010 FIFA World Cup (Marcus, 2009).

Phase one was directed at service quality and formed part of the National Service Excellence Strategy that was first launched at the annual National Tourism Conference in November 2008. This first phase, also called the ‘Tourism Service Excellence Initiative’ began in October 2009. According to Mmatsatsi Marobe, CEO of the Tourism Business Council of South Africa, the main objective in phase one of the project was to evaluate the current customer service delivery and gaps in South Africa, and to use this information to develop a locally relevant programme for the delivery of a memorable and unforgettable service to all who visit the country (Department of Tourism, 2009).

The launching of the South African Experiment followed a brainstorming session led by a group of senior doctorate students from the Da Vinci Institute for Technology Management (sponsor of the programme) on the challenges facing the country, with particular focus on service delivery. The outcomes of the deliberations were to be used as input into phase one of the project, directed specifically at service quality (Mbetse, 2008: 3).

According to Professor Roy Marcus, chairman of the Da Vinci Institute for Technology Management, there is an inextricable link between the competitive advantage of a nation and its ability to embrace the fundamentals of service quality. He states, ‘South Africa’s aim of delivering a memorable customer service experience calls for an urgent, robust plan to systematically transform the country’s service culture. The South African

Experiment is the ideal platform for engaging the private sector in this objective' (Marcus, 2009).

- **The Draft Strategy of Service Excellence**

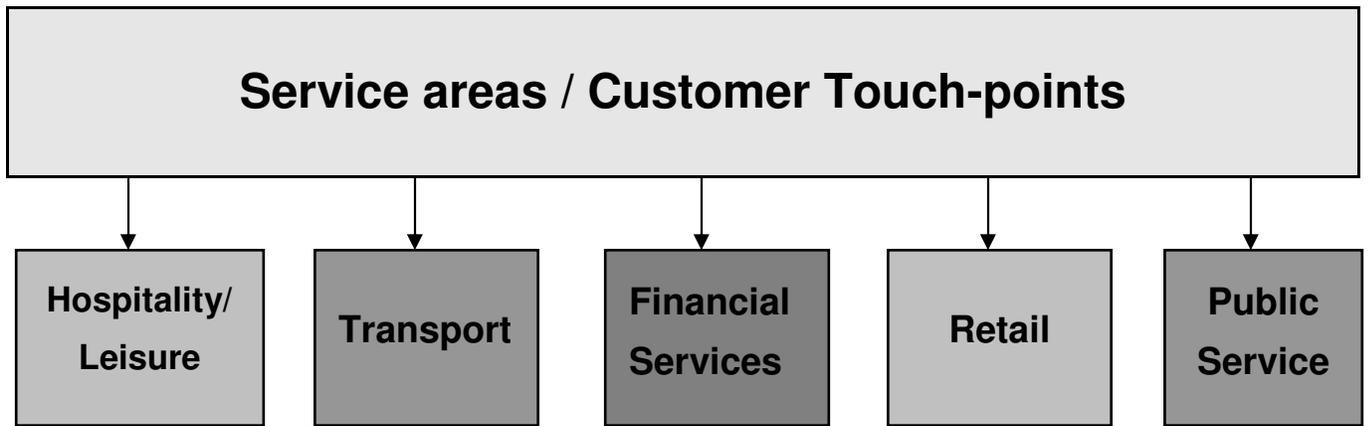
In the past the country never had an integrated approach to service excellence. The indoctrination of an 'Integrated South African Tourism Service Excellence Strategy' will therefore provide the impetus to consolidate all efforts and produce a strategy that will guide service excellence in the tourism sector for 2010 and beyond (Focus Group Report, 2008: 11).

Service excellence has long been a priority for both the private and public sectors. As a result, the Department of Tourism and the Tourism Business Council of South Africa (TBCSA), in consultation with international experts, embarked on a public-private partnership to promote, develop and sustain greater levels of service excellence not only throughout the Tourism Value Chain, but also in terms of greater public awareness (Department of Tourism, 2009).

In her speech at the 2008 Annual National Tourism Conference, Sindiswa Nhlumayo, Deputy Director-General at the Department of Tourism, said: 'The tasks and responsibilities related to 2010 and growing tourism numbers, compels us to redefine what we mean when we talk of service excellence and culture'. Nhlumayo further pointed out that all efforts (initiatives and programmes) across sectors must be integrated into a clear and comprehensive plan. The tourist service experience (see Figure 3.1), involves the entire tourism service value chain and not only the tourism sector (Nhlumayo, 2008: 5).



**Figure 3.2: Tourism Cluster**



Source: Adapted from Nhlumayo (2008).

- **The Plan**

The platform for service experience delivery at any organisation consists of three parts. The first part is the PIE, which are Produce, Infrastructure and Environment. The second one is PES, which stand for Prophecies, Efficiency and Systems, and the third one is PAB which consists of People, Attitudes and Behaviour. These three parts forms the Integrated Tourism Service Excellence Strategy and will be South Africa's competitive advantage in attracting new tourists. According to Nhlumayo, South Africa is doing very well in most of the above-mentioned categories, but not in terms of the PAB (Nhlumayo, 2008: 6). Middleton, Fyall & Morgan (2009: 145) recognise the powerful impact that staff members' physical appearance, behaviour, knowledge and attitudes can have on customer's perception of the organisation they represent.

The vision of the Service Excellence Strategy is to deliver a pleasant and unforgettable service experience to visiting tourists to South Africa. In addition, the mission is to create a service-orientated culture and provide human behaviour solutions that will touch the entire tourism service value chain. It will further ensure that service excellence is rooted in the culture, policies, prophecies and mindset of the leaders in the country (Nhlumayo, 2008: 7).

Five strategic pillars have been identified to implement the Service Excellence Strategy (Table 3.1) (South Africa Service Quality Initiative, 2009):

**Table 3.1: Five strategic pillars of the Service Excellence Strategy.**

<b>PILLAR ONE: Research &amp; Information</b>	
<b>Focus</b>	<b>Actions</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Objective:</b> benchmarking and measuring of service standards for the monitoring and improvement of customer satisfaction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop a baseline for Customer Service Satisfaction for South Africa</li> <li>- Measure customer satisfaction cutting across the entire tourism service value chain</li> <li>- Measure and benchmark customer satisfaction levels over time</li> <li>- Provide vigorous, objective and comprehensive assessment of South African Tourism service levels</li> <li>- Engage in timely and relevant research so that businesses can be supported to develop service strategies and raise service standards</li> <li>- Introduce national Service Readiness Index to be published at regular intervals</li> </ul>

<b>PILLAR TWO: Up-skilling of service delivery</b>	
<b>Focus</b>	<b>Actions</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Behaviour and attitude alignment at all service touch points using appropriate training programmes and other interventions to achieve sustainable change in behaviour</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ensure that current SA Host programme integrate behavioural issues and is applicable to the entire tourism service value chain</li> <li>- Develop customised customer care programmes applicable to the entire service value chain</li> <li>- Work with the Tourism, Hospitality and Sport, Education and Training Authority (THETA) to ensure that there is accredited trainers</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Communicate information on available training programmes</li> <li>- Lobby education and training stakeholders to integrate service excellence issues in all tourism related training programmes</li> </ul>
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<b>PILLAR THREE: Public awareness</b>
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<b>Focus</b>	<b>Actions</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Educate consumers on minimum world class standards to demand and to motivate South Africans to be hospitable and welcoming in 2010 and beyond.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Introduce National Service Excellence Awards based on the public nomination process to be launched in 2010 (replace existing Welcome Awards)</li> <li>- Introduce National Service Excellence Month</li> <li>- Host Annual Service Excellence Conference</li> <li>- Introduce Service Excellence News</li> <li>- Introduce Service Excellence Reality TV Series</li> <li>- Introduce internal branding programme featuring public heroes as champions of the National Journey to Service Excellence</li> <li>- Introduce Service Excellence Talk Show on Radio and TV</li> <li>- Introduce 'Go an Extra Mile Campaign' for South Africa</li> <li>- Introduce 'Great Service Begins with me Campaign'</li> </ul>

<b>PILLAR FOUR: Measurement and monitoring of service standards</b>
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<b>Focus</b>	<b>Actions</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Implementation of a credible and effective grading / accreditation system that includes behaviour</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Introduce a South African mark of quality to be provided to all companies and organisations that comply with the requirements for service</li> </ul>

and attitude assessment at all service touch points	<p>excellence applicable to all stakeholders in the Tourism Service Value Chain, covering issues such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Introduce standards for business excellence in innovation, people and service</li> <li>- Encourage industry players to be Investor in People accredited</li> <li>- Train the trainers to assist all players in implementing standards</li> <li>- Introduce web-based self assessment tools</li> </ul>
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<b>PILLAR FIVE: Consumer feedback system</b>	
<b>Focus</b>	<b>Actions</b>
- Well publicised, credible and real-time consumer feedback system that is linked to grading and accreditation system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Introduce voluntary Travellers' Charter and Ombudsperson for the industry</li> <li>- Introduce cellular based customer feedback line</li> <li>- Introduce National Tourism Consumer Helpline</li> <li>- Introduce public write-in programme on customer service excellence with complaints and accolades published on a service excellence website and in newspaper columns</li> </ul>

Source: South Africa Service Quality Initiative (2009)

Nhlumayo also stated that the critical success factor for the above-mentioned strategy will firstly be political leadership (Nhlumayo, 2008: 9). The transformation of the service levels in South Africa starts with the leadership of the country, who need to take the initiative to pro-actively do something about service quality. Secondly, key role-players such as public and private enterprises, must be convinced to support the service excellence strategy. Thirdly, resources are needed to implement the Service Excellence Strategy and change perceptions regarding service levels in order to become more competitive. Finally, it would require the commitment of all South Africans to ensure visitors receive excellent service (Nhlumayo, 2008: 9).

### **3.3 INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE**

#### **3.3.1 Lessons to be learnt from Singapore**

Although Singapore has only four million people and is one of the smallest countries in the world, it received 10.8 million visitor arrivals in 2008 (Singapore Tourism Board, 2009). The Singapore Tourism Board aims to achieve a target of 17 million visitor arrivals by 2015. According to Gan Kim Yong, Acting Minister for Manpower in Singapore, 'The need to enhance our service competitiveness remains paramount so that Singapore will be well-positioned to capitalise on the growth opportunities in the tourism industry and hospitality sector' (Ministry of Manpower, 2009).

Furthermore, Buck Tang, representative from Singapore and member of Singapore Service Quality Centre, at the Annual National Tourism Conference in 2008, said "If you are looking at the last 40 years, there is one word that shaped Singapore; the word is called 'quality'". Tang further stated that quality did not happen by chance in Singapore, it took a very strong commitment from the government of the country (Tang, 2008: 2).

##### **3.3.1.1 Service Quality Centre (SQ)**

The Singapore Government made a strong commitment in the 1990s to improve service quality in the country by forming an organisation called the Service Quality (SQ) Centre which is a private and public joint initiative. The SQ Centre has partnered with organisations over twenty countries to achieve sustainable results in service excellence (Singapore Management University, 2009).

##### **3.3.1.2 Institute of Service Excellence**

In addition, the Singapore Government also encouraged the establishment of the Institute of Service Excellence on 18 July 2007 by the Singapore Management University and Singapore Workforce Agency with the primary aim of raising service standards and promoting a culture of service excellence in Singapore. By working in close collaboration and consultation with government agencies, it promotes a culture of

service excellence and encourages business leaders to incorporate service excellence into their business strategies, processes and systems (Singapore Management University, 2009).

The Institute of Service Excellence has three key focus areas, namely:

- **Benchmarking and Comparative Analysis**

The objective of benchmarking and measuring service standards is critical for the monitoring and improvement of customer satisfaction levels. One of the projects initiated by the Institute of Service Excellence is the Customer Satisfaction Index of Singapore (CSISG). The CSISG measures and reports the overall customer satisfaction scores across sectors and subsectors, as well as companies with the largest market shares (Singapore Management University, 2009).

According to Shankari (2009), an index such as the CSISG will break down the various components of what satisfies a customer, allowing a company to work on improving one or more aspects of its processes. In addition, once an organisation knows how it rates in comparison to other companies within and outside the sector, then it can realistically look for ways to improve itself (Shankari, 2009).

- **Research and Thought Leadership**

By engaging in timely and relevant research on service excellence, the Institute is primed to facilitate businesses in their efforts to develop service strategies, innovative business solutions and raise service standards (Singapore Management University, 2009).

- **Industry Engagement**

The Institute of Service Excellence taps into industry and business leaders for their insights and feedback via forums, conferences and dialogues. The objective is to synergise industry knowledge and the research capabilities of Singapore Management

University to develop tools and innovative strategies that will sharpen the service sector's competitive edge (Singapore Management University, 2009).

### **3.3.1.3 Go the Extra Mile for Service (GEMS)**

The Singapore Government has also invested in a project called 'Go the Extra Mile for Service' (GEMS), which aims to encourage all Singaporeans to take the initiative to improve service levels and work towards achieving an excellent service culture in Singapore (Singapore Government, 2009). GEMS organises a whole host of activities and programmes which are aimed at the following (Singapore Government, 2009):

- **Service Leadership** – Encouraging employers to take the lead in making service competitiveness their business strategy.
- **Service Capability** – Training service workers to be competent, knowledgeable and effective in their jobs.
- **Service Mindset** – Encouraging Singapore to value careers in services as well as respect and appreciate service workers.
- **Service in Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs)** – Upgrading service standards of SMEs.

The success of the above-mentioned project will help to enhance Singapore's attractiveness to visitors, stimulate the performance of the tourism sector and in turn create more jobs and brighter business prospects for the tourism industry (Singapore Tourism Board, 2009).

### **3.3.1.4 Singapore Tourism Board**

The Singapore Tourism Board (STB) formed a Service Quality Division in February 2003 to set new benchmarks in the service standards of tourism related sectors and to ensure effective delivery of information to visitors. This division encourages the tourism industry to use service quality as an experience differentiator and a competitive

advantage for Singapore. In addition, it aims to institute new service standards in key tourism sectors to improve visitors' satisfaction and increase tourism arrivals (Singapore Tourism Board, 2009).

The Service Quality Division has two departments responsible for improving service quality and delivering quality information to visitors:

- **Customer Information and Service Department**

The effective delivery of destination information to all visitors in Singapore is achieved through an extensive network of brochure distribution points and the Singapore Visitors Centres (SVCs) in key tourist areas. The department also provides mobile SVCs at various venues for exhibitions and conventions to cater for the business and MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, Exhibitions and Events) visitors (Singapore Tourism Board, 2009).

The Customer Information and Service Department also manages the 'Uniquely Singapore Friends', a volunteer scheme that welcomes the public to be a part of Singapore's tourism by sharing their own Singapore stories with tourists at the SVCs and making a difference in creating a memorable Singapore experience (Singapore Tourism Board, 2009).

- **Service Culture, Assessment and Feedback Department**

This department aims to create a strong service culture in tourism organisations and is responsible for managing a comprehensive feedback system. It also seeks to generate greater awareness of the importance of service excellence through seminars and workshops and facilitate service experts in the sharing of their knowledge with tourism service providers to encourage the adoption of best practices (Singapore Tourism Board, 2009).

In addition, through the comprehensive feedback system, the department manages tourist complaints, ensuring that these are promptly and professionally addressed. The feedback system also serves as a 'listening post' within STB to ensure prompt and effective management of feedback for the benefit of the tourism sector (Singapore Tourism Board, 2009).

The annual tourism awards, the 'Singapore Experience Awards' recognise individuals and organisations with the best product and service delivery who have contributed to a distinctive and compelling Singapore experience. The Awards bring together the best in the fields of retail, leisure, education, healthcare, business travel and MICE (Singapore Tourism Board, 2009).

Finally, this department facilitates the establishment of Performance Standards Excellence within the tourism industry. An accreditation scheme, 'Singapore Service STAR' was developed by the Singapore Tourism Board (STB) with the aim to recognise and promote businesses that deliver good service and set new standards in the tourism industry. Businesses from Retail, Food & Beverage and Entertainment industries can join this scheme (Singapore Tourism Board, 2009).

There are three words that guide or govern Singapore as a nation at the highest level, namely integrity, service and excellence. According to Gan Kim Yong, good service will generate loyalty, repeat business and higher profits (Ministry of Manpower, 2009). He further pointed out that customer satisfaction is driven by factors beyond front-line service. It is about providing a total customer experience that meets or even exceeds customers' expectations. Yong states, 'It includes branding and customers' perception of quality, of how much value he is getting for his money, how he compares his current and his past experiences, as well as his future expectations' (Ministry of Manpower, 2009). According to Cooper & Hall (2008: 320), tourists who are satisfied with a destination or tourism businesses

- are likely to become loyal and visit repeatedly;
- will deepen their relationships with the destination and its individual service providers;
- are more likely to recommend the destination to others;
- demonstrate less price sensitivity.

According to Tang, (2008: 4) service excellence needs to be translated down to every single level, in the public or private sector. Furthermore, one fundamental approach that Singapore had over the years was that everyone (government, employees, et

cetera.) joined forces to improve the quality of service in the country. Goeldner and Ritchie (2006: 536) claims that keeping customers satisfied is everybody's job in an organisation and employees should strive to exceed customer expectations.

Singapore spent millions of dollars on campaigns to educate, communicate and equip the people in the country. Most importantly, the message behind these campaigns was to spell out what role each person needed to play to achieve service excellence (Tang, 2008: 4). According to Page (2009: 121), the wider tourism industry and agencies responsible for tourism in a destination need to pull in the same direction, to work towards common goals and to promote the attributes of the destination in a positive manner so that the images of the area, place or destination are enhanced or maintained.

Yong confirmed this in his speech at the 14<sup>th</sup> Service Excellent Awards (2008) in Singapore. He states, 'Everyone has a role to play in achieving service excellence. This includes the receptionist who is not only courteous but is also able to answer customers' queries, to the line manager who trains his staff and schedules the roster to maximise staff productivity'. He further states that senior managers also play a part by deciding how to position their brand and how much should be invested in training, demand forecasting and customer relationship management systems. He emphasises that a service excellence culture must form part of an organisation's culture (Ministry of Manpower, 2009).

In his speech at the 2008 Annual National Tourism Conference at Emperor's Palace, Tang further discussed the challenge of creating a customer experience 'DNA' that is unique to a country or a specific organisation. Thus, it is not only about providing a good service but to design it in such a way that a good service will eventually lead to a very different and unique service brand. Tang stated, 'By not having a clearly defined customer experience DNA (at country or company level), you will find that you are wasting all your resources and are going around in circles'. According to Cooper & Hall (2008: 317), it is imperative that tourism firms understand how to manage service encounters as they may lead to satisfaction, loyalty and positive word-of-mouth recommendations.

Tang further said that while the training of employees is important, one should ask 'What will be the focus of the training?'. According to Tang (2008) the training programmes should be able to link with the outcome that is in mind for the customer experience DNA of an organisation or country. On the other hand, a service mindset cannot be trained, but can be influenced if you design your whole learning process in such a way that employees engage emotionally with tourists (Tang, 2008). Emotions play an important role with service employees, as observable facial and body displays create impressions, and emotional displays by service providers can have positive or negative effects on customers, for example empathy when something has gone wrong or being excited when a customer is, et cetera. (Cooper & Hall, 2008: 319).

The customer experience is therefore by design, not by chance. The whole experience, from the moment the tourist disembarks from the aircraft and go through all the necessary procedures within the airport, leave the airport, use transportation, goes to the hotel, does shopping, et cetera, must be carefully managed and planned at a country level (Tang, 2008). In addition, even the way an employee greets a tourist, how they behave, smile, et cetera. needs to be planned for. According to Cooper & Hall (2008: 309), all the elements of a destination must be managed with a focus on the tourist, with tourist 'perceived value' being the driving force for all decisions. Everyone in South Africa therefore needs to take responsibility for the provision of excellent service if the country wants to shape a unique and different experience DNA for tourists to remember.

In his speech at the Global Conference on Service Excellence, Ho Kwon Ping, executive chairman of Premium Resorts operator Banyan Tree Holdings in Singapore, said the following, 'Service excellence comes from people doing their work consistently with pride in quality, and pride in that bond between themselves and customers. And this can only come from the values of a society and a company' (Singapore Management University, 2009).

Finally, in his opening address, at the 2009 Singapore Global Conference in Service Excellence, Senior Minister of State for Trade and Industry and Education, Mr S. Iswaran highlighted the following three important points for businesses wanting to seize opportunities and reinvent their service delivery (Singapore Government, 2009):

- Training is critical to prepare for higher levels of service delivery
- Service leaders must lead by example
- Introduce benchmarking to achieve new areas of growth

### **3.3.2 Lessons to be learnt from Malaysia**

Malaysia began to focus on tourism in 1998 following an economic crisis in Asia. As a result of new allocations that were given to tourism, the industry grew from 5.5 million visitors in 1998 to 20 million visitors in 2008. Tourist arrivals in Malaysia have more than quadrupled, with a 300% growth rate in tourist arrivals in less than a decade (Wee, 2008: 1). In Asia, Malaysia is second only to China in terms of tourist arrivals. The tourism sector contributes some 7% to Malaysia's gross domestic product (Say, 2009).

Ngiam Foong, president of the Malaysian Association of Tour and Travel Agents (MATTA), states in a newspaper article 'Branding Malaysia', that it is important to get every single player and person in the country to embrace the tourism culture (Say, 2009). Foong further states that when a tourist goes shopping, he undergoes different 'experiences' that can subconsciously make him a repeat tourist. He says, 'Right from the moment they arrive, the immigration officer must smile; the taxi driver must be friendly and all the way up to the bell boy in the hotel'. He feels that it is up to Malaysians to deliver these positive 'experiences' to a tourist when they come to Malaysia (Say, 2009). According to Middleton, Fyall and Morgan (2009: 147), consumers move through a series of encounters during the tourism experience. Some encounters are of greater importance than others and these may be considered as 'critical incidents', or 'moments of truth'. It is the 'moments of truth' that stay in the consumer's mind and signify quality and satisfaction (Middleton *et al.*, 2009: 148).

In his speech at the 2008 Annual Tourism Conference at Emperor's Palace, Mr Wee, Secretary General for Tourism in Malaysia, distinguishes between both the hardware as well as the software aspect of quality (see Table 3.2) (Wee, 2008: 7).

**Table 3.2: Components of Quality Service**

<b>ASPECTS OF QUALITY</b>	
<b>HARDWARE</b>	<b>SOFTWARE</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infrastructure</li> <li>• Tourism attractions</li> <li>• New product development by public and private sectors</li> <li>• Maintenance by local authorities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainable tourism development</li> <li>• Coordination among all players</li> <li>• Public awareness</li> <li>• Comfort, safety and security of tourists</li> </ul>

Source: Adapted from Wee (2008: 7)

### **3.3.2.1 Hardware aspect of quality**

- **Infrastructure**

Wee (2008: 7) pointed out every country that wishes to build their tourism industry need to pay attention to its infrastructure. According to Burton (1994: 176), travel between countries will be encouraged where good transport infrastructures exist. The challenge is to increase the accessibility and flexibility of a destination by road, rail, sea and air

transportation as well as accommodation (Wee, 2008: 7). Ngiam Foong states in the above-mentioned article 'Branding Malaysia' that Malaysia has to improve their public transportation system for it to be a more accessible destination (Say, 2009). Another challenge is to improve entry and exit procedures of customs and immigrations between countries to ensure problem-free travel. According to Page (2009: 141), transport is the most critical element in the promotion of the growth of domestic and international tourism. It enables the tourist to consume the products and experiences they have purchased, because it links the supply chain together (Page, 2009: 141).

- **Tourism attractions**

The improvement of both man-made and natural attractions at a destination is important. This will involve the restoration and conservation of historical sites, the upgrading of tourism facilities, beautification and the development of medium price hotels. Wee (2008: 8) states that local authorities are very often running on a budgetary deficit. But regardless of increases in rates, local authorities still need to deliver quality service and facilities must be maintained.

The importance of the above lies in the fact that attractions are considered the most powerful component in the supply side of tourism. Whilst the market provides the 'push' of traveller movement, attractions provide the major 'pull' (Bennett, Jooste & Strydom, 2005: 39).

- **New product development by public and private sectors**

In Malaysia, incentives are provided for private sector investment in developing new products, facilities and attractions. For example, there is a special tourism fund where loans are given at subsidised interest rates (Wee, 2008: 8).

- **Maintenance by local authorities**

Wee (2008: 9) pointed out that it must be the responsibility of local authorities to maintain facilities. Although destination facilities do not act as travel generators, they

fulfill a very important role in the tourism industry (Bennett *et al.*, 2005: 9). In the article 'Branding Malaysia' (Say, 2009), Ivo Nekvapil, vice-president of Malaysia Association of Hotels (MAH), said, 'We have to improve the image of our facilities, especially our taxi and limo services' and 'We have to continually improve our service in hotels as we are sometimes far behind the service of Thailand and Indonesia'. The images customers have towards products strongly influence their buying decisions (Middleton *et al.*, 2009: 148).

### **3.3.2.2 Software aspects of Quality**

- **Sustainable tourism development**

According to Wee (2008: 9), all planning for tourism developments must seek a balance amongst its economic, social and environmental goals. Sustainability pertains to the ability of a destination to maintain the quality of its physical, social, cultural and environmental resources while it competes in the marketplace (Goeldner & Ritchie, 2006: 408). All tourism developments must therefore have a holistic and integrated approach that leverages on the innovation and vitality of the private sector, hospitality, courtesy and civic-consciousness of the public, as well as government support (Wee, 2008: 9).

- **Coordination among role-players**

Greater coordination among role-players at all levels in the tourism industry is important. According to Ngiam Foong, there is the notion that the role-players of the tourism sector comprise mainly of the government and hotels. He says, 'The stakeholders include the government, the airlines, hotels, tour agents, the attractions, the shopping and the people' (Say, 2009). According to Wee (2008:10) it is easy to come up with the best strategies and policies at national level, but on ground level things are quite different.

- **Public awareness**

Public awareness about the importance of sustainable tourism must be created. Goeldner and Ritchie (2006: 485) suggest that an awareness of environmental and cultural values must be fostered in both the management and staff of all tourism projects and activities. Malaysia runs a programme called 'Welcome to the World' to prepare the Malaysian public to be more hospitable to tourists (Wee, 2008:10). Ngiam Foong highlights that the public plays an important role and must get involved in tourism. For example, when a tourist stops to ask for directions, they must be assisted (Say, 2009).

- **Comfort, safety and security of tourists**

The comfort, safety and security of tourists visiting Malaysia must be assured at all times. Ngiam Foong says the following: 'Certainly no country is crime free. And with Singapore being our neighbour, they read our news. What happens here, impacts them. So this is a perception issue we need to address' (Say, 2009). Goeldner and Ritchie (2006: 299) claim that crimes against tourists result in bad publicity and create a negative image in the minds of prospective visitors.

### **3.3.2.3 Service Quality for Competitiveness**

The continual improvement of quality standards is very important if the destination wants to attract and meet the expectations of high value tourists. In the article 'Branding Malaysia' (February, 2009), Ivo Nekvapil states there ought to be more emphasis on targeting the right markets if Malaysia wants to draw better quality tourists. He further says that Malaysia should target tourists from Europe, Australia and Japan, adding that it might not be that difficult given Malaysia's plus points – a value-for-money destination, good products, service and hotels (Say, 2009).

According to Wee (2008: 11), the challenge in tourism is to not only sell a dream but also to fulfill it because this will give rise to goodwill and image building for the country. In return it will result in positive word-of-mouth recommendations and repeat visits by

tourists. Wee further states that service quality must be the key differentiating factor amongst destinations.

#### **3.3.2.4 Enhancing Quality Services**

In his speech at the 2008 Annual Tourism Conference at Emperor's Palace, Wee emphasised the importance of human contact – the personal care and touch in the provision of service in the tourism industry. He further contends that a service culture must be inculcated in homes, schools, institutions and society at large (Wee, 2008: 12).

#### **3.3.2.5 Improvement Measures**

Malaysia implemented the following measures to raise the quality of service in the country and the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area could benefit from following these steps (Wee, 2008: 13):

- **Training and standards**

It is important to establish standards for the tourism industry, including the training that is being provided by different institutions. The national tourism human resources government council is responsible for the planning and co-ordination of human resource development assets. In addition they are responsible for the National Occupational Skills Standards (NOSS) for tourism as well as tourism-related education and student tourism programmes (Wee, 2008: 13).

- **'Malaysia Welcomes the World' Campaign**

This campaign known as the 'Malaysia Welcomes the World' was run in 2007 and it coincided with the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of its Independence (Malaysian Chinese Tourism Association, 2009). It included a nationwide training programme which targeted the public and private sectors, educating all front-line staff on how to treat tourists. It especially involved the immigration and custom departments, tourist police, taxi drivers, retailers, hotel staff, et cetera.

Special attention was given to popular areas visited by foreign tourists. There was also a campaign aimed at the public, to encourage them to act with courtesy and helpfulness. This was done to create a sense of awareness that tourism is an important industry as it provides a valuable income and thus is a major job creator (Wee, 2008:14). Local authorities were also encouraged to maintain tourism facilities and products.

- **Experience Enrichment**

Tourism programmes and activities portray Malaysia as an exotic place with year-round events, filled with a carnival atmosphere. Fifty major events are organised every year to include a wide spectrum of the cultural and religious festivals of the multiracial Malaysian society, such as 'Colours of Malaysia', a festival of dances and a celebration of the different races. Other festivals include Independence Day Celebration and Food and Fruit Festivals. A Formula One Grand Prix is also held in Malaysia every year (Wee, 2008:15).

The government budgeted some RM200million for the most recent 'Visit Malaysia 2007' campaign, and succeeded to increase tourist arrivals by 20% to 20.97 million in 2007, an increase of 4 million tourists from the previous year (Say, 2009). In addition, as part of the campaign, Malaysia opened 31 new shopping malls to support three major sale events which attract shoppers throughout Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia.

- **Regional Cooperation**

An initiative by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) aims to improve tourism attractiveness and standards within the region. A mutual Recognition Agreement exists between member countries which permits a person trained in one member country to work in another member country. Efforts and resources are therefore combined to encourage tourists to visit the region (Wee, 2008:15).

In his speech at the 2008 Annual National Tourism Conference at Emperor's Palace, Wee (2008: 16) stated that quality improvement requires commitment at all levels (local,

national and international). He concluded that the quality of service is dependent on how well the visitor's expectation can be met. The challenge will therefore be to improve the quality of the hardware and software aspects in tourism.

### **3.3.4 Lessons to be learnt from Germany**

#### **3.3.4.1 FIFA World Cup 2006**

In his speech at the 2008 Annual Tourism Conference at Emperor's Palace, Dr Nikolaus Eberl, author of the book 'BrandOvation: How Germany won the World Cup of Nation Branding', shared on the lessons Germany learnt during the four weeks prior to hosting the World Cup Soccer in 2006. According to Eberl, the first step that Germany undertook was to evaluate the strength of the existing brands. They appointed Austrian Arts Director Andre Heller to identify the true perceptions other nations have about Germany (Eberl, 2008a).

Germany used to be perceived as a factory and heavily weighted on the 'hard' side of politics and economics rather than the 'soft' side of people and culture, when compared to countries such as Italy and Brazil (SASQI, 2008). The image of the entire nation of 82 million people therefore had to be transformed from being perceived as hard and cold, to a nation associated with warmth, hospitality, beauty, culture and fun (2010 Scorecard, 2009).

Bennett *et al.* (2005: 10) contend that perception is a powerful determinant of a person's behaviour. Furthermore, one of the main functions of the tourism marketer is to sustain, alter or develop images which will entice tourists to visit his particular establishment or destination (Bennett *et al.*, 2005: 10).

The brand promise of 'A Time to make Friends' was conceived to convey a new image of Germany to the world – an image of welcoming, open-minded, modern and innovative people (Eberl, 2008a). Morgan, Pritchard & Pride (2003: 20), claims that smart managers exploit the meaning or value of their destination to their potential consumers. In addition, their advertising should reflect that added value; that point of differentiation. Eberl (2008b: 3) says, "Making 'the World feel at Home amongst

Friends' connected with a deep-felt desire of the German public to prove that they are not only superb engineers, but also great hosts". Germans have never displayed such a sense of unity and national pride since World War II (SASQI, 2008). It is not what tourists as consumers know as objective fact, but what they 'think' or 'feel' subjectively about a country as a vacation destination, its tourism norms, and its rules and regulations, that affects their consumer behaviour (Bennett et al. 2005: 119).

Germany embarked on a 'Friendliness Campaign' that was launched to make the world aware of the 'new Germany' and designed to turn employees into cross-cultural experts by teaching them how to interact with visitors from other cultures (Eberl, 2008b: 4). Dr Eberl said: 'The country then came to the realisation that if you want to change your image, you have to change your behaviour, and if you want to change your behaviour, you have to start with your people and not the advertising' (Eberl, 2008b: 4).

According to the Focus Group Report (SASQI, 2008), the support for the national team, even when it failed to make it to the final, was overwhelming. In addition, the hospitality that Germans gave to the 2006 World Cup visitors left them with a different impression of their culture.

Mike de Vries, Chief Executive Officer of FC Deutschland GmbH, was responsible for the re-branding of Germany for the 2006 FIFA World Cup. With its slogan 'Germany – Land of Ideas', De Vries and his team sold Germany to visitors from all over the world as a friendly, open-minded and innovative country (SASQI, 2008). This campaign, directed mostly at foreign visitors and Germans themselves, was proclaimed as being highly successful by the media after the World Cup. In addition, this campaign came alive in the form of six giant sculptures, strategically and prominently erected around Berlin, instilling a sense of ownership and pride amongst its people (SASQI, 2008).

According to the Focus Group Report (SASQI, 2008), the world expected Germany to organise an efficient and successful World Cup, but visiting fans had never expected to experience such a memorable event. The success of the World Cup in Germany had put more pressure on South Africa to live up to the standards set by the 2006 FIFA Local Organising Committee and therefore to ensure a memorable tourist experience and their return to South Africa.

### **3.3.4.2 XENOS Programme**

The aim of the German Government Program 'XENOS – Living and Working in Diversity' is to strengthen civic-spiritness and use practice-oriented measures against xenophobia, hostility towards foreigners and racial discrimination. This programme was designed to heighten awareness, tolerance and respect of other cultures and boost a positive attitude of hospitality. Some 6,500 employees ranging from taxi drivers, train station and airport personnel, and employees working in hotels and catering, attended the 460 training events across Germany (SASQI, 2008). This was further extended to a total of 15,000 volunteers who represented themselves in and around stadiums with their professional enthusiasm, well-informed and helpful attitudes (SASQI, 2008).

### **3.3.4.3 Information Technology**

The internet and extranet played a central role in the lead up to the 2006 FIFA World Cup. The German National Tourism Board (GNTB) geared its marketing activities towards a multi-channelling strategy, using the internet as a major sales channel for its comprehensive range of communications (SASQI, 2008). The network resources ranged from websites to online training courses to newsletters with market-specific content. With a total of 31 websites in 22 languages – two main portals in German and English, two market-specific websites, extranets for the travel industry and press, and a picture database, the GNTB was a market leader in the provision of online information about Germany as a travel destination (SASQI, 2008). In addition, the GNTB added comprehensive information about shopping opportunities in Germany to their consumer websites.

## **3.4 CONCLUSION**

South Africa's current situation, approaches and measures to service quality has been investigated in its preparation towards the 2010 World Cup Soccer and beyond. The chapter further included a study of lessons that can be learnt from and measures that has been taken by countries such as Singapore, Malaysia and Germany in their pursuit to improve and cultivate a service quality culture. The purpose of this chapter was therefore to gain a national and international perspective on service quality. It further

adds value to this study by providing benchmarks for the Sol Plaatje Muncipal Area and other tourism destinations in South Africa; to compare and learn from mistakes made to achieve a position as a world class service quality destination.

The theoretical aspects and components of service quality that were discussed in Chapter 3 contribute to the compilation of the questions in the visitor questionnaire (refer to Appendix 1A) and interview questionnaire (refer to Appendix 1B).

## CHAPTER 4

### EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The provision of quality service to the tourism industry is a national priority in South Africa and therefore also in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area. The purpose of this survey was to determine how domestic and foreign tourists perceive the quality of service delivery in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area. The findings of this survey are beneficial to all tourism stakeholders in their efforts to provide visitors with the best holiday and business experience in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area. This chapter aims to report on the findings of the above-mentioned and thereby gain the necessary information to allow the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area to satisfy the needs of tourists, and to ultimately establish Kimberley and the Northern Cape as a primary tourist destination.

This chapter will firstly provide insight into current tourism markets and trends within the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area, analysing the service quality perceptions of visiting domestic and foreign tourists. The structured questionnaire consisted of 25 questions and was divided into six main categories, namely: (1) demographical information about the respondents, (2) their perception of service quality at accommodation establishments, (3) transportation used, (4) restaurants, pubs and coffee shops, (5) attractions visited and (6) tourism service delivery in general in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area. The convenience sampling technique was used in order to select an appropriate sample. A total of 250 questionnaires were distributed by four fieldworkers at the following sampling points: the departure hall of Kimberley Airport (100), The Big Hole (100) and McGregor Museum (50). A total of 200 questionnaires were received in the visitor survey during the period 8 December to 22 December 2009 (18% from the McGregor Museum, 32.8% from the Big Hole and 29.2% from Kimberley Airport). The respondents who participated in the survey were domestic and foreign tourists who visited the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area for a period longer than 24 hours for the purpose of business, leisure, sport and visiting family or friends.

Secondly, the chapter will present a summary of the unstructured interviews (conducted by the researcher) with 20 major role-players in the local tourism industry. The role-players represent the different sectors in the tourism industry and provided valuable information about current trends experienced in the delivery of quality service.

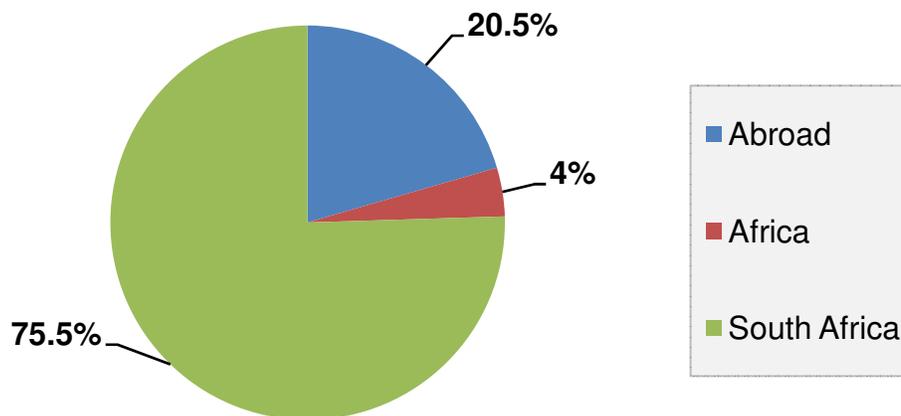
## 4.2 RESULTS (refer to visitor questionnaire on page 187)

### 4.2.1 The profile of respondents

#### 4.2.1.1 Country of residence

The aim of this question was to identify the country of residence of tourists participating in the study. Figure 4.1 indicates that 75.5% of the respondents were domestic tourists, 20.5% from abroad and 4% from the rest of Africa. This shows that 75.5% of visitors to the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area were domestic tourists and 24.5% foreign tourists.

**Figure 4.1 Country of residence**

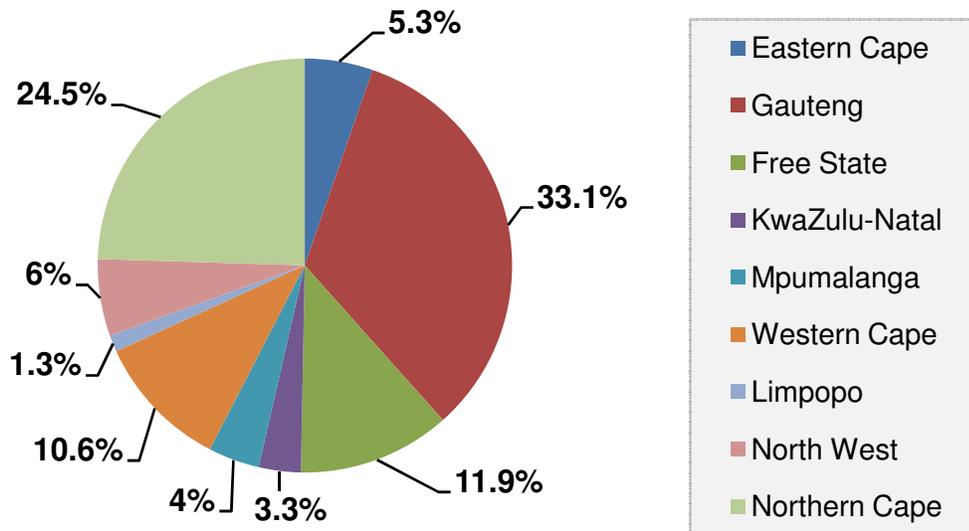


#### 4.2.1.2 Province of origin: Domestic tourists

Figure 4.2 indicates the origin of domestic tourists and can assist in tailoring marketing strategies accordingly. The majority of respondents were from Gauteng (33.1%), Northern Cape (24.5%), the Free State (11.9%) and the Western Cape (10.6%). The importance of domestic tourism to the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area is evident from the

above information and it is imperative that its marketing and promotion activities be focused on these provinces.

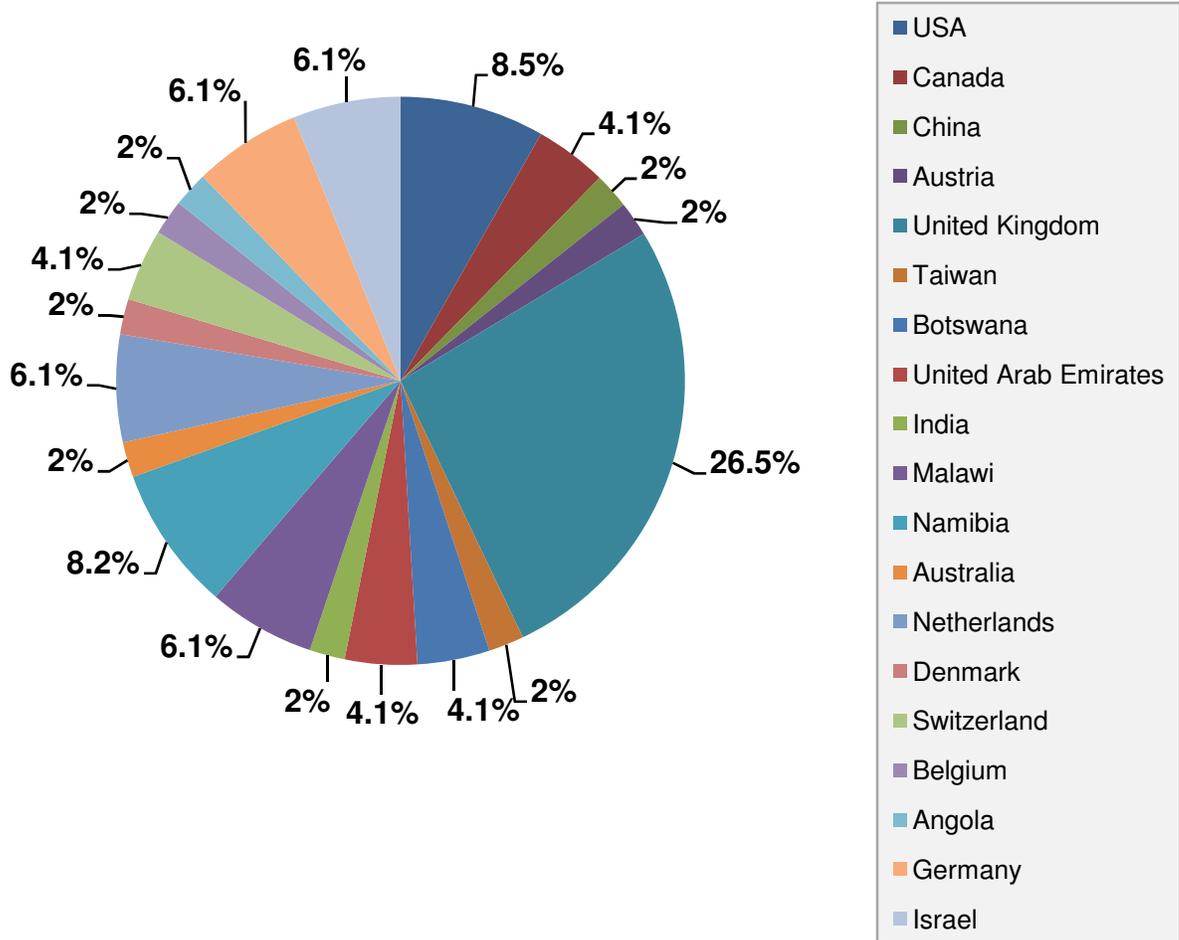
**Figure 4.2 Domestic tourists: Province of origin**



#### 4.2.1.3 Country of origin: Foreign tourists

The purpose of this question was to identify the countries where international tourists come from. From figure 4.3 it is evident that the majority (26.5%) of foreign tourists interviewed came from the United Kingdom, followed by the United States (8.5%) and Namibia (8.2%) and The Netherlands, Germany, Israel and Malawi (all 6.1%). The same percentage of respondents came from United Arab Emirates (4.1%), Botswana (4.1%), Switzerland (4.1%) and Canada (4.1%). It is therefore evident from the figure below that the majority of foreign respondents came from countries outside of Africa.

**Figure 4.3 Foreign tourists: Country of representation**

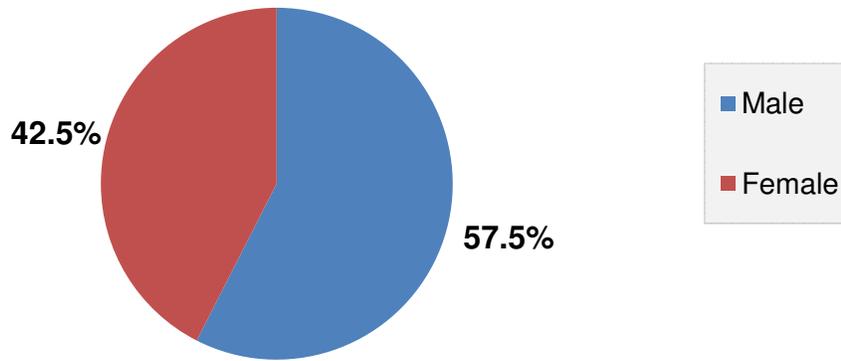


It is important to identify the different age groups, gender and race group of visitors to the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area as this data will assist in adopting a marketing strategy that meet specific needs and interests.

**4.2.1.4 Gender of tourists**

Figure 4.4 below illustrates that males represented 57.5% of the sample, while females represented the remaining 42.5% of the sample size.

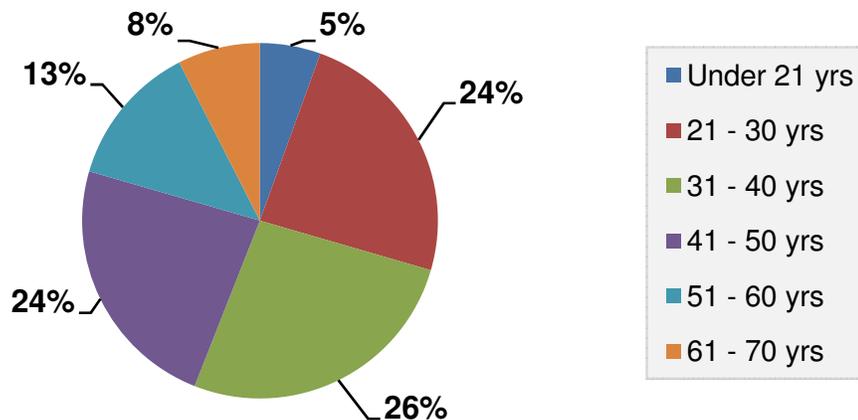
**Figure 4.4 Gender of tourists visiting the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area**



#### 4.2.1.5 Age of respondents

There was a fair amount of respondents from each age category. As can be seen in figure 4.5, the 31 – 40 age group had the highest representation with 26% of the respondents, 21 – 30 and 41 – 50 age groups each account for 24%. They are followed by age groups 51 – 60 (13%), 61 – 70 (8%) and under 21 years (5%).

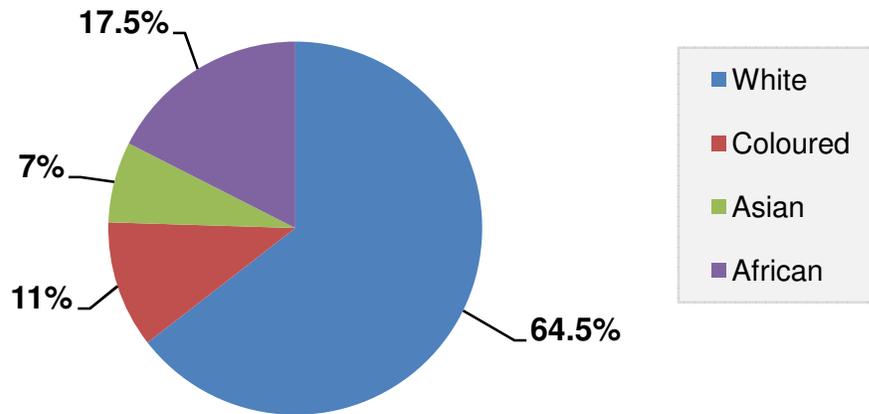
**Figure 4.5 The age of the respondents**



#### 4.2.1.6 Race groups

According to figure 4.6, it is evident that the White race group dominated the sample (64.5%), followed by the African (17.5%), Coloured (11%) and Asian (7%).

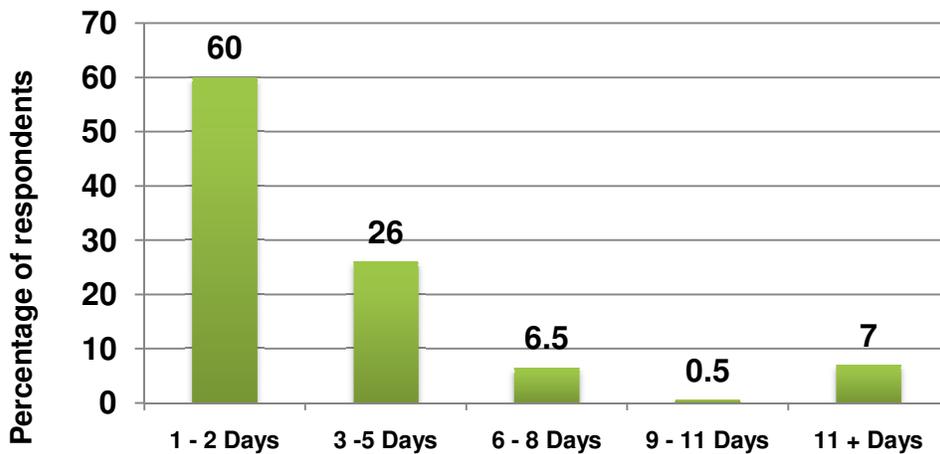
**Figure 4.6 Race groups**



#### 4.2.1.7 Length of stay

According to figure 4.7 the majority (60%) of respondents stayed 1 – 2 days, while 26% stayed between 3 – 5 days and 7% stayed 11 days and more. The data further indicates that 6.5% of respondents stayed for 6 – 8 days and less than one percent spent between 9 – 11 days in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area.

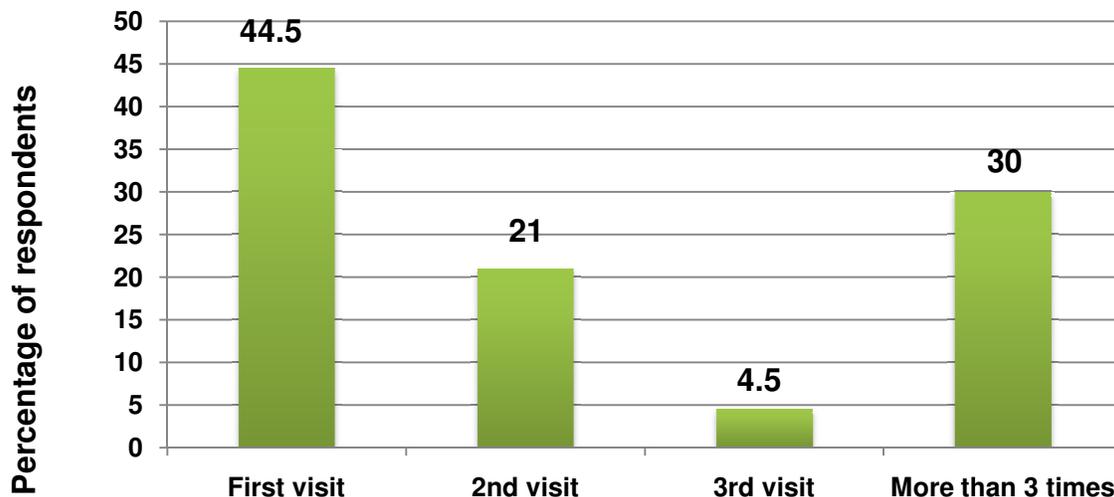
**Figure 4.7 Length of stay in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area**



#### 4.2.1.8 Visits to Sol Plaatje Municipal Area

Figure 4.8 shows that the majority of the respondents (55.5%) have already visited the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area before, of which 21% had visited once before, 4.5% were visiting for the third time, and 30% had visited the city more than three times. A large number of respondents (44.5%) were first time visitors to the city. New visitors' perception of the service quality in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area is important as this determines their return and 'word-of-mouth' marketing of the city.

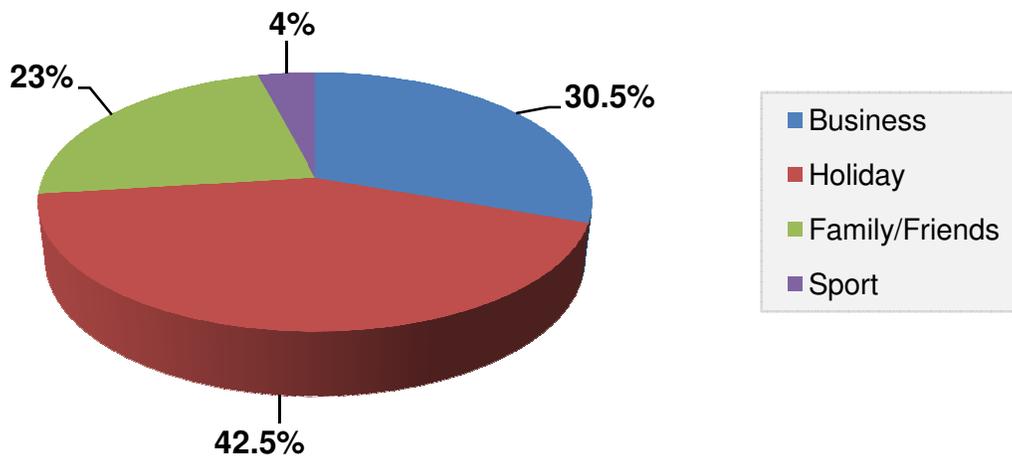
**Figure 4.8 Visits to Sol Plaatje Municipal Area**



#### 4.2.1.9 The purpose of visit

Figure 4.9 indicates that the majority of tourists visit Sol Plaatje Municipal Area for holiday purposes (42.5%), secondly for business (30.5%), thirdly to visit family or friends (23%) and a small percentage (4%) for sport purposes.

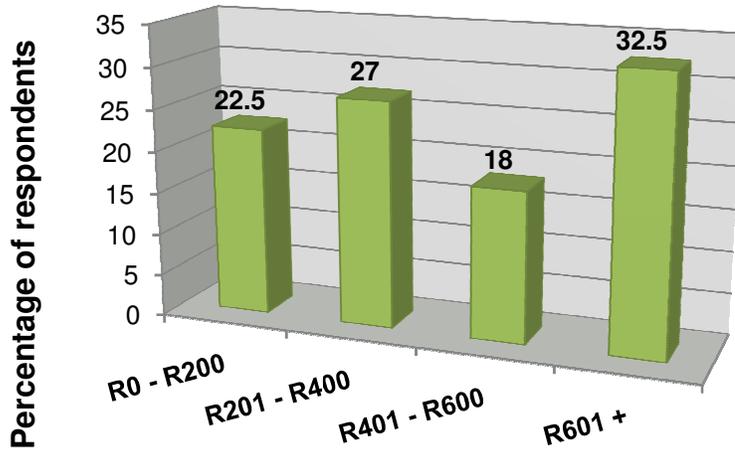
**Figure 4.9 Purpose of visit**



#### 4.2.1.10 Average spending per day

Figure 4.10 illustrates the average spending pattern of the visiting tourists per day. The majority of tourists (32.5%) spent R601 and more per day, followed by 27% who spent R201 – R400 per day. This is followed by 22.5% who spent R200 or less and 18% of respondents who spent between R401 – R600 per day.

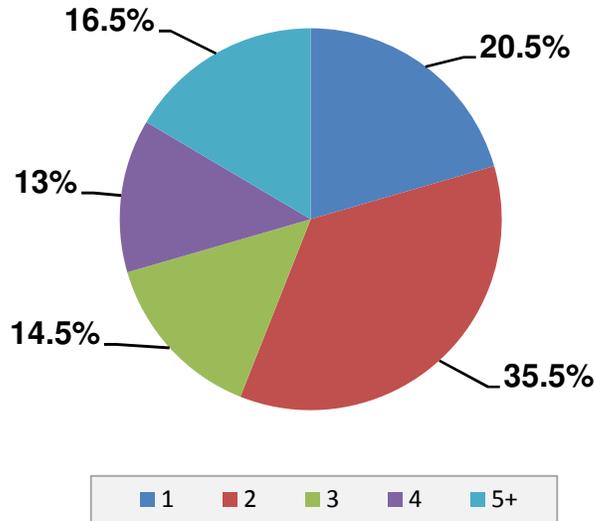
**Figure 4.10 Average spending per tourist per day**



**4.2.1.11 Number of tourists in a group**

Figure 4.11 indicates that 35.5% of tourists visiting the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area travel in a group of two people, followed by 20.5% who travelled alone and 16.5% travelled in a group consisting of five or more people.

**Figure 4.11 Number of tourists in a group**



The following data indicates what the perception of visitors is with regards to different service quality aspects at accommodation establishments, restaurants and attractions.

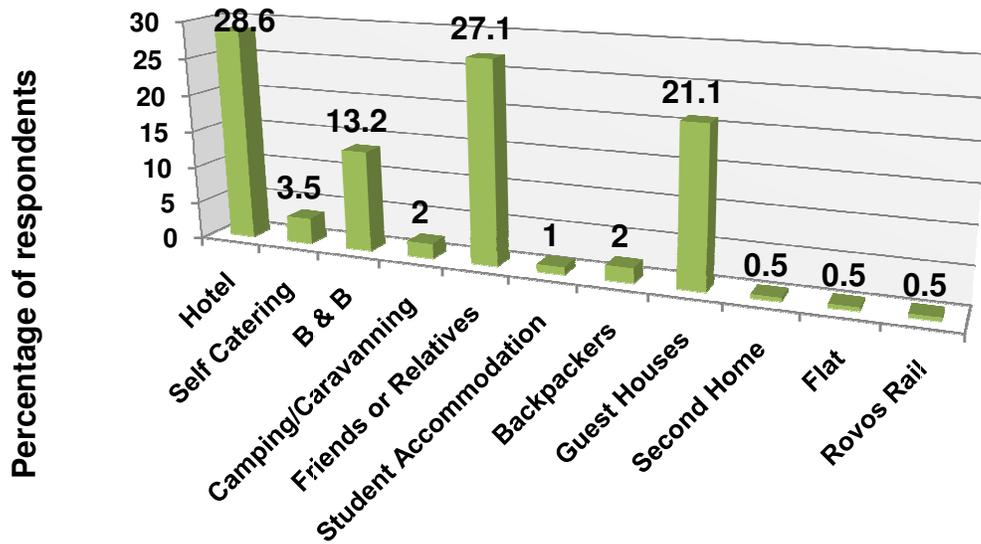
## 4.2.2 Accommodation

### 4.2.2.1 Type of accommodation

Figure 4.12 determines what type of accommodation tourists used when they visited the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area. Of the ten categories of accommodation, the most popular accommodation type was hotels at 28.6%, followed by friends and relatives (27.1%), guest houses (21.1%), bed & breakfast (13.2%) and self catering (3.5%).

The majority of domestic respondents came from Gauteng and Northern Cape and stayed with family and friends (33.7%), followed by hotels (27.1%) and guest houses (19.8%). On the other hand, the majority of foreign visitors travelled from European countries and preferred to stay in hotels (32.6%), followed by guest houses (24.4%) and bed & breakfasts (20%) during their visit to the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area.

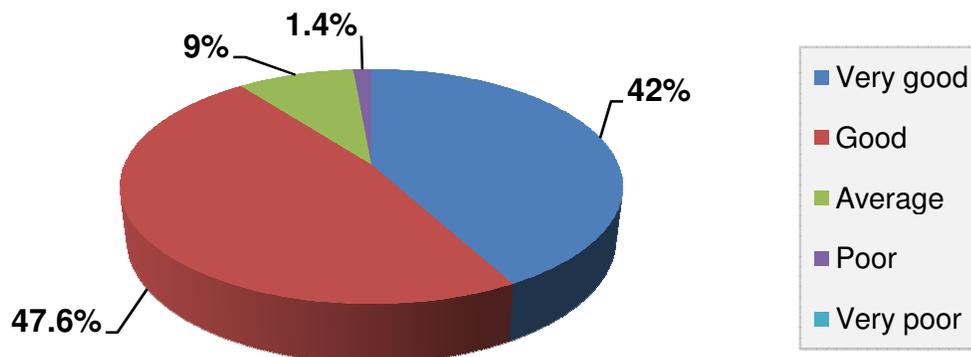
**Figure 4.12 Type of accommodation**



#### 4.2.2.2 The general rating of accommodation establishments in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area

Figure 4.13 shows that the majority of tourists felt they were treated with respect at accommodation establishments. A total of 47.6% of the respondents rated it as good, 42% as very good and 9% as average. Only a small percentage (1.4%) of the respondents felt they were not treated with respect.

**Figure 4.13 Question: Did the staff treat you with respect?**



According to figure 4.14, almost half of the respondents (46.9%) perceived the attitude of staff as good, followed by 42% as very good and 9.7% average. Only 1.4% of respondents perceived the attitude of staff as poor.

**Figure 4.14 Question: How would you rate the staff's attitude?**

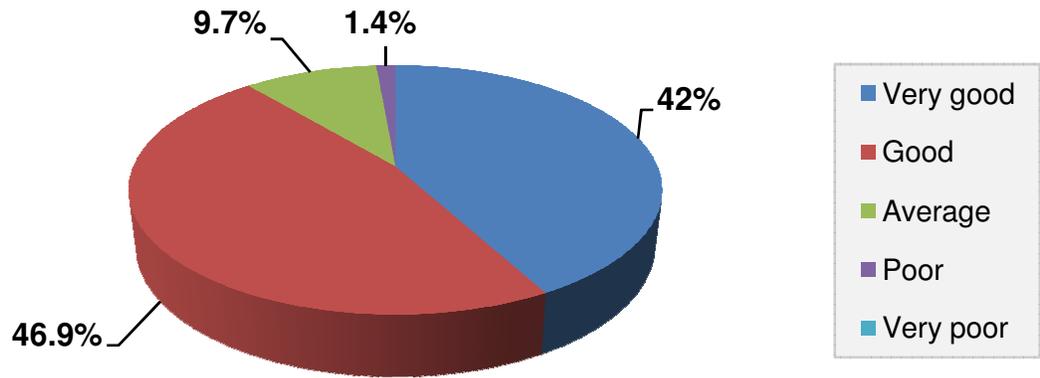


Figure 4.15 indicates that the majority of tourists visiting the Sol Plaatje were satisfied with the time frame in which staff responded to their needs at accommodation establishments. A total of 50.3% of the respondents rated it as good, 39.3% as very good and 8.3% as average. Only 1.4% of respondents perceived it as poor and 0.7% as very poor.

**Figure 4.15 Question: Did the staff respond timeously to your needs?**

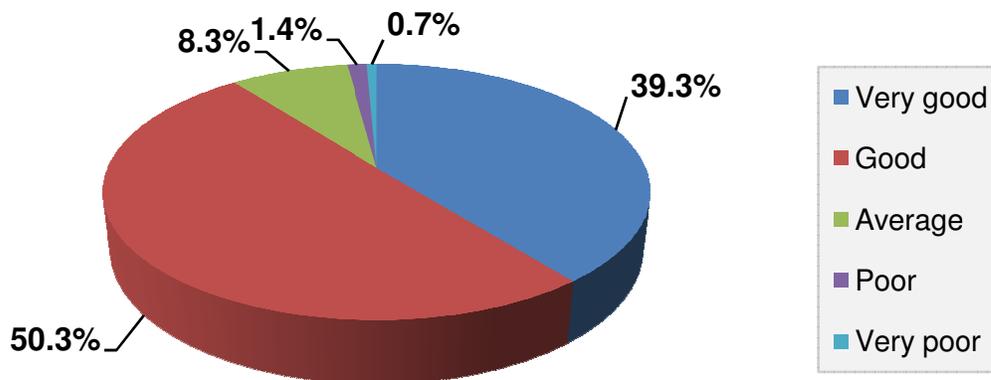
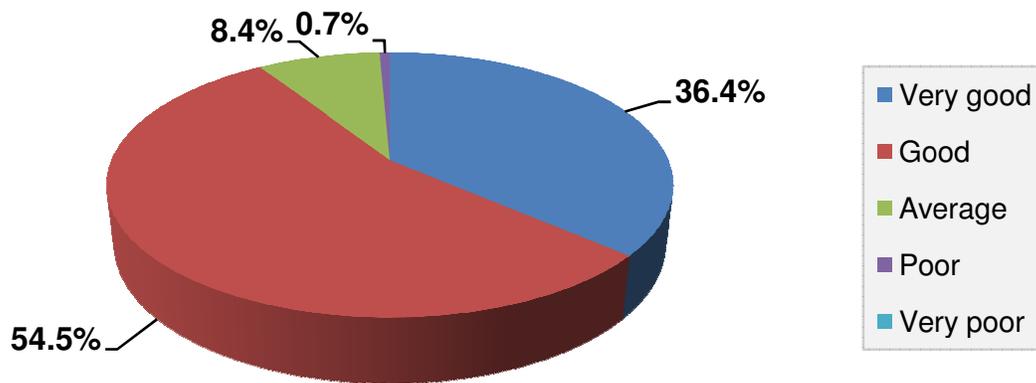


Figure 4.16 illustrates that the reliability of staff was perceived as good by 54.5% of respondents, 36.4% perceived it as very good, 8.4% as average and only 0.7% as poor.

**Figure 4.16 Question: Is the staff reliable?**



From figure 4.17 it is apparent that the majority (54.2%) of respondents rated the presentability of staff as good, 37.3% as very good and 7% as average. A small percentage, 1.5%, rated it as poor.

**Figure 4.17 Question: Is the staff presentable and identifiable?**

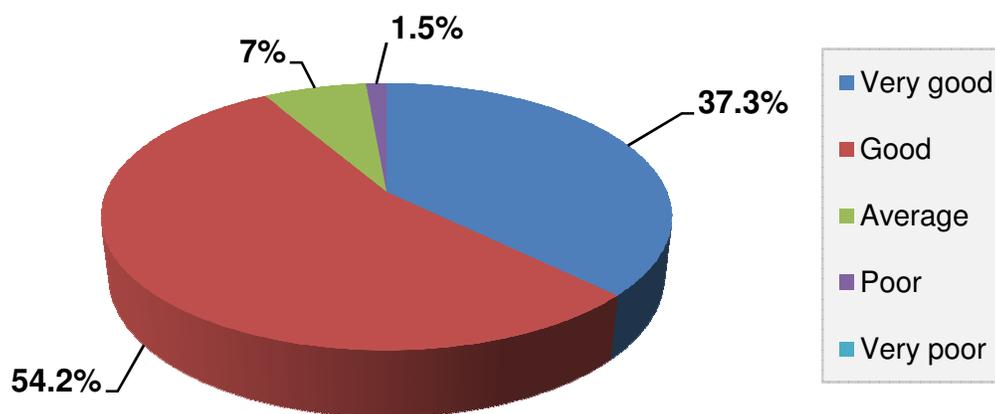
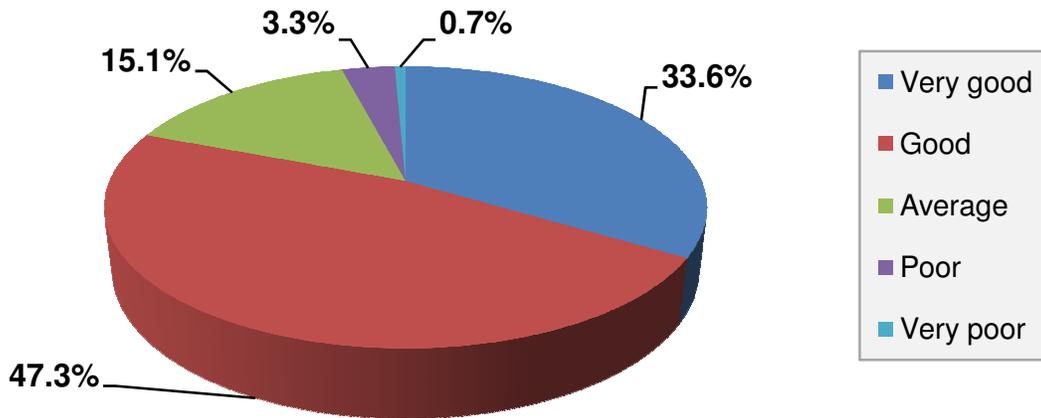


Figure 4.18 indicates that the majority of tourists rated the accommodation establishment as good value for money. A total of 47.3% of the respondents rated it as

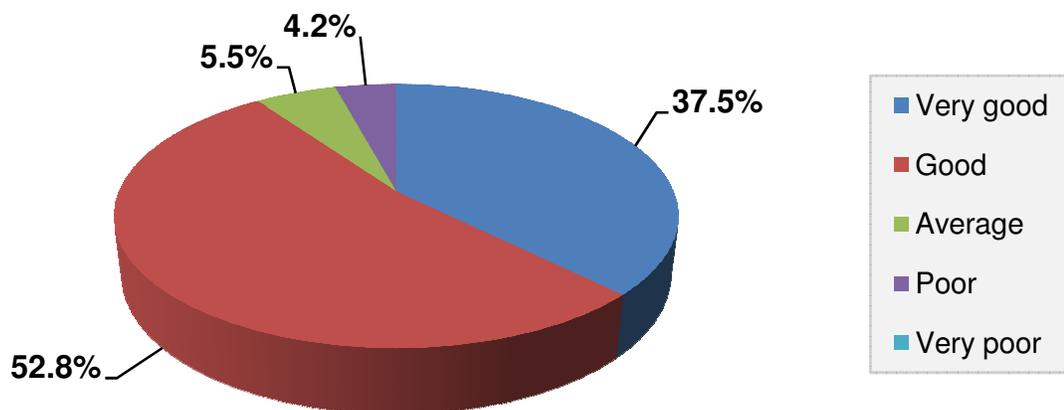
good, followed by 33.6%, as very good and 15.1% as average. A small minority of respondents (3.3%) rated it as poor and 0.7% as very poor.

**Figure 4.18 Question: Did you regard the establishment as good value for money?**



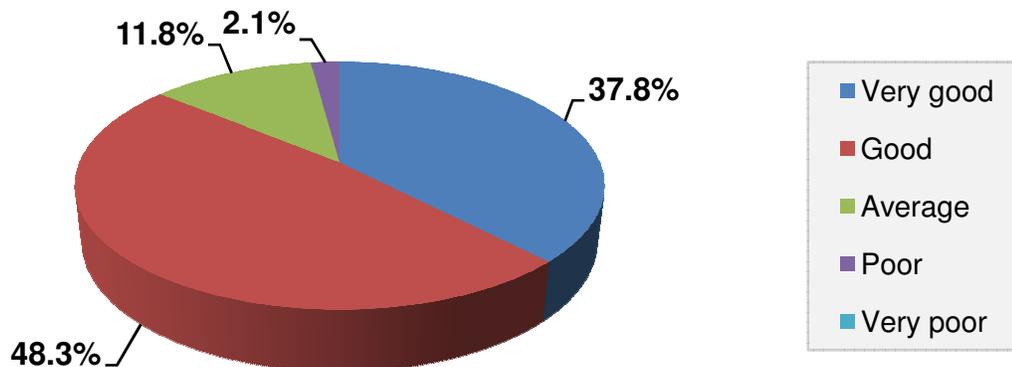
From figure 4.19 it is evident that 52.8% respondents rated the communication skills of staff as good, 37.5% rated it as very good, 5.5% as average and 4.2% as poor.

**Figure 4.19 Question: How would you rate their communication skills?**



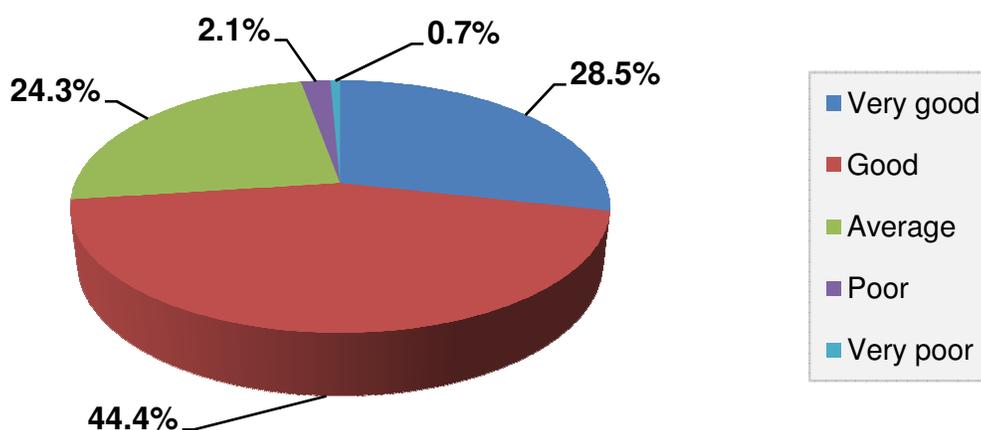
According to figure 4.20, the accessibility of accommodation establishments in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area was perceived by 48.3% of tourists as good, 37.8% perceived it as very good, 11.8% as average and only 2.1% as poor.

**Figure 4.20 Question: Is the establishment accessible?**



This data will assist in identifying what the perception is on the tourism knowledge of staff at accommodation establishments and will therefore identify training gaps that might exist in this sector. Figure 4.21 illustrates that 44.4% of respondents rated the tourism related knowledge of an establishment's staff as good, 28.5% as very good and 24.3% as average. A total of 2.1% of the respondents rated it as poor, followed by 0.7% as very poor. From this data it is evident that improvement is needed in the training of staff as more than a quarter of respondents rated it as average to poor.

**Figure 4.21 Question: How do you rate the staff's tourism related knowledge?**



From figure 4.22 it is evident that the majority of respondents rated the staff's ability to use technology as good (52.4%), 30.3% rated it as very good, 13.1 % as average, 3.4% as poor and 0.8% as very poor.

**Figure 4.22 Question: How well trained are front-line staff in using technology to do their work?**

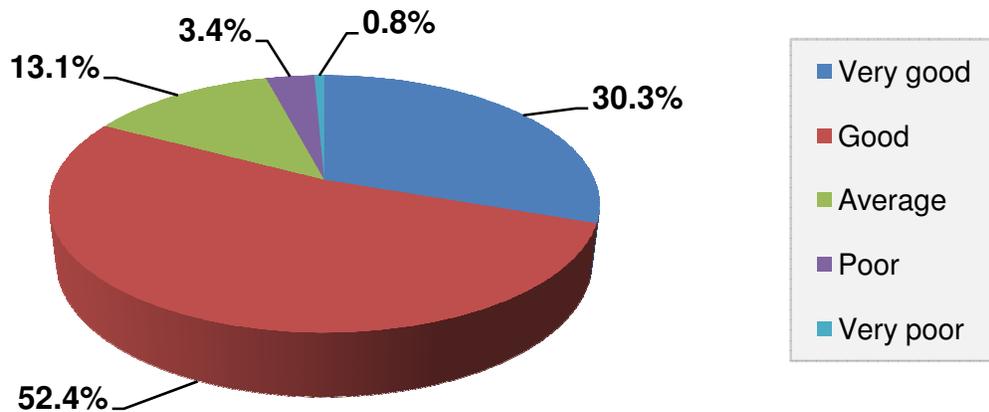
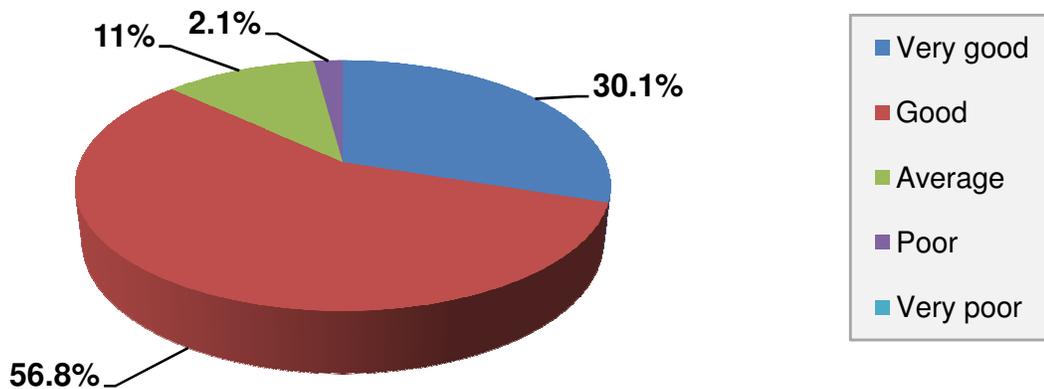


Figure 4.23 illustrates that 56.8% of tourists perceived the overall quality of the accommodation establishment as good, followed by very good (30.1%), average (11%) and poor (2.1%).

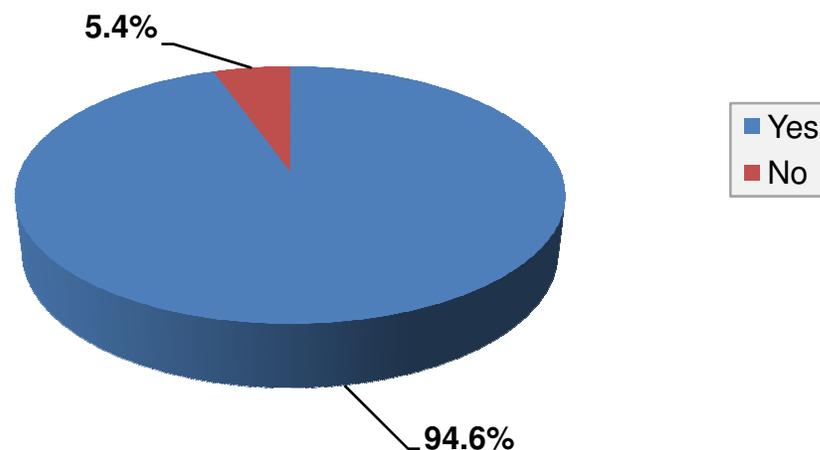
**Figure 4.23 Question: How do you perceive the overall quality of the accommodation establishment?**



According to figure 4.24, 94.6% of the tourists participated in this survey would recommend the accommodation establishment they stayed at in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area to other people. This is important as it determines their return and 'word-of-mouth' marketing of the accommodation establishment. Only 5.4% of respondents indicated they would not recommend the establishment to other people.

Based on their answer to the question below, respondents had to motivate why they would or would not recommend the accommodation establishment to other people. In the summary below, the researcher has distinguished between the motivations of foreign and domestic tourists to see if there is any distinctive difference in opinion between the two groups. Another reason is the probable difference in needs and expectations between foreign and domestic tourists.

**Figure 4.24 Question: Would you recommend the accommodation establishment to other people?**



Only two foreign respondents indicated that they would not recommend the accommodation establishment to other people as they perceived it as too expensive. The other foreign respondents' motivation for recommending the accommodation establishment they stayed at is tabulated in table 4.1 below. The most popular motivations were cleanliness and neatness (17%) and the location and accessibility of the establishment (17%). This is followed by friendliness and hospitality (12.7%), general satisfaction with the service provided at the establishment (12.7%), physical appearance (10.6%), value for money (8.5 %) and good food (8.5%).

**Table 4.1 Numerical data: Foreign tourists' motivation for recommending accommodation establishment**

	<b>Motivation</b>	<b>Number of respondents</b>
1.	Neat and clean	8
2.	Good location and accessible	8
3.	Friendliness and hospitality	6
4.	Satisfied with service in general	6
5.	Physical appearance is appealing	5
6.	Value for money	4
7.	Good food	4
8.	Comfortable	3
9.	Private	2
10.	Limited place to stay	2
11.	Fast service	1

Out of the 151 domestic respondents, 93 respondents (61.5%) would recommend the accommodation establishment to other people. Their motivations are tabulated in table 4.2 below. A large number of domestic respondents (48) did not answer this question since they travelled to Kimberley for the purpose of visiting friends or relatives.

From table 4.2 it is evident that 19.3% of domestic respondents indicated good service as motivation for recommending the accommodation establishment to other people. This is followed by cleanliness and neatness (17.2%), friendliness and hospitality (16.1%) and good value for money (9.6%). Other feedback from respondents includes the accessibility of the accommodation establishment (6.4%), private and quietness (5.3%), safety (5.3%) and a central location for business (4.3%). All these above-mentioned factors are important as it can contribute to a positive experience for tourists visiting the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area.

**Table 4.2 Numerical data: Domestic tourists' motivation for recommending accommodation establishment**

	<b>Motivation</b>	<b>Number of respondents</b>
1.	Satisfied / good service	18
2.	Clean and neat	16
3.	Friendliness and hospitality	15
4.	Good value for money	9
5.	Accessible / easy to find	6
6.	Private and quiet	5
7.	Safe	5
8.	Location central for business	4
9.	Physical appearance is appealing	3
10.	Comfortable / convenient	3
11.	Helpful and caring	2
12.	Excellent service	2
13.	Good food	1
14.	Close to Big Hole	1
15.	Staff's knowledge about area	1
16.	Great atmosphere	1
17.	Interesting	1

Furthermore, ten domestic tourists (respondents) would not recommend the accommodation establishment to other people. Important issues that were mentioned are the lack in communication skills, incompetent staff and poor service delivery in general. Another reason was the establishments' lack in uniqueness. Other issues mentioned are the lack of attention to detail such as faulty televisions, the absence of internet and cell phone plugs and facilities that were not up to standard.

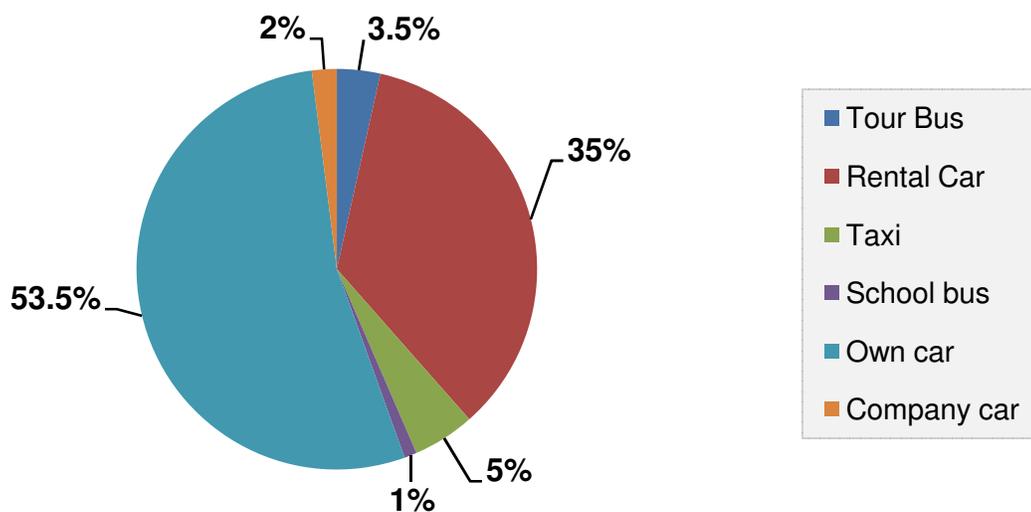
## 4.2.3 Transportation

### 4.2.3.1 Mode of transport

Figure 4.25 identifies the different means of transport that visitors used to get to the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area. The majority (53.5%) of tourists (domestic and foreign) made use of their own car as a substantial number of visitors are from the nearby Northern Cape (see figure 4.2). This is followed by rental car (35%), taxi (5%), tour bus (3.5%), company car (2%) and school bus (1%).

The majority of domestic tourists travelled to the city by their own vehicle (50.3%), followed by rental car (31.7%) and 6.6% made use of taxi services. Comparatively, the majority of foreign tourists rented a car (55.1%) when they visited the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area. This is followed by 36.7% of foreign visitors who travelled in their own car (from Namibia or Botswana) and 8.1% travelled by tour bus.

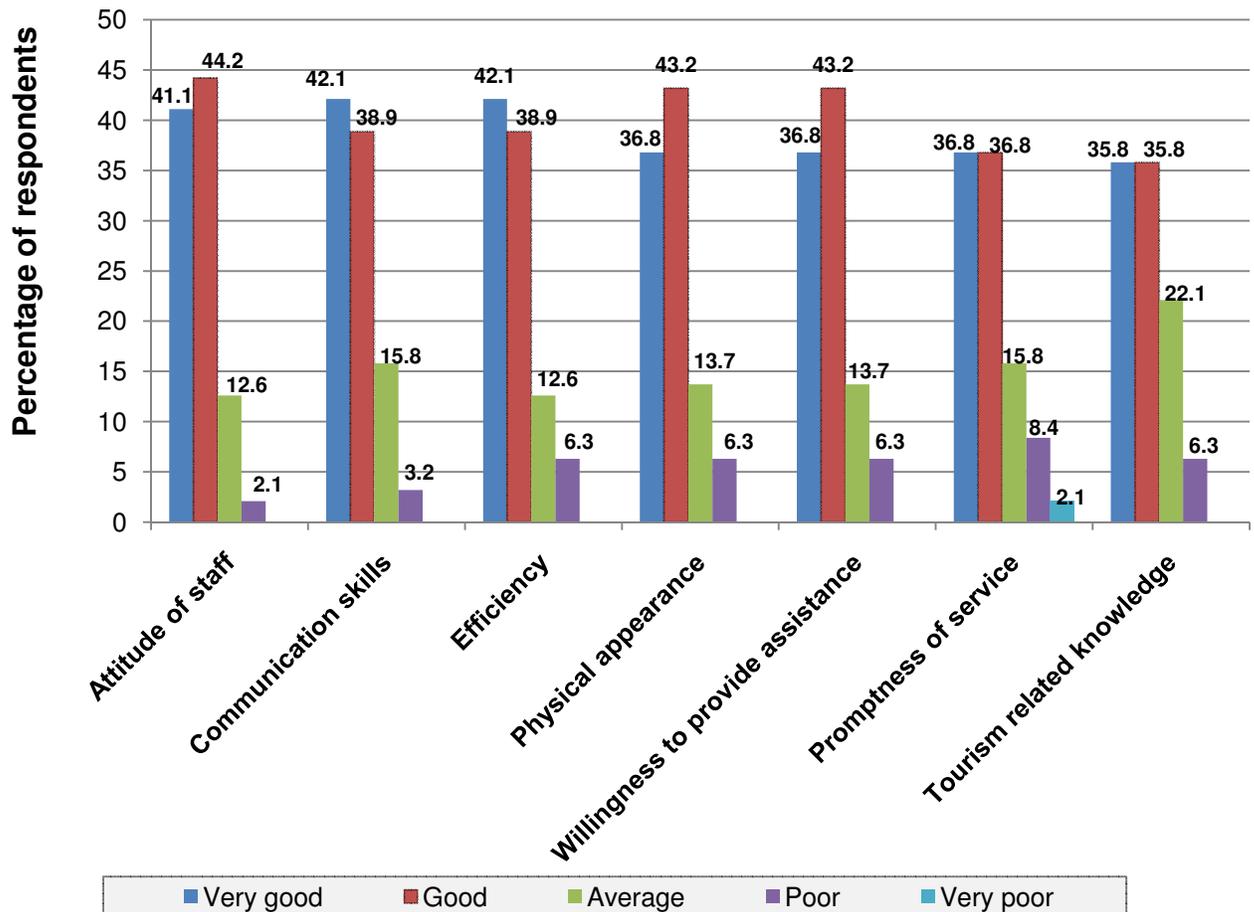
**Figure 4.25 Mode of transport**



#### 4.2.3.2 Rating of transportation in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area

From figure 4.26 it is evident that the respondents rated the attitude of staff as good (44.2%), very good (41.1%), average (12.6%) and poor (2.1%). The willingness to provide assistance and physical appearance of service received the same ratings: good (43.2%), very good (36.8%), average (13.7%) and poor (6.3%). The respondents perceived the communication skills of staff as very good (42.1%), followed by good (38.9%), average (15.8%) and poor (3.2%). The efficiency of staff was rated as very good (42.1%), good (38.9%), average (15.8%) and poor (3.2%). This is followed by the promptness of service which was perceived as very good and good (36.8%), average (15.8%), poor (8.4%) and very poor (2.1%). Finally, the tourism related knowledge was perceived by respondents as very good and good (35.8%), average (22.1%) and poor (6.3%).

**Figure 4.26 Summary of the general rating of transport in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area**



Areas in the transport sector that received the highest ratings by foreign and domestic tourists were communication skills (42.1%) and efficiency (42.1%). Although a large number of respondents perceived communication skills to be very good, there were a number of respondents who perceived it to be average (15.8%) leaving room for improvement in this area. Other areas that need more attention and were rated as average are the tourism related knowledge of staff (22.1%) and promptness of service (15.8). In addition, 8.4% of respondents perceived promptness of service to be poor and 2.1% rated it as very poor.

From figure 4.27 below it is evident that the majority of respondents rated the attitude of staff as good (44.2%), followed by very good (41.1%), average (12.6%) and poor (2.1%).

**Figure 4.27 Rating of Transport: Attitude of staff**

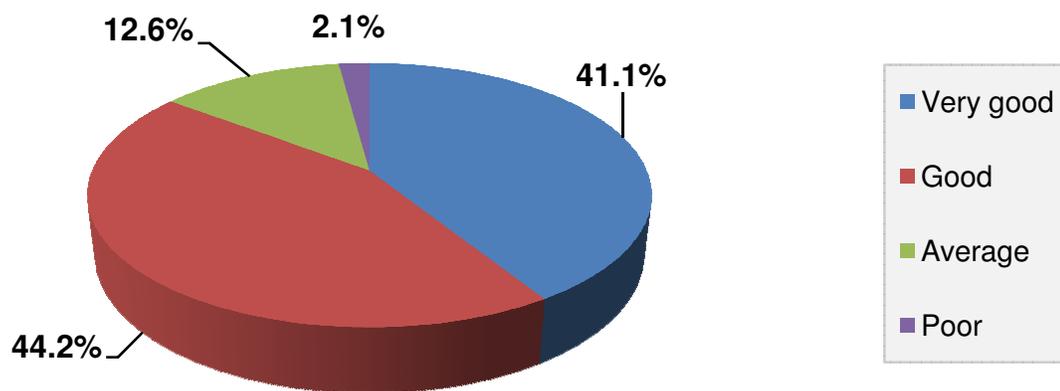
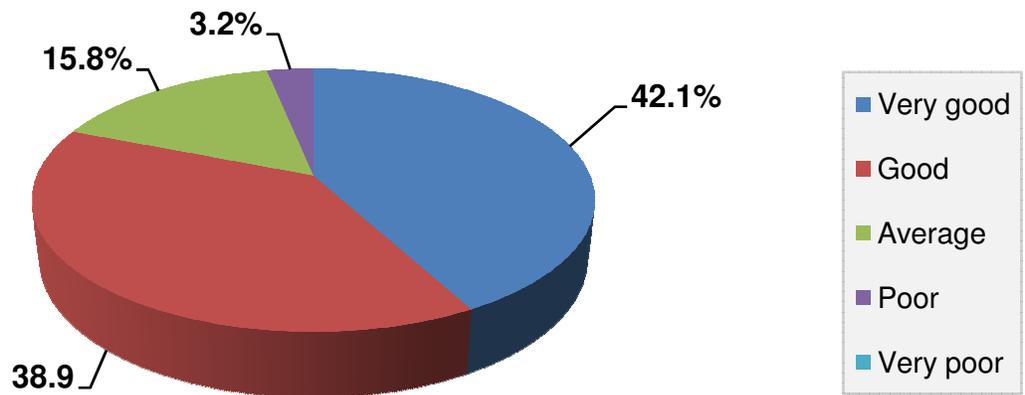


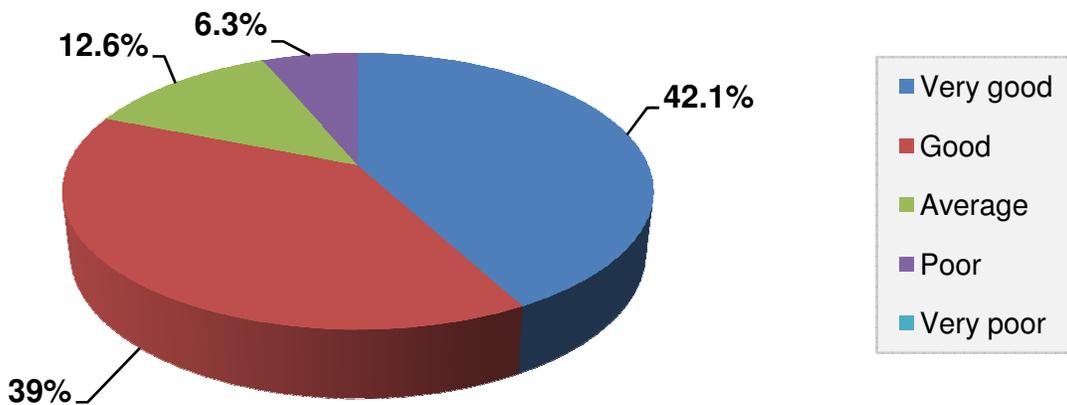
Figure 4.28 indicates that 42.1% of respondents perceived the communication skills of staff as very good (42.1%), followed by good (38.9%), average (15.8%) and poor (3.2%).

**Figure 4.28 Rating of transport: Communication skills of staff**



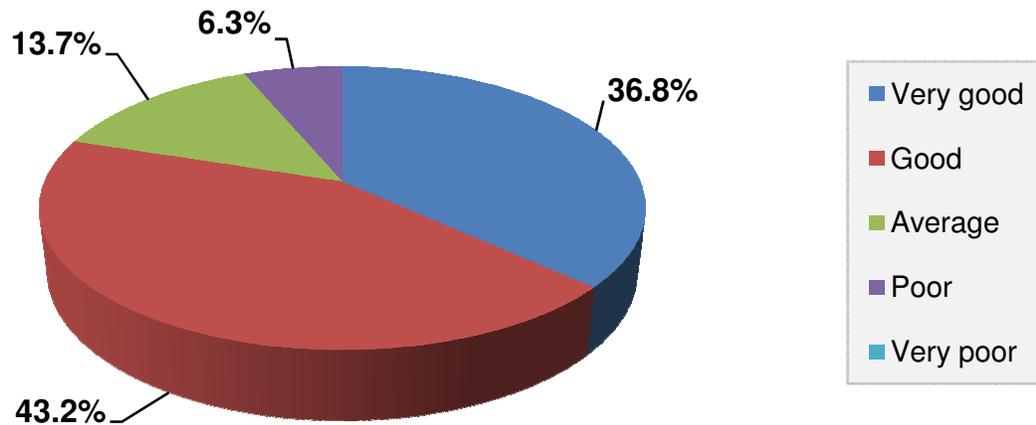
According to figure 4.29, most of the respondents perceived the efficiency of staff as very good (42.1%), followed by good (39%), average (12.6%) and poor (6.3%).

**Figure 4.29 Rating of transport: Efficiency of staff**



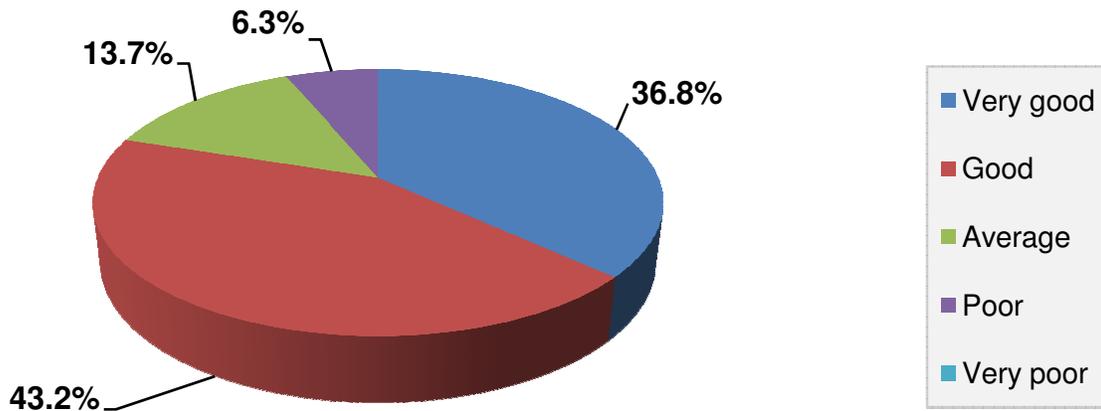
As can be seen from figure 4.30, the majority of respondents rated the physical appearance of staff as good (43.2%), 36.8% rated it as very good, 13.7% as average and 6.3% as poor.

**Figure 4.30 Rating of transport: Physical appearance of staff**



According to figure 4.31 it is noticeable that the majority of visitors rated the willingness of staff as good (43.2%), 36.8% as very good, 13.7% as average and 6.3% as poor.

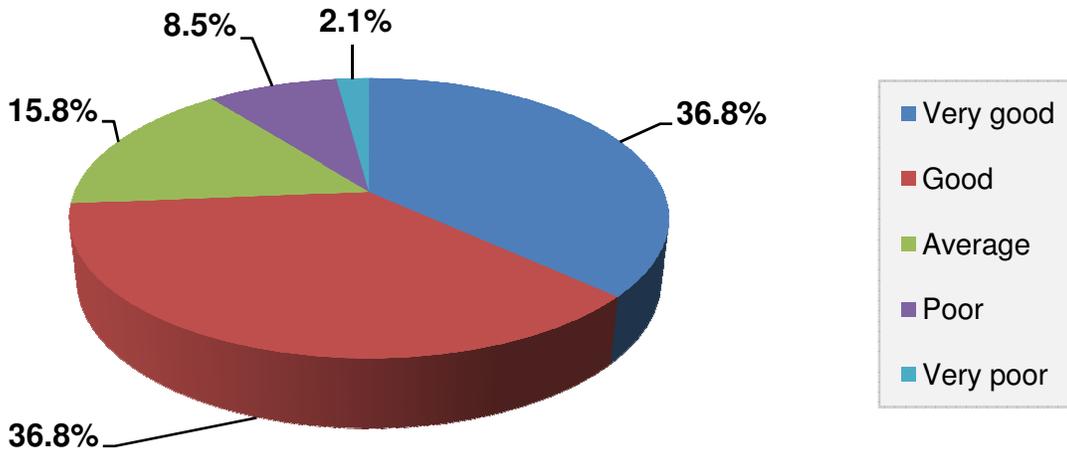
**Figure 4.31 Rating of transport: Willingness of staff to provide assistance**



An equal number of respondents perceived the promptness of service to be very good (36.8%) and good (36.8%) as can be seen from figure 4.32. Furthermore, 15.8% of the respondents rated it as average, 8.5% as poor and 2.1% as very poor. In comparison

with the ratings of the other aspects of transport, it is evident that improvement is needed in this area.

**Figure 4.32 Rating of transport: Promptness of service**



An equal number of respondents perceived staff's tourism related knowledge to be very good (35.8%) and good (35.8%) as can be seen from figure 4.33. A large number of respondents rated it as average (22.1%) and 6.3% rated it as poor, thus indicating a need for improvement in this area.

**Figure 4.33 Rating of transport: Staff's tourism related knowledge**

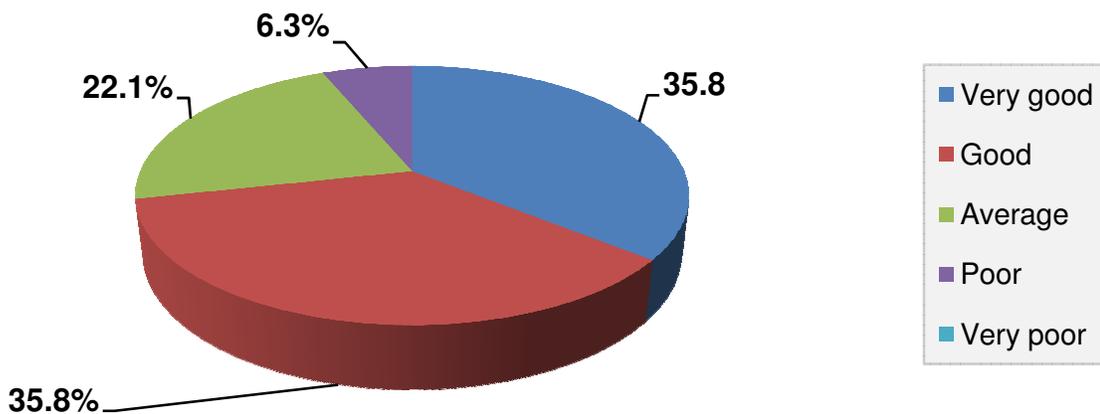
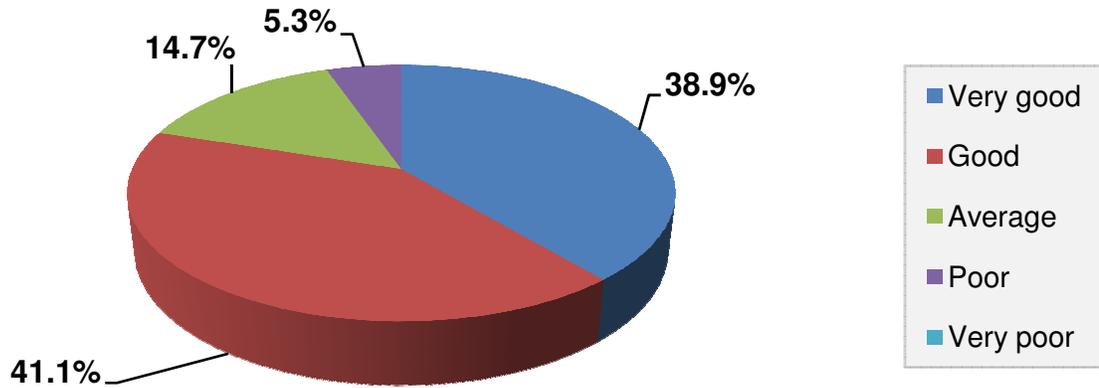


Figure 4.34 shows the overall perception of service quality by visitors regarding the transport they used in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area. The majority of respondents

perceived it as good (41.1%), 38.9% as very good, 14.7% as average and 5.3% as poor.

**Figure 4.34 Rating of transport: Overall service quality**



## 4.2.4 Food and entertainment

### 4.2.4.1 The general rating of food and entertainment in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area

**Figure 4.35 Summary of the general rating of Food and Entertainment in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area**

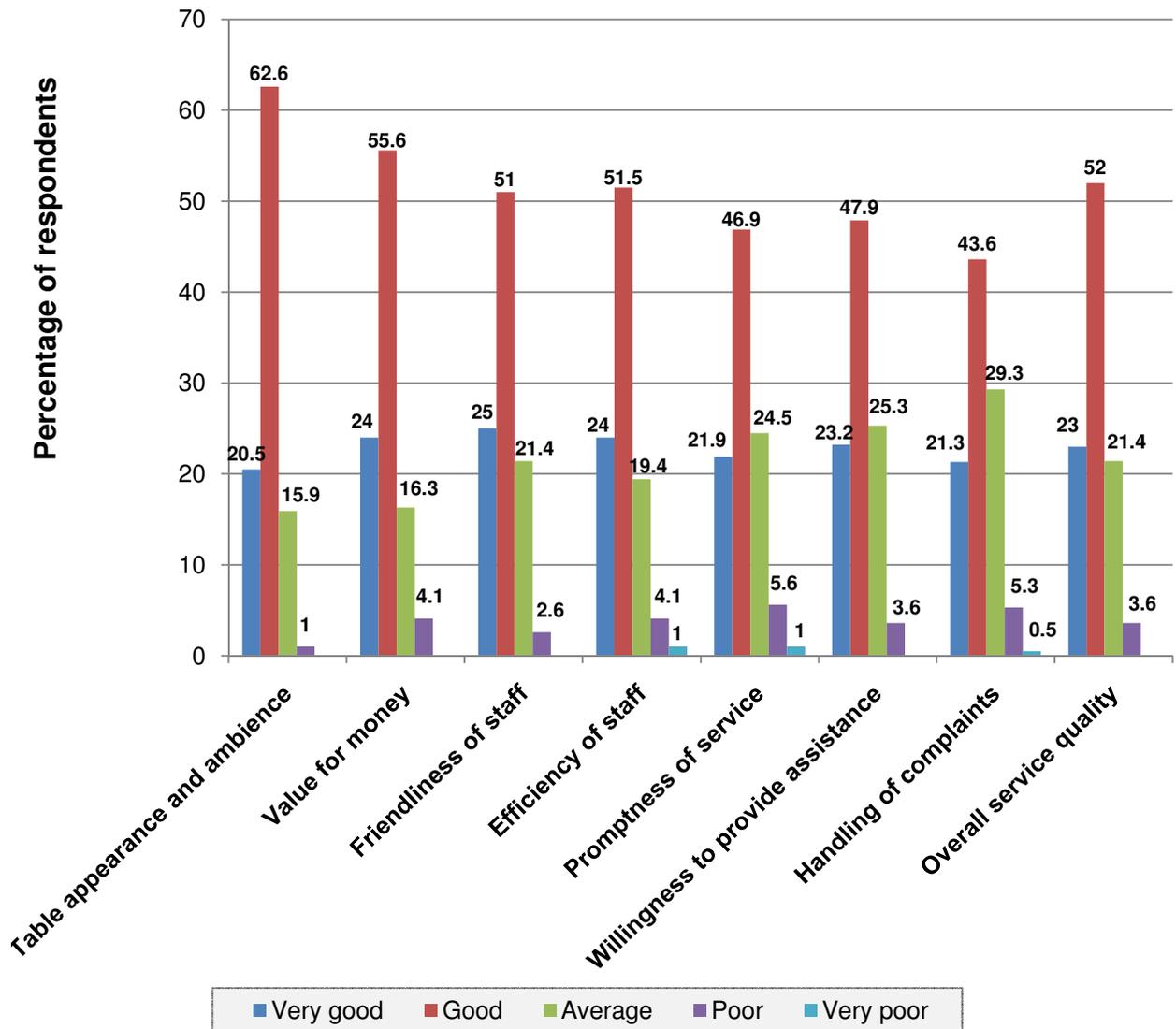


Figure 4.35 shows a summary of the different aspects of restaurants, pubs and coffee shops that were rated by respondents. It is evident that table appearance and ambience received the highest ratings from respondents which rated it as good (62.6%), very good (20.5%), average (15.9%) and poor (1%). This is followed by value for money as

good (55.6%), very good (24%), average (16.3%) and poor (4.1%). The overall service quality was rated as good (52%), very good (23%), average (21.4%) and poor (3.6%). Efficiency of staff were perceived by visitors as good (51.5%), followed by very good (24%), average (19.4%), poor (4.1%) and very poor (1%). The respondents perceived the friendliness of staff as good (51%), very good (25%), average (21.4%) and poor (2.6%). The willingness to provide assistance was rated as good (47.9%), average (25.3%), very good (23.2%) and poor (3.6%). Furthermore, the promptness of service was perceived as good (46.9%), average (24.5%), very good (21.9%), poor (5.6%) and very poor (1%). Finally, respondents rated the handling of complaints as good (43.6%), average (29.3%), very good (21.3%) and poor (3.6%).

Figure 4.36 shows that the majority of visitors to the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area rated the table appearance and ambience as good (62.6%), followed by very good (20.5%), average (15.9%) and poor (1%).

**Figure 4.36 Rating of Food and Entertainment: Table appearance and ambience**

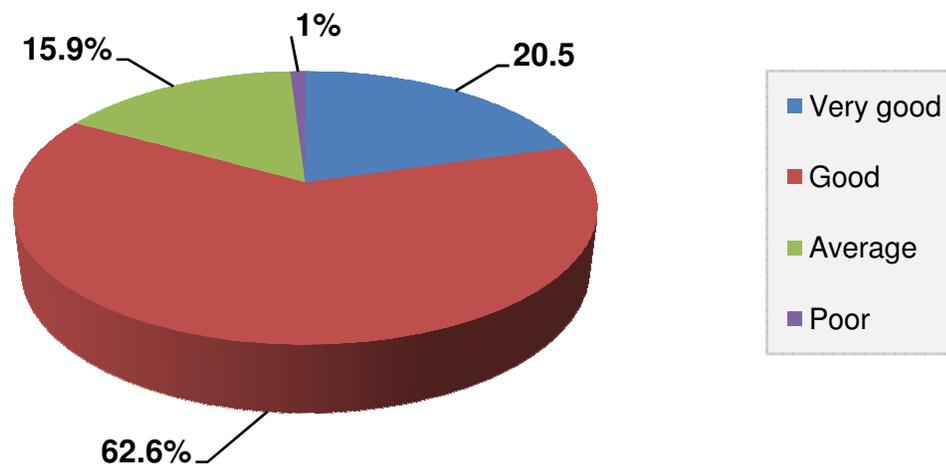
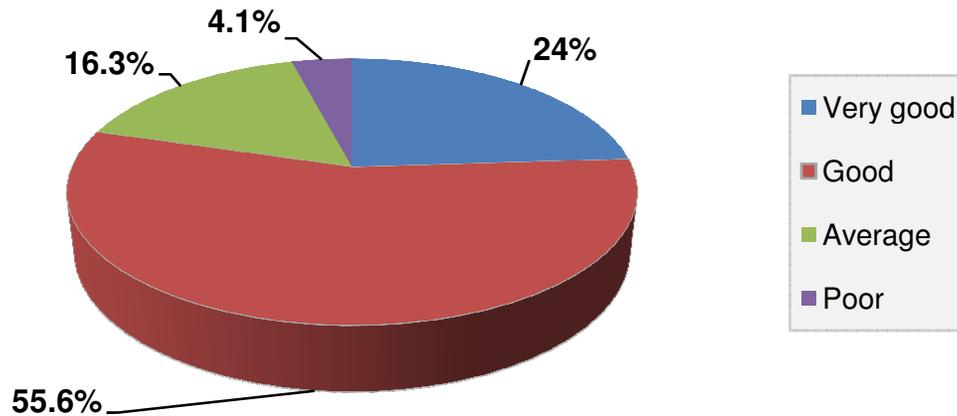


Figure 4.37 shows that the majority of respondents (55.6%) perceived restaurants, pubs and coffee shops as good value for money. This is followed by very good (24%), average (16.3%) and poor (4.1%).

**Figure 4.37 Rating of Food and Entertainment: Value for money**



According to figure 4.38, most of the foreign and domestic tourists perceived the friendliness of staff as good (51%). The other respondents rated the friendliness of staff as very good (25%), average (21.4%) and only 2.6% as poor.

**Figure 4.38 Rating of Food and Entertainment: Friendliness of staff**

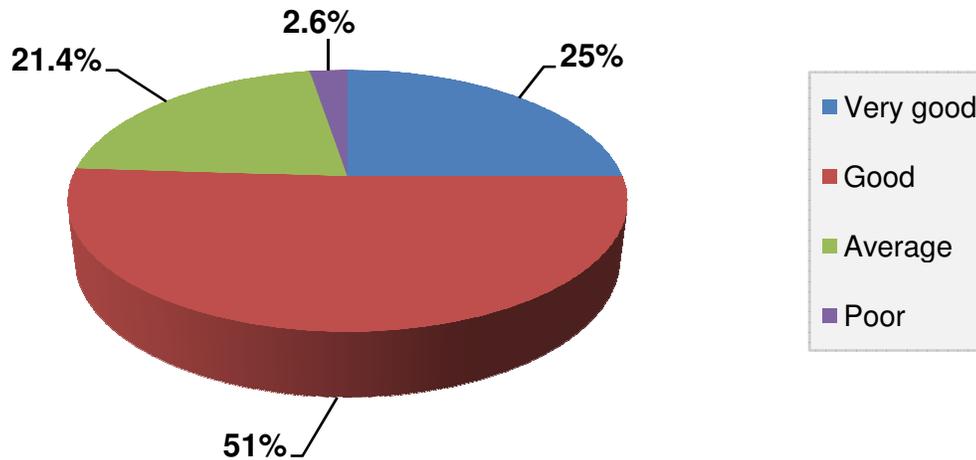


Figure 4.39 shows that the majority of respondents rated the efficiency of staff as good (51.5%), 24% rated it as very good and 19.4% as average. Furthermore, 4.1% of the respondents perceived the efficiency of staff as poor and 1% as very poor.

**Figure 4.39 Rating of Food and Entertainment: Efficiency of staff**

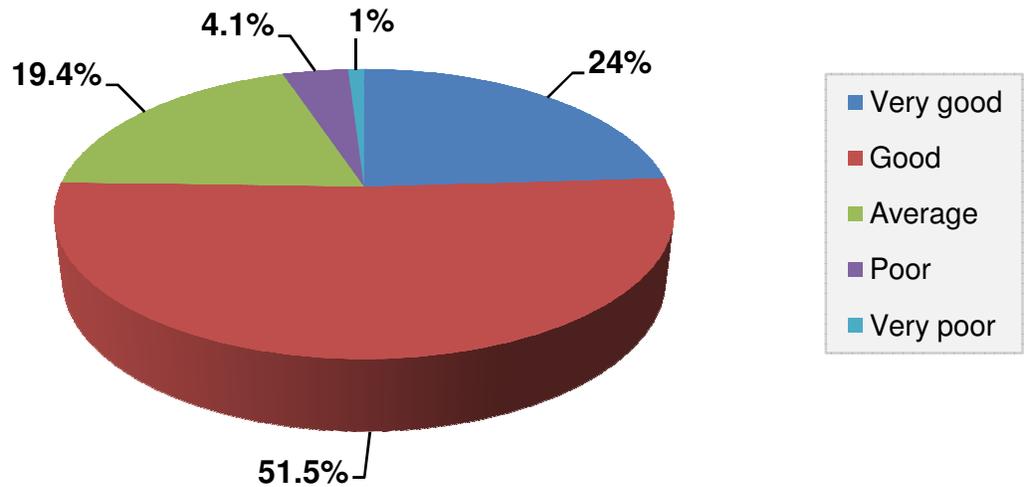


Figure 4.40 illustrates that the majority (47%) of respondents rated promptness of service as good and 21.9% as very good. A total percentage of 31.1% of respondents rated it as average to very poor, indicating a need for improvement in the promptness of service in general.

**Figure 4.40 Rating of Food and Entertainment: Promptness of service**

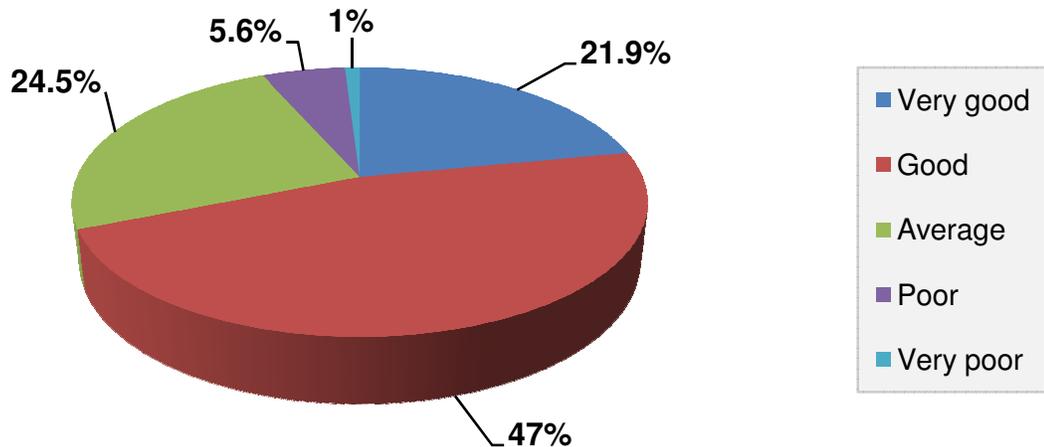
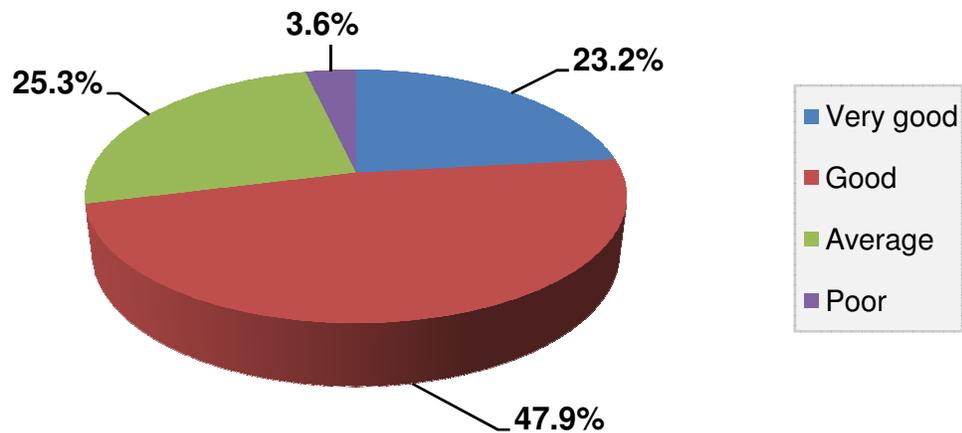


Figure 4.41 indicates that 47.9% of tourists (respondents) to the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area perceived the willingness of staff to provide assistance, as good. This is followed by 23.2% as very good and 25.3% rated it average. Only 3.6% of respondents rated it as poor.

**Figure 4.41 Rating of Food and Entertainment: Willingness of staff to provide assistance**



From figure 4.42, it is apparent that the majority of respondents (43.6%) rated staff's handling of complaints as good. This is followed by 29.3% as average, 21.3% as very good, 5.3% as poor and 0.5% rated it as very poor. It is therefore evident that 35.1% of respondents rated it average to very poor indicating a need for improvement in this area.

**Figure 4.42 Rating of Food and Entertainment: Staff's handling of complaints**

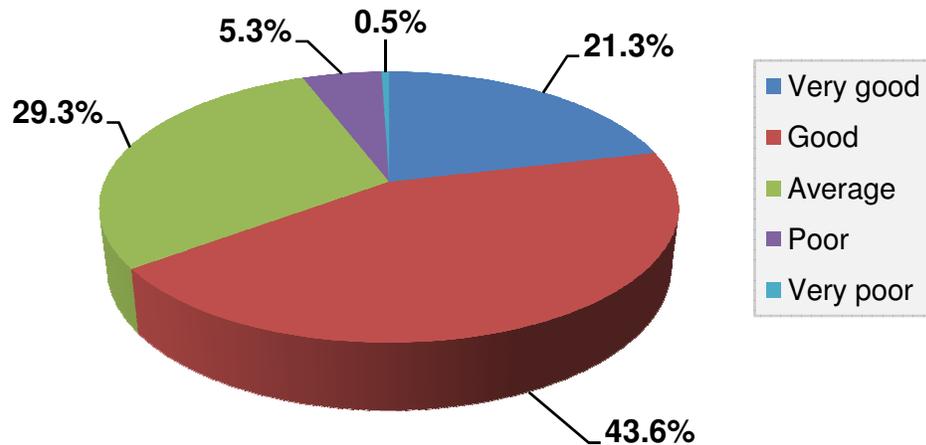
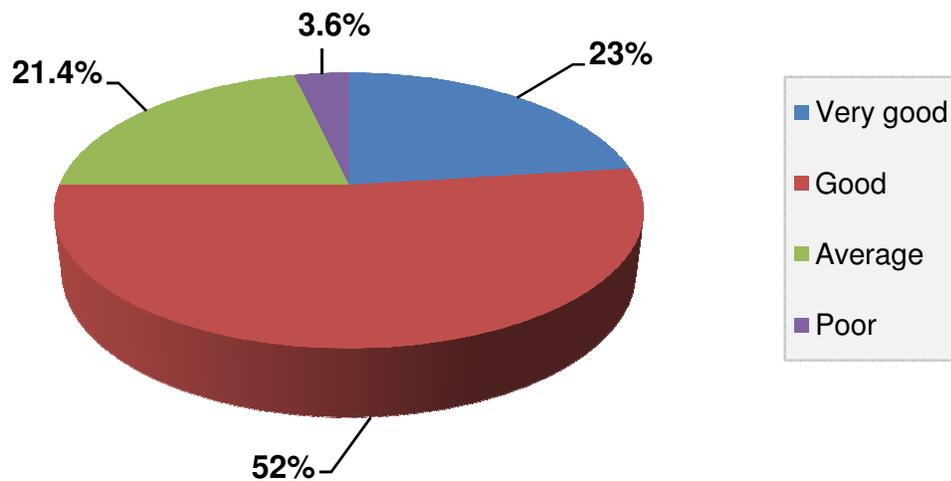


Figure 4.43 illustrates that the majority of visiting tourists (respondents) to the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area rated the overall service quality at restaurant, pubs and coffee shops as good (52%), followed by 23% as very good, 21.4% as average and only 3.6% as poor.

**Figure 4.43 Rating of Food and Entertainment: Overall service quality**



From the above one can conclude that a large percentage of the different aspects of restaurants, pubs and coffee shops were rated as average by the respondents. It is therefore evident that there is a need for improvement in this category. There is a

definite need for improvement in the promptness of service, willingness of staff to provide assistance and the overall service quality.

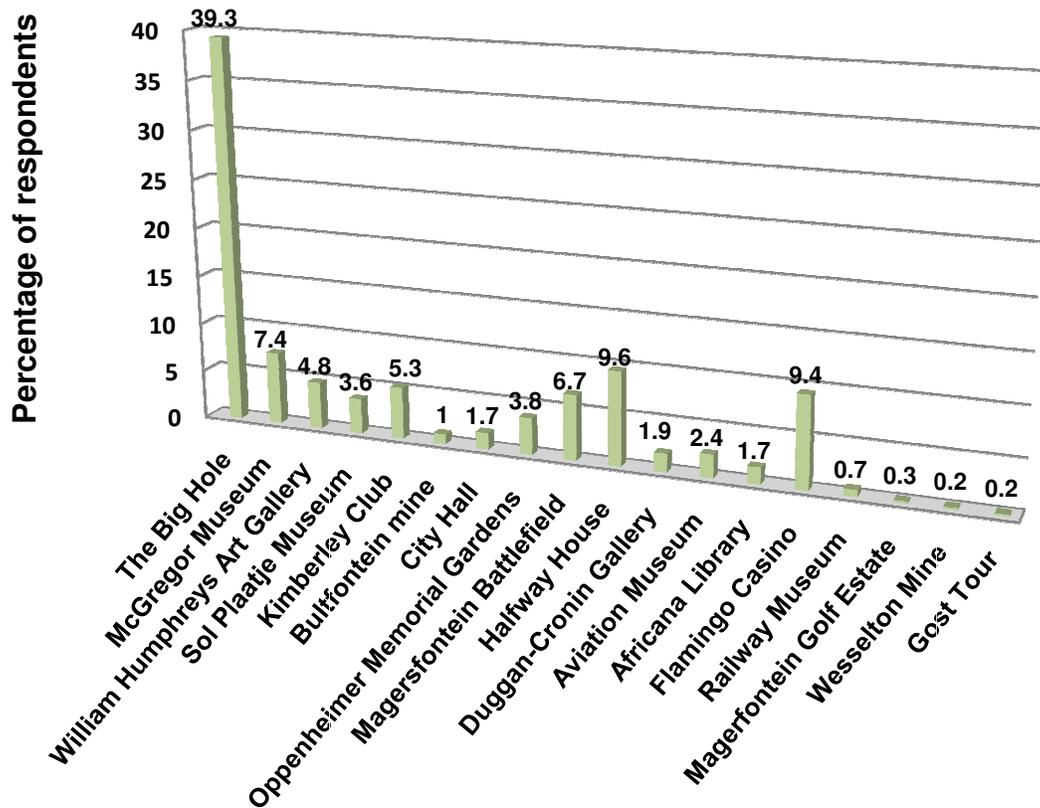
#### **4.2.5 Attractions**

The purpose for the graph below is to identify which types of attractions are more popular than others and what type of attractions motivates visitors to visit the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area. Based on this question the respondents rated their general perception of service delivery at the attractions they visited.

##### **4.2.5.1 Attractions visited in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area**

According to figure 4.44, the most popular attraction visited by respondents was the Big Hole (39.3%), compared to other attractions such as the Halfway House (9.6%), Flamingo Casino (9.4%), McGregor Museum (7.4%), Magersfontein Battlefield (6.7%), the Kimberley Club (5.3%), William Humphreys Art Gallery (4.8%), Oppenheimer Memorial Gardens (3.8%) and the Sol Plaatje Museum (3.6%).

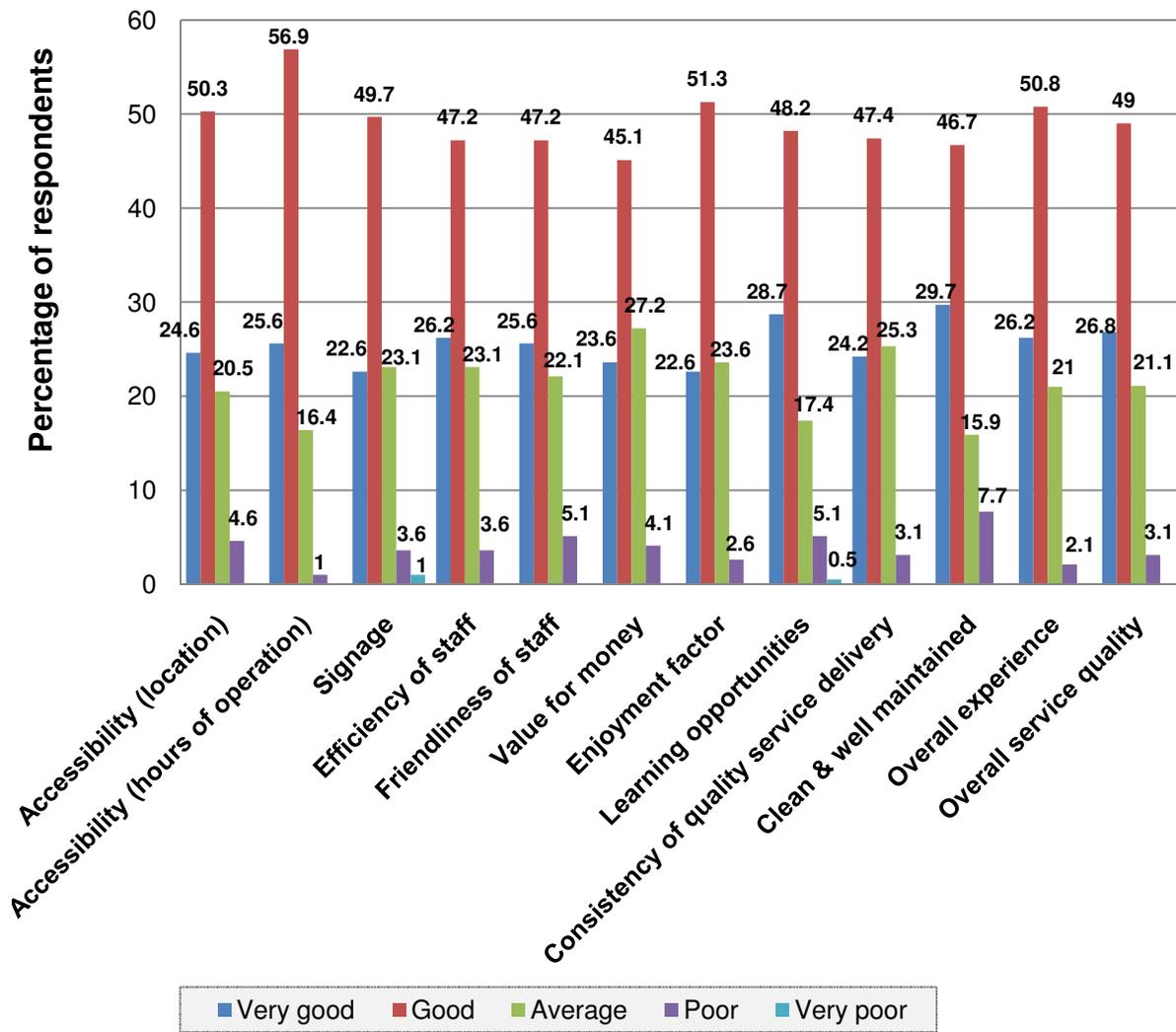
**Figure 4.44 Attractions visited**



#### 4.2.5.2 General rating of attractions in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area

Figure 4.45 below, shows a summary of the different aspects at the attractions (see figure 4.44) that were rated by respondents.

**Figure 4.45 Summary of the general rating of attractions in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area**



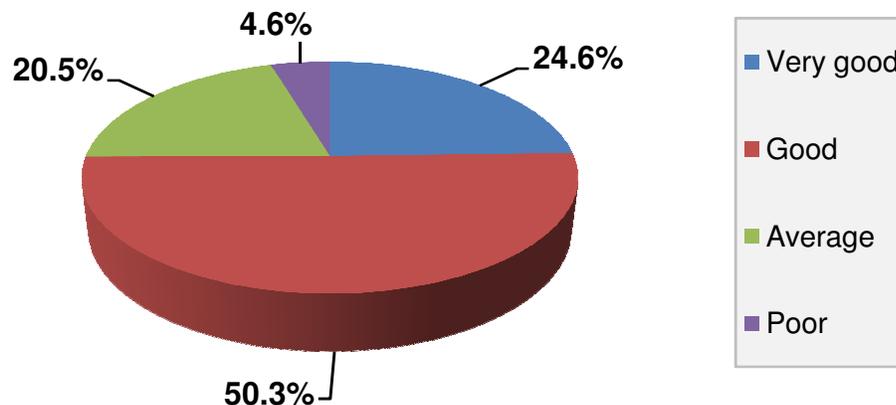
From figure 4.45 it is evident that the accessibility (hours of operation) received the highest rating as 56.9% perceived it to be good; 25.6% rated it as very good, 16.4% as average and 1% as poor. This is followed by the enjoyment factor which was rated good (51.3%), average (23.6%), very good (22.6%) and poor (2.6%). Respondents' overall experience in the city was rated as good (50.8%), very good (26.2%), average (21%) and poor (2.1%). The accessibility (location) was rated as good (50.3%), very good (24.6%), average (20.5%) and poor (4.6%). The majority of respondents perceived signage in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area as good (49.7%), average (23.1%), very good (22.6%), poor (3.6%) and very poor (1%).

The overall service quality was rated as good (49%), very good (26.8%), average (21.1%) and poor (3.1%). Learning opportunities were rated as good (48.2%), very good (28.7%), average (17.4%), poor (5.1%) and very poor (0.5%). The majority of respondents rated the consistency of quality service delivery as good (47.4%). This is an area that needs attention as a large number of respondents rated it as average (25.3%). Other respondents rated it as very good (24.2%) and 3.1% as poor. The friendliness of staff was rated as good (47.2%), very good (25.6%), average (22.1%) and poor (5.1%).

Furthermore, the efficiency of staff was perceived as good (47.2%), very good (26.2%), average (23.1%) and poor (3.6%). The majority of respondents perceived the cleanliness and maintenance in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area as good (46.7%), very good (29.7%), average (15.9%) and poor (7.7%). Finally, 45.1% of the respondents rated the city as a good value for money destination. A large number of respondents rated it as average (27.2%), leaving room for improvement in this area. Other tourists perceived it as very good (23.6%) and poor (4.1%).

Figure 4.46 indicates that 50.3% of tourists (respondents) to the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area perceived the location of attractions as good, 24.6% as very good, and 20.5% as average. Only 4.6% rated it as poor.

**Figure 4.46 Rating of attractions: Accessibility (location)**



From figure 4.47 it is apparent that the majority of tourists that visited the city rated the operating hours of attractions as good (56.9%), followed by very good 25.6%. Other respondents rated it as average (16.5%) and 1% as poor.

**Figure 4.47 Rating of attractions: Accessibility (hours of operation)**

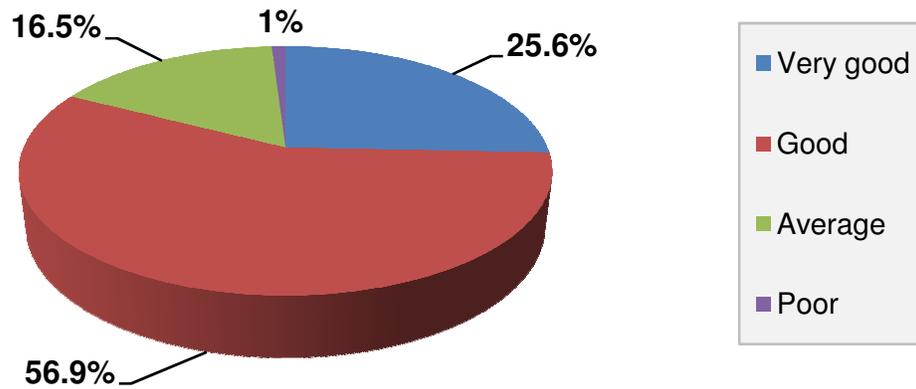


Figure 4.48 indicates that 49.7% of respondents perceived the signage in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area to be good, 22.6% as very good, 23.1% as average, 3.7% as poor and 1% as very poor.

**Figure 4.48 Rating of attractions: Signage**

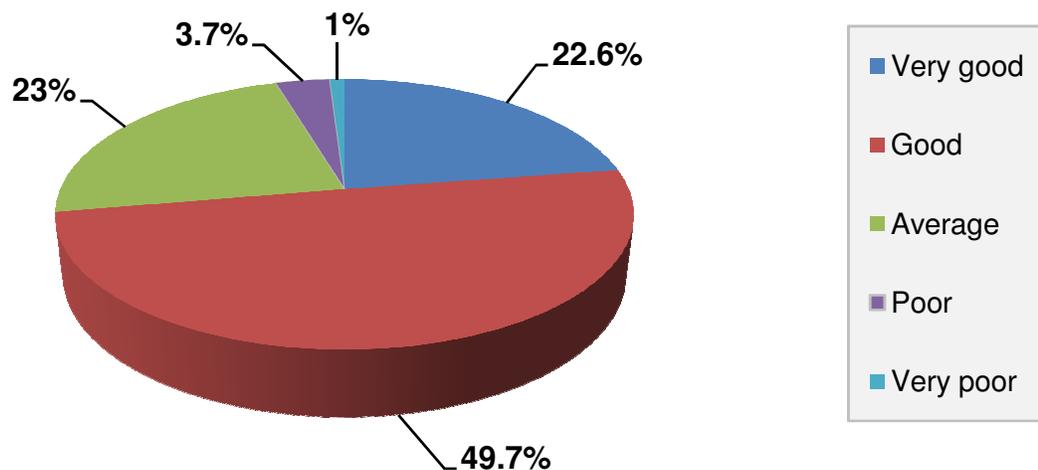


Figure 4.49 indicates the efficiency of staff at attractions in Sol Plaatje Municipal Area. Most of the respondents rated it as good (47.2%), 26.2% as very good, 23.1% as average and 3.5% as poor.

**Figure 4.49 Rating of attractions: Efficiency of staff**

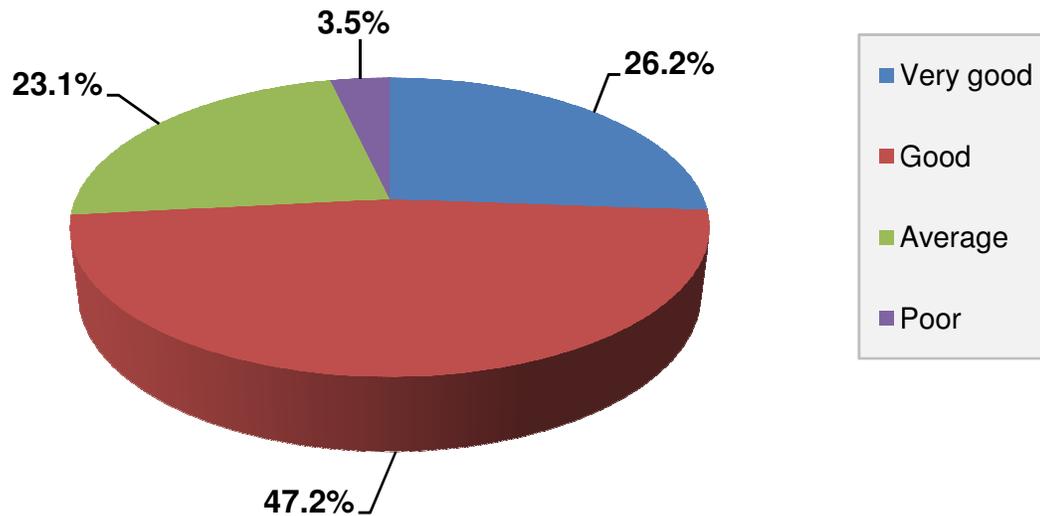


Figure 4.50 shows that the majority of foreign and domestic tourists (respondents) perceived the friendliness of staff as good (47.2%). Other respondents rated it as very good (25.6%), and as average (22.1%). A small percentage (5.1%) of respondents rated it as poor.

**Figure 4.50 Rating of attractions: Friendliness of staff**

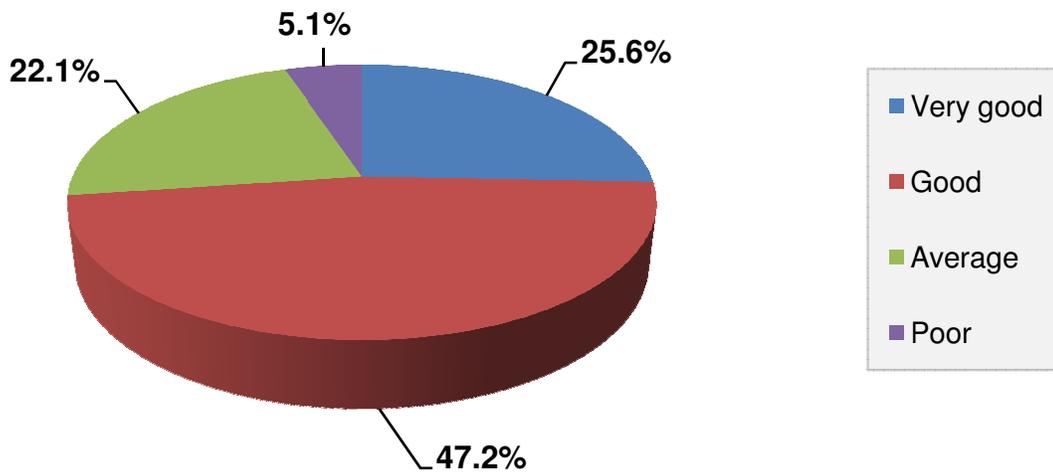
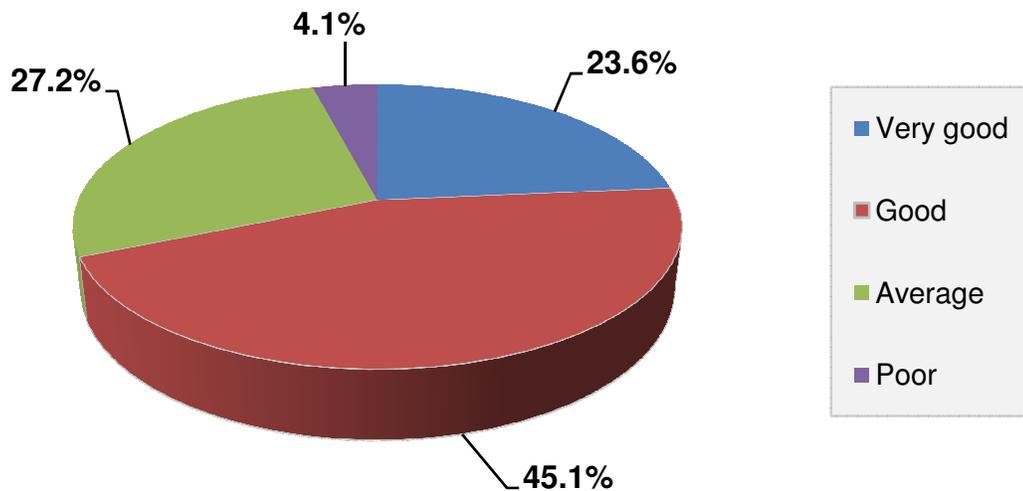


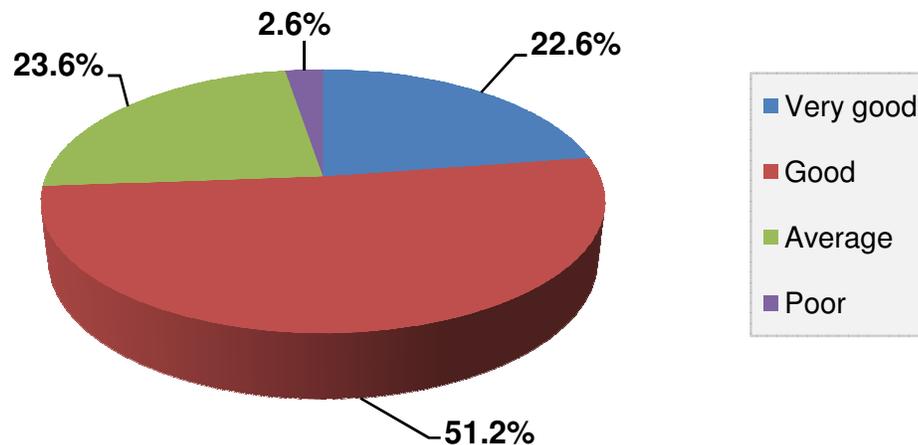
Figure 4.51 shows that 45.1% of respondents perceived attractions to be good value for money in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area. This is followed by 23.6% as very good, 27.2% as average and 4.1% as poor. Thus, a large number (31.3%) of respondents felt they were not receiving value for money at attractions in general.

**Figure 4.51 Rating of attractions: Value for money**



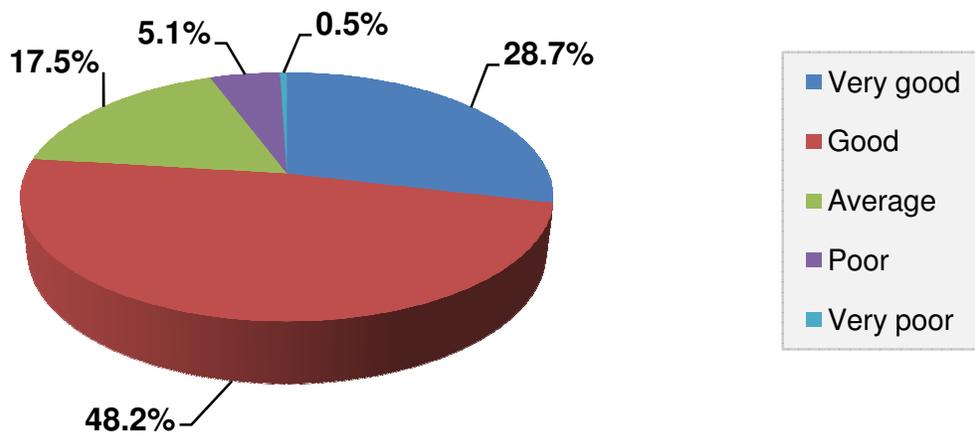
In figure 4.52 the majority of respondents (51.2%) rated the enjoyment factor at attractions as good. Other respondents rated it as very good (22.6%), 23.6% as average and 2.6% as poor.

**Figure 4.52 Rating of attractions: Enjoyment factor**



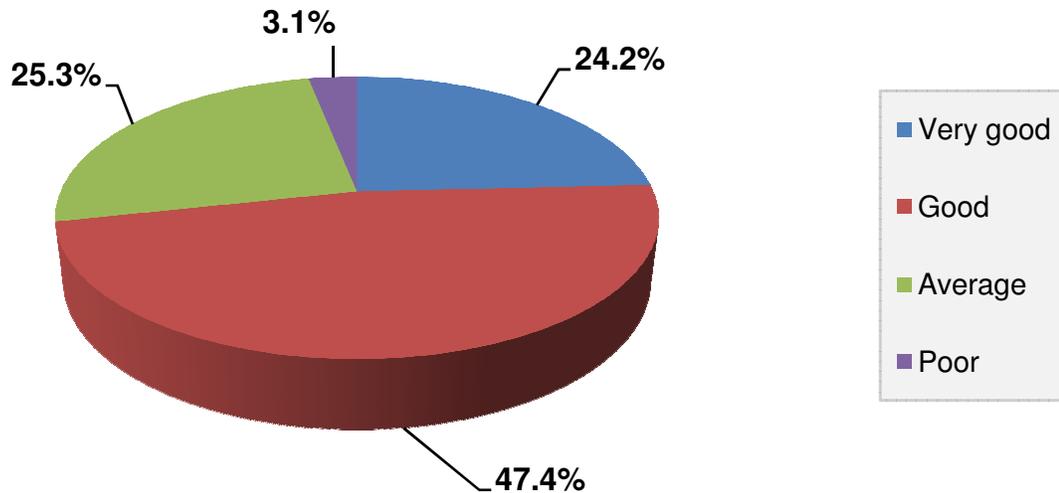
According to figure 4.53, most visitors (respondents) to the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area felt they were learning from attractions in general. A total of 48.2% of the respondents rated learning opportunities as good, 28.7% rated it as very good, followed by 17.5% as average. A total of 5.1% of the respondents perceived it as poor and 0.5% as very poor.

**Figure 4.53 Rating of attractions: Learning opportunities**



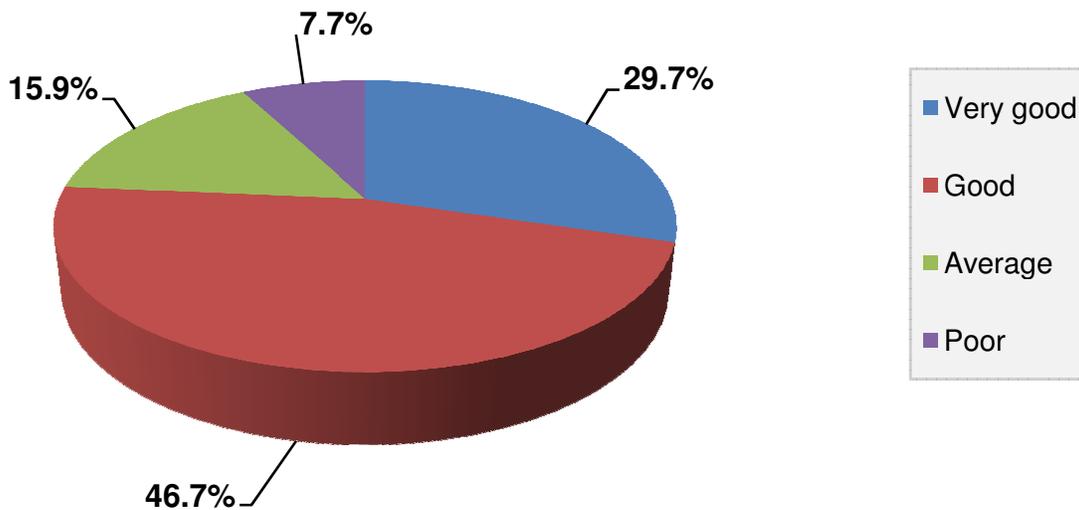
It is evident from figure 4.54 below that the majority of respondents (47.4%) indicated that they perceived the consistency of service delivery to be good. Other respondents rated it as very good (24.2%) and a large percentage, 25.3%, as average. Only 3.1% of respondents perceived it to be poor.

**Figure 4.54 Rating of attractions: Consistency of quality service delivery**



It is important that the perception of the cleanliness and maintenance of attractions at tourism destinations such as the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area be a positive one. According to figure 4.55, the majority of respondents rated it as good (46.7%), followed by very good (29.7%), average (15.9%) and 7.7% as poor.

**Figure 4.55 Rating of attractions: Clean and well-maintained**



The visitors' overall experience and perception of attractions in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area can influence them to return and promote the city by means of 'word-of-mouth'. From figure 4.56 below, it is apparent that most of the respondents perceived attractions

in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area to be good (50.7%), 26.2% as very good, 21% perceived attractions as average, and only 2.1% as poor.

**Figure 4.56 Rating of attractions: Overall experience**

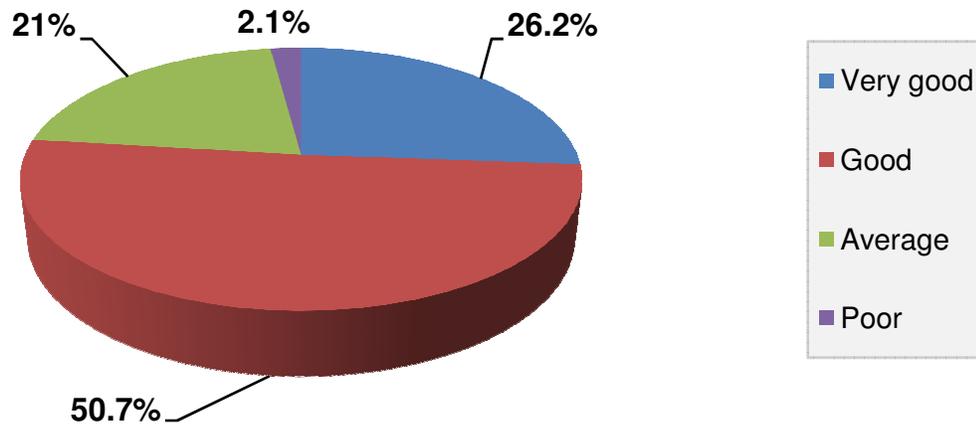


Figure 4.57 illustrates how respondents rated the overall service quality at attractions they visited in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area. It is apparent from the graph below that the majority of visitors perceived it as good (49%), 26.8% as very good, 21.1% as average and 3.1% as poor.

**Figure 4.57 Rating of attractions: Overall service quality**

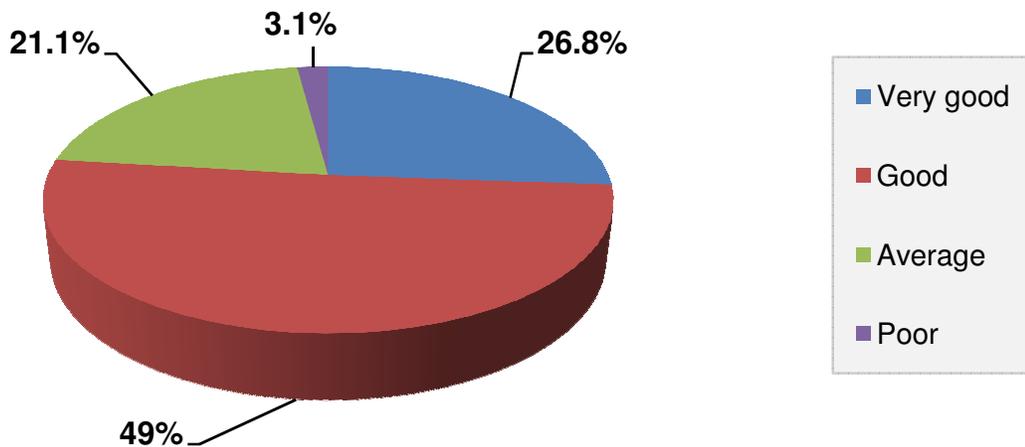
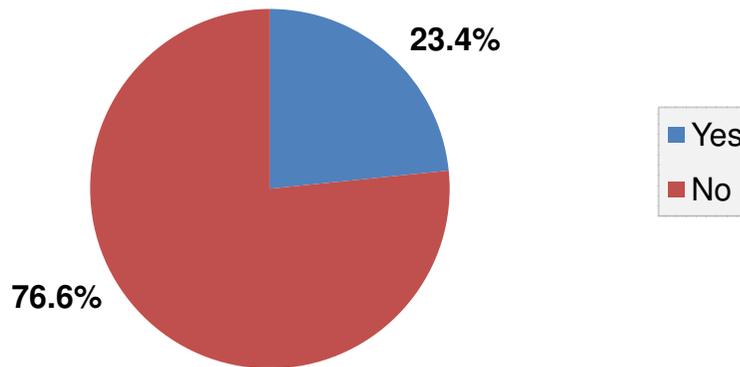


Figure 4.58 indicates that in total the majority of respondents (76.6%) have not experienced superior service at any attraction in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area. In an

open-ended question the majority of respondents motivated that they only perceived the service to be average at attractions.

**Figure 4.58 Question: Are there any attraction (s) where you experienced superior service?**



This is followed by a number of respondents who were satisfied with the service and perceived it to be good but not exceeding their expectations. A small minority of respondents did not experience good service and felt that there is nothing that stands out or is unique. Other respondents (23.4%) felt they did experience superior service at the following attractions (listed in order of importance):

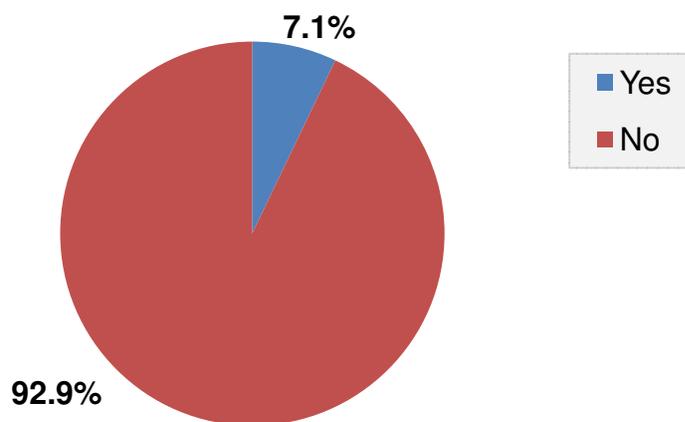
- The Big Hole (13 respondents)
- Kimberley Club (7 respondents)
- Flamingo Casino (3 respondents)

Other attractions were perceived as delivering superior service by one respondent each. It includes the City Hall, Aviations Museum, Africana Library, Halfway House, William Humphreys Art Gallery and Mario's Restaurant.

A large proportion of respondents (108) answered the above question but did not motivate their answer. Most respondents did not give specific and clear answers. Possible reasons for this could be the time factor as they were in the city for business. Other tourists felt they had not seen enough attractions to make a comment, as a large proportion of respondents were planning to visit only the Big Hole.

Figure 4.59 indicates that the majority of respondents (92.9%) had not experienced particularly poor service at any attraction in Sol Plaatje Municipal Area, compared to 7.1% who felt they did experience poor service. One can therefore conclude that the majority of respondents were satisfied with the service they received but had not experienced superior service (in question 19). This is confirmed in the open-ended question where 22% respondents motivated that they were satisfied with the service they received at attractions in general. Other respondents (13%) indicated they did not perceive poor service at attractions in Sol Plaatje Municipal Area. These respondents did not motivate their answer as they were in the city for business purposes and the majority only had time to visit the Big Hole. Other tourists (8.5%) perceived the service at attractions to be average and 4.5% perceived the staff as friendly and helpful. A small minority (6%) perceived it as clean and neat, value for money and enjoyed the food at the attractions.

**Figure 4.59 Question: Are there any attraction(s) where you experienced poor service?**



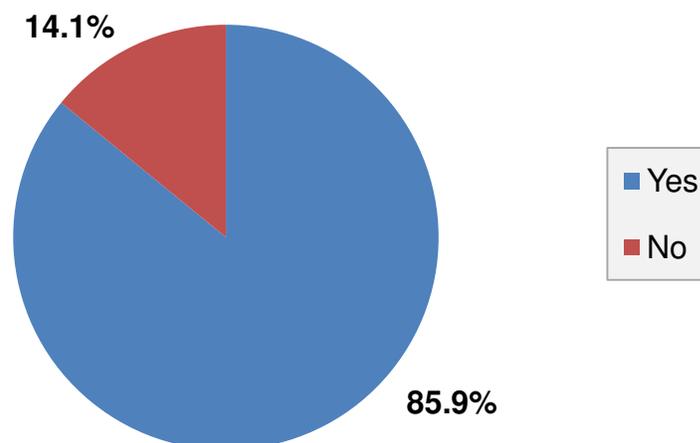
A total of 13 respondents (6.5%) indicated that they received poor service at the McGregor Museum, African Library, Halfway House, Magersfontein and Aviation Museum. They motivated that the staff were unfriendly, unhelpful and their service very slow. Other comments included the Oppenheimer Memorial Gardens that were perceived as being filthy and full of beggars.

Twelve respondents (6%) did not motivate their answers and indicated they had not spent enough time in the city to visit attractions. Further, a total of 75 (37.5%) respondents did not motivate their answers as the majority only visited one attraction, namely the Big Hole. Another reason was the time factor as the respondents did not have enough time to complete all five open-ended questions in the questionnaire. A small number of respondents misunderstood this question and thought the question was aimed at service delivery in general and not attractions specifically.

#### 4.2.6 General

##### 4.2.6.1 Promotion of Sol Plaatje as a tourist destination

**Figure 4.60 Question: Will you promote the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area as a tourist destination?**

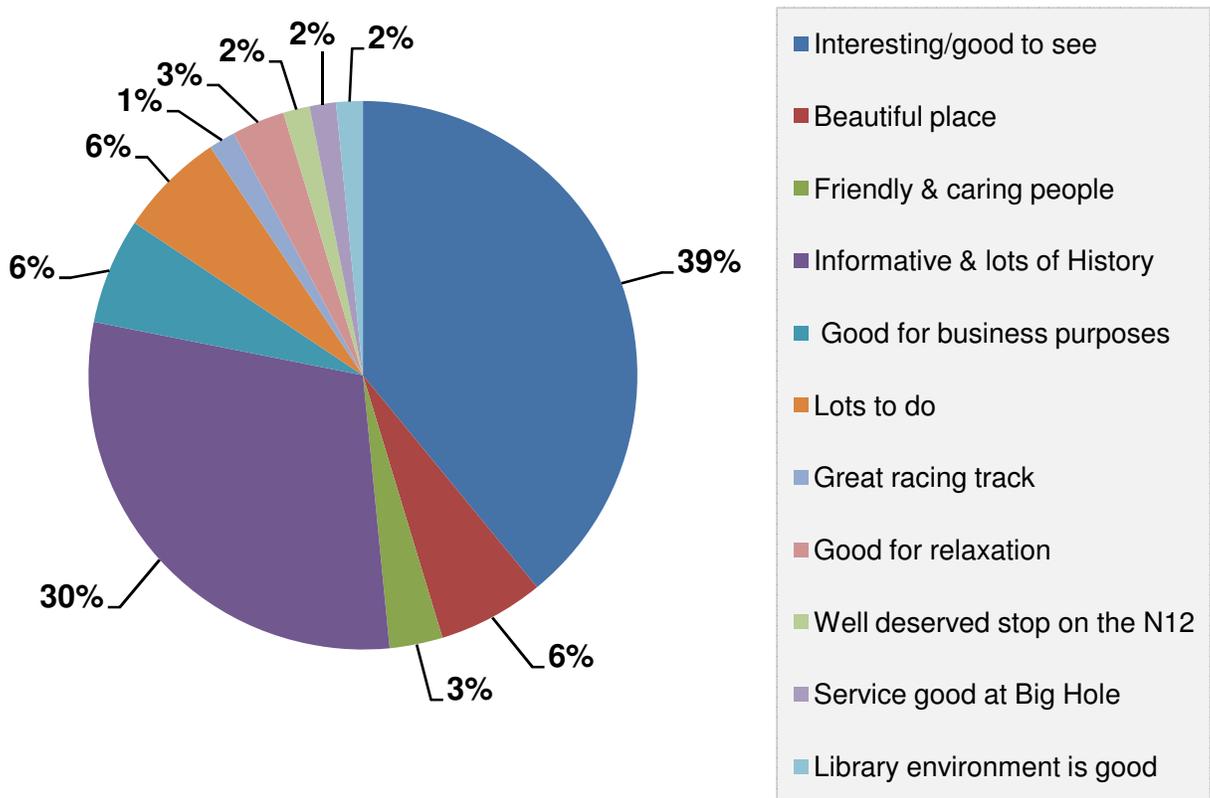


According to figure 4.60, 85.9% of tourists (respondents) who participated in this survey would promote Sol Plaatje Municipal Area as a tourist destination. This is an indication that the majority of tourists felt positive about the city and was generally satisfied with the service they received. Based on the above question, respondents were asked to motivate their answer in an open-ended question. In the summary below, the researcher distinguishes between the motivations of foreign and domestic tourists to see if there are any distinctive differences in opinion between the two groups.

#### 4.2.6.2 Domestic tourists: who will promote Sol Plaatje

Only 99 domestic respondents (out of 151) motivated the above question. The reason for this could be the time factor or the respondents felt they had not stayed long enough in the city to motivate their answer. The motivations of respondents who will promote the city are indicated in figure 4.61 below.

**Figure 4.61 Motivations: Domestic tourists who will promote Sol Plaatje Municipal Area**

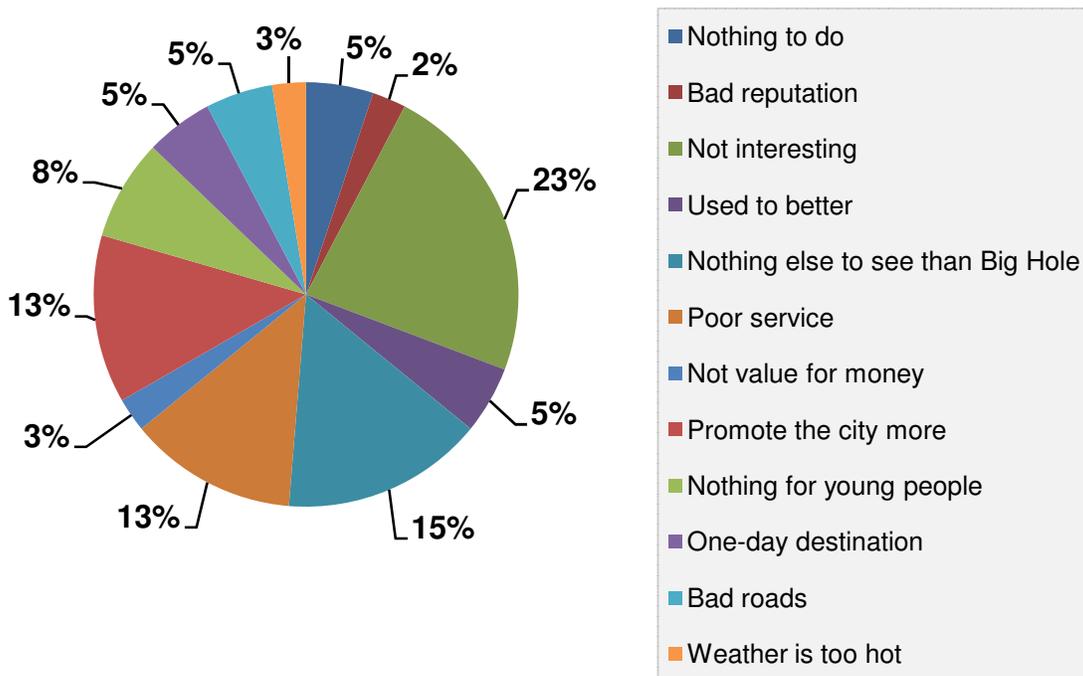


The majority of domestic respondents, 126 out of 151 (83.4%), indicated that they will promote the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area. The historical attractions in the city are the respondents' most popular reason for promoting the city (30%). The majority of respondents (39%) who motivated 'interesting' or 'good to see', referred to the Big Hole and not the city in general as they should have. The reason for this misunderstanding is that the respondents were interviewed at the Big Hole. Other respondents equally (6%) motivated that Kimberley is a good business destination (as it is the capital of the Northern Cape), there is a lot to do in the city and it is a beautiful place.

### 4.2.6.3 Domestic tourists: who will not promote Sol Plaatje

Twenty-five (out of the 28 respondents), who indicated that they will not promote the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area, were domestic tourists. From figure 4.62 it is evident that 23% of domestic tourists that would not promote Sol Plaatje Municipal Area motivated that it is not interesting enough. In addition, 15% of domestic respondents felt that the Big Hole is the main attraction and there is nothing else to see or do in the city. Other domestic respondents equally (13%) felt they were receiving poor service in the city and that not enough is being done to promote the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area as a tourist destination. A further 8% of domestic tourists indicated that the city does not offer much for young people.

**Figure 4.62 Motivations: Domestic tourists who will not promote Sol Plaatje Municipal Area**

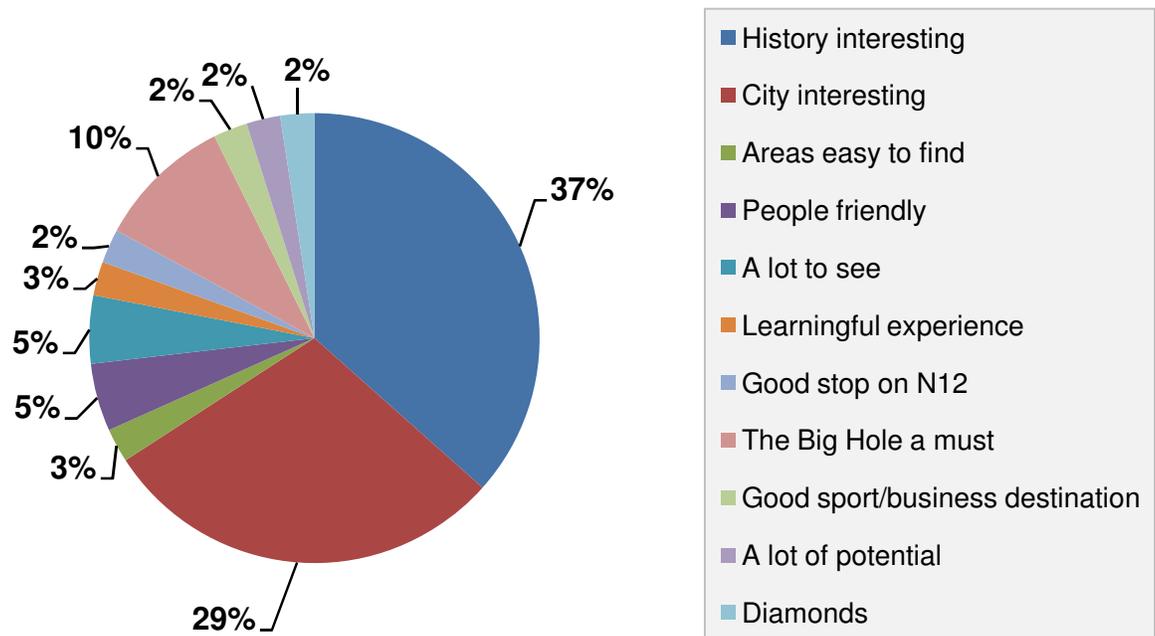


### 4.2.6.4 Foreign tourists: who will promote Sol Plaatje

The majority of foreign tourists, 46 out of 49 (93.8%), indicated that they will promote Sol Plaatje Municipal Area as a tourist destination. Only three respondents would not

promote it, as they felt there is not much to do and see in the city. A total of seven (14.2%) foreign respondents did not complete the open-ended question and five (11.6%) indicated that they were not sure of their answer as they had only just arrived in the city. The motivations of the foreign respondents are indicated in figure 4.63 below.

**Figure 4.63 Motivations: foreign tourists who will promote Sol Plaatje Municipal Area**

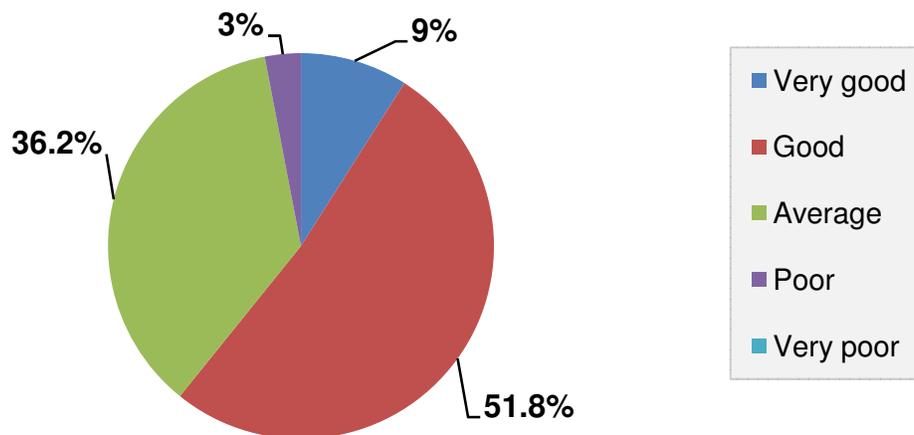


From figure 4.63 it is evident that the majority of respondents (37%) motivated the rich history of Sol Plaatje Municipal Area as the main reason for promoting the city. 29% of the respondents perceived the city to be an interesting tourist destination and 10% would recommend it to others as The Big Hole is a must-see attraction.

#### 4.2.6.5 Pre-conceived perception

From figure 4.64 it is apparent that the majority of respondents rated their pre-conceived perception of service rendering compared to their actual experience of the service delivery in Sol Plaatje Municipal Area, as good (51.8%), 36.2% rated it as average, 9% rated it as very good and 3% rated it as poor.

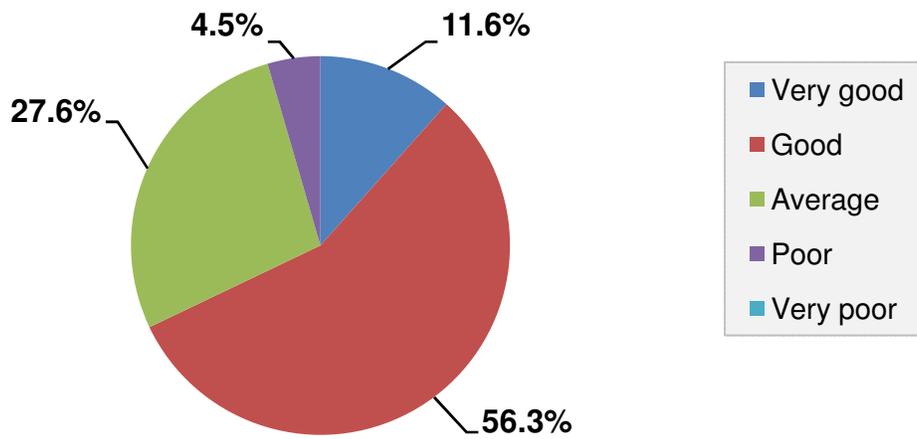
**Figure 4.64 Question: How does your pre-conceived perception of service rendering in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area compare to your actual experience?**



#### 4.2.6.6 General satisfaction

From figure 4.65 it is apparent that the majority of tourists (respondents) are satisfied with the delivery of service in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area. 56% of the respondents rated it as good, 28% rated it as average, 12% as very good and 4% as poor.

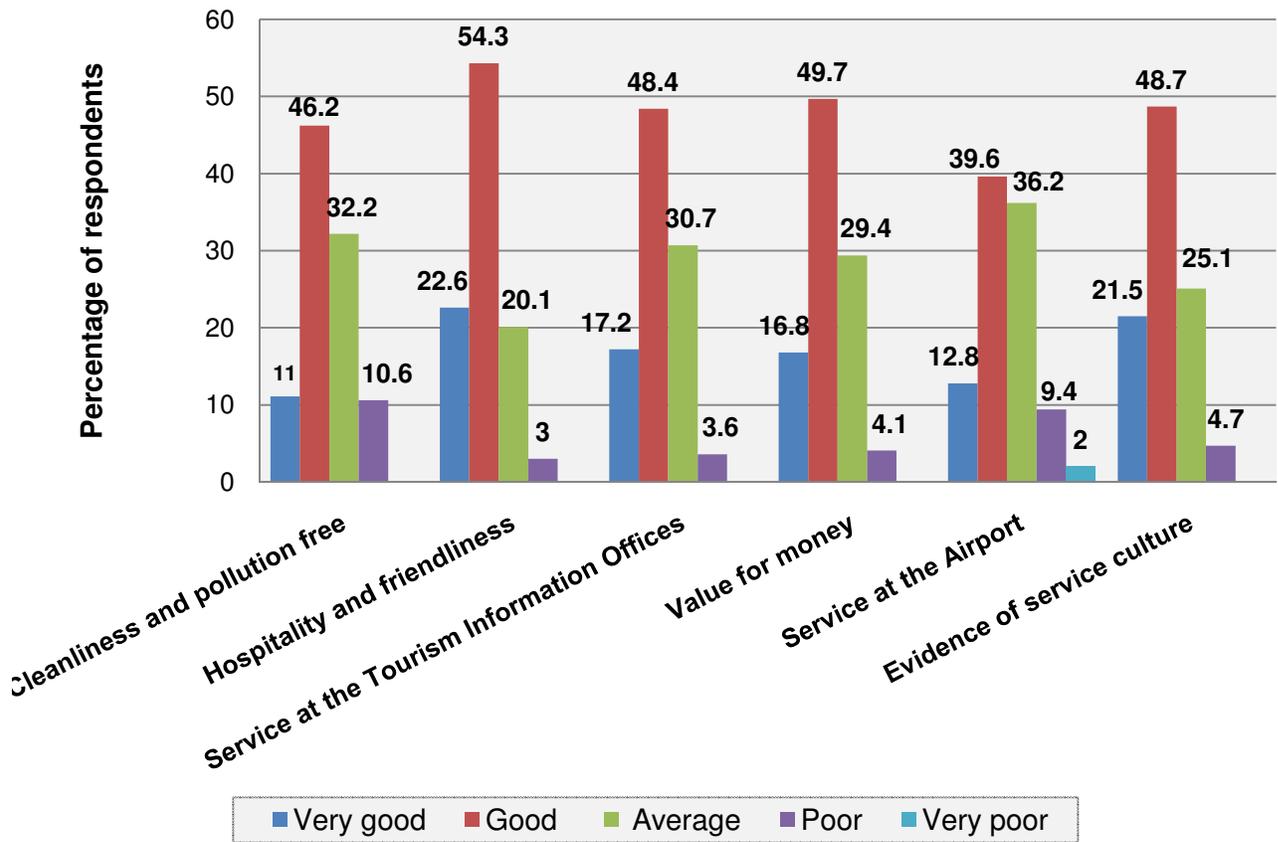
**Figure 4.65 How satisfied are you with tourism service delivery in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Region?**



#### 4.2.6.7 Summary of the general rating of Sol Plaatje as a tourism destination

Figure 4.66 shows a summary on how respondents rated the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area as a tourist destination in general.

**Figure 4.66 Summary of the general rating of the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area as a tourism destination**



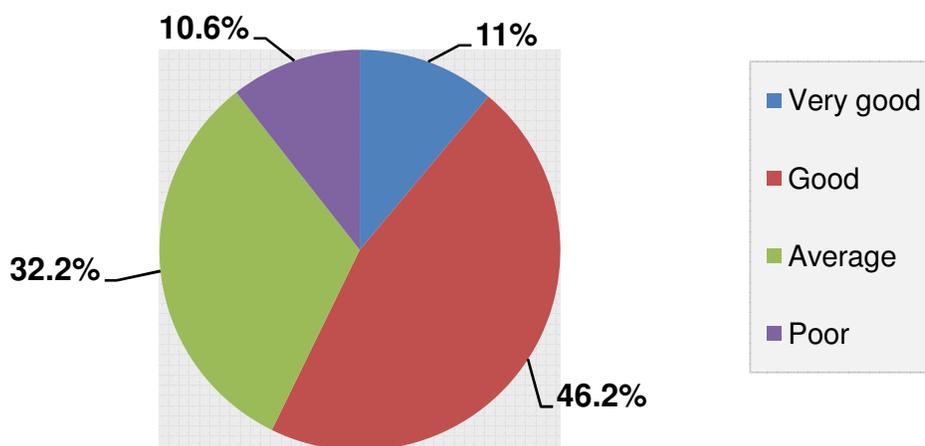
According to figure 4.66, hospitality and friendliness received the highest ratings. 54.3% of respondents rated it as good, 22.6% as very good, 20.1% average and only 3% as poor. This is followed by value for money as good (49.7%), average (29.4%), very good (16.8%) and 4.1% rated it as poor. The evidence of service culture were perceived as good (48.7%), average (25.1%), very good (21.51%) and poor (4.7%). Furthermore, the service at the Tourism Information Offices were rated as good (48.4%), average (30.7%), very good (17.2%) and only 3.6% as very poor. The respondents rated

cleanliness and pollution free as good (46.2%) and only 11% as very good. This is an area that can improve as 32.2% of respondents perceived it as average and 10.6% rated it as poor.

Another area that needs attention includes the service delivery at the Kimberley Airport as only 39.6% of respondents rated it as good and 12.8% as very good. A large percentage (36.2%) of respondents rated it as average and as poor (9.4%).

Figure 4.67 indicates that the majority of respondents (46.2%) perceived cleanliness and pollution free to be good. A large percentage of respondents (32.2%) rated it average and 10.6% as poor. Only 11% perceived it as very good.

**Figure 4.67 Rating of Sol Plaatje as a tourism destination: Cleanliness and Pollution free**



It is evident from figure 4.68 below that the tourists (respondents) who visited the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area perceived the people to be friendly and hospitable. The majority of respondents rated hospitality and friendliness as good (54.3%), followed by very good (22.6%), average (20.1%) and 3% as poor. Although 76.9% indicated friendliness and hospitality to be good to very good, a large number of respondents (23.1%) perceived it to be average to poor.

**Figure 4.68 Rating of Sol Plaatje as a tourism destination: Hospitality and Friendly People**

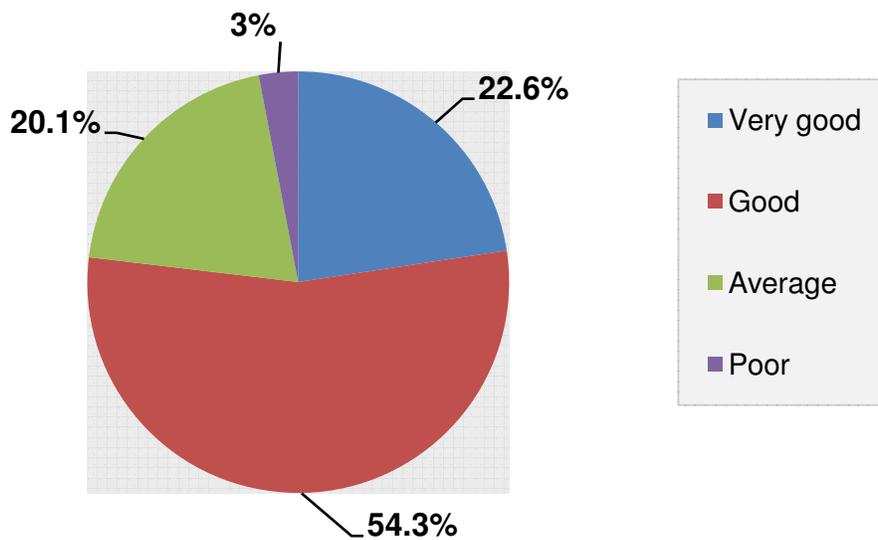


Figure 4.69 indicates that 48.5% of respondents perceived the service at the main Tourism Information Office to be good and 17.2% rated it as very good. A large number of respondents rated it as average (30.7%) and 3.6% as poor.

**Figure 4.69 Rating of Sol Plaatje as a tourism destination: Service at the Tourism Information Offices**

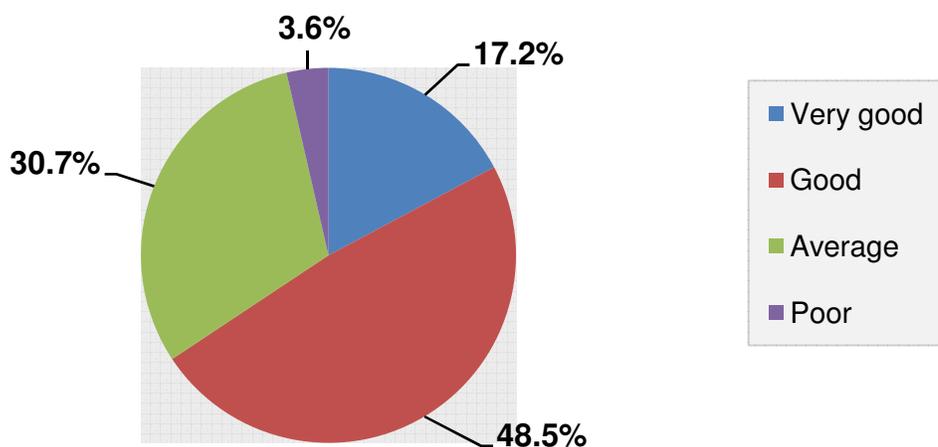
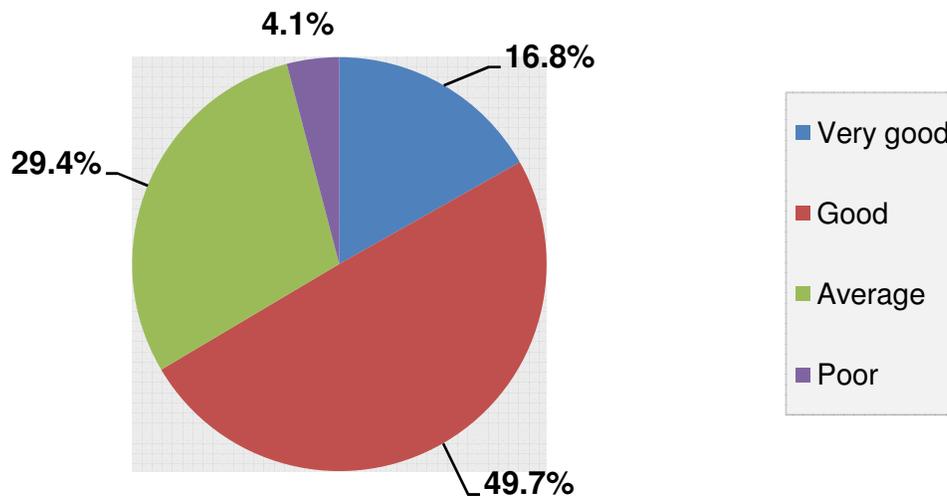


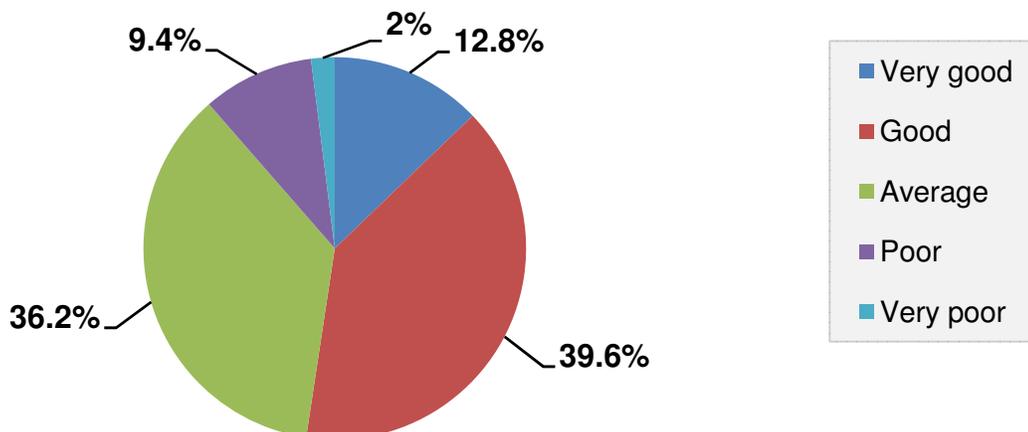
Figure 4.70 illustrates that the majority of visitors (49.7%) to the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area perceived it to be a good value for money destination. 29.4% of the respondents rated it to be average, 16.8% rated it as very good and only 4.1% as poor.

**Figure 4.70 Rating of Sol Plaatje as a tourism destination: Value for money**



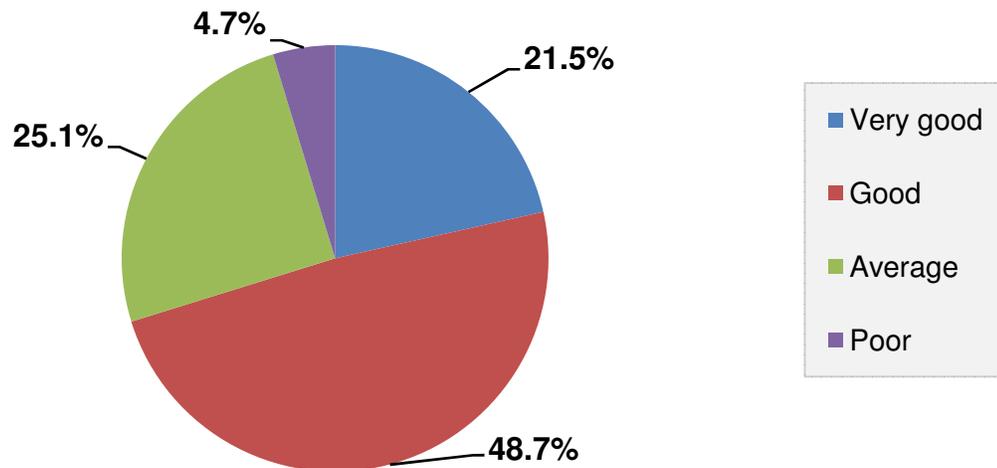
As can be seen in figure 4.71, the service at the Kimberley Airport has been rated as good (39.6%). A large percentage (36.2%) rated it as average, 9.4% as poor and 2% rated it very poor. Only 12.8% rated the service at the Kimberley Airport as very good. These results indicate a need for improvement as 37.6% of respondents perceived it to be average.

**Figure 4.71 Rating of Sol Plaatje as a tourism destination: Service at Airport**



From figure 4.72 it is evident that 48.7% of respondents perceived the service quality culture amongst staff to be good. This is followed by 25.1% as average, 21.5% as very good and 4.7% as poor.

**Figure 4.72 Rating of Sol Plaatje as a tourism destination: Evidence of service quality culture amongst staff**



The questionnaire concluded with an open-ended question where respondents were asked to make recommendations for improving the service quality in Sol Plaatje Municipal Area. A large number of respondents, 60 (30%), did not complete this question and some (4%) respondents did not know what to say. The reason for this could be the time factor and a large percentage of respondents felt they were not long enough in the city to make a valuable contribution to this question. Domestic and foreign tourists' recommendations for improving the quality of service in Sol Plaatje Municipal Area are summarised in Table 4.3 below (in order of importance).

**Table 4.3: Respondents' recommendations for the improvement of service quality**

	<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>Number of respondents</b>
1.	<p>Service:</p> <p>Must improve...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• promptness of service;</li> <li>• language (use of it);</li> <li>• respect for tourists;</li> <li>• service in general;</li> <li>• water pipes in the city.</li> </ul> <p>Training...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• of staff at attractions;</li> <li>• of staff in more knowledge of the attractions;</li> <li>• of service manners.</li> </ul> <p>Attitude...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff must be friendlier.</li> <li>• Breed a service culture.</li> </ul> <p>Hours...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attractions are closed during visiting hours.</li> </ul>	21
2.	<p><b>Roads/potholes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Needs to be upgraded.</li> <li>• The road works on the N12 takes a lot of time, resulting in less time being spent in city.</li> </ul>	20

3.	<p><b>Signage:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is too small or does not exist.</li> <li>• The signage to the Big Hole is confusing and not clear.</li> <li>• The use of another colour (not brown).</li> <li>• There are no clear/proper/visible signage boards to Guest Houses.</li> <li>• It needs improvement in general.</li> </ul>	20
4.	<p><b>Attractions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More of a variety is needed.</li> <li>• Attractions are not clearly indicated on tourist information maps.</li> <li>• Improvement is needed: make it more interesting, interactive, colourful and fun. It is not unique.</li> <li>• Upgrading of services are needed for example the employment of a geologist as a tour guide.</li> <li>• The attractions are located too far apart.</li> <li>• The supply of tour bus services needed.</li> <li>• The supply of maps on attractions at tourist information centre needed.</li> <li>• Magersfontein needs to be upgraded.</li> </ul>	17
5.	<p><b>Airport:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is chaotic.</li> <li>• The renovations are not an excuse for poor service.</li> <li>• The toilets and bar area are a disgrace.</li> <li>• Must be closed</li> </ul>	14

6.	<p><b>Pollution and Dirt:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The pollution in Kamfersdam must be sorted out.</li> <li>• The city is full of pollution and filthy; needs to be cleaned up regularly.</li> </ul>	13
7.	<p><b>Not value for money:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More affordable tourist activities are needed.</li> <li>• Distinction must be made between local and international fees.</li> <li>• Tourists are not getting value for their money.</li> </ul>	8
8.	<p><b>Entertainment:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More activities for young people and small kids needed.</li> <li>• There is a lack of night entertainment in the city.</li> </ul>	6
9.	<p><b>Movie at Big Hole:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The movie is racial.</li> <li>• Kimberley must be more ethical and appreciate other tribes.</li> </ul>	4
10.	<p><b>Marketing:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Must not only concentrate on The Big Hole.</li> <li>• More advertisement necessary, especially the lesser known attractions.</li> <li>• The tourism website must be updated regularly; the</li> </ul>	5

	information is two years out of date.	
11.	<p><b>Other general recommendations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The accommodation star-rating needs to be upgraded – a four-star must be extremely good.</li> <li>• The establishment of a common vision for the city.</li> <li>• Developments in the city are improving, but extremely slow.</li> <li>• The unemployment rate is a great problem.</li> <li>• Make the town more beautiful (with flowers).</li> <li>• The restaurants need improvement.</li> <li>• The foreign tourists are not visible.</li> <li>• The road manners of taxi drivers must improve.</li> </ul>	8
12.	<p><b>Other general comments:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The rich history of city makes it interesting.</li> <li>• Love the summer weather.</li> <li>• People are friendly.</li> <li>• Keep up with the good work in the city.</li> </ul>	9

#### 4.3 INTERVIEWS WITH ROLE-PLAYERS (refer to interview questions on Page 192)

The researcher interviewed 20 role-players representative of the sectors in the local tourism industry. Table 4.4 indicates the role-players who were included in the personal interviews. The purpose of the interviews was to get valuable insight into the perceptions of role-players regarding tourism service levels in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area. The role-players provided valuable information regarding the current trends experienced in the delivery of quality service.

**Table 4.4: Interviews with role-players representing the Tourism Sectors in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area**

	<b>Sectors:</b>	<b>Respondents:</b>
1.	Tourist Attractions	Project Manager of Big Hole Manager of McGregor Museum
2.	Accommodation	Director of the Kimberley Guesthouse Association Manager of Big Hole Protea Hotel
3.	Transportation	Owner of Newton Bus Tours
4.	Travel Organisers	Northern Cape Provincial Registrar: Tour Guiding  Private Tour Operator in the Northern Cape  Branch Manager of Astra Travel Agency  Branch Manager of Rennie's Travel Agency
5.	Destination organisers	<u>Northern Cape Tourism Authority (NCTA):</u>  Marketing Director  Marketing Officer  Chief Executive Officer

		<u>Northern Cape Tourism Department (NCTD):</u> Director of NCTD Deputy Director for Tourism Policy & Research Manager: Partnership and Industry Development Client Service Desk Officers Tourism Information Officer Tourism Information Clerk at Frances Baard District Municipality
6.	Commercial & Industrial	Chief Executive Officer of Chamber of Commerce and Industry (NOCCI) Manager of Sol Plaatje Information Centre

Below is a summary of the major trends in tourism service delivery from the perspective of the local role-players in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area.

#### **4.3.1 What is your perception of the service quality at the following tourism-related services in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area?**

##### **4.3.1.1 Accommodation establishments**

The majority of respondents (70%) indicated that the expectations of tourists have not been met in the accommodation sector. According to a respondent, 'In general service is bad; there is a lack of management and training'. Another respondent said, 'Nobody is monitoring or co-ordinating if accommodation establishments comply to certain standards'.

The respondents felt that the local community is very friendly and hospitable but would not go that extra mile in terms of service delivery. Business owners oversee small things (for example steak knife, hairdryer plug, presentation of food, et cetera.) and

therefore do not create and present a quality product to visiting tourists. The accommodation sector can therefore improve in this regard by understanding the different needs of tourists, by offering a unique product and quality service.

It is vital that owners of accommodation establishments understand, implement and invest in the concept of service excellence. There was a general feeling that more can be done regarding the training of staff members, especially frontline staff, as they create the first impression of the business. The product owners, therefore, do not only have the responsibility to train their staff on a consistent basis, but to employ the right people.

According to the respondents, the employees at accommodation establishments need to improve their skills in administration, telephone etiquette and interpersonal communication. Another problem is that employees do not always present themselves in a professional manner and do not always wear a uniform. Furthermore, staff employed at accommodation establishments does not always have first-hand knowledge about tourist attractions in the city; respondents suggested that they be sent on a tour of the city. All these above-mentioned factors do not only influence the overall image of accommodation establishments, but the city in general.

A number of respondents (30%) in the local accommodation sector agreed that there is a need for additional good quality and accredited accommodation establishments in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area. Although a number of new establishments (Guest Houses and Bed-and-Breakfast establishments) have opened their doors, they are not all graded and therefore their standards are not regulated.

Furthermore, there is a general lack in monitoring and inspection to ensure that a certain standard is maintained, resulting in the existence of poor quality accommodation establishments in the city. A number of accommodation establishments do not want to become a member of the South African Tourism Grading Council because of the problems experienced with the council. This is a major problem as foreign tourists will only stay at graded establishments. Hotels and other establishments in the city that are graded, generally offer very good service. Furthermore, some respondents felt a need for five-star accommodation especially for the big events that are held in the city.

#### **4.3.1.2 Transportation**

The majority of respondents (70%) indicated that the transport sector is delivering a basic service to tourists, but rarely exceeds their expectations. One respondent said, 'Bus drivers tend to be technically minded and not focused on the needs of the tourist'.

They are satisfied with the service delivered by rental car companies, as they are geared towards the tourism market. The service delivery of local transport companies though, is poor. It is imperative that the local taxi operators, in particular, receive customer care training and become aware of the importance of service excellence.

According to 55% of respondents, there is currently a shortage of luxury coach services in the city. Unfortunately, the absence of competition has resulted in a monopoly in the market and little effort has been made by tour operators to upgrade their buses. A need for more bus owners to operate in the city, has been identified.

One of the issues that were raised by 35% of the respondents, concerned the accessibility of the city as a tourism and business destination. There is an increasing demand for more flights into and out of the city, especially flights to neighbouring countries (such as Namibia and Botswana), as Kimberley is the gateway to these destinations. The current airline, South African Airlink, operates only once a day between Kimberley and Cape Town; this does not cater adequately for the ever increasing number of business- and game hunting tourists who want to visit the city by means of flying. The South African Express Airline delivers a more frequent service to the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area, offering three to six return flights to Johannesburg on a daily basis. The respondents perceived the cost of Kimberley related flights to be very expensive (especially between Cape Town and Kimberley) and thus having a negative impact on the tourism industry and its accessibility to the whole of the Northern Cape Province.

#### **4.3.1.3 Restaurants, pubs and coffee shops**

Sixty percent of respondents in the local tourism industry indicated that there is a general lack of quality services in restaurants and coffee shops, and that there are only a few good restaurants that can be recommended for their quality service. A possible reason for the poor customer service could be that some restaurants only employ skeleton staff during the low season only to find that staff cannot manage or performs inadequately when it gets busier. According to a respondent, 'Service is inconsistent and a general lack in training exists'.

Pubs, on the other hand, deliver a fairly good service in general, employing some of the best bartenders and chefs in the country. Furthermore, 55% of respondents suggested that establishments should maintain longer opening hours, especially over weekends and on public holidays. Furthermore, some establishments are closed over the peak tourism season in December. The minority, 25% of respondents, suggested that there is a need for after-hours entertainment for young people.

Fifty percent of respondents further suggested that training is needed on a continual basis, especially in the areas relating to interpersonal skills and attitudes of staff members. They suggested that greater cooperation and liaison between the public and private sectors are needed regarding service delivery in the tourism industry. In addition, greater awareness among the role-players must be established to improve service delivery in the hospitality industry.

#### **4.3.1.4 Attractions**

In the light of the rich variety of historic and heritage sites in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area, 50% of respondents felt that an overall improvement in the attraction sector is needed. The mindset of managers and employees should be geared towards service excellence to improve the tourist experience. Respondents felt that some historic attractions, such as the Kennilworth Grave Yard, are not well maintained and even unsafe to visit. More can therefore be done to improve historic tourism sights. Some respondents also felt that the attractions in the city are not marketed well (for example township tours), resulting in the tourists not being aware of what the city has to offer.

Forty percent of respondents indicated that the operating hours of attractions poses concern as some attractions are only open during certain hours of the day which are not always convenient to the passing tourist. Other attractions show little commitment to their advertised time schedule. According to 25% of the respondents, there are also no guided tours available at certain attractions over a weekend.

Another point of concern is the lack of affordable souvenirs at attractions in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area. An adequate supply of these products, which serves as a powerful marketing tool, should be one of the focus areas of attractions.

The signage to attractions in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area causes a hindrance; especially signage to the Big Hole, as it is not clear and leads to confusion. This was also confirmed by the response of visiting domestic and foreign tourists who participated in the survey. The lack of visible and standardised signage has a negative effect on the tourists' experience. Furthermore, the litter at attractions is a major concern for the respondents as it does a lot of damage to the image of the local tourism industry.

Respondents further recommended that tour guides be registered and trained as professional guides at attractions such as the Big Hole, William Humphreys Art Gallery and the McGregor Museum. They indicated that the staff employed by certain attractions is sometimes not able to assist and provide adequate information upon enquiry. The facilities and physical appearance of the city's historic and cultural attractions, such as the battlefields, are in need of upgrading and general improvement of appearance.

Owners or managers of attractions do not always have control or influence over the experience of tourists regarding poor signage, roads and the general cleanliness of the city and therefore need to be assisted by local municipalities in this regard. The majority of role-players (60%) felt that the customer's experience of the city depends on the Sol Plaatje Municipality's intention to improve the above-mentioned issues.

#### **4.3.2 What are your recommendations for improving the quality of service which is offered in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area?**

- **Customer Care Training**

The majority of respondents (80%) in the local tourism industry indicated that tourism establishments in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area are not employing people that are suited to this profession. A major concern is the lack in product knowledge. Managers and especially employees are not informed about the needs of tourists and also lack adequate knowledge regarding the products they are marketing. In addition, some people working in the tourism industry do not have the necessary qualifications or experience. According to a respondent, 'Product owners who employ students should send them on tours of Kimberley to inform them of attractions and what is happening in Kimberley. Then staff will have first-hand knowledge about the product and know what they are talking about'.

The respondents suggested that product owners send their staff for adequate training, including tours of the various attractions in the city. It is vital that service excellence starts with the owners of the tourism establishments who are responsible for the continuous training of their staff. Respondents further mentioned that students who do their practical training at tourism institutions lack interpersonal and administrative skills. Furthermore, something must be done to attract young people to return to the city after tertiary studies, to prevent the brain drain phenomenon that seems to be occurring currently.

- **Funding**

As service excellence is of a national importance, respondents felt that it is important to budget, fund and implement it in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area. In addition, government institutions (Sol Plaatje Municipality and Northern Cape Tourism Department) should assist in making funds available for training such as the South African Host Training Programme. Furthermore, it is imperative that these funds be applied correctly.

- **Leadership**

The tourism industry needs to be more organised, for example the establishment of a local tourism forum that will incorporate tourism bodies such as Northern Cape Tourism Association, Northern Cape Tourism Department, Sol Plaatje Municipality, Frances Baard District Municipality and the Guest House Association. Strong leadership is further needed to drive service excellence in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area. Fifty percent of respondents felt that the bigger responsibility of service delivery lies with the Northern Cape Tourism Department. In addition, the private sector and individual product owners can do a lot to train their staff in terms of service delivery and improve product presentation. According to a respondent, 'Managers lack product knowledge and is not informed about the needs of tourists; some don't come from the area or don't have a tourism background'.

- **Co-operation between role-players**

A minority of respondents, 45%, felt strongly that a communication gap exists between role-players in the local Tourism Industry. Co-operation between role-players in the local tourism industry is therefore necessary in order to improve service delivery in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area. Leaders in the public and private sector also need to improve coordination of service delivery as it can have a negative effect on planning.

- **Infrastructure**

Eighty percent of respondents suggested that the infrastructure in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area be upgraded as this influences the visitor's experience of the city. Service delivery by the Sol Plaatje Municipality is perceived to be very poor, particularly in the areas of maintenance and communication. It is necessary for the municipality to become tourism focused and deliver a quality service. According to a role-player, 'Something to consider regarding service excellence is that the customer experience is not always only influenced by the owner, but by the municipality in terms of signage, roads, cleanliness et cetera'. Furthermore, according to role-players, many tourists detour Kimberley because of the poor condition of the roads on the N12. In addition,

potholes in the city prove to be a problem and the absence of general cleanliness is a creating a negative image of the town.

Sixty-five percent of respondents further feel that a concerted effort should be made by the municipality to improve and develop tourist sites and even to subsidise certain sites if necessary. Another area of concern is the signage in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area. Street names on the pavements are covered in dirt and not always visible. In addition, illegal name boards are a problem and are not controlled or taken down by local regulatory bodies. Local role-players also agree that the local municipality is operating under a tight budget and it could be indicative of the above-mentioned problems.

- **Marketing**

The majority of role-players (65%) indicated that more should be done to attract tourists to the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area. One role-player asked the following, 'What is the Sol Plaatje Municipality doing to promote the city except for handing out pamphlets at the Indaba every year?'. Another respondent said, 'The Northern Cape Tourism Authority must be stronger regards the campaigns that they launch with a focus on specific target markets'. A marketing strategy must therefore be put into place that includes the branding of the city. Role-players also feel that visitors to the city are only aware of the Big Hole as a tourist attraction. The other attractions in Kimberley which includes mining, architecture and heritage, need to be marketed more aggressively to create a greater awareness – this will require additional funds and the employment of more staff. It is necessary to obtain a common understanding of what the needs of tourists are and adjust tourism products accordingly. For instance, time schedules of transport and tourist facilities must be adjusted according to the needs of tourists. The tourism website of the Sol Plaatje Municipality, which serves as a powerful marketing tool, also needs to be upgraded regularly.

- **Information distribution**

There is a general lack of information and awareness of attractions. According to the respondents, the Sol Plaatje Municipal Tourism Information Office is not fulfilling its role in the distribution of information. The majority of respondents (65%) perceived their

service as poor and mentioned the lack in capacity and funds as possible reasons for this.

Service delivery should be monitored in order to assess whether the needs of customers are being fulfilled. Respondents suggested that systems should be put into place to collect information and evidence on customer service successes or failures in the local tourism industry. It is also important that excellent service be recognised and awarded, such as the Welcome Service Excellence Awards, which rewards the delivery of excellence service in the Northern Cape.

#### **4.4 CONCLUSION**

The aim of this chapter was to report, present and summarise the aspects relating to the perceptions of tourists on the quality of tourism service in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area. This chapter further included a summary of the unstructured interviews conducted by the researcher with role-players in the local tourism industry. From the findings it is apparent that the majority of foreign and domestic tourists had a positive perception of the service quality in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area. The majority of role-players in the local tourism arena, however, perceived the service delivery in the local tourism industry as average to poor and not exceeding the expectations of tourists. The issues that arose from the findings that need attention will be discussed in the following chapter.

In chapter five, the conclusion and recommendations from the empirical findings is discussed.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

The main purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions of the level of service provision in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area, from the perspective of the tourist and the tourism industry. The primary aim of the study was therefore:

- to investigate the perceptions of tourists on the quality of tourism service in the Sol Plaatje Area;

To achieve the above-mentioned aim the following secondary objectives were set in Chapter 1 and achieved in their respective chapters.

- The first objective was to determine the needs of foreign and domestic tourists in terms of service delivery. This objective was achieved in Chapter 2, 3 and 4. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the relevant academic texts on the current trends in service quality, customer care and the measurement thereof to ultimately establish the service needs of tourists visiting a destination. Chapter 3 gives a descriptive review of measures taken by specific countries to improve and meet the service quality needs of tourists. It was also achieved in chapter 4 by conducting a survey to determine how domestic and foreign tourists perceived the quality of service delivery in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area. The findings of the survey therefore assisted in determining the service needs of tourists who visited the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area for tourism purposes. A summary of these findings will be discussed in the Conclusion Section of this chapter.
- The second objective was to conduct a comprehensive literature review on service quality. This objective was achieved in Chapters 2 and 3. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the components and concepts of service quality. Chapter 3 investigates benchmarks that were set in quality service by South Africa and foreign destinations namely, Singapore, Malaysia and Germany.

- The third objective was to determine the perception of the quality of service by conducting unstructured interviews with selected role-players in the local tourism industry. This objective was achieved in chapter 4. A summary of these findings will be discussed in the Conclusion Section of this chapter.
- The final objective was to make recommendations and suggestions to increase service quality in the Sol Plaatje Area if applicable. This objective is met in this Chapter 5. The aim of this chapter is to draw conclusions from the literature and empirical research conducted, as well as to make recommendations concerning the research.

Based on the above-mentioned objectives, the contribution of this study lies in the following:

- The study created insights into the trends and relevant academic texts on service quality and its significance in the tourism industry (chapter 2).
- Insights were gained into current trends and efforts to improve service delivery in countries such as South Africa, Malaysia, Singapore and Germany (chapter 3).
- The information gained from the tourism survey and interviews with local role-players will assist the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area to identify and satisfy tourists' needs and ultimately become established as a primary tourist destination (chapter 4).
- The recommendations and suggestions on how to improve the tourism service delivery in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area (chapter 5).
- The findings of the study would therefore be beneficial to all tourism stakeholders in their efforts to provide visitors with the best holiday and business experiences in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area.

The aim of this chapter is to draw conclusions based on the literature review and empirical research. These are structured in two sections:

- Conclusions from the literature reviews in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3, and
- Conclusions with regard to the empirical research conducted in Chapter 4.

In conclusion, recommendations with regard to the study will be made and finally recommendations will be made regarding future research.

## **5.2 CONCLUSIONS**

### **5.2.1 Conclusions with regard to the literature study**

The literature study was divided into two sections namely,

- a conceptual framework of service quality in the tourism industry;
- an investigation into trends and characteristics of service quality from a South African and a foreign perspective (Malaysia, Singapore and Germany).

#### **5.2.1.1 Service quality in the tourism industry**

- There is a greater demand for higher standards of service provision and improved quality in the tourism industry.
- Service quality is the delivery of excellent or superior service relative to consumer expectations. Service quality also consistently meets and exceeds customer expectations.
- Customer satisfaction is the feeling people experience when their needs and expectations have been met.
- The long-term and mutually satisfying relationship with the customer is achieved through the development of a service culture that focuses on best practice initiatives.
- A tourism organisation that provides superior service quality can gain several competitive advantages that include the following factors:
  - A quality product and service create loyal consumers
  - Satisfied customers are willing to pay more for the satisfaction they derive from a better service
  - It is easier to make a repeat sale than to conclude a first-time sale with a new customer
  - It creates brand loyalty

- It is a powerful marketing tool
  - Dealing with complaints is expensive, time-consuming and bad for the organisation's reputation
- It is important that the tourism industry is proactive in its pursuit of high-quality visitor experiences rather than reactive towards individual problems that arise as a result of tourist dissatisfaction after a visit.
  - One of the key tasks of the tourism marketer is therefore to manage the relationship between staff and consumers to ensure that consumers receive a quality offering. This interaction is referred to as a 'service encounter' or 'the moment of truth'.
  - The tourism industry (known as a 'people's industry'), must empower staff with the necessary skills to deal with all types of people.
  - One of the most reliable and trusted measurement of customer service is the SERVQUAL model or quality Gaps model. It measures all aspects of customer service and uses five generic dimensions of service quality, namely: reliability, responsiveness, assurance, tangibles and empathy.

### **5.2.1.2 Service quality: National and international perspective**

#### **National perspective on service excellence**

- South Africa's service delivery standard is the lowest in the world.
- Service excellence is one of the most crucial ingredients in achieving sustainable tourism growth in South Africa.
- Service excellence is recognised as one way in which the South African tourism industry may choose to differentiate itself from competitors in the future.
- Service quality was declared a national priority in 2007 during the launch of a multifaceted programme called the 'South African Experiment'.
- The key findings of the 2007 Accenture Report is:
  - One of the most important critical skills lacking is customer service.
  - There is an urgent need to develop a Customer Service Programme.

- A lack of an underlying service ethos prevails across the industry, consequently resulting in poor service delivery.
- The essential skills needed for good customer relations and service should be introduced as part of every tourism qualification.
- The tourist service experience involves the entire tourism service value chain and not only the tourism sector. The entire chain for example the taxi driver, airport, accommodation facilities, et cetera all work together and therefore need to be committed to an enjoyable, hassle-free passage from one link to another.
- The following measures were put into place to improve tourism service delivery in South Africa:
  - The ‘Welcome Campaign’: The aim is to persuade South Africans to be good hosts. The annual Welcome Awards also promotes service excellence throughout the country.
  - The ‘South African Experiment’ and Draft Strategy of Service Excellence: This is a countrywide strategic intervention programme that aims to boost sustainable economic growth and increase service delivery.
  - Phase one is directed at evaluating current customer service delivery and gaps in South Africa and forms part of the National Service Excellence Strategy.

## **International perspective**

### **Singapore:**

- The creation of a customer experience DNA that is unique to a country or a specific organisation is important. The whole experience, from the moment the tourist disembarks from the aircraft and go through all the necessary procedures within the airport, leave the airport, use transportation, goes to the hotel, does shopping, et cetera, must be carefully managed and planned for at destination level.

- It is therefore not only about providing a good service but to design it in such a way that a good service will eventually lead to a very different and unique service brand.
- Important means by which businesses can reinvent their service delivery include the following:
  - Training is critical to prepare for higher level of service delivery;
  - Service leaders must lead by example;
  - The introduction of benchmarking and measuring of service standards is critical for the monitoring and improvement of customer satisfaction levels.

➤ **Malaysia:**

- The following hardware and software components of service quality are critical factors that should be present at a destination if it wishes to provide a memorable service experience to the tourist.

- **Hardware aspects:**

- Infrastructure. The challenge is to increase the accessibility and flexibility of a destination by road, rail, sea and air.
- Tourism attractions. This will involve the restoration and conservation of historical sites, the upgrading of tourism facilities and beautification of man-made and natural attractions.
- New product development by public and private sectors. Incentives should be provided for private sector investment in developing new products, facilities and attractions.
- Maintenance by local authorities. It must be the responsibility of local authorities to maintain facilities.

- **Software aspects:**
  - Sustainable tourism development. All planning for tourism developments must seek a balance amongst its economic, social and environmental goals.
  - Coordination among all players. Greater coordination among role-players at all levels in the tourism industry is important.
  - Public awareness. The general public plays an important role and must get involved in tourism service delivery.
  - Comfort, safety and security of tourists. It is important that a positive image of the previous mentioned are created in the minds of prospective tourists.
- The quality of service is therefore dependent on how well the visitor's expectation can be met. The challenge for the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area is therefore to improve the hardware and software aspects of service quality.
- **Germany:**
  - The re-branding of Germany for the 2006 FIFA World Cup with the brand promise of 'A Time to make Friends' was highly successful and sold Germany to visitors from all over the world as a friendly, open-minded and innovative country.
  - A successful campaign, the 'Friendliness Campaign', was launched to make the world aware of the 'new Germany' and designed to teach employees how to interact with visitors from other cultures.

### **5.2.2 Conclusions with regard to the empirical study**

This section firstly summarises the most important aspects of the empirical results (Chapter 4) derived from a survey conducted among foreign and domestic tourists in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area. It consists of six categories namely: profile of respondents, accommodation, transportation, food and entertainment, attractions and general perceptions.

Secondly, this section outlines the most important findings derived from the interviews conducted by the researcher with certain role-players in the local tourism industry in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area.

#### 5.2.2.1 Profile of respondents

- **Country of residence:** The majority of respondents (75.5%) were domestic tourists and 24.5% were from abroad.
- **Province of origin:** The majority of domestic respondents visiting the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area were from Gauteng (33.1%), followed by the Northern Cape (24.5%).
- **Country of representation:** The majority of foreign respondents came from the United Kingdom (26.5%) followed by both the United States (8.2%) and Namibia (8.2%).
- **Length of stay:** The majority of the respondents (60%), stayed only 1 – 2 days.
- **Visits to Sol Plaatje Municipal Area:** A large number of respondents (44.5%) were first time visitors to the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area and 30% had visited the area more than three times.
- **Purpose of visit:** It can be concluded that the majority of respondents visit the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area for holiday purposes (42.5%) and business (30.5%).
- **Spending per day:** The majority of visitors (32.5%) spend R601 and more per day.

#### 5.2.2.2 Accommodation

- In general, the most popular accommodation type was hotels (28.6%), followed by friends and relatives (27.1%).
- The majority of domestic respondents came from Gauteng and Northern Cape and stayed with Family and Friends (33.7%), followed by Hotels (27.1%) and Guest Houses (19.8%).
- The majority of foreign visitors travelled from European countries and preferred to stay in Hotels (32.6%), followed by Guest Houses (24.4%) and Bed & Breakfasts (20%).

- Improvement is needed concerning the training of staff as 26.4% of respondents perceived it as average to poor.
- All but three foreign respondents would recommend accommodation establishments to other people for its cleanliness and accessibility.
- Half of domestic respondents (49.6%) would recommend the accommodation establishment to other people. Respondents motivated good service, cleanliness friendliness and hospitality for recommending the establishment.
- The reasons for not recommending the accommodation establishment include the lack in communication skills, incompetent staff, the lack in uniqueness, the lack of attention to detail and a perception that it is too expensive.

### **5.2.2.3 Transportation**

- The majority of domestic tourists (53.3%) made use of their own car, coming mainly from Gauteng and Northern Cape. This is followed by 31.7% of respondents who rented a car. It can further be concluded that the majority of these respondents (30.8%) are business tourists.
- The majority of foreign tourists rented a car (55.1%). This is followed by 36.7% of foreign visitors who travelled in their own car (from Namibia or Botswana).
- A large number of respondents rated tourism-related knowledge as average (22.1%), leaving room for improvement in this area.

### **5.2.2.4 Food and entertainment**

- Aspects that need improvement include the handling of complaints as 35.1% of respondents rated it average to very poor.
- The promptness of service delivery needs improvement as 31.1% rated it average to very poor.
- The majority of respondents (83.1%) perceived table appearance and ambience as good to very good.

### **5.2.2.5 Attractions**

- The most popular attraction visited by respondents (39.3%) was the Big Hole.
- The majority of respondents rated accessibility (hours of operation) as good to very good (82.5%).
- A high percentage of respondents (31.3%) perceived attractions as too expensive.
- The majority of visitors (75.8%) perceived the overall service delivery at attractions as good to very good, while 24.2% rated it average to poor; leaving room for improvement in the overall service delivery at attractions.
- The majority of 76.6% of respondents have not experienced superior service at any attraction in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area. The majority of these respondents motivated they were satisfied with the service, but not exceeding their expectations.
- The minority of 23.4% of respondents felt that they experienced superior service at the Big Hole.

### **5.2.2.6 General**

- A total percentage of 83.4% of domestic and 93.8% of foreign respondents would promote Sol Plaatje Municipal Area as a tourist destination. This is an indication that the majority of tourists feel positive about the city and was generally satisfied with the service they received.
- The historical attractions in the city are the domestic (39%) and foreign (37%) respondents' most popular reason for promoting the city.
- The majority (23%) of domestic tourists that would not promote Sol Plaatje Municipal Area indicated that it is not interesting enough. This is followed by 15% of domestic respondents who felt that the Big Hole is the main attraction and there is nothing else to see or do in the city.
- A large percentage of visitors (39.2%) rated their actual experience of the service rendering in the city as average to poor, compared to their pre-conceived perceptions.

- A large number of respondents' (32.1%) rated their satisfaction with service delivery in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area as average to poor, leaving room for a general improvement.
- In the general rating of the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area, hospitality and friendliness received the highest ratings (76.9% as good to very good).
- The service delivery at the Kimberley Airport needs to improve as 45.6% of the respondents rated it average to very poor.
- The cleanliness of the city needs improvement as 42.8% respondents perceived it as average to poor.
- Respondents' recommendations for improving the quality of service included the general improvement of service at tourism organisations, the upgrading of the roads, and improved signage.

### **5.2.3 Conclusions with regards to role-players in the local tourism industry**

This section summarises the most important findings from the interviews conducted by the researcher with certain role-players in the local tourism industry:

- The majority of role-players in the local tourism industry perceived the service delivery in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area as average to poor and not exceeding the expectations of tourists.
- The Sol Plaatje Municipal Area is not employing people that are suited to the tourism profession.
- Managers and especially employees lack adequate knowledge about the products they are marketing.
- Government institutions (Sol Plaatje Municipality and Northern Cape Tourism Department) should assist in making funds available for training.
- Strong leadership is further needed to drive service excellence in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area.
- The tourism industry needs to be more organised, for instance through the establishment of a local tourism forum.
- The private sector and individual product owners can do a lot to motivate their staff in terms of service delivery and improved product presentation.

- A communication gap exists between role-players in the local tourism industry.
- Greater co-operation between role-players in the local tourism industry is necessary to improve service delivery.
- Eighty percent of respondents suggested that the infrastructure in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area be upgraded as this influences the visitor's experience of the city.
- Clear and visible signage is needed in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area.
- The majority of role-players (65%) indicated that more must be done to attract tourists to the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area.
- A common understanding of tourists' needs and the monitoring thereof is necessary.
- The Sol Plaatje Municipal Tourism Information Office is not fulfilling its role in the distribution of information as they should. The majority of respondents (65%) perceived their service as poor.

### **5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the conclusions of the study, the following recommendations should be considered:

#### **5.3.1 Expansion and improvement of skills base**

- The employment of suitable staff with adequate knowledge and experience of the local tourism industry is needed across all tourism sectors. The Sol Plaatje Municipal Tourism Information Office plays a key role here and need to focus on the following issues in a consistent and continuous way:
  - Employ people with suitable knowledge, skills and experience to provide an excellent service to tourists.
  - Employ people with relevant academic qualifications across all tourism sectors.
  - Train existing staff to extend their knowledge base of the city and province.
  - Reduce staff turnover by investing in their employees.

- People employed in leadership positions must have an extensive knowledge of the tourism industry to manage and plan more effectively for service quality in tourism.
- The training of staff across all sectors is needed on a continuous basis. Particular attention must be given to the training of front office staff. Employees should exhibit high levels of competence, a caring attitude, assurance, reliability and responsiveness. The local and provincial government should therefore play a more substantial role in driving service quality training. The following suggestions are made in this regard:
  - Local and provincial government should proactively plan and budget for service quality training across all tourism sectors.
  - Initiatives such as the formation of partnerships with the private sector to combine efforts, resources and funds in the training of employees should be implemented.
  - Generate greater awareness of the importance of service excellence through seminars and workshops and facilitate service experts in the sharing of their knowledge with tourism service providers.
  - Provision should be made for academic bursaries.
  - It is also important to standardise customer care training provided by different institutions.
- Product owners should take greater responsibility with regards to the following:
  - The continuous training of their employees in all aspects of customer care.
  - Ensure all their staff has a good knowledge of the city by sending them on regular city tours.
  - Owners of tourism establishments should have a greater understanding of and be more attentive to the needs of customers and adjust accordingly, for instance,
    - Extending operating hours of establishments to suit the needs of tourists;

- Special attention should be given to the special needs of the business tourist (such as high speed Internet access in hotel rooms).

### **5.3.2 Access to Information and Communication**

Relevant tourism information should be easily accessible to tourists and role-players in the industry. The following suggestions are made:

- Signage must be visible and should include standardised tourist information boards that indicate main tourist routes, attractions and accommodation establishments. The erection of street name boards will significantly improve the visitor's experience in the city.
- Erect small self-help tourist information kiosks at major accommodation establishments.
- A duplication of many tourism-related functions exists within local and provincial government. The establishment of a tourism forum is therefore needed with the inclusion of all major tourism industry role-players such as the Sol Plaatje Municipality, Northern Cape Tourism Department, the Northern Cape Tourism Authority and the Frances Baard District Municipality. This will create a platform for greater interaction and communication between key players in the local tourism industry and enhance the distribution of tourism information between role-players and government institutions.
- The establishment of a body that represents private role-players in the local tourism industry that will work in close collaboration and consultation with government agencies. The aim will be to promote a culture of service excellence and encourage business leaders to incorporate service excellence into their business strategies, processes and systems. In addition, the development of tools and innovative strategies will assist in establishing the city as a service excellence destination.

### 5.3.3 Expansion of Product Base

Although the discussions in paragraphs 5.3.3 – 5.3.6 are not directly related to service quality, it provide a supporting basis from which quality service should be launched and is therefore included in the discussion.

The innovative development of more diverse tourism products and the expansion of the existing product base are needed to expand on the quality of the visitors' experience. This can be achieved by:

- The upgrading and development of existing facilities and services, especially at existing cultural and historical attractions. Attention must be given to the following:
  - The upgrading of the coffee shop at Magersfontein Battlefield.
  - Transforming static displays into an interactive experience i.e. introducing modern technology like audio-tours, 3-D movies, et cetera.
  - The development and use of the Telkom Tower as a viewing point or restaurant can attract new visitors to the city.
  - Entertainment for young people is needed such as the development of a theme or entertainment park and safe night clubs. This includes the upgrading of the local theatre to attract a variety of shows.
  - Erect viewing points at Kamfers Dam to view the flamingos.
  - New and existing authentic cultural experiences in the city need to be developed and marketed, such as township tours.
  - An increase in the number of attractions that focus on the sale of affordable arts, crafts and souvenirs unique to the province are needed.
  
- The building of a restaurant at the Kimberley Airport will significantly improve the quality of tourist experience and enhance first impressions of the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area.

- Facilitate improved air access to the city through negotiations with air transport operators. Suggestions include:
  - The reduction of passenger costs and an increase in the frequency and capacity of return flights to Johannesburg and Cape Town. In addition, opportunities should be explored for return flights to Windhoek and Gaborone as the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area serve as a gateway to these destinations.

#### **5.3.4 Marketing**

Increased efforts to market the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area are needed, especially in the following areas:

- A well-researched and developed marketing strategy must be launched that focuses on the needs of the city's domestic target market (Gauteng and Northern Cape) and its largest overseas market namely the United Kingdom.
- The development of a unique brand for the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area as a 'friendly and hospitable' tourism destination. The packaging, branding and tailoring of marketing messages are therefore needed to attract domestic and foreign tourist markets to the city.
- The launch of a 'Friendliness Campaign' to prepare employees and the general public how to interact and be more hospitable to tourists.
- The hosting of the following key events (and the marketing thereof) will draw large numbers of domestic tourists to the city:
  - cultural festivals that showcase the unique heritage of the Northern Cape Province;
  - national business meetings to establish the city as a business destination;
  - large provincial and national sporting events.
- As the gateway to Namibia and Botswana, the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area should focus its marketing efforts on these untapped markets.
- The development of a comprehensive range of brochures and marketing material of the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area.

- Online information about the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area as a tourist destination is needed. This includes the upgrading of the current tourism website.
- The marketing of the city as a rail destination.

### **5.3.5 Service Delivery**

- The local Sol Plaatje Municipality needs to improve its service delivery as this will have an effect on the quality of the overall tourist experience. Attention should be given to:
  - The improvement of basic service delivery to all tourism role-players.
  - The establishment of an inner-city renewal plan will enhance the experience of visitors significantly. This includes the general cleanliness and tidying of streets and maintenance and upkeep of roads and parks, planting of flowers and general beautification of the city.
  - Sol Plaatje Municipality, in partnership with the private sector, should start a campaign to create awareness especially among the youth about the value of cleaning their environment and its effect on the tourist experience and business in the city. This can be done by the launching of a competition amongst school children.

### **5.3.6 Quality Assurance**

- For Kimberley to become a successful tourism destination, government institutions such as Northern Cape Tourism Authority, Northern Cape Tourism Department, Sol Plaatje Municipality and Frances Baard District Municipality should all play a more dynamic role in their efforts to improve customer service in the city. The following suggestions are made in this regard:
  - The creation of a comprehensive feedback system for the regular monitoring of service quality and customer service failures in the tourism industry. Excellent service should be rewarded and publicised on a regular basis.

- The benchmarking and measuring of tourism service standards across all sectors is needed. Once the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area knows how it rates in comparison to other destinations, then it can realistically look for ways to improve itself.
- A database of all existing accommodation establishments should be created to ensure that they comply with certain minimum standards, to provide assistance by communicating industry-related information and advice as to the improvement of their service quality.

#### **5.4 TOPICS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

Lesser known events and features in the history of the Northern Cape should be researched. Information on prominent historical figures and the unique culture and community lifestyle of the people of the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area can be used to enrich the quality of experience of the visiting tourists.

Little research has been conducted concerning service delivery in the local tourism industry. This research study therefore serves as an important stepping stone for similar future studies to be conducted. If the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area wants to be established and known for its excellent service delivery, the importance of regular surveys to monitor the service levels across all tourism sectors, cannot be overemphasised.

Finally, a need exists for a study of the business traveler's perception of service delivery in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area as a large number of business travelers visit the city, which therefore has the potential to be established as a business destination.

If the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area aims at competing with other destinations, locally and abroad, emphasis should be placed on the delivery of quality service. Tourism organisations must have a thorough knowledge of the service needs of their target market and an in-depth understanding of service quality trends. An awareness of the importance of offering excellent service to tourists, in combination with market research

into tourists' service needs, expectations and perceptions, will place Sol Plaatje Municipal Area in a position to attract more interest as a preferred tourism destination.

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# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1A: VISITOR QUESTIONNAIRE

Interviewer No: \_\_\_\_\_ Questionnaire No: \_\_\_\_\_

**Survey: Service provision in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area from a tourism perspective.**

The researcher is an MTech Tourism & Hospitality Management student at the Central University of Technology, Free State in Bloemfontein.

The provision of quality service to the tourism industry is a national priority in South Africa and therefore also in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area. The purpose of this survey is to determine how domestic and international tourists perceive the quality of service delivery in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area. This survey will therefore enable the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area to provide visitors with the best holiday/business experience. Please assist the researcher in providing the most appropriate answers.

### PROFILE

1. Please indicate country of residence: 

Abroad	Africa	South Africa
--------	--------	--------------

2. If from South Africa please indicate which province:

Eastern Cape	Gauteng	Free State	KwaZulu-Natal	Mpumalanga
Western Cape	Limpopo	North West	Northern Cape	

3. If from abroad or the rest of Africa, please indicate which country you represent:

--

4. Please indicate you gender, age and race group:

Male		Female	
------	--	--------	--

Under 21	21 – 30	31 – 40	41 - 50	
51 – 60	61 – 70	71 +		

A. White	
B. Coloured	
C. Asian	
D. African	
E. <b>Other, specify...</b>	

5. How long are you planning to stay in Sol Plaatje Municipal Area?

1-2 Days	3-5 Days	6-8 Days	9-11 Days	11+ Days	
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6. How many times have you visited Sol Plaatje Municipal Area before?

First visit	2 <sup>nd</sup> visit	3 <sup>rd</sup> visit	More than 3 times	
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**7. Purpose of visit to the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area?**

Business		Holiday		Family/friends		Other	
----------	--	---------	--	----------------	--	-------	--

**8. What is your average daily spending per person?**

R0 – R200		R201 – R400		R401 – R600		R601 +	
-----------	--	-------------	--	-------------	--	--------	--

**9. How many people in your group?**

1		2		3		4		5+	
---	--	---	--	---	--	---	--	----	--

**ACCOMMODATION**

**10. Which type of accommodation are you using mostly in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area? (One tick only).**

Hotel		Student Accommodation	
Self Catering		Backpackers	
B & B		Guest House	
Camping/Caravanning		Second Home (Holiday Home)	
Friends or Relatives		<b>Other – please mention...</b>	

**11. How do you rate the accommodation establishment?**

	Very good	Good	Average	Poor	Very poor
Did the staff treat you with respect?					
How would you rate the staff's attitude?					
Did the staff respond timeously to your needs?					
Is the staff reliable?					
Is the staff presentable and identifiable?					
Did you regard the establishment as good value for money?					
How would you rate their communication skills?					
Is the establishment accessible?					
How do you rate the staff's tourism related knowledge?					
How well trained are front-line staff in using technology to do their work?					
How do you perceive the overall quality of the accommodation establishment?					

**12. Would you recommend the accommodation establishment to other people?**

Yes		No	
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**13. Please motivate your answer.**

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**TRANSPORTATION**

**14. Which mode of transport did you use while in the area? (May tick more than one)**

1. Tour Bus		2. Rental Car	
3. Taxi		4. <b>Other, specify...</b>	

15. If you have used any transport mentioned in nr 14, please rate them in terms of the following:

	Very Good	Good	Average	Poor	Very poor
Attitude of staff					
Communication skills of staff					
Efficiency of staff					
Physical appearance of staff					
Willingness of staff to provide assistance					
Overall service quality					
Promptness of service					
Staff's tourism related knowledge					

### FOOD & ENTERTAINMENT

16. How do you rate the restaurants, pubs and coffee shops in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area according to the following:

	Very good	Good	Average	Poor	Very poor
Table appearance and ambience					
Value for money					
Friendliness of staff					
Efficiency of staff					
Promptness of service					
Willingness of staff to provide assistance					
Staff's handling of complaints					
Overall service quality					

### ATTRACTIONS

17. Did you visit one or more of the following attractions (Please tick all visited).

The Big Hole & Mine Museum		Oppenheimer Memorial Gardens	
McGregor Museum		Magersfontein Battlefield	
William Humphreys Art Gallery		Halfway House	
Sol Plaatje Museum		Duggan-Cronin Gallery	
Kimberley Club		Aviation Museum	
Bultfontein mine		Africana Library	
City Hall		Flamingo Casino	
<b><u>Others, please specify...</u></b>			

18. How would you rate the service offering at the attractions in general?

	Very good	Good	Average	Poor	Very poor
Accessibility (location)					
Accessibility (hours of operation)					
Signage					
Efficiency of staff					
Friendliness of staff					
Value for money					

Enjoyment factor					
Learning opportunities					
Consistency of quality service delivery					
Clean & well maintained					
Overall experience					
Overall service quality					

**19. Are there any attraction(s) where you experienced superior service?**

1. Yes		2. No	
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**Please motivate your answer**

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**20. Are there any attraction(s) where you experienced poor service?**

1. Yes		2. No	
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**Please motivate your answer**

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### GENERAL

**21. Will you promote Sol Plaatje Municipal Area as a tourist destination?**

1. Yes		2. No	
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**Please motivate your answer.**

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**22. How does your pre-conceived perception of service rendering in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area compare to your actual experience?**

Very good		Good		Average		Poor		Very poor	
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**23. How satisfied are you with tourism service delivery in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area?**

Very good		Good		Average		Poor		Very poor	
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**24. How do you rate the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area as a tourism destination according to the following?**

	Very good	Good	Average	Poor	Very poor
Cleanliness and pollution free					
Hospitality and friendly people					
Service at the Tourism Information Offices					
Value for money					
Service at the Airport					
Evidence of service quality culture amongst staff					

**25. What are your recommendations for improving the quality of service which is offered in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area?**

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## APPENDIX 1B: ROLE-PLAYERS - Interview questions

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### Survey: Service provision in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area from a tourism perspective

1. What is your perception of the service quality at the following tourism-related services in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area?

1.1 Accommodation establishments

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1.2 Transportation (for example tour buses, rental car's, taxi's et cetera.)

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1.3 Restaurants, pubs and coffee shops

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1.4 Attractions

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**2. What are your recommendations for improving the quality of service which is offered in the Sol Plaatje Municipal Area?**

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