

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Exploring the role of Emotional Intelligence in the Customer Service Industry

By

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**Graduate School of Business and Leadership
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DECLARATION

I, **Zahir Sayed**, declare that:

- i. The research reported in this dissertation, except where otherwise indicated, is my own original work.
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First and foremost, all praise is due to Almighty ALLAH for blessing me with the strength and ability to complete this research study.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to the following individuals, who enabled me to successfully complete this study:

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- Finally, to all the participants in this study. Thank You for sharing your perceptions and experiences with me. I have learnt that emotional intelligence makes us all better and more effective human beings, particularly in the work environment.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this research study to

- My children, **Muazza Zahra** and **Muhammad Hasnain**. Thank you for making every little attempt to co-author this research study with me. Your bubbly energy and enthusiasm is my inspiration to continue working hard and achieving so much more in my studies. This is for the both of you!

ABSTRACT

The customer service industry is a dynamic environment and serves as the face of an organisation. The purpose of this study was to explore the role of emotional intelligence in a revenue services office within the Public Sector in Durban, South Africa. In noting the significance that emotional intelligence has on service delivery, continued research was important to ascertain the role that emotional intelligence had in the customer service environment. Generally, a satisfied customer maintains loyalty and reciprocates with positive and constructive feedback. The motivation for this study was a scarcity of contemporary literature specifically on emotional intelligence within the customer service industry in South Africa. The purpose of this study was to explore the role of emotional intelligence and determine its importance to the customer service industry and during a customer service engagement. A qualitative research method with purposive sampling was employed and included management and employees from the branch operations division of the company under study. Interviews were conducted with fifteen participants in order to gain insight and understanding of their perceptions of emotional intelligence and the significance it plays in the customer service environment. The collected data was analysed using thematic analysis. The key findings indicated that both employees and managers understood the concepts of emotional intelligence concepts and provided a favourable indication that emotional intelligence has a significant role within the customer service environment. Another key finding revealed that emotional intelligence plays a significant part within the leadership of the customer service environment. The findings of this study established that emotional intelligence is essential for the customer and service employees in the customer service environment and provides the service employees with the ability to understand and reason with the emotions that arise and exist in the service engagement. The recommendation is that the leadership in the service environment should provide regular training on emotional intelligence, enabling service employees to be better equipped to deal with various types of customers and for the leadership in the service environment to manage their subordinates in an effective manner. The implications of this study can improve the emotional intelligence of service employees within the customer service industry and promote further research on this topic in South Africa.

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GLOSSARY

| | |
|------|----------------------------------------------|
| EQ | Emotional intelligence or Emotional quotient |
| IQ | Intelligence quotient |
| SARS | South African Revenue Service |

EDITOR'S NOTE

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**Editing of Dissertation: EXPLORING THE ROLE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN THE
CUSTOMER SERVICE INDUSTRY by Zahir Sayed**

This letter confirms that the aforementioned dissertation has been language edited.

Any queries may be directed to the number listed below.

Kind Regards



MP Mathews

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

Customer service is a key element for organisational success. Organisations are constantly striving to ensure that their customers are satisfied, which would ideally ensure customer retention; attract new customers; increase their credibility within an industry; ensure positive reviews for the organisations image and reputation; and ultimately boost revenue inflows and profit for the organisation. To achieve this level requires effort and unprecedented dedication to ensuring that the customer is well taken care off. It is critical for the survival of an organisation to create an incredible experience for the customer. A key aspect in measuring this level of interaction is the role that emotions play in the service environment.

Emotions contribute significantly to the life of human beings by impacting on their ethics and behaviours. Cherry (2013) explained that as humans become occupied in employment with an organisation, these emotions play a substantial part in how individuals behave within their workspace. A vital step for an organisation would be to manage these emotions effectively. The process of managing emotions is referred to as emotional intelligence. This process requires an individual to understand their own emotional feelings, the feelings of those that they are in contact with, as well as to build and maintain relationships by managing such feelings accordingly. In a service environment, this will be reflected in the relationships between employees and customers.

An emotional feeling can be contagious and therefore the manner in which an employee engages with a customer will affect how the customer will view the company. It is required that employees utilise their emotional intelligence skills to adjust to the rhythm of a customer's emotional state throughout the customer service engagement. Goleman (1998) indicated that upon reviewing data in the hospitality industry, it was established that the most effective employees were those with strong emotional intelligence competencies such as empathy, self-management and strong relationship bonds with fellow team members, allowing them to work in synergy and effectively. The application of emotional intelligence provides an organisation with

the ability to analyse how an individual is able to control their emotions and handle stress (Goleman, 1998).

Due to emotions being very sensitive feelings that an individual experiences, it is important for employees in a service environment to interact correctly and empathically with customers as the result of such interactions will determine how the customer views the reputation of the company. It is therefore essential to have all such employees thoroughly developed in and using their emotional intelligence skills for such key encounters with customers. More recently, Bradberry (2016) concurred that emotional intelligence plays a significant part in the professional success of an individual, as the skills allow an employee to be more effective in dealing with some of the core emotional intelligence competencies such as managing their own emotions by diverting any negativity into a more positive interaction; showing empathy in order to analyse how the customer feels and adjusting and communicating more effectively.

1.2. Motivation for the Study

The South African Revenue Service (SARS) is an essential foundation of and a key enabler to the South African government. SARS plays a key role in the South African economy by providing resilient revenue and customs administration services, with a core mandate to collect all revenue due that will allow the government to fund priority expenditure and provide for its citizens through public service programs (SARS Strategic Plan 2015/2016 – 2019/2020).

SARS' mission is to ensure that the service it provides to the public is of high quality and is responsive to the public's needs by simplifying the process for taxpayers to register, file or calculate their tax liabilities or any other tax-related matter. There will be continued progress in offering more convenient and effective channels to ensure that the products or service offered by SARS are easily accessible. To this end, there will be extensive support provided to assist and educate taxpayers through proactive engagements. SARS realises that not all their clients are the same and may vary due to different behaviours, characteristics and attitudes in terms of compliance from each taxpayer towards their tax obligations (SARS Strategic Plan 2015/2016 – 2019/2020).

As a result, SARS will make efforts to re-organise its processes to account for the diversity of taxpayers that it serves. In doing so, their efforts will be increased through transparent engagements with a view to enhancing and sustaining relationships. At the very core of SARS' culture is their People Management principles which recognise that the organisation is a part of the Public Administration, which carries the responsibility of serving the public collectively in its role of fiscal management of the country and by daily interactions with the public. The South African Constitution states in Section 195 (1) that the Public Administration is required to display "*a high standard of professional ethics*"; to provide a service that is "*impartial, fair, equitable and without bias*", is "*accountable*", and is "*broadly representative of the South African people*". Consequently, SARS requires employees to be proficient in dealing with and resolving their client's queries and needs in a disciplined manner (SARS Strategic Plan 2015/2016 – 2019/2020).

The Kwa-Zulu Natal Region has seven SARS branch offices. The total staff compliment is 235 and the average walk-in clients per month for this region is 72 000 customers. The number of customers that the SARS branch offices service generally increases during the Tax Filing Season. The SARS Durban branch has a staff compliment of 96 staff members. This comprises 76 employees, 9 managers and 11 support staff. The average number of walk-in clients is approximately 20 000 per month and results in a number of face-to-face interactions daily for SARS service employees, in which they are required to resolve all customer queries and to provide efficient resolution. The challenge within a service environment is that not all customers are easy to deal with. SARS' customers generally require service assistance on tax-related matters that may include calculation of their tax assessments; objections and disputes on their assessments; or seeking clarification on payments to SARS that they are liable for. The customer can become emotional in a service encounter due to service outcomes not meeting their expectations. This could result in the customer becoming very emotional. The service employee and the leadership of the service environment must therefore be developed to be able to handle these encounters effectively.

Mattila and Enz (2002) posit that Gardner (1985) mentioned that service delivery is a key area for research on emotions. Therefore, it is of relevance for SARS to enforce and practise emotional intelligence skills that will enable their workforce to be better

skilled in dealing with their clients appropriately, effectively and as required in the outline of the SARS Strategic Plan. To further explore the existence of emotional intelligence in the service industry, a research study was conducted on the Branch Office Division of SARS.

1.3. Focus of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the role of emotional intelligence in the customer service industry. The aim of this research study was to examine what individuals in a service environment comprehend emotional intelligence to be and how emotional intelligence can improve their interactions and build relationships with customers. The impact of emotional intelligence in a service environment also focuses on a leader's ability to successfully manage their emotions.

In an environment where the focus is on meeting customer expectations, it becomes important to highlight emotional intelligence and the role that it plays in service encounters, as well as the impact that it has on service employee effectiveness. It is equally important to highlight the importance of emotional intelligence in the leadership of a service environment and how the positive influence of a leader can enhance the culture embedded within a service employee to remain composed and effective in delivering a remarkable service engagement with the customer.

1.4. Problem Statement

Scholars on emotional intelligence have focused on either emotional intelligence in customer service (Angelova and Zekiri, 2011; Basharat and Raja, 2013; Danquah and Wireko, 2014; Radha and Prasad, 2013; Slatten, 2011) or emotional intelligence in leadership (Ashkanasy and Daus, 2002; Batool, 2013). Past research on emotional intelligence in South Africa has focused on the relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership styles in the petrochemical industry in South Africa (Pillay, Viviers and Mayer, 2013), research on servant leadership being affected by emotional intelligence and trust (Du Plessis, Wakelin and Nel, 2015), the positive relationship between leadership effectiveness, self-efficacy and emotional intelligence (Ramchunder and Martins, 2014) and research study reflecting a significant link between emotional intelligence and authentic leadership (Kotze and

Nel, 2015). The theory has not actively engaged or provided sufficient information that links these three significant contributors, viz. emotional intelligence, customer service and leadership within a customer service environment. Consequently, there is a gap in the theory that associates emotional intelligence with customer service and the leadership of customer service environments.

The mandate given to SARS is quite clear and requires employees of SARS to provide good quality service to the South African and foreign public that is simplified and accessible (SARS Strategic Plan 2015/2016 – 2019/2020). SARS is committed to making a contribution to the social and economic development of the country by increasing revenue collections that will allow the government to deliver on its responsibility of providing a better life for all South Africans. The foundation for SARS to contribute to this mandate is the values that are entrenched within the behaviour of all SARS employees. All SARS employees are required to abide by the code of conduct and values of SARS which includes accountability, fairness, honesty, integrity, respect, transparency and trust. (SARS Strategic Plan 2015/2016 – 2019/2020).

A need therefore arose to examine the role of emotional intelligence that is applied in customer service interactions at SARS. The ability to handle a customer's emotions is significant in providing good customer service (Slatten, 2011). Of importance is the ability to understand the customer from their viewpoint and to be able to provide a calming effect in negative customer engagements. The customer service employee is required to have well developed emotional intelligence skills that will enable the employee to be able to handle different customers from diverse backgrounds with different needs in various individual service interactions. The leadership factor in a customer service environment is equally essential for the well-being of service employees. Leaders who are emotionally intelligent will influence a calm and positive ethos amongst their service employees (Batoool, 2013). This characteristic will enable a service employee to foster the same habits when dealing with customers. Such positive traits by a leader will inevitably see a culture of emotional intelligence being entrenched across the organisation.

The customer service industry is a dynamic environment and serves as the face of an organisation. Customers can become increasingly frustrated with service delivery

and this is vented out to service employees who are expected to deal with such customers in a dignified and focused manner whilst making every effort in upholding a positive image of the organisation. In noting the significance of emotional intelligence in service delivery it is evident that continued research is important to ascertain the role that emotional intelligence has in a customer service environment.

1.5. Aim of the Study

The main aim of this research was to investigate the significance of emotional intelligence in the customer service industry. The purpose of this study was to:

- Examine if emotional intelligence and its importance in the service environment is understood by employees in a customer service environment;
- Explore the significance of emotional intelligence in service delivery and customer relations in a customer service environment;
- Explore the role of emotional intelligence in the leadership of a customer service environment; and
- Identify how emotional intelligence can be enhanced in a service environment.

1.6. Contribution

This study will provide suggestions and recommendations to the leadership of the organisation that is being examined to assist them in enhancing the overall emotional intelligence ability of all employees within this environment. Current challenges, experiences and recommendations will be made for future research exploration on this subject matter. This study may contribute to providing solutions that could improve emotional intelligence within customer service organisations.

1.7. Limitations of the Study

The availability of participants was a limitation for this study as the organisation assigns their available employees based on historical forecasts. Their participation in this research would have had an impact on their day-to-day operations and had to be managed carefully. Time constraints served as another limitation to this study as the participants could not be kept out of normal operations for a lengthy period. This

impacted on the time taken for each interview to be conducted and resulted in minimal time being available for the researcher to conduct each interview. These limitations were only applicable to service employees and not the management employees of this division. The researcher mitigated these limitations by scheduling each interview according to the availability of each participant.

1.8. Research Methodology

A qualitative research method is used in this study as it allows the researcher to gain an understanding of an individual's attitudes and experiences (Patton and Cochrain, 2002). The objective of this study was to gather a detailed understanding of emotional intelligence and the significance that it can have within a customer service environment. The research objectives that were outlined were achieved through the use of descriptive research in order to collect data that was relevant to the research topic and coded accurately from the sample population. The participants that contributed to this study were from the service division within the organisation under study and were actively involved in daily service interactions with customers and service employees. Interviews were conducted to collect data for this study and these were analysed and categorised into themes.

The purposive sampling method was used in this research study. Oppong (2013) found that purposive sampling enables the researcher to deliberately select participants who are experienced in the subject matter and who will make a valuable contribution to the research. The participants in this study were purposively selected and interviews were conducted with employees from the service environment to obtain the required data from the targeted sample population. Moriarty (2011) found that interviews are a common method for collecting data in a qualitative research study as it is a useful method of extracting perceptions and experiences for the interviewer. The interviewer was able to ask for a deeper explanation from the participant if clarity was required for their response, unlike in a quantitative study wherein the use of a questionnaire will limit the researcher in obtaining a better understanding of the response. The interviews for this study were designed using unstructured, open-ended questions to enhance the gathering of data on the participants' perceptions and experiences.

Face-to-face interviews were conducted during the operational hours of the organisation under study and served as an advantage for the research study as the participants were flexible and in a service frame of mind, which assisted the objectives of this study. The use of interviews enabled the researcher to regulate the questions and to probe the participants to elaborate on their responses for purposes of seeking clarity that would support the research objectives. The disadvantage of an interview in a research study is that a researcher may be biased to the responses provided by the participants based on his/her own sensitivities towards the subject matter (Goldman, 2007).

In certain face-to-face situations, the interviewer may have to re-phrase or simplify the question as not all participants may have explicit knowledge on the topic of the research. The data that was collected was transcribed, analysed and categorized into themes. Hayes (2000), cited in Goldman (2007), found that categorizing data into themes is based on the recurring thoughts, criticisms and perceptions of the participants.

1.9. Structure of the Study

Chapter One – Introduction

This chapter focuses on providing an introduction to the study. The research problem, research objectives and focus of the study were discussed. The outline of this chapter also covered the research questions, limitations of the study and setting of this research.

Chapter Two – Literature Review

This chapter provided a composition of the literature review that was used to discuss the role of emotional intelligence in a customer service environment.

Chapter Three – Research Methodology

Chapter three described the research methodology that was used in this study. The chapter outlines the design of the study; the sampling method; data collection and the research instrument that was used to collect the data.

Chapter Four – Results and Discussion

The results and findings of the study are presented in this chapter and these results were linked to the literature review.

Chapter Five – Recommendations and Conclusion

This chapter discusses the key findings of this study and provides recommendations for management. The recommendations for future research and the conclusion of the study are also presented in this chapter.

1.10. Conclusion

Emotional intelligence has been established as an effective skill that an individual can develop over time. These skills enable an individual to conduct themselves in a focused and effective manner. Such skills are vital for employees of a service environment. Organisations operating in a service orientated industry should focus on enhancing emotional intelligence skills that improve the conduct of employees when dealing with customers as well as for the leadership of a service environment in managing and understanding their employees. The improvement of these skills will ensure that the correct behaviours that maintain the reputation of the organisation are essentially entrenched within the core of a service organisation, which is the employee fundamentally. The next chapter presents the literature review of the study.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

The researcher explores the role of emotional intelligence in the customer services industry. A key starting point to this study is to conduct a defining and in-depth review of available literature. The literature review focuses on emotional intelligence theory, history and practices, as well as its role in customer service and leadership within a service environment. The researcher undertakes this study by reviewing past scholars' and researchers' views and insight on related subject matters.

There is a plethora of literature available on emotional intelligence, customer service and leadership. However, none have specifically been explicit on the link between emotional intelligence and customer service or customer service leadership. Nevertheless, the individual literature available on emotional intelligence, customer service and leadership will be combined and used in this study.

2.2. What is Emotional Intelligence

The term emotional intelligence is made up of two complex words, emotional and intelligence. Chopra and Kanji (2010) explained that emotions are subjective, whilst intelligence is objective. In being 'emotional', an individual is in a subjective psychological phase, which a human experiences through the use of their feelings. The demonstration of emotional intelligence skills is also a critical factor for success in job performance, relationship management and personal control. The term 'intelligence' can be described as the ability to gain and apply knowledge and skills and originates from the Latin vocabulary. In basic terminology, emotional intelligence refers to the ability to detect the emotions of a human being. Bradberry (2016) suggested that unlike the intelligence quotient, emotional intelligence is quite flexible as it repeatedly develops the brain to practice new behaviours and allows the brain to build conduits that turn these behaviours into habits. In time, these habits turn out to be the regular responses of an individual without them realising that they are now in-sync with their emotional outlook. As the brain develops the use of positive and new behaviours, the support for destructive behaviours will fade away. Kulkarni (2014) postulated that the term emotional intelligence is heavily linked with and

overlaps previous constructs such as social intelligence as there is a partial resemblance to it. However, Mayer, Salovey and Caruso (2004), as cited in Kulkarni (2014) suggested that the term emotional intelligence was preferred to earlier concepts such as social intelligence as it was more results focused. Bradberry (2016) mentioned that emotional intelligence impacts on the professional success of an individual because it is considered to be a powerful way of focusing energy in a positive direction that yields incredible results.

Maag (2013) stated that taking control of one's emotions and behaviours is probably the most difficult attempt undertaken by a human. Dealing with customers over a period of time can be challenging and frustrating. Bradberry (2016) posited that emotional intelligence is that characteristic within individuals that is intangible and it influences how we deal with behaviours, steer through social complications and make personal decisions that result in the achievement of positive results. Kasapi and Mihiotis (2014) explained that emotional intelligence is a more significant factor in determining a successful leader than IQ.

Bradberry (2016) posited that people who are emotionally intelligent do not stress about matters that they cannot control. Instead, their energy is focused on the matters that are within their span of control, like their efforts and their attention. Chipumuro (2015) indicated that the increased pressure and demands of a work environment, particularly around the meeting of deadlines and targets, may cause employees to become discouraged and lose focus. However, an employee with enhanced emotional intelligence skills would be able to limit the anxiety of the situation and be able to confidently deal with the emotional turmoil that exists within their own space and amongst others. These skills will make an employee more effective and efficient and serves as an ideal vessel to develop trust, synergy and cohesion amongst the team.

Individuals with high emotional intelligence are assertive (Bradberry, 2016). They strike a balance between their modesty, kindness, empathy and politeness and their ability to be assertive and create boundaries. This combination is quite tactful and simplifies the handling of conflict as it enables such individuals to neutralise toxic individuals, avoid making enemies or being viewed antagonistically. Covey (1989) argued that such traits are not limited to the workplace, but also apply in any channel

where relationships between individuals are required. If you cannot understand when your emotions are being overdrawn or when your relationship is heading for a crisis, then your ability to be emotionally intelligent is definitely not in a healthy state. Similarly, Brown (2014) alluded that emotions are very intensive and could occasionally become rather disruptive in the workplace. Emotional intelligence provides a significant method of evaluating an effective employee (Kannaiah and Shanthi (2015). This aides in building trust and the performance achievements of the organisation. An individual is likely to get better results when they are able to work under stress, stay motivated and are able to motivate others. Naseer, Chishti, Rahman and Jumani (2011) concurred that emotional intelligence is essential for the realisation of high performance.

Emotions are central to all states of affairs that an individual becomes involved in (Chipumuro, 2015), including their temperament, frame of mind, decision making and general responses. It is of importance for an individual to be able to identify the factors that arouse different emotional states within themselves so that they may be able to obtain insight about themselves. Success in the workplace for an individual can be established by mastering the skills of emotional intelligence (Kasapi and Mihiotis, 2014). An individual's ability to recognise and understand their emotions will likely be a reflection of their emotional and social competencies which are deemed as essential to achieve success in the workplace (Goleman, 1998).

Past research on emotional intelligence has reflected that the theories suggested by Mayer and Solvey (1990), Bar-on (1997) and Daniel Goleman (1998) conceptualise the essence of emotional intelligence from two perspectives, one as a pure form of intelligence using intellectual ability and the other being a mixed intelligence of intellectual ability and personality traits (Radha and Prasad, 2013). The difference between both is different beliefs as to what establishes emotional intelligence. The model of emotional intelligence by Goleman (1998) is based on the emotional competencies through which an individual is able to master certain abilities on emotional intelligence and makes them more effective in the workplace.

Goleman (1998) identified four mechanisms for emotional competence, namely self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management. Kasapi and Mihiotis (2014) indicate that Goleman (1998) posited that more so than

IQ, emotional intelligence was the stand out factor in determining successful leaders. Bar-on (2006) explained that early theories and definitions of social intelligence had an impact on the way emotional intelligence was conceptualised. Mayer and Salovey (2004) initially viewed emotional intelligence as a part of social intelligence and this view suggests that both theories are related as they are likely considered to be interconnected mechanisms of the same paradigm. Mayer and Salovey (1997), as cited in Kulkarni (2014), explained that emotional intelligence is basically the ability to link emotions to reasoning; the use of emotions to expedite reasoning; and to reason intelligently about emotions. Emotional intelligence can therefore be described as that process which taps into an individual's intellectual ability and analyses the extent to which these abilities are informed by emotions and compare these to the extent to which these emotions are managed through an individual's mental ability.

2.3. History of Emotional Intelligence

The recognition of emotions began approximately 2000 years ago. Freedman (2010:1) states that Plato documented that "all learning has an emotional base". This gave rise to researchers and scientists proving and disproving the significance of an individual's feelings. The term 'emotional intelligence' was first conceived in 1990 by Peter Salovey and John D. Mayer, who described it as a form of social intelligence that enables an individual to be conscious of their own feelings and the feelings of others, and to use this information as a guide when applying one's own thoughts and actions (Mayer and Salovey, 1990).

The expedition to explore the significance of emotional intelligence was then initiated by Salovey and Mayer through research programmes aimed at identifying the emotional impact of individuals in various settings and the ability of such individuals to recover from the emotional situation that they faced. Amongst their other research activities was a study to identify how individuals' emotions impacted on their social interactions and on using this ability to build relationships. Freedman (2010) explained that David Caruso, a co-author with Salovey and Mayer, mentioned that emotional intelligence is not the opposite of intelligence or the triumph of the heart over the head, but rather a unique connection of both.

During the mid to late nineties, Daniel Goleman took an interest in the work that was done by Salovey and Mayer and further developed on the emotional intelligence framework, which ultimately led to his publications on this topic, in particular his books on *Emotional Intelligence* and *Working with Emotional Intelligence* (Goleman, 1998).

2.4. Emotional Intelligence Models

The emergence of emotional intelligence as a key factor in human engagement has led the way for current subject matter experts to lay a solid foundation to create an academic model on emotional intelligence. These models theorize emotional intelligence from two viewpoints, either using an ability model or a mixed model (Stys and Brown, 2004).

An ability model regards emotional intelligence as a form of mental ability and is a form of pure intelligence. This model envisions emotions as a source of information that assists in understanding one's social environment. The mixed model, on the other hand, utilises a combination of mental ability with personality features such as positivity, well-being and being satisfied. The ability model suggested by Salovey and Mayer is the only available ability model at present (Mayer and Salovey, 1990).

There are two mixed models which were theorised by Bar-On (1997) and Goleman (1998). Stys and Brown (2004) illustrated that the Bar-On model is associated with personality and focuses on the interdependence of emotional intelligence with personality features that provide satisfaction to an individual. The Goleman mixed model, however focuses on an individual's intellectual ability, performance and personality traits and their resulting impact on the individual in their workplace (Goleman, 1998).

2.4.1. Ability Model of Emotional Intelligence

The ability model was developed by Peter Salovey and John Mayer (1990) after they introduced the terminology of emotional Intelligence to the academic world as part of their continued research on emotional intelligence. Their key theories were focused on emotions being an early detection of individual feelings, whilst intelligence is the

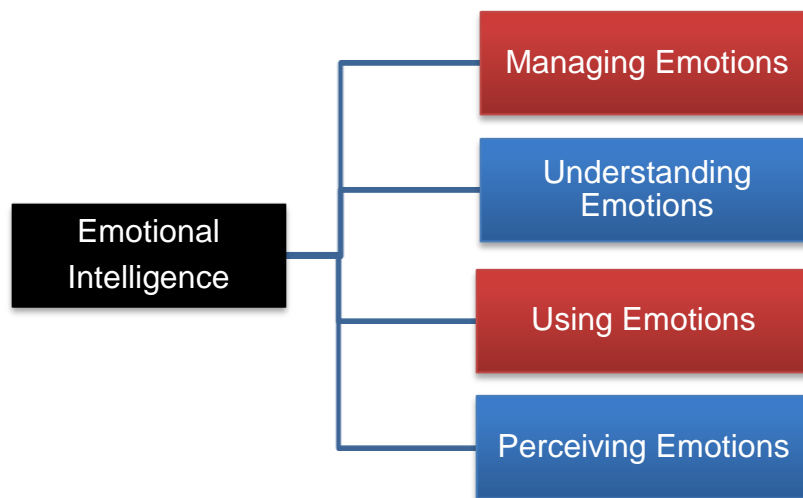
ability to comprehend and be sensible, thus realising that the individual ability to process and relate to emotional information will vary accordingly (Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso, 2004).

The Salovey and Mayer model is based on identifying emotional intelligence within two areas, namely experiential, which is the ability to recognise emotional information without necessarily understanding it fully; and strategic, which enables an individual to manage and understand emotions without fully experiencing it. This model has four branches of emotional intelligence which describe the areas that are significant in analysing emotions. It specifically highlights the ability to perceive emotions, use emotions to facilitate thinking, understand emotions and manage emotions (Stys and Brown, 2004).

Fernández-Berrocal and Extremera (2006) postulated that Mayer and Salovey (1997) considered emotional intelligence to be more of a mental ability that allowed an individual to understand and manage emotions, while at the same time being able to perceive and use emotions accordingly. These traits were categorically developed into the Mayer and Salovey ability model (1990), whereby emotional intelligence was used to understand one's self and others; to generate and communicate feelings; detect emotional signals; and control one's own emotion to encourage understanding and personal growth. This ability model featured four branches, with the perceiving of emotions at the basic level and the managing of emotions at the highest level, which illustrates that an individual's ability to control their own emotions and that of others will form the basis of the abilities for the other three branches.

The four-branch model is illustrated in Figure 2.1., outlining each stage of the four branches.

Figure 2.1: Mayer and Salovey's Four-Branch Model of Emotional Intelligence



Source: Brackett, Rivers and Salovey (2011, 92)

2.4.1.1. Perceiving Emotions

Brackett and Salovey (2006) explained that this dimension focuses on detecting sensitivity and non-verbal signs in an individual, resulting in the perception of an emotion. Non-verbal signals in the form of facial expressions such as anger, sadness, happiness or frustrations are globally recognisable in providing insight into individuals' emotions. The ability to correctly perceive emotions through facial expressions provides a critical beginning point of understanding emotions (Mayer, Salovey and Caruso, 2004).

2.4.1.2. Use of emotions to facilitate thinking

This branch of emotional intelligence utilizes the capacity of the emotion to guide the thinking ability of an individual to be creative, logical and rational in the thinking process. It is the emotional manner in which one responds to something that catches one's attention. The use of emotions in this process will enable an individual to connect relevant feelings to decision-making; problem solving; reasoning; and interpersonal communication (Brackett and Salovey, 2006). This ability will enable an individual to differentiate amongst the different emotions that one is feeling and

identify those particular emotions which influence their thought process (Stys and Brown, 2004).

2.4.1.3. Understanding Emotions

The understanding of emotions does require a considerable amount of comprehension of the thought process to effectively analyse emotions. Any emotion will always transmit a signal. While happiness normally gives off signs of being sociable and content, emotions such as anger make an individual appear destructive, while fear may make a person more withdrawn and distant. Any visible emotion is a result of how that individual is feeling at a given point in time. It is therefore essential as part of being emotionally intelligent to understand such emotions and to be able to reason with such signals. These will include the understanding of emotional vocabulary and the manner in which emotional states progress from one to another. To be able to fully understand emotions, one needs to be able to comprehend the meaning of emotions (Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso, 2004).

This ability also enables an individual to understand complex emotions, comprehending two emotional signals at once and being able to understand the transition from one emotional state to the other (Stys and Brown, 2004). Brackett and Salovey (2006) explained that individuals who are talented in understanding emotions appreciate the link in terms that describe the different emotional states. These individuals are extremely sensitive to the way emotional words are mentioned and many mixed signals may affect the emotional archetypes.

2.4.1.4. Managing Emotions

The managing of emotions in an individual requires observing one's own feelings and accurately discriminating against these feelings. An individual will also need to believe that they can improve on these feelings, employ tactics to adjust their feelings and assess the efficiency of such tactics (Brackett and Salovey, 2006). An individual might also be efficient in assisting others to manage their emotions, like cheering on a friend or inspiring and motivating a colleague at work, whilst some individuals may not be as effective in creating such positive outcomes. The ability to

fully manage emotions is not always possible as not everyone understands that emotions convey signals. An individual may therefore control emotional signals until they become agonizing or overwhelming. In doing so, an individual is able to regulate their own emotions and those of others (Mayer, Salovey and Caruso, 2004). The managing of emotions furthermore allows an individual to either engage or detach from an emotion which is reliant on its convenience in a particular circumstance.

2.4.2. Bar-On's Mixed Model of Emotional Intelligence

The term “emotion quotient” was developed by Reuven Bar-On as one of the first measures of emotional intelligence (1997). This model on emotional intelligence was more related to the potential for success and performance, rather than the actual success or performance achieved. It is therefore considered as more of a process-orientated model rather than an outcomes-based model. The main focus is on a range of social and emotional competencies, including being able to be aware and understand one's self and to apply the same to others; being able to deal with complex emotions; and being able to adapt to change in a personal and social environment (Bar-On, 2002 cited in Stys and Brown, 2004).

Fernández-Berrocal and Extremera (2006) explained that Bar-On's mixed model of emotional and social intelligence is a combination of interconnected emotional and social capabilities. These include the relevant skills that regulate the effectiveness of an individual to understand and express themselves; relate to others and understand them; and being able to negotiate and deal with daily requirements. Emotional intelligence is a broad ability that an individual develops, including various emotional and social abilities. This has led to authors reflecting and identifying Bar-On's method as a mixed model of emotional intelligence as its proportions include emotional, social, cognitive and personality dimensions (Fernández-Berrocal and Extremera, 2006). The Bar-On model's structure has five components of emotional intelligence viz. interpersonal, intrapersonal, stress management, adaptability and the general mood. Each of these components has a sub-component and is summarised in Table 2.1 below. Bar-On suggests that the emotional intelligence journey develops with time and can be enhanced through regular training and development interventions (Bar-On, 2002 cited in Stys and Brown, 2004).

Table 2.1: Bar-On's Model of Emotional Intelligence

| COMPONENTS | SUB-COMPONENTS |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Intrapersonal | Self- Regard Emotional Self-Awareness Assertiveness Independence Self-Actualisation |
| Interpersonal | Empathy Social Responsibility Interpersonal Relationship |
| Adaptability | Reality Testing Flexibility Problem Solving |
| Stress Management | Stress Tolerance Impulse Control |
| General Mood Components | Optimism Happiness |

Source: Stys and Brown (2004, 12)

Bar-on (2006) highlighted that the Bar-On model originally formed the basis of emotional intelligence and was designed to evaluate the concept of emotional intelligence. This model highlights the related social and emotional competencies that form the social-emotional intelligence construct and includes the characteristics that control how effectively an individual is able to identify, comprehend and express themselves whilst also relating to others and comprehending their actions.

2.4.3. Goleman's Mixed Model of Emotional Intelligence

Daniel Goleman discovered the works of Peter Salovey and John Mayer in the 1990's and began to expand on this discipline, leading to his book titled *Emotional Intelligence* (1995), which habituated the idea of emotional intelligence to the private and public sectors.

Goleman's model on emotional intelligence has four main competencies. The first of these is self-awareness, which is the ability to recognise and understand one's own emotions. Self-management is the second competency and is focused on discipline within an individual and adapting to varying circumstances. The third competency is social awareness which is the ability to understand others and finally, relationship management which enables an individual to connect with others, inspire, influence, develop others while managing conflict (Goleman, 1998).

Fernández-Berrocal and Extremera (2006) mentioned that Goleman's model of emotional intelligence (1990) was established to predict the personal effects in the workspace and within an organisation. The dimensions within this model are based on various capabilities that are considered to be characteristic within successful and brilliant employees. Goleman (1998) explained that each of the four dimensions developed in his model of emotional intelligence will form the basis for an individual to develop other essential abilities as required in the workplace environment for example, self-awareness skills serve as a foundation for reflecting on the development of the pros and cons in making a decision. These skills are vital for leaders when making decisions for their teams.

The skills of emotional intelligence will need to be developed in order for an individual to be considered as emotionally competent, which will result in them performing successfully in the workplace. This is referred to as a learned competence and is essential in understanding Goleman's proposal (Goleman, 1998). The emotional intelligence models of Mayer and Salovey (1990) were linked to the potential emotional abilities in an individual, while Goleman's proposal (1998) was based on emotional competencies whereby the emotional intelligence level is based on the specific capabilities of an individual. This skill enables them to be more effective in their job performance (Goleman, 1998). Goleman's (1998) model of emotional intelligence is illustrated in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2: Goleman's Emotional Intelligence Competencies

| | SELF Personal Competence | OTHER Social Competence |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| RECOGNITION | Self-Awareness Emotional Self-Awareness Accurate Self-Awareness Self-Confidence | Social Awareness Empathy Service Organisation Organisational Awareness |
| REGULATION | Self-Management Self-Control Trustworthiness Conscientiousness Adaptability Achievement Drive Initiative | Relationship Management Developing Others Influence Communication Conflict Management Leadership Change Catalyst Building Bonds Teamwork and Collaboration |

Source: Stys and Brown (2004, 15)

2.5. Customer Service

Hassan (2013) defined customer service as a set of activities that are designed with the intention of enhancing customer satisfaction prior to, during and after service interaction with the aim of meeting the expectations of the customer. Qasim and Asadullah (2012) defined customer service as a set of activities that provide trouble free support to a consumer. Verhoef (2003) suggested that companies and organisations should make concerted efforts to build close relationships with their customers in order to improve the service perceptions of customers. The main emphasis is based on the attitude of staff to maintain high service delivery standards by prioritizing customer satisfaction as the main objective. Customer service is generally defined as a mixture of activities and strategies offered by organisations in an attempt to improve the quality of service. In other words, it can be viewed as a richly rewarding shopping experience (Howardell, 2003 cited in Hassan, 2013).

Mosahab, Mahamad and Ramayah (2010) explained that the link between service behaviour and the quality of service plays an important role in management due to services being as a key component in many companies locally and globally, in the process influencing the revenue inflows of these companies. Therefore, customer satisfaction plays a key role in customer retention, as those customers who have experienced good quality service will in all likelihood compliment and share their good experience with others. On the other hand, Bitner, Faranda, Hubbert and Zeithaml (1997) contended that some service delivery experts are of the opinion that efficient service delivery can be achieved if customers can contribute in the service creation process.

Hassan (2013) quotes Kotler (1997) who mentioned that providing good customer service is a significant component of the business process as it accomplishes customer satisfaction, customer loyalty and will ultimately increase organisational growth and profitability. However, Bitner et al. (1997) argued that customer engagement in a service environment can give rise to issues for an organisation due to the impact of customers being able to influence the outcome of quality and quantity in service delivery. The challenge for the organisation is providing a quality service that matches the needs and expectations of the customer. Gopalakrishna (2013) argued that customer service is not scientific as it cannot be condensed into a formula or equation. It is neither a subject where all answers to a customer's query are a clear 'yes' or 'no'. The nature of a human is diverse and complex and a 'one size fits all' approach cannot be assumed. The word 'customer' contains a characteristic of customization (Gopalakrishna, 2013). Therefore, customer service is a process that develops and customizes services that are specific to the needs of each individual customer.

The success of a business is achieved through good customer service and as the customer service of an organisation improves, so too will the profit and growth of the organisation (Hassan, 2013). Tronvoll (2011) explained that emotional responses that are positive will result in the customer developing a lasting relationship and association with the service provider. On the contrary, a negative emotional response is likely to have an adverse effect, often to the detriment of the service provider. Liljander and Strandvik (1995), cited in Tronvoll (2011), contended that

negative emotions had a more severe impact on service encounters than those linked to positive emotions. It is therefore essential for service providers to develop an understanding of the emotional reactions that arise due to an unsatisfactory service encounter and make efforts to eliminate complaints that would tarnish the organisation's reputation. A negative emotion is the reaction of a dissatisfied customer that is likely to result in a customer complaint being initiated (Tronvoll, 2011).

2.5.1. Customer satisfaction

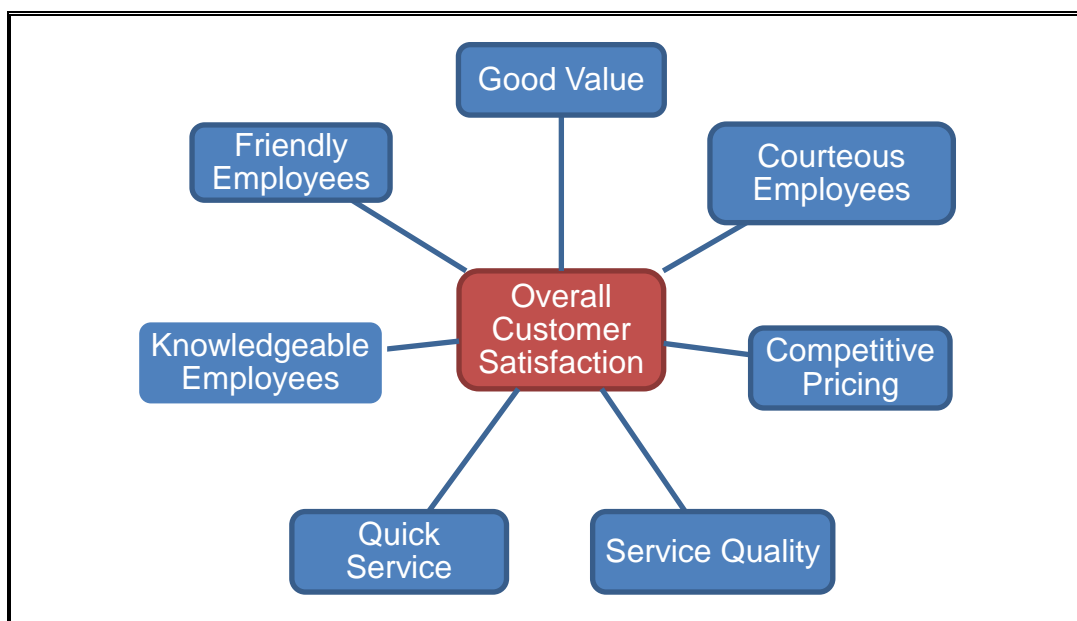
Customer satisfaction is defined as evaluating the experience of a service encounter on whether it was in some measure as good as it was expected to be (Hunt, 1977 cited in Wadud, 2012). Hansemark and Alinson (2004), cited in Angelova and Zekiri (2011), defined satisfaction as the customer's attitude towards a service provider, or the emotional reaction between the expectations of a customer and what they receive in terms of the fulfilment of some need or desire. When a customer is content with the service offering, it is termed as satisfaction (Agbor, 2011). Customer satisfaction is influenced by many factors (Angelova and Zekiri, 2011). These include employees who are friendly, courteous, helpful and knowledgeable, the quality of the service rendered, as well as the efficiency in providing the service. It is an important strategic goal for organisations as it translates into an increase in profits, as well as a better reputation within the industry in which the company operates (Ayuba, 2014). The principal goal in attaining customer satisfaction is to build strong relationships that will assist in meeting customer expectations (Angelova and Zekiri, 2011).

Customer satisfaction is the determinant for improving the quality of service and in order to achieve that level, organisations must set the standards that are required to be achieved. Zairi (2000), cited in Wadud (2012) commented that a customer provides a sense of purpose in what the organisation does. Organisations are more dependent on customers than they are reliant on the organisation. The quality of service provided and attaining customer satisfaction are very important factors for companies that are striving to achieve growth and a greater market share. It is therefore essential for companies to deliver a high quality standard of service, as

customer satisfaction positively affects the organisation's profits. Customers that are treated well, will definitely return (Angelova and Zekiri, 2011).

Angelova and Zekiri (2011) posited that 'attitude' plays a central part in customer satisfaction. An attitude is the apparent quality of service, whilst satisfaction is more specific to the transaction that is rendered. Oliver (1981), cited in Angelova and Zekiri (2011), identified attitude as a customer's affective orientation, whilst satisfaction is the emotional reaction that follows the service level engagement. Wadud (2012) mentioned that one of the most important aspects relating to all types of organisations is customer satisfaction. These organisations aim to provide the customer with the best possible service while constantly striving to find ways to improve the level of satisfaction for the customer. Hokinson (1995), cited in Wadud (2012), highlighted the factors that affect customer satisfaction, as shown in Figure 2.2. below.

Figure 2.2: Seven factors that affect customer satisfaction



Source: Hokinson (1995), cited in Wadud (2012, 19)

Liljander and Strandvik (1997), cited in McColl-Kennedy and Smith (2006), argued however that positive emotions do not impact on a customer's level of satisfaction. Their argument is based on the view that emotions are multi-dimensional and a more in-depth analysis needs to be conducted in order to overcome negative emotions in

customer satisfaction. The result of customer satisfaction is trust and loyalty towards the company. It is therefore important for companies to prioritize building strong relationships with customers, as good service translates into positive performance and increased profits for the company. Invariably, there is an expectation within service industry organisations to manage and develop their customer interfaces on the emotional intelligence abilities of employees (McColl-Kennedy and Smith, 2006).

2.5.2. Customer Expectations

Gures, Arslan and Tun (2014) defined customer expectations as the needs and requirements of a customer, while Nabi (2012) mentioned that customer expectations are the standards that are set out by customers on what they believe to be good service. This will explicitly involve the customer being able to feel what service should be offered rather than what service could be offered by the service provider. Customer expectations play a key role in customer satisfaction. The level at which a consumer's needs are fulfilled could form an important part in developing feelings of satisfaction due to the impact of the service transaction (Angelova and Zekiri, 2011).

Consumers have an expectation of receiving quality service and products. Therefore expectations are important to companies as they really want to understand what these expectations are. Any shortcoming in attempting to fulfil these expectations can result either in an unhappy customer, a serious confrontation or a loss of business for the organisation. Nabi (2012) emphasized that the expectation of a customer is actually what they really want from a service encounter. Gures et al., (2014) explained that it is significantly essential for service providers to realise and be cognisant of the needs of the customer in order to oblige and fulfil the expectations of the customer. In managing customer expectations effectively, service providers can increase customer satisfaction. The ultimate objective of any organisation should be to satisfy the customer. Many organisations do not understand their customers or their thought processes (Nabi, 2012). Consequently, this creates quite a challenge for organisations as it brings about a greater emphasis on customer expectations. The advantage of customer retention requires

organisations to improve their quality of service regularly and is likely to result in customer loyalty.

However, Nabi (2012) explained that the definition of expectations varies and is diverse, brought about by the past experiences of customers, marketing strategies and the customer's opinion at the moment of purchase. The customer's knowledge of certain products and services may also cause different expectations to arise, while the needs of an individual, a customer's experience, as well as their pre-purchase beliefs could be the influencing factors in determining a customer's expectations.

2.5.3. Customer Relationship Management

Customer relationship management is a term that provides an understanding of how an organisation interacts with their customers. This process is used to collect the intelligence data that is required to provide better support on products and services to customers. Esfahani, Jafarzadeh and Nafari (2012) explained that customer relationship management is considered to be one of the basic strategies for business. It consists of all the persuasive measures that organisations use to serve customers. The main objective of this process is to predict the needs of the customer and to react to these accordingly.

The focus of organisations should be on creating value for customers by developing capacity to ensure growth in its responsibility to satisfy the needs of the customer (Oluseye, Tairat and Emmanuel, 2014). The essence of an organisation is customer satisfaction and delivering a service that is of high quality is paramount in achieving good organisational performance. The sole aim of managing relationships with customers must be to provide customized services to each customer. In doing so, organisations are empowered to deliver more exceptional services to its customers (Oluseye et al., 2014).

Komlosi (2013), cited in Danquah and Wireko (2014), postulated that emotional intelligence using customer relationship management is the foundation for effective service delivery. Mohammadhossein and Zakaria (2012) mentioned that a customer is a vital component in each business, and demanding a constant improvement in the services offered. Jacob (2015) explained that a customers' emotional journey

actually starts before they are customers. Alipour and Mohammadi (2011) contended that the importance of treating a customer with respect is central to an organisations objectives and is key to its existence. Customer satisfaction or displeasure can reveal whether they will return to the company, move on to a competitor or ultimately move to a service provider that meets their emotional needs. Oliver (1997), cited in Johnston (2004), mentioned that satisfaction is a judgement, whilst emotions such as delight, happiness, contentment are the result of the judgment of a satisfactory service encounter.

Jones (2014) mentioned that the objective of the service provider should be to target the customer's hearts, and not only their minds. In other words, it should not just be about making a transaction but rather creating lasting relationships with the customer. Jones (2014) further explained the importance of emotional Intelligence by quoting that in an article entitled '*Customer Satisfaction Doesn't Count*', the Gallup Organisation mentioned that if an emotional connection is not made with the customer then satisfaction is insignificant. It is rather important to connect with customers on an emotional level, as engaged customers are more likely to recommend your organisation multiple times in future. These emotional connections will drive the customer's association with the organisation, as the power of service lies more in an emotional connection rather than a rational one.

Bitner and Hubbert (1994), cited in van Dolen, de Ruyter and Lemmink (2004), stated that when employees have close contact with the customer, they can intensely influence the service experience of the customer, thus creating a satisfactory relationship and service encounter. Roberts-Lombard and du Plessis (2012) argued that customer relationship management is a view on how companies can retain customers whilst reducing costs and maximizing profits. The authors further contended that organisations now view customer relationship management as a top priority, not just as a competitive advantage but more for the survival of the organisation.

2.6. Emotional Intelligence in Service

A service encounter is the moment of interaction between employee and customer, and due to the human emotions being attached to both, it can be observed that there

is a strong link between both employee and customer emotions in a service encounter (Bitner et al.,1997). Walden and Janevska (2011) stated that Lazarus, a famous psychologist who studied emotions explained that prior to the occurrence of an emotion, individuals will make an unconscious analysis of what is transpiring and how it will affect them or those within their family, social or employment network. From that perspective, emotions develop from being just normal to a critical aspect of an organisation's survival.

In a service environment, there is a generally high expectation from a customer for a particular need on a specific product or service. As the encounter progresses, it is a natural process for emotions, either good or bad, to be displayed. These moments are key in the customer engagement process. All focus will be on the customer service employee and how they are equipped to handle such a situation (Angelova and Zekiri, 2011). For service employees to understand emotions, it is important for them to perceive these correctly. These will include an understanding of all non-verbal signs such as body language, tone and expression. Goleman (1998) explained that emotions will help in prioritizing what an individual is focused on and what they react to.

Barlow and Maul (2000), cited in Walden and Janevska (2011), highlighted that customers are always emotional and certainly no one is neutral about consuming. Emotions influence the decisions made by customers and just as the normal aspects of the service experience are managed, then so too should the emotional aspects of the service encounter. It would be a severe weakness to make a decision for the organisation without considering the emotional impact it will have on its customers. In order to achieve thorough customer engagement, it is important to tune into the emotional needs of customers. However, this cannot be a generic approach and must be adapted to each individual customer. This can be achieved if front-line employees and managers are well developed to manage their own emotional intelligence skills.

2.7. Emotional Intelligence in Service Delivery and Customer Relations

Customer service encounters occur quite frequently on a daily basis (McColl-Kennedy and Smith, 2006). The majority of these encounters are routine and rather

insignificant. However, they are more likely to be remembered when something goes wrong, resulting in heightened customer emotions. Boyatzis and Van Oosten (2003) explained that emotional intelligence is a cherished resource that can reinvigorate the organisation's purpose and serve as an inspiration for employees to perform better. The clients of any organisation will confirm that an emotionally intelligent organisation is in tune with client requirements. When service goes wrong, customers tend to express negative emotions such as anger and frustration. The role of service employees, who are dealing with face-to-face encounters, is critical in managing customer emotions (McColl-Kennedy and Smith, 2006). This is due to them not only being able to observe and respond to customer queries, but also to the way their own behaviour impacts on the customer's emotions and reactions in the service encounter.

Customer service is the measure for success in a service environment and the performance of the employee dictates the quality of service delivered to the customer. Radha and Prasad (2013) mentioned that a key part of business management is observing the behaviour of employees and additionally, to managing customer behaviour. The first step in ensuring that customers receive service that is of high quality is for service providers to be adaptive to the needs of each individual customer. The process of managing employees through emotional intelligence will aid an organisation in achieving a much desired performance level, provide effective communication channels and improve the organisation's corporate image. A sound background in the technical aspects of a job is essentially what a job demands, but using emotional intelligence in conjunction with this speciality will allow for better service delivery and engagements. An emotionally intelligent employee will assist in supporting their organisation by treating each individual customer according to their specific needs. It is also expected from employees who are emotionally competent to apply higher levels of sensitivity and empathy towards their customers, which serves as the basis for an inspiring service experience. Emotional intelligence in employees aids an organisation to improve its overall effectiveness in delivery on its strategic objectives (Radha and Prasad, 2013).

Slatten (2011) explained that emotions in service encounters are something that one generally deals with one's day-to-day engagements, at the shop, service station or at

the bank. One finds that from these engagements, one is able to recall the positive experiences rather fondly, but at the same time, those negative encounters are also vividly embedded in one's mind. As customers, these experiences affect people, either as customers or as employees. Customers play a key role in any business and it is therefore essential to make employees understand the importance of taking care of these customers and ensuring that their experience with the company is a pleasant one (Radha and Prasad, 2013).

There may be situations where an employee is faced with a difficult customer who will provoke the employee to react in an uncontrollable manner. It is for these types of situations that the employee must be trained to take complete control of the situation. When dealing with people who are behaving emotionally, it is important to understand that they are typically disappointed with the organisation, process or other factors over which an employee has no control (Radha and Prasad, 2013). This emotional behaviour is directed personally at the employee, unless they have provoked the irate customer with poor service or an unhealthy attitude. Whilst attempting to address such a situation, it is important to first deal with the emotional state. Once this has been established, then only should an employee proceed to resolve the customer's problem. It is important to be able to reduce the customer's emotional level, especially a negative one, as the likelihood is that they will not be receptive towards an employee or their attempts to assist (Slatten, 2011). Customers need to be treated very delicately because if they perceive the employee to be out of tune with their emotional needs, then the employee additionally becomes part of the problem and not the solution.

Othman et al. (2008), as cited in Promduang (2013), contended that a person must be able to deal with emotions, especially if they work in a service area which involves regular engagement with colleagues, customers and superiors. Those employees with high emotional intelligence skills are expected to have a better success rate in understanding their customers' needs. The emotions displayed by customers often send a cue to the service employee, enabling them to be effective during the service encounter with the customer (Slatten, 2011). If the customer expresses negative emotions and the service employee is able to successfully decode these signals,

then the service employee can adjust their approach in order to create a more satisfactory experience for the customer.

Danquah and Wireko (2014) highlighted the studies of Martins et al. (2010), Zahid et al. (2011) and Komlosi (2013) which revealed that emotional intelligence impacted on service providers within the customer service industry. Wirtz and Chung (2003), cited in Danquah and Wireko (2014), established that emotional intelligence plays a crucial role in customer satisfaction, with the quality of service influencing the effect of service delivery. Service delivery is a key element in the process of achieving the desired financial performance and growth of the company. It allows for the persuasion of customers and for showcasing the ability of the company to deliver within their market. In the service industry, service delivery creates the foundation for achieving customer satisfaction and retention. In order to achieve this, Petrides (2011) and Zahid et al. (2011), cited in Danquah and Wireko (2014), suggested that services should be delivered within a relationship management strategy.

A key role that customers play in service delivery is that they contribute towards their own satisfaction and the quality of the service that they receive. A customer may not care in the least as to whether their engagement has increased the company's productivity, but what they will be highly concerned about is whether their needs have been fulfilled (Bitner et al.,1997). A customer that participates effectively can increase the probability that their needs are met and the assistance that they are looking for is achieved. Due to a customer's participation in service delivery, they blame themselves at times when things go wrong. If they feel that they are partially to blame, then they will become disgruntled with the service provider due to their belief that this could have been avoided if the service provider had taken a more proactive approach in resolving their problem (Bitner et al.,1997).

2.7.1. Role of Emotional Intelligence in the Service Environment

In a service environment, it is important and essential for the customer to have a good interaction. Slatten (2011) stated that Scandanavian Airlines' former president J Carlzon explained the importance of this interaction, defining it as the moment of truth and a key factor of service management. It is referred to as the moment of truth due to the customer's expectation resulting in their experience, revealing their

understanding of service quality. These encounters strain the link when a customer and employee interact. The conduct of service interactions are not all routine. Pugh (2001) posits that when a service employee displays a smile to a customer, it should not be assumed that the employee is experiencing a positive emotion, but it is rather due to service employees being developed to express different emotions during a service encounter. It is equally important to differentiate between an experienced emotion and an expressed emotion. The latter is more likely to be staged in order to smooth out the service encounter. Although employees are developed to express emotions that they do not feel, the emotion felt at the time of the service encounter is more likely to influence the displayed emotions. However, the display of positive emotions is also a distinctive interpretation of good service quality (Pugh, 2001).

Kim (2010) highlighted that one of the most important intangible assets for an organisation is the forming of social relationships which are essential for productivity. The most relevant feature in these social relationships is the relationship between the employee and the customer. Promduang (2013) stated that it is in the best interest of service organisations to ensure that their service staff optimize their performances in order to provide value to customers. Prentice (2008), cited in Promduang (2013) recommended that being skilled in emotional intelligence is not only about managing customers who are emotional, but also allowing the employee to control their own emotions and allowing them to keep focused and deal with any irrational demands being put forward on them. Bardzil and Slaski (2003), as cited in Dimitriades (2007), highlighted that great service which is provided with a positive emotional content is highly likely to come from those employees who are firstly in tune with their own emotions and secondly, are able to understand the emotions of others. Giardini and Frese (2008) postulated that in a service environment, the engagement between the employer and the customer plays a critical role. A requirement in most service settings is for employees to create a positive atmosphere. This positivity will create a calm interaction, resulting in a likely positive outcome.

2.7.2. Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Customer Service

Emotional intelligence is required by those employees who have close relationships with customers. Mattila and Enz (2002) stated that customizing the service

transaction to meet individual demands of customers is an essential goal for organisations in the service industry.

Cherniss (1998) explained that developing front-line employees with emotional skills will allow the organisation to form a closer relationship with the customer by being more aware of each individual customers needs and requirements and importantly, having a better ability to understand the emotional state of the customer during the service encounter. The emotions of customers relay critical and sensitive information on how the customer will review the organisation. The display of positive emotions will probably result in overall positive feedback. Consequently, improving customer relations through emotional intelligence is essential. Those emotions displayed by the customer in a service encounter are crucial in assessing the overall service delivered to the customer. The customer's evaluation of the service encounter connects highly with the emotion that is displayed during and after the service encounter.

Mattila and Enz (2002) indicated that the conduct of employees that serve as front-line providers of service are critical in terms of how the consumer will evaluate the level of service. Gardner (1985), cited in Mattila and Enz (2002), also suggested that mood effects are likely to be experienced during the service encounter. Estep (2013) posited the importance of maintaining positive attitudes in a customer service environment. If the positive approach displayed by the employee can result in a positive reaction from the client, then this approach can make significant strides for those companies that are struggling to achieve positive customer service.

2.8. Leadership

Leadership can be described as the ability to influence one or more individuals, or a group, in the direction of achieving specific objectives and goals. A leader is one who displays a professional attitude, is motivating, creates their own targets, is enthusiastic, shows personal commitment and keeps the momentum rolling towards the attainment of the desired objectives (Dran, 2004 cited in Ali, 2012).

Goleman (1998) indicated that the emotional tone set by a leader flows from top to bottom with incredible accuracy. Winston and Patterson (2006) posit that a leader is

one who identifies, develops and influences their followers who possess the abilities and skills towards the missions and objectives of the organisation, resulting in the follower channelling their emotional, spiritual and physical energy through a determined effort by the follower to achieve the organisation's objectives. Najundeswaraswamy and Swamy (2014) described a leader as one who delegates a task or influences others to achieve specific objectives. Organisations in today's environment require leaders who are effective and who can fully comprehend the complexities of increased change in the global arena. A leader who has a good relationship with subordinates is likely to achieve greater effectiveness in achieving the task from employees.

Goleman (1998) stated that leaders who are notably invisible are generally average leaders, while the best of leaders are regularly visible as they walk around and generate conversations with staff about their families and other personal matters of interest. They also request from staff to be kept informed, thus creating openness for future communications to take place. This approach allows staff across all levels of the organisation to keep their superiors informed. Badea and Pana (2010) mentioned that leaders who are emotionally adept; who understand and master their own emotions and feelings; and who can differentiate and deal with the feelings of others effectively are at an advantage in life. Such individuals who are highly proficient in their emotional ability are likely to be more effective and productive. Individuals who cannot control their emotional states are affected by their inability to be focused on their work and to think clearly. Emotional intelligence is that aptitude that allows a leader to support, motivate and understand their followers, while simultaneously improving their own self-understanding (Badea and Pana, 2010).

Mukoma (2003) explained that leadership is a significant factor affecting organisational performance. Stogdil (1974), cited in Mukoma (2003), defined leadership as way of motivating a team towards achieving a specific goal. Brown (2014) emphasised that leaders are often the drivers of change in an organisation. A leader shows a tendency that ensures that an individual is passionate about what they do and makes certain that the best in an employee surfaces. They possess the attributes to develop an employee's growth and influence their performance by the leadership style they exhibit.

Gonos and Gallo (2013) mentioned that in a competitive environment where there are constant challenges, organisations have to adapt to these changes. A key aspect in these situations will be the type of managers that are hired for these positions. Organisations need to hire individuals who will primarily add value to the company and be cost effective in their handling of day-to-day operations. This is due to the individual demands of the various stakeholders. For example, the owner is mainly concerned with the return on investment; employees want better working conditions; the organisations supplier's and bankers require that obligations are met; while customers require their demands to be satisfied, in addition to lower prices and quality product offerings (Gonos and Gallo, 2013). These demands rely heavily on the manager being able to manage the company effectively and will require an adequate style of leadership from the manager in order to be effective and to ensure that there is continuous effort. Harper (2012) explained that leadership plays an influential role in organisational flexibility, longevity and in the promotion of its brand. Bolden (2014) contended that in a changing worldwide setting, leadership provides the solution for not just the success of individuals or organisations, but additionally for the success of industry specific segments and countries across the globe.

Fambrough and Hart (2008) postulated that developing emotional intelligence in a leader is essential as it enhances their efforts to influence their followers in attaining organisational success. However, Nwokeiwu (2009) is of the view that although leadership is rather challenging to define, the most common definitions lean towards a leader's ability to lead, inspire, motivate and project a clear vision of the path to achieve specific goals. A leader is one who creates a vision for the future and engages their followers through communication, participation and by removing any obstacles that may prevent the efficient achievement of multiple targets

Kasapi and Mihotis (2014) argued that an effective leader actively engages their employees in the making of key decisions. Badea and Pana (2010) mentioned that leaders are open to being influenced by the emotions of others, which are often contagious. In reacting to these, a leader can either:

- Create a positive emotional environment that allows employees to maximize their productivity and efficiency; or

- Affect the emotional climate through discord amongst the workgroup, which results in anxiety in employees who become discouraged and ultimately, affects overall job performance.

Sosik and Megerian (1999), cited in Kasapi and Mihiotis (2014), explained that emotional intelligence serves as the foundation of a leader's character as it enables leaders to develop more awareness of themselves and others. Badea and Pana (2010) posited that a leader can, through using their empathy skills, develop an understanding of their followers; gain a better insight into their thoughts and feelings; and possibly be able to anticipate certain behaviours from an individual and be prepared to react to these accordingly.

Leadership has been a widely researched topic. Past scholars have associated a common term, that of 'influence', with leadership (Bolden, 2004; Winston and Patterson, 2006; Ali, 2012; Sharma and Jain, 2013). A leader is able to achieve this influence by humbling themselves and by portraying a vision of future objectives and realisation, which the follower is able to identify with their own self-belief and values, allowing the follower to comprehend such vision and take minor strides in achieving the objective (Winston and Patterson, 2006). Adeyemi-Bello (2001), cited in Harper (2012), indicated that organisational success is linked to leadership styles as it is dependent and related to the influence from followers. Sharma and Jain (2013) explain that leadership is a practice that uses influence upon others to achieve an objective and gives direction on the organisation's purpose. However, Najundeswaraswamy and Swamy (2014) caution that different leadership styles could have diverse effects on organisational results and performance.

2.8.1. Leadership Styles

The link between emotional intelligence and leadership is distinct. Ashkanasy and Daus (2002) further explained that modern theories on leadership are focused on charismatic or transformational leadership styles. Transformational leaders project a vision and are able to inspire, motivate and provide assistance to their followers. Those transformational leaders who are able to manage and control their own emotions will be more skilled at uniting their workforce to deliver as required. A leader who is able to understand their employees well will be prepared to mediate in

any challenging emotional situation by providing customised support and solution to the affected follower or employee. In essence, a transformational leader must have the ability to inspire their followers emotionally (Ashkanasy and Daus, 2002).

Leaders who are emotionally intelligent are able to regulate their own emotions and that of others, allowing the use of emotional signals in their decision-making to achieve desired outcomes. They use empathy with their followers and create positive relationships with their followers. It may therefore be stated that emotional intelligence is a catalyst for leadership, as effective leaders need to be skilled in managing their own emotions, empathetic and manage relationships, all of which are core traits of emotional intelligence (Mayer and Salovey, 1990; Goleman, 1998).

2.8.1.1. Transformational Leadership

A transformational leadership style focuses on the development of the follower and their needs. Those managers who adopt a transformational leadership style focus solely on the growth and development of the value system of the employee, their current level of moralities and their inspirational abilities (Najundeswaraswamy and Swamy, 2014). Bass (1997), cited in Harper (2012), stated that a transformational leader is seen as a role model who builds trust and confidence, based on their ability to inspire their followers towards attaining organisational success. The difference in a transformational leadership style when compared to a transactional style, lies in the way the leader motivates others (Obiwuru, Okwu, Akpa and Nkwankwere, 2011).

Bass (1997), as cited in Najundeswaraswamy and Swamy (2014), explained that the objective of transformational leadership is to literally transform people and organisations. This would require a transformation of the heart and mind; provision of in-depth insight and understanding; and adjustment of behaviour to become compatible with the values and concepts and bring about a change in the individual that is permanent and builds momentum. Bass and Avolio (1993), as cited in Najundeswaraswamy and Swamy (2014), posited that transformational leadership occurs when a leader broadens their concern level and supports the interests of their employees, thus creating awareness of the task for the group and resulting in the leader placing the needs of the employee ahead of their own self-interest for the good of the group.

2.9. Emotional Intelligence and Service Leadership

Leadership is about influencing people and providing guidance and direction as required. Batool (2013) explained that emotional intelligence is a significant area of leadership. In developing future leaders, emotional intelligence serves as a key ingredient. Emotional intelligence in an organisation has been referred to as “sine qua non” or a pre-requisite of leadership (Kreitz, 2009, 531). Goleman (1998) advised that a leader who is highly skilled in emotional intelligence will be key to the organisation’s success and that leaders must be alert to employee’s emotional signals in their workspace and must mediate when a problem arises. The leader must also be able to apply self-control by managing their own emotions in order to gain the trust of their employees and to be able to comprehend the social and political concords within an organisation (Goleman, 1998).

An effective leader should show strengths in managing workloads, dealing efficiently with disciplinary issues and stress related matters, whilst also encouraging improved performance towards organisational goals. In applying emotional intelligence effectively, leaders will be able to build high-quality relationships with their employees and will further strengthen the trust and loyalty that is placed in the leader (Batool, 2013). A leader or manager is tasked with developing and executing a successful strategy for the organisation.

Chopra and Kanji (2010) explained that a leader or manager with good emotional intelligence skills will be more effective in enhancing the resourcefulness of an organisation. The responsibility of a leader or manager should be to support and motivate their employees to deliver effectively. It is therefore essential for such individuals in a leadership capacity within an organisation to be proficient in being emotionally intelligent. A leader plays a critical and influential role. Their personality, characteristics and traits are often contagious and inspire and motivate to others, whilst negative attitudes and behaviours are often frowned upon. Any display of anger or frustration could lead to the perception by employees that the leader lacks control or as a sign of weakness.

Goleman (1998) and Lewis (2000), cited in Prati et al. (2003), established that a lack of emotional control was connected to the ineffectiveness of the leader, which could be attributed to a lack of empathy by employees to the emotional state of the leader.

Employees may thus lose faith if they feel that the leader is not stable enough to control their emotions, leading to the belief that the leader is ineffective in their ability. Ultimately, whatever the cause, a leaders' inability in emotional control will affect and be felt throughout the team.

Jacob (2015) postulated that the role of a leader in a customer service environment is to create a regular path for a desired outcome, which can be achieved through stimulating people's emotions to realize this outcome. Though emotional intelligence is an effective leadership tool, it can be more powerful if it is used honorably. As a leader, one does not want to build a trusting relationship only to be responsible for breaking the trust. Ideally, a leader will not want to engage an emotional elephant only to end up enraging it through acts of being untrustworthy (Jacob, 2015). A customer or employee will open their heart to the leader by offering constructive feedback and one's ability as a leader to honor their issue or problem will be a directive on whether or not they will continue to be open towards the leader in future.

Ashkanasy and Daus (2002) posited that managers need to be highly skilled at observing the emotional climate within the organisation on an individual and collective level. The critical signs that managers should look out for are where employees are surrounded by a cycle of negative emotions. These include signs from employees reflecting unusual displays of mood swings or are withdrawn and are clearly not in their normal frame of mind. The ability to detect such signals will clearly distinguish a manager who is emotionally skilled from one who is only partially skilled. Through observation, a manager can assess the emotional climate within their organisation and prevent any disastrous encounters (Ashkanasy and Daus, 2002).

2.9.1. Emotional intelligence and effective leadership

Leadership is not confined to the most senior person in the organisation but also includes other managers and line managers who influence subordinates that they are responsible for and who also aid the effectiveness of the main leader of the organisation (Lindebaum and Cartwright, 2010). Although the core elements of emotional intelligence are valuable to the leader of the organisation, it can be equally valuable to other members of the management team (Palmer et al., 2000). Leaders

who display positive emotional management styles serve to enhance their employees by engaging with them to generate creativity, as well as problem solving. Interpersonal skills are an integral part of effective leadership. Historically, leaders were viewed as being able to plan, control and manage the overall running of the organisation. However, currently especially in more service-related organisations, the leader's role is to be able to motivate, inspire and create an atmosphere of positive attitude in the workspace (Lindebaum and Cartwright, 2010). Of importance will be their ability to establish a working environment whereby employees can freely contribute their ideas and innovations. This can be done through establishing an emotional connection with employees, thus making them comfortable to be creative. Consequently, the effective handling of emotions can contribute to how the needs of individuals are handled and the levels at which employees are motivated, giving them a feel-good factor at work (Palmer et al., 2001).

Boomer (2014) cited research that reflects that effective leadership has a direct link to emotional intelligence. The most important characteristics for successful leadership are often below one's surface, much like the core of an iceberg. When leaders possess the skill to identify people's emotions, they are then more capable of responding more effectively rather than just reacting to them, thus strengthening the existing relationships with their employees. This is the heart of emotional intelligence.

Emotional intelligence has emerged as a primary element for leadership effectiveness. Prati et al. (2003) stated that the transformation of organisations from normal machines to dynamic, unpredictable organisms has created the expectancy for managers to transform the typical hierarchical structure into a more flattened one. This has now led to an increase in the role that leaders play in the organisation, which requires them to be more involved in facilitating, co-ordinating and organizing the work behaviours of their employees. Caruso and Salovey (2004), cited in Lindebaum and Cartwright (2010), argued that it is quite a difficult task to be able to inspire employees or to challenge their widespread assumptions without being emotionally intelligent. It is therefore fundamental for a leader's effectiveness ability to be supported by emotional intelligence skills. The understanding of what causes certain emotions in employees and how they change with time aids the leader in generating enthusiasm and optimism for any change that could affect the moods of

employees by encouraging a more cheerful atmosphere, especially if there are high risks involved. Leaders and managers will need to constantly address the soft skills and emotional understanding of employees over and above their technical expertise, when receiving them into the organisation. Goleman (1998) contended that simply being emotionally intelligent does not guarantee that the individual has learnt all the competencies of emotional intelligence, but rather it means that they have the potential to develop these competencies.

Emotional intelligence is an essential element of leadership effectiveness due to leaders having to deal with teams. Those leaders who are emotionally intelligent benefit teams in two ways, namely by motivating their team towards achieving the desired goals and by serving as a transformational influence over their team members (Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee, 2000 as cited in Prati et al., 2003). Consequently, leaders challenge their members to collaborate in achieving team effectiveness and improved performance by engaging in team member interactions; strengthening relationships through building interpersonal trust; and inspiring their members to implement the pronounced vision of the leader (Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee, 2000, cited in Prati et al., 2003).

2.9.2. Emotionally Intelligent Leadership

The use of emotional intelligence as a key element in leadership provides support in managing personal feelings and the emotion of others. Zahid, Wasim and Raziq (2011) posited that in order for emotional intelligence to be absorbed into the culture of the organisation, it must be energetically put into practice by the senior management of the organisation. Miller (1999), as cited in Zahid, Wasim and Raziq (2011), stated that emotional intelligence starts at the top. The mind-set of an organisation is a combination of those that are employed within, making it a collective mind set. If the leadership of an organisation displays effective emotional intelligence skills, it is likely that the organisation will become more emotionally competent.

Guillen and Florent-Tracey (2011) explained that a vital feature in leaders is their ability to act as team players. This is reflected in their ability to work efficiently within a team as well as in empowering their workforce. To be successful, leaders will need

to build a reputation of being good team players and being able to provide good service. A leader should have an inspirational side which should be used to communicate and implement their vision, effectively controlling all tasks and rewarding people accordingly.

George (2000), cited in Prati et al. (2003) postulated four aspects of emotional intelligence which provide leaders with the ability to motivate and transform team members. These include:

- The ability to focus on the self-awareness of the individual. This awareness of one's own emotions and that of others will allow an individual to establish compassionate relations with others.
- The second ability is for a leader to be well skilled in managing emotions. This refers to the leader's ability to identify early signals or emotional reactions. This ability will assist the leader in regulating emotions and better managing these employees.
- The third ability is to recognise that emotional intelligence is useful in influencing behaviour. Emotions that are managed effectively at an individual level will allow employees to be more creative, contributing and sociable in a supportive environment.
- The final ability for emotionally intelligent leaders is the managing of emotions, which brings together the previous three abilities to be used in directing the leaders, as well as those of others, in displaying an effective emotional response (George, 2000 cited in Prati et al., 2003).

The leadership in a service environment should spend valuable time in brainstorming sessions in order to identify what is important to their customers. This will help employees to identify the needs and expectations of their customers (Jacob, 2015).

2.10. Conclusion

The literature review has provided a clear indication that emotional intelligence is fundamental to an individual and their conduct and reactions to specific situations in life. People's approaches influence their decision-making and how they interact with other individuals. Emotional intelligence is that factor which separates a positive

individual from a negative one as they are more focused and in control of their own emotions and are able to manage the emotions of others. These characteristics bode well for an individual who is employed in a service environment as the skills of emotional intelligence enhances their ability to effectively deal with customers. Emotional intelligence is significantly important in service organisations and for the leadership of these organisations as it creates a culture of connecting with a customer on an emotional level. Emotional intelligence in a leader is also vital because a leader that is in control of their emotions is able to influence a positive emotion management amongst employees. The next chapter will focus on the research methodology employed by the researcher in this study.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

This chapter describes the research methodology used in this research study. A research methodology is selected to outline the aims and objectives of the study and is based on theories endorsed in the literature review (Singh, 2008). The analysis of the data is also covered in this chapter.

This study was designed in a manner that enabled the researcher to explore the role of emotional intelligence in the customer service industry. The intention of a research study is to acquire an understanding of specific occurrences, processes and events (Van der Velde et al., 2004 as cited in Singh, 2008). A research study process, in seeking solutions, can clarify challenges and attach value to a broader understanding of these challenges (Singh, 2008)

3.2. Qualitative Research

Qualitative analysis requires a constant interaction between theory and analysis. The qualitative research process accumulates, interprets and analyses information by detecting the behaviour of individuals through their actions and dialogue (Anderson, 2006). A quantitative research study involves numbers and measurements of specific objectives, whilst a qualitative study is more descriptive and analyses concepts, meanings and definitions. The qualitative study reflects a more subjective tone than a quantitative study as it makes use of different data collection methods. Welman, Kruger and Mitchell (2005) stated that academically, qualitative research can be described more as an approach rather than a set of techniques or design, while Patton and Cochrain (2002) posited that qualitative research is characterised by its objectives, which are related to the understanding of certain features of social life. The methodology used commonly generates words as data for analysis, rather than numbers.

Qualitative research insinuates that human beings are societal and complex. Ghauri and Gronhaug (2002), cited in Maseko (2011), contended that qualitative research is constructivist and interpretivist, whereby a researcher makes use of their knowledge

and expertise to analyse the research data findings. Anderson (2006) stated that the qualitative research style is predominantly about interpreting research data. This type of research covers various interpretative techniques which aim to describe, decode or translate data. Therefore, the qualitative approach is fundamentally a descriptive form of research which is more open-ended and aimed at in-depth fact finding. The sample size used is generally smaller, with participants requested to provide feedback on specific questions related to the study. The researcher analyses responses to identify expressions, perceptions and thoughts that could aid the objectives of the research study, which will be used to determine the level of agreement that exists within the sample group (Anderson, 2006).

Patton and Cochrain (2002) further elaborated that the objective of the qualitative method is to gain an understanding of individuals' attitudes and experiences. These methods seek to provide a solution on the why, what or how of an occurrence, rather than the 'how many' or 'how much' which are more related to a quantitative method. If the perception of a particular issue is required to be understood, then a qualitative study would be most suitable. Anderson (2006) explained the aim of analysing qualitative data is to ascertain trends which reflect deviations over a period of time or to identify the link between specific variables. Poulton (2014) stated that the flexibility of a qualitative research study is the key advantage as it generally uses open-ended questions that are not limited to 'yes' or 'no' responses, permitting participants to freely express themselves and provide an in-depth view or perception of the subject matter. This enables the researcher to gather a greater understanding of each participant's responses.

A qualitative study provides an additional advantage in that the relationship that is created between the researcher and the participant is generally informal, creating a relaxed setting for the research participant to be more detailed in their responses (Poulton, 2014). The researcher is given an opportunity to gather more information by asking ensuing questions such as 'why' and 'how'. The more a researcher probes, the more clarity is provided for the researcher to gain greater detail in understanding a participant's perception or response on the research subject (Poulton, 2014). However, Hancock, Ockleford and Windridge (2007) explained that a cause of possible uncertainty is attributable to the various methods of qualitative research as not all qualitative research questions are similar or are due to different

qualitative researchers that come from various research traditions. This has an impact due to the different approaches implying different global views. Consequently, using a particular approach can influence how one publishes the outcomes of one's findings.

Nagata and Ming (2014), cited in Poulton (2014), decisively stated that qualitative research is a prominent choice as it enables the researcher to expand their knowledge on the research topic and the emergence of multiple truths that surface as the study develops. This method allows the researcher to precisely examine an individual's experience and views (Patton, 2014).

Moriarty (2011) stated that the qualitative method is a process that can be widely used in different research studies that are theoretically established in disciplines such as philosophy, psychology and sociology. Though there may exist substantial diversity in studies that can be viewed as qualitative, a set of core characteristics is possible to define. These include:

- seeking to provide a detailed understanding of the social world, their perspectives and experience;
- making use of smaller samples that are preferred purposively, with the prominent criteria as the basis;
- the method of data collection is interactive, makes provision for emerging matters to be explored and generally allows closer contact between the researcher and participants; and
- data is wide-ranging and comprehensive (Moriarty, 2011).

Patton and Cochran (2002) posited that in instances where not much is known on the research topic, it is advisable to begin with a qualitative study as it can assist in generating hypotheses which can then be further tested using quantitative methods.

According to Maseko (2011), qualitative research is the collection of data using the expertise and experience of people, as well as their feelings and needs. Qualitative research can be conducted in the form of surveys, questionnaires, interviews and focus groups. The qualitative methods that are applied to research questions such as what, how and why have been used in this study (Maseko, 2011).

The research problem in this study was more favourable to and found leverage in the qualitative research design. The application of qualitative research was identified as a genuine choice that allowed for a more extensive exploration of the role of emotional intelligence in the service environment, allowing the researcher to gather constructive responses, feedback and perceptions.

3.3. Data Collection

Hancock et al. (2007) explained that the methods for collecting qualitative research data include interviews, focus groups, observations, collecting documented material like photographs and letters, collecting narratives and open-ended questionnaires. The data collection method used for this study was semi-structured interviews. Interviews can in some instances be structured, making use of a pre-set order of questions which is presented to each interviewee. In other instances, interviews can be unstructured and take the form of a free-wheeling conversation.

In a qualitative study, researchers tend to make use of semi-structured interviews which cover a range of open-ended questions based on the topic of inquiry (Hancock et al., 2007). The open ended nature of these questions are linked to the topic being investigated and, in addition, offers the interviewer and the interviewee an opportunity to express their views on the related inquiry in more detail. If an interviewee displays signs of hesitance or uncertainty, the interviewer can then acknowledge these cues and prod the interviewee to elaborate further on the response provided for more details (Hancock et al., 2007). Chaleunvong (2009) stated that a data collection technique permits the researcher to methodically gather information on the objectives of the study, in the environment in which they occur. Data is required to be collected in a systematic manner as a haphazard approach will affect the effort to answer the research objectives in a convincing manner. Hox and Boeije (2005) indicated that when collecting data, social scientists use various collection strategies. Firstly, experiments play an important role as they involve the use of a research design that permits unplanned interference. Secondly, the use of structured questionnaires in surveys is an important data collection method as it involves the collection of data from a representative sample of the research population. Thirdly, in a qualitative research study, the data collection is sourced

generally from collecting large amounts of data on a smaller purposive sample, using techniques like interviews, focus groups or observations.

3.3.1. Primary Data Collection

Primary data is data that is composed for a specific research goal and uses processes that best fit the research problem. Hox and Boeije (2005) postulated four primary data collection strategies, namely:

a) The Experiment

In conducting an experiment, the researcher has full control over who the participants in the experiment are. The researcher is able to manipulate the independent variables from a planned design and monitors the effort that the independent variable has on the dependent variable. The core of an experiment is that the research design and process is created by the researcher (Hox and Boeije, 2005).

b) The Social Survey (Interview)

An established strategy for primary data collection is the interview survey, which makes use of a representative sample from a specific target population. Generally, there are a large number of questions put forward to the participants and responses are then categorised. The interview survey is usually conducted when data is required to be collected for a study on the attitudes, opinions, feelings or individual experiences of the population. Additionally, surveys are also used for collecting data on behavioural patterns (Hox and Boeije, 2005).

c) Qualitative Research Data

A qualitative researcher studies how people develop, understand themselves and make efforts to understand others too. As a result, the data collection methods are flexible and reflective of the social context. A frequent method of qualitative data collection is the use of an interview which gives the interviewee an adequate opportunity to express themselves freely on their experiences, views and opinions. This method is not conventionally standardised and provides an opportunity for adjustment during the study (Hox and Boeije, 2005).

d) Solicited and Spontaneous Data

In collecting primary data, a researcher makes use of a stimulus (i.e. an open questionnaire or a survey questionnaire) to elicit information from research participants. The explicit soliciting of information has an advantage as the researcher has the opportunity to design the data collection in a way that optimises the data that is provided on each research question. The disadvantage, however, is that participants are aware that they are participating in a disciplined study (Hox and Boeije, 2005). As a result, they may react to the topic of inquiry or the institution that is sponsoring the study, resulting in their behaviour not genuinely being reflected as true. Consequently, concerns may be raised as to whether the displayed behaviour would have occurred naturally had the information not been prompted as part of the research study. The possible reaction can be evaded by observing the activities or expressions without affecting the participants in any way (Hox and Boeije, 2005). Table 3.1. provides a synopsis of the different methods used in the collection of primary data for social research.

A vast majority of available secondary data comprises of quantitative data. Researchers who express an interest in studying a specific theoretical problem have the choice of creating their own data or to use any existing data that is related to the desired research interests. The advantage of collecting one's own data is the allowance to create an academic concept, data collection methodology and research design that is linked to the research questions, ensuring rationality and that the attempt to resolve a problem is made using valid information. On the contrary, the disadvantage of collecting one's own data is that it is time consuming and costly (Hox and Boeije, 2005).

Table 3.1: Different methods of Primary Data Collection

| | <i>Solicited</i> | <i>Spontaneous</i> |
|--------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Quantitative | Experiment Interview Survey Mail Survey Structured Diary Web Survey | (Passive) observation Monitoring Administrative records e.g. Statistical records and archives |
| Qualitative | Open Interview Focus Group Unstructured diary | (Participant) observation Existing records e.g. Images and news archives |

Source: Hox and Boeije (2005, 596)

3.3.2. Secondary Data Collection

On every instance that primary data is published, new data is positioned within the existing collection of social knowledge. As this material is made available to the general community for re-use, it then becomes known as secondary data (Hox and Boeije, 2005). This data can then be used for describing historical or present-day characteristics; comparative research; conducting a re-analysis by asking questions that were not addressed originally; advancement of the research design and methodology; and for learning and development interventions (Hox and Boeije, 2005).

In social research studies, it is possible that data which was previously collected by past researchers is used (Hox and Boeije, 2005). This data may be used for purposes other than research, such as official statistics or administrative records. As this data is then archived and made available for future use, primary data can then be used as secondary data. However, the use of secondary data does cause some problems for the researcher. The researcher must, firstly, discover useful data sources that will aid and add value to their research problem and secondly, this data must be easily retrievable (Hancock et al., 2007). Finally, it is important for secondary data to be evaluated on its ability to meet the required quality of the present research study (Hox and Boeije, 2005).

3.4. Ethics

Chaleunvong (2009) postulated that as the data collection techniques are developed, there needs to be consideration of whether the research process is likely to cause any harm, either physically or emotionally. Such harm can be caused by violating an individual's right to privacy; unauthorised monitoring of participants' behaviour patterns; making personal information public; or failing to respect the values, cultures or traditions of participants. Patton and Cochrain (2002) posited that a researcher has a responsibility to their participants, colleagues and those to whom their research findings will be presented.

A key starting point in addressing ethical concerns is the four principles of Beauchamp and Childress (1983), cited in Patton and Cochrain (2002), namely:

- Respecting the rights of individuals;
- Goodness – practicing good values;
- Non-maleficence – ensuring that no harm is caused; and
- Being just, impartial and unbiased.

Patton and Cochrain (2002) explained that careful consideration should be given to the environment in which the study is being conducted, the objectives of the study and if the topic of study is of a sensitive nature. There should be sufficient care and thought given to avoid any discomfort to the participant by talking about or discussing past experiences that were humiliating or painful. Such reminiscing could lead to anxiety or an increase thereof. Any distress felt during the interview could have a knock-on effect after the interview as well.

It is further recommended that certain key areas be addressed to eliminate any ethical issues. There are two issues of an ethical nature, namely consent and confidentiality, which needs to be considered prior to commencing with a research study (Patton and Cochrain, 2002). These include obtaining informed consent from participants before the interview commences; making certain that confidentiality is maintained; understanding the cultural diversity of participants to ensure that these cultural values are respected throughout the research process; and ensuring that where sensitive questions are put forward, personal information such as names and address are omitted (Chaleunvong, 2009). The researcher approached each

participant as a researcher and not as an employee of the organisation, thus preventing and eliminating any issue of biasness towards the research process. Each participant was interviewed in an office within their department.

Those who participate in the research study must be able to do so without being coerced into making any contribution. Consent from the participant must be granted of their own free will. If written consent may scare participants, then a verbal consent should suffice. In terms of confidentiality, if the identity of the participants is collected, then it should be protected earnestly. There should be no risk in breaching confidentiality by storing such sensitive information in unguarded files or computers (Patton and Cochrain, 2002).

The researcher submitted an application for ethical clearance which was approved by the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Appendix 4). Before commencing with data collection, the researcher sought permission from the SARS Group Executive for Branch Operations. Approval for this study was duly granted and the signed internal research forms and a gatekeeper's letter were received. The Informed Consent form (Appendix 1) was explained to the participants, detailing the research objectives and the research questions. Each participant in this study submitted a signed consent form (Appendix 2) prior to each interview being conducted.

3.5. Sampling

A sample can be described as a subset of a population, which represents the larger population (Poulton, 2014). The researcher is really not able to study the entire population and therefore a sample is required (Poulton, 2014).

In qualitative research, studying all incidents of a phenomenon is either too costly or impossible. Therefore, due to this limitation, the researcher is forced to select only a portion as a sample for their study. Oppong (2013) stated that in a broad sense, sampling entails the selection of participants who will provide relevant and key information to the research objectives. Mack et. al (2005), cited in Oppong (2013), explained that it is not always necessary to collect information from the entire target population (e.g. all residents in a Metropolitan City). If it is indeed possible to collect information from the entire Metropolitan City, then information from everyone is really not essential for the findings to be credible and valid. These circumstances dictate

that only a subset of the population which is defined as the 'sample' is then applied to the research study. In basic terms, the objectives of a specific research study and its target population is influenced by the decisions of 'who' and 'how' many individuals are selected for the research study. Goldman (2007) stated that there are various sampling methods made available for researchers to use. According to Naidoo (2011), a sampling method can be either probability or non-probability sampling. Denscombe (1998), cited in Goldman (2007), alluded that methods of probability sampling includes stratified, multi-stage, random and systematic sampling, whilst non-probability methods include convenience sampling and purposive sampling.

Oppong (2013) referred to purposive sampling as the most frequently used sampling method in qualitative research. This method of sampling allows the researcher to select participants who possess the knowledge and experience required to support the research objectives of the study. Poulton (2014) stated that purposive sampling is the most frequent qualitative sampling method as the research participants that are selected are the correct target that yields the achievement of the research objectives. Palys (2008) posited that when a researcher decides or intends engaging in a purposive sampling study, it indicates that the researcher sees the sampling as a strategic choice about who, why, where and how the research will be conducted. Purposive sampling is generally tantamount to qualitative research.

The researcher collected data through an interview process within the SARS Branch Operations Division, Durban. In this study, the researcher used the purposive sampling method to select participants. Participants in this study were explicitly selected on the basis that they would allow the researcher to focus on individuals who were most likely to contribute positively based on their experience and knowledge of the subject matter and enable the researcher to formulate an opinion. In conducting interviews, the purposive sampling method was used. The advantage of adopting this sampling method made provision for the researcher to apply their own judgment in selecting participants that had the expertise and knowledge required to be able to provide valuable information, which served as a catalyst in drawing conclusions for this study.

O'Reilly and Parker (2012) highlighted that sampling is a key anxiety for a researcher to control the success of their study and requires a thorough examination. A qualitative study varies from a quantitative study which simply counts number or opinions. In a qualitative study, the sampling enables the researcher to focus on the quality of information that is provided. The point at which a researcher is able to identify when their research objectives are sufficiently answered or when new information is attained is referred to as data saturation (Fusch and Ness, 2015). In this research study, the researcher achieved data saturation upon completing fifteen interviews and found that the data was applicable to the research objectives of this study. Any additional samples would have led to a repetition of information and no new knowledge would have been obtained.

Palys (2008, 698) suggested that in order to proceed or when considering a purposive sampling method, the researcher should “think of the situation, place or person which offers the biggest prospect for progressing with their research study and make a decision from there”.

3.6. Interviews

The researcher's process of collecting data for this study was through interviews, which were considered to be a beneficial way to gain an in-depth insight into the participants' feelings and perceptions on the topic under study. There were no cost implications and the interview process was simplified and manageable. The questions for the interview (Appendix 3) were semi-structured and open-ended, allowing the researcher to engage in additional discussions that were relevant to the study and which enabled the interviewer to discover any notions mentioned by the interviewee. Hancock et al. (2007) highlighted that the research questions used in the study are rather important as they assist in guiding the whole research process. It is further highlighted that a qualitative study commonly commences with a general area of inquiry (Hancock et al., 2007).

The questions for the interview were put forward in such a manner that it permitted interviewees to express, in their own words what they really understood about emotional intelligence and the key features linked to the role of emotional intelligence in the customer service industry. Hancock et al. (2007) elaborated that a question in

a qualitative study differs from a quantitative research hypothesis as it does not have the same prediction. However, in both qualitative and quantitative studies, there is an intimate link between the method and the research question. The method, once identified, aids in directing the research questions, while at the same time complementing the resources and experience of the researcher. As a qualitative study develops, it is recommended that the research questions be refined or reformulated. On the contrary, should a research question in a quantitative study be refined, then it requires a new study to commence (Hancock et al., 2007).

Moriarty (2011) stated that interviews are a common method for collecting data in a qualitative research study and is a conversant and agile way of drawing on the views, feelings, expertise and experiences of people. A considerable amount of data can be collected from an interview. However, a substantial amount of time may be utilised to set-up the interview and analyse the data to preference. A qualitative interview is frequently described as being semi-structured or in-depth, with the former being executed with the use of open-ended questions that the researcher believed to be relevant to the research topic. Donalek (2005), cited in Poulton (2014), commented that researchers who adopt a qualitative approach are usually of the view that interviews serve as a beneficial tool to gather an understanding of the participants and their points of view.

Interviews have been the most frequently used tool for data collection ever since qualitative research originated (Al Yateem, 2012 cited in Poulton, 2014). Fontana and Frey (2014), cited in Poulton (2014), indicated that interviews serve as a reliable technique for data collection as it provides an accurate record of the participants, actual responses, their perspectives and the authenticity is genuine as an audio recording cannot be edited. The researcher abstained from leading the participants into providing responses that were deemed appropriate for the research study, but rather allowed participants to freely express their thoughts, opinions and experiences on the research topic. It is essential for the researcher to thoroughly understand the research topic that is being investigated so that the correct questions can be posed to the participants in order to benefit the study. If a researcher is not fully aware of the research topic, it could prove quite a challenge during the course of the interview as there would be uncertainty on when to probe further to obtain a more thorough response (Sofaer, 2002 cited in Poulton, 2014).

The researcher was resolute in ensuring that participants were comfortable in speaking about their perceptions, experiences and feelings relative to the research topic, without participants feeling a sense of obligation to relate their accounts of the subject to general social standards and preferences. The researcher also found it essential to record all interviews digitally, in order to ensure that all data was captured accurately. However, Given (2004), cited in Poulton (2014), expressed the view that participants may become guarded due to the interview being recorded and may be reluctant to freely express themselves. Data was gathered through interviews with selected participants who the researcher viewed as being key to providing invaluable information that would enable the researcher to formulate an opinion (Hlathi, 2008).

The researcher adopted the purposive sampling method in order to undertake the interviews, which allowed the researcher to carefully approach specific individuals to partake in this study. Upon receiving consent, the researcher was able to interview the participants and gather information that served as a support in drawing conclusion for this study.

Prior to commencing with data collection, the researcher contacted the Branch Manager to assist in facilitating this process with the Operations Managers. All identified participants expressed their willingness to participate in this study. The researcher drew up an interview timetable and allotted dates and times for the interviews, which best suited the participants, without compromising their work commitments. Upon obtaining ethical clearance, the researcher commenced interviews from 9 to 17 May 2016. The researcher clarified with each participant prior to their interview that any information provided by themselves would only be used for purposes of this research study; confidentiality will be strictly maintained; and under no circumstances would information be shared with anyone. The supervisor and examiner were the only exceptions.

Each participant was made aware, prior to the interview being conducted, of the purpose of this study and that their responses are based on their perceptions of the research topic. The researcher additionally clarified with the participants that the responses provided were neither correct nor incorrect and requested the participants to provide consent to permit the researcher to record the interview for transcribing at

a later stage. The participants were also advised that they may withdraw their participation in this study without any repercussions. All participants in this study acknowledged the conditions and provided the researcher with their consent and willingness to participate in this study. The researcher preferred an interview approach for this study as it provided a better prospect to probe and gather an in-depth exploration of the participants' perceptions (Goldman, 2007). The researcher prepared an interview schedule with a list of open-ended questions to engage the interviewee in conversation on the study topic. Goldman (2007) stated that unlike a questionnaire or survey which has to be followed, an interview schedule is created to provide a formal, yet simple and comfortable discussion where the researcher is focused on listening and comprehending the responses from the participants.

The first interview was conducted on 9 May 2016. A total of fifteen interviews were conducted. These interviews provided the researcher with a substantial amount of data to undertake an analysis and confidently draw conclusions on the role of emotional intelligence in the customer service industry. Some of the participants have been in the service environment in excess of ten years and were able to provide a rich perspective to this study. All participants in this study were interviewed within the service department and the researcher ensured that they were comfortable. The researcher made eye contact, was engaged in listening attentively and maintained a good rapport with each participant. Though the interviews were being recorded, the researcher did write down some responses.

The researcher encountered no major difficulties in the interview process. All participants were punctual and expressed a keen interest in the study and the research topic. The researcher allowed participants to choose a date and time that was most convenient to the participant, thus eliminating any financial or operational implications for the participants and the operations of the branch office. In some instances, the participants did request the researcher to conduct the interview earlier than scheduled due to the research study being conducted in an off-peak period for the branch, enabling the participants to be more flexible.

3.7. Data Analysis

The procedure of collecting data is not the end state of a research inquiry. Patton (1990), cited in Mayet (2003), explained that a feature of a qualitative study is to create knowledge. The intention of this study was to create knowledge, specifically about the role of emotional intelligence in a customer service environment. In this study, the researcher used the thematic analysis method, which comprises of conducting data analysis with the aim of categorizing themes that are based on recurring thoughts, criticism and perceptions (Hayes, 2000 cited in Goldman, 2007). Mayet (2003) contended that a researcher seeks to identify themes and patterns in the data which arises from the opinions of the participants. Rubin and Rubin (1995), cited in Mayet (2003), views this as a more affluent perspective, rather than attempting to make use of existing literature to identify patterns and themes from the responses of the research participants. A literature review is expected to enable the researcher to identify patterns and common themes that emanate from the data (McClaren, 1998 cited in Mayet, 2003). The first step in analysing the data is to organise the data, which would include a strict and precise transcription of the recorded audio interview.

The next step in the process is an in-depth review of the data. The analysis of qualitative data is a creative process (Patton, 1990 cited in Mayet, 2003) which requires intellectual discipline, rigorous analysis and a substantial amount of hard work (Mayet, 2003). Due to a qualitative data analysis being extremely creative in nature, Mayet (2003) debated that a fixed approach may be difficult to recommend. As suggested by Goldman (2007), a deductive thematic analysis was conducted in this study. This method is contrary to a theory-driven approach in which the research design is to test a pre-existing theory that is created by specific examinable hypotheses.

The thematic analysis enabled the precise words, thoughts and experiences of the participants to emerge from each interview, which concurred with the views expressed by Goldman (2007) whereby a researcher should not have a pre-determined revelation of the study, but rather attempt to identify themes that surface from the data analysis. A study with pre-determined conclusions could restrict the potential outcome that would have emerged from the research process (Goldman,

2007). Therefore, the interview questions were formulated carefully to avoid any limitations on the responses that were provided. All the responses from the interviews were coded and analysed by the themes that emerged from the questions. To protect the anonymity of the participants, none of the participants' names were mentioned in the study.

The thematic analysis used in this study followed Braun and Clarke's (2013) seven stages of thematic analysis as cited in Craver (2014). Table 3.3 below lists these seven stages.

Table 3.3: Braun and Clarke's Seven Stages of Thematic Analysis

| Stage | Thematic Analysis | Description |
|-------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | Transcription | Transcribing audio data to written text |
| 2 | Reading and Familiarization | Become familiar with the content by reading and re-reading the data |
| 3 | Coding (Selective and Complete) | Coding only material of interest or the entire data-set |
| 4 | Searching for Themes | Identifying patterned responses within a dataset |
| 5 | Reviewing Themes | Determine if themes fit with coded data |
| 6 | Defining and Naming Themes | Identifying the uniqueness of each them |
| 7 | Writing the report | Writing the report by making use of compelling extracts that relate to the research question and literature |

Source: Braun and Clarke (2013) cited in Craver (2014, 2)

3.8. Confirmability and Credibility

Goldman (2007) mentioned that in order for a research study to ensure confirmability, it needs to be objectively confirmed by making the research study available for outside scrutiny. This can be done by subjecting the interview schedule, audio recording and the data collection to an audit process which enables a review

of the analysis and verification of the interpretations that are made are well explained in the data (Goldman, 2007). In ensuring credibility for this study, the researcher, prior to commencing with the research, was aware of the expectations and interests; reserved opinion on this study; and allowed the data that was gathered from the interview process to be expressed without restrictions. Goldman (2007) explained that in order for the research results to be credible, the participants' responses should make sense and can only be achieved if the researcher can maintain a distinction between the view of the participant and their own opinion. However, the researcher reserved any subjectivity and allowed the participants to share their views, knowledge and practices easily. The participant responses from each interview were analysed to determine credibility. The researcher can therefore be confident that the results of this research study reflect the experiences and perceptions of the research participants.

3.9. Conclusion

This chapter described the research methodology adopted in this research study. The researcher emphasised the method of analysis, the preference of conducting interviews, the sampling method and the data collection method. The interview approach was imperative in realising the perceptions of the interviewees on the research subject. A research methodology provides the researcher with direction and guidance on how to achieve the research objectives, as well as a process of collecting and analysing data that enables an efficient interpretation of the responses to the questions posed by the researcher. The research methodology guides the researcher to categorize themes to support the various stages of the research design. A presentation of the results and a discussion thereof is provided in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the role of emotional intelligence in the customer service industry. The researcher recognized that conducting interviews were a suitable method for the collection of data for this study. The preceding chapters delivered a synopsis of the study, the applicable literature was reviewed, past researcher views on this subject matter were acquired, the research methodology was expounded upon and the research design was summarised. This chapter focuses on the results and discussions based on thematic analysis of the research questions.

4.2. Demographic details of the Participants

Fifteen employees, including managers, were selected to participate in this study. The researcher employed a purposive sampling method and the participants were selected from the Durban Branch Operations Division of SARS as they were perceived to be adept to the customer service environment and would therefore provide the researcher with sufficient information relating to the role of emotional intelligence in the service environment.

The research purpose of exploring emotional intelligence impacts on both management and employees. All participants in this study were perceived to be experienced in the customer service industry and were significant in adding value to this study. Each participant was required to respond to all the research questions put to them and were also given the opportunity to contribute to other matters that were relevant to the research topic. Table 4.1 below provides details of all the participants.

Table 4.1: Details of Participants

| # | GENDER | EXPERIENCE | DESIGNATION | DIVISION |
|------|--------|-------------|----------------|-------------------|
| R 1 | Female | 10-20 years | Team Member | Branch Operations |
| R 2 | Female | 20+ years | Team Member | Branch Operations |
| R 3 | Male | 20+ years | Ops Manager | Branch Operations |
| R 4 | Female | 10-20 years | Ops Manager | Branch Operations |
| R 5 | Male | 10-20 years | Ops Manager | Branch Operations |
| R 6 | Female | 10-20 years | Team Member | Branch Operations |
| R 7 | Female | 10-20 years | Team Member | Branch Operations |
| R 8 | Female | 10-20 years | Ops Manager | Branch Operations |
| R 9 | Female | 20+ years | Ops Manager | Branch Operations |
| R 10 | Female | 10-20 years | Team Member | Branch Operations |
| R 11 | Female | 20+ years | Ops Manager | Branch Operations |
| R 12 | Female | 10-20 years | Ops Manager | Branch Operations |
| R 13 | Female | 10-20 years | Team Member | Branch Operations |
| R 14 | Female | 10-20 years | Team Member | Branch Operations |
| R 15 | Male | 10-20 years | Branch Manager | Branch Operations |

Figure 4.1. reflects that there was an 80% representation of female participants and 20% male participants, while Figure 4.2. provides a breakdown of the designation of the participants.

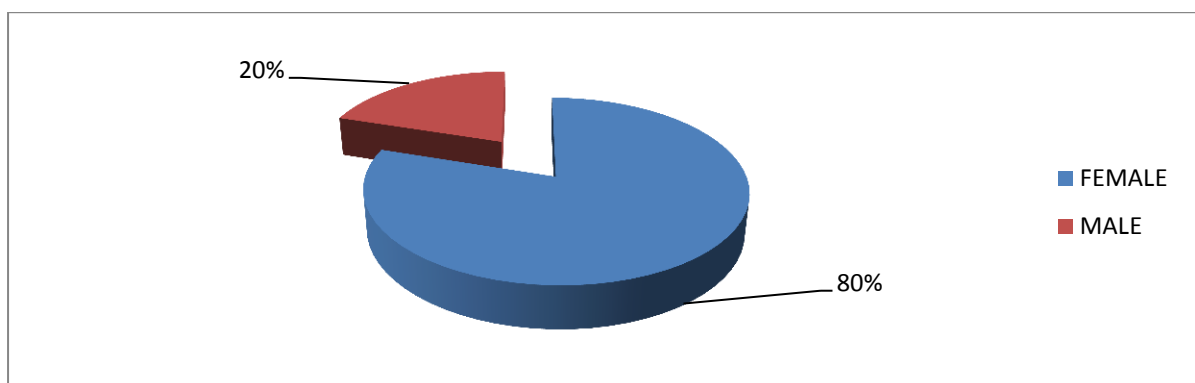


Figure 4.1: Gender of the research participants

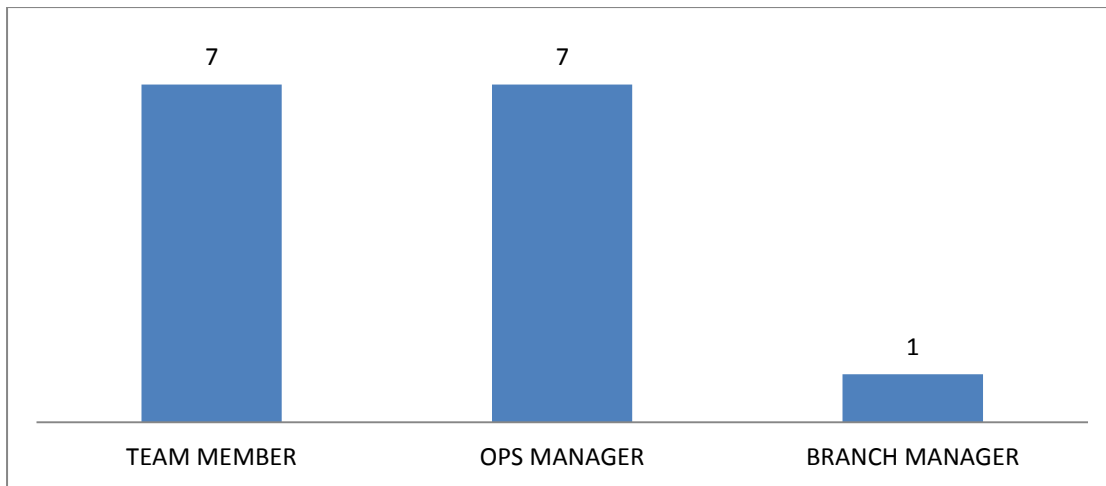


Figure 4.2: Designation of the research participants

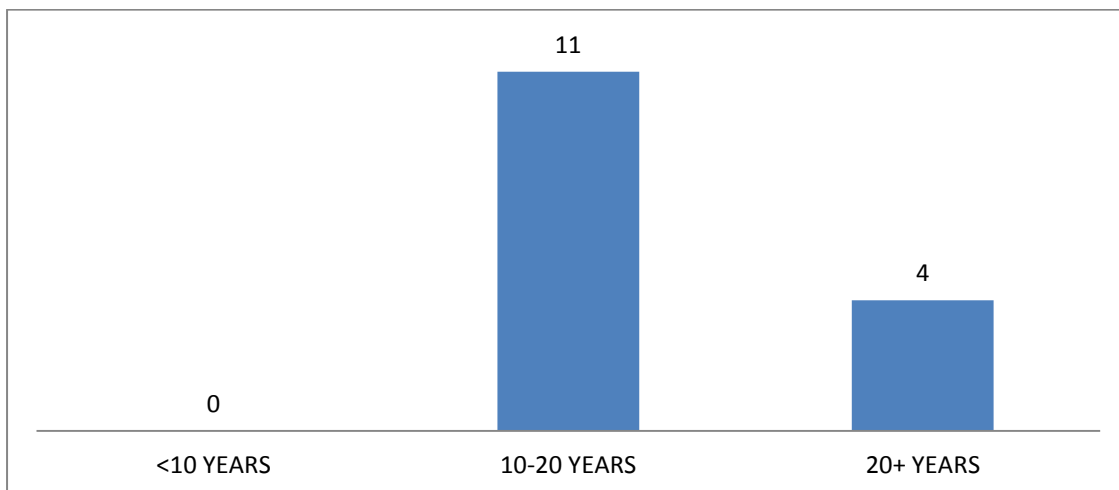


Figure 4.3: Work experience of participants within this industry

Figure 4.3. indicates that 73% of the participants in this study had 10-20 years' work experience within this industry, while the remaining 27% had in excess of 20 years' service. These representations provided the researcher with sufficient evidence that the research participants were experienced in the customer service environment and were likely to use this expertise to respond effectively to the research questions posed.

During the interviews, the researcher established that all the research participants have practiced in excess of ten years within this industry and are likely to understand the customer service environment much better and relate to the role that emotional

intelligence has within such an environment. There were no participants who had practiced within this industry for less than ten years. Even though they would have had some industry experience, the researcher assumed that such participants were unlikely to make a significant contribution to this study.

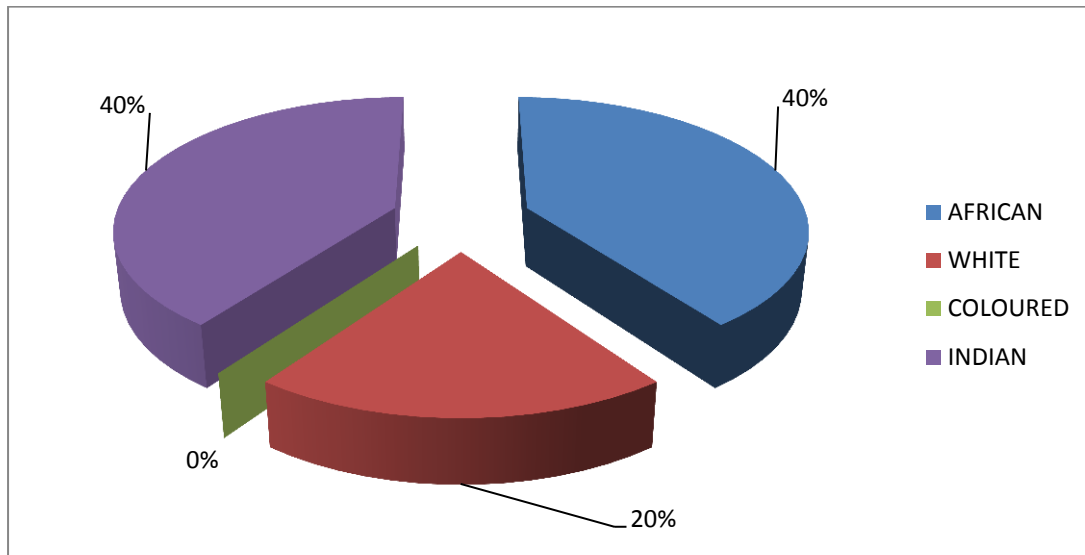


Figure 4.4: Race groups of participants

Figure 4.4. depicts that 40% of the research participants were African, an equal 40% were made up of Indian participants, while the remaining 20% were made up of White participants. There were no Coloured participants' currently in management. Although there were Coloured service employees, they were either unavailable for participation in this study or not identified by their Managers as being experienced enough to make a substantial contribution to this study.

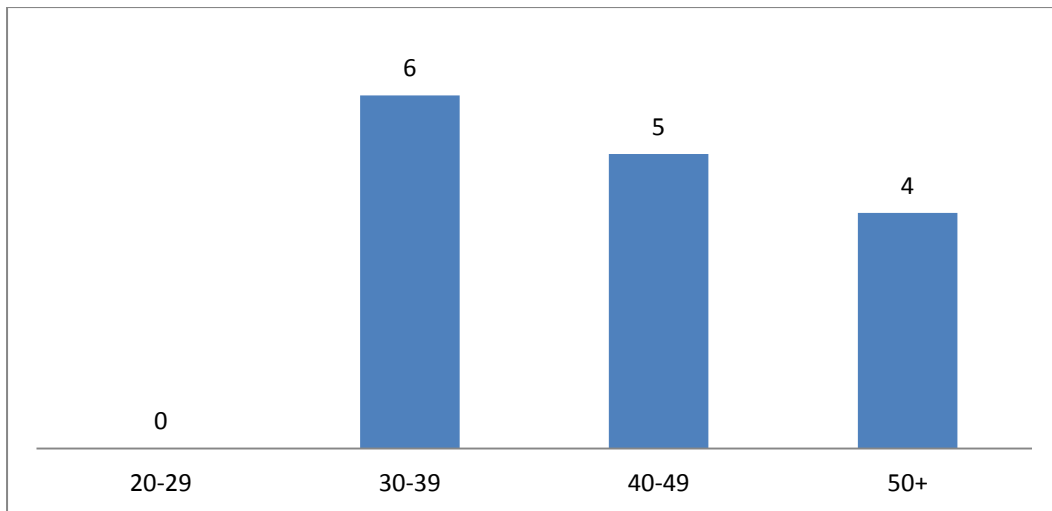


Figure 4.5: Age category of participants

Figure 4.5. specifies the age categories of the interviewed participants. All participants were in the age category 30 years old and above. There were no participants who were younger than 30 years old. This correlates well with Figure 4.3. which depicted the work experience of the participants. All participants are over 30 years of age and have a minimum of 10 years' experience within the service industry. Participants with such credentials clearly provide the researcher with the assurance that the participants are mature and fairly well experienced in their industry. This enabled the researcher to draw on these experiences from each participant and to gather richly elaborate responses that provide a clearer comprehension of the role of emotional intelligence in the customer service industry. Figure 4.6. illustrates that the majority of research participants were tertiary qualified and well educated, with 40% of participants in possession of a Degree. Another 40% indicated that a National Diploma was their highest level of education, while the remaining 20% were in possession of a Matric Certificate.

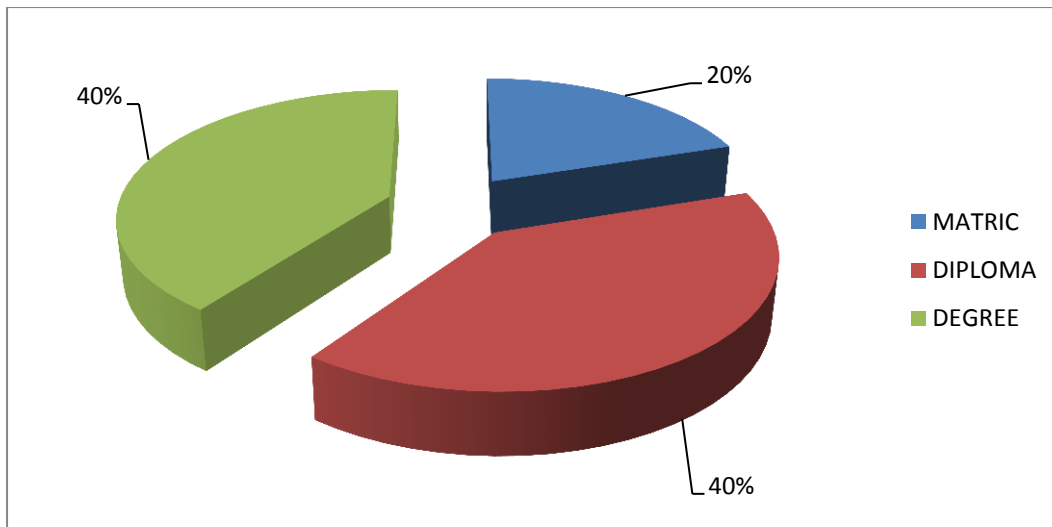


Figure 4.6: Level of Education of participants

4.3. Analysis of the Research Data

The researcher identified 10 themes.

Table 4.2: Themes

| | |
|----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Theme 1 | Employee understanding of Emotional Intelligence in a Service Environment |
| Theme 2 | Understanding the Components of Emotional Intelligence |
| Theme 3 | Customer Interaction |
| Theme 4 | Service Employee Conduct |
| Theme 5 | Emotional Intelligence Skills in Service Employee Effectiveness |
| Theme 6 | Emotional Intelligence in Service Delivery |
| Theme 7 | Customer emotions |
| Theme 8 | Development of Emotional Intelligence Skills |
| Theme 9 | Leading Service Teams |
| Theme 10 | Emotional Intelligence, Leadership and Customer service |

4.4. Employee understanding of Emotional Intelligence in a Service environment

It was noted that there was a significant understanding of emotional intelligence, its importance and the role it played in the service environment amongst the participants. The participants also highlighted varying views on emotional intelligence and how it impacts all stakeholders in a service environment. According to Goleman (1998), emotional intelligence requires having the ability of self-awareness, empathy, handling relationships, managing feelings and motivation.

“Emotional intelligence to me is the awareness of others around you and how your mood itself affects those, especially in my position where I manage the team, where it affects those around you” (R5)

Another respondent stated that:

“Emotional intelligence is about detecting people’s emotions and whether they are using it to get what they want from you” (R8)

It was found that some of the participants were quite well versed in the key characteristics of emotional intelligence and it was further established from their responses that they were exposed to formal training and development on emotional intelligence.

“That takes me back to all the sessions. It is about how you communicate, your self-understanding about yourself and about other people’s emotions and how you use it to communicate; your self-assessment and other people’s assessment and how you interact with it” (R11)

Goleman (1998) explained that in short, a lack in control of emotions makes smart people look stupid. One participant highlighted the difference between EQ and IQ. The participant stated:

“I think there is a difference between emotional intelligence, EQ and IQ. Emotional intelligence is what is inside you. You know how you perceive yourself on the outside, but what is within you and how you portray it. It’s the opposite of

intelligence. It is not how intelligent you are but how you control what is within you" (R3)

Lam and Kirby (2002) stated that the prospect of a high level of emotional intelligence could lead to success in a person's private and work life and has led to a rather positive aura being created amongst managers, students and the public at large. The general feeling from participants is that emotional intelligence has an effect on an individual's performance and can contribute to success in an individual's career and improving their general quality of life.

"Emotional intelligence to me is how to handle yourself every day. It is made of quite a few things because how you are emotionally and also how you treat other people. Because your body language, how you portray yourself, even how you dress, everything at the end of the days boils down to your emotional intelligence" (R9)

One respondent provided a rather confined view of how emotional intelligence impacts on their conduct in life.

"It is a way I deal with things, the way I perceive matters or the way I react to a situation, to a person I'm dealing with or how people react to me" (R10)

It was found that emotional intelligence played an important role in all of the participants' personal and work lives. This importance was reflected in the responses provided. There was a solid belief that emotional intelligence is important for them personally, the customer whom they are serving and for a customer service environment in general.

Employees acknowledged that emotional intelligence is critically required in the service arena. It needs to be properly implemented in order to be able to effectively understand and manage emotions. Khalili (2012) stated that past research has reflected that workplaces or organisations are emotional places. Furthermore, while Adeoye and Torubelli (2011) stated that amongst the factors that impact on the effectiveness of an organisation, the role of emotional intelligence is highly fundamental.

One participant reflected on the current service training methods at SARS and highlighted the significance of emotional intelligence within these training and development interventions.

“I think our staff have come a long way. Some of them have already done the training. We are doing the training in stages and some of them when they come back from the training you can see that there is a big difference, because they seem to know when to hold back themselves and they give the client a chance to finish” (R9).

Wadud (2012) commented that in the modern business value and belief system, organisations should be more focused on being customer-centric as it is considered to be the primary basis and the driving factor for many organisations achieving excellence. A participant mentioned:

“I think in a service environment, it is creating awareness first of all. Like I said before, very few people are aware of the simple things that you have to pay attention to when you deal with clients. Like I said, they are all different, body language, tone of voice, state of mind, emotions, all is different. Create that awareness and to communicate on a daily basis. To be aware that each and every client is different” (R5).

Singh (2008) stated that an individual who practices emotional intelligence consistently on a high level is more unlikely to have any problems with their behaviours and can evade being self-destructive and being negative. A high level of social skills is important for effective relationships. These skills allow team members to interact and eradicate any negative situations that can affect the achievements of goals in the workplace. The following view shared by a respondent highlighted the importance of providing good service that has a positive effect on the customers of SARS and how service is essentially a two-way process:

“No matter how small the query is, it is important that they leave with a very good experience because they will continue to come back and will always continue paying their taxes and they will tell everybody that they have been to SARS and had a fantastic experience. Word of mouth will help a lot” (R9).

The participant further explained that due to the environment that they operate in, it can be very difficult, so they need to be very wary of how to handle customers, put them at ease and make it a memorable experience for them so that they can come back to SARS and give SARS what it needs. Another respondent gave a heartfelt account of how applying emotional intelligence in the service encounter with the client can actually assist in a challenging situation.

“I would say that especially in SARS, if someone has to come in and explain to you that they have recently been unemployed, I cannot make the entire debt at one time, is there a possibility that SARS could look at my social aspect or personal aspect in life and then we can make a decision in terms of collection, by not killing the person and maybe taking their financial situation into consideration and at the same time even with the staff, I did mention earlier, it should be that your staff should be equipped, mentally as well as physically to assist with the query” (R12).

A participant mentioned:

“Working in the service environment, you get abused verbally and emotionally and what makes it worse is how you respond. If we can have training that assists staff in dealing with irate clients. The current ergonomics makes it easy for the client to physically abuse the employee. I think people need to understand how to treat each other’s emotions” (R4).

The participant’s response correlated with the research study of Ashkanasy and Daus (2002) which highlighted that emotional labour could be detrimental to the employee performing such a responsibility and this can affect them psychologically and physically. These employees are required to contain feelings of anger, frustration and resentment which are inappropriate to display in a service environment. In adhering to constantly monitoring one’s own emotions and expressing positive emotions, it is essential for these employees to be able to have a healthy expressive outlet, because if these feelings are continually repressed, then the outcome will be one of emotional exhaustion.

Zeidner, Matthews and Roberts (2004) stated that emotional intelligence influences a number of behaviours in a work environment. These include customer service, commitment and team-work. Similar views were provided by a participant who

highlighted how emotional intelligence can have a positive influence in a service environment.

“As customer service, we need to understand at times where the person is coming from, because we need to provide a service. If we don’t understand, we will end up not knowing exactly how to assist the client, and we need to make the client understand as well. We know at times clients would actually come in and have a problem with SARS or the assessment and then you will find that they are irate” (R15).

The participant further highlighted that as individuals are diverse from different backgrounds, at times people tend to bring into the workplace the problems that they have. When it comes to dealing with customers, those issues that one brings to the work-place would actually interfere. The way that one reacts or interacts with the customer will at times show that maybe there is a problem with the person that is assisting the customer, because of those issues. This has an effect on customer service both positively and negatively. As the service provider, one needs to understand the background of the customer, how to handle an irate customer and how to calm the person down in order for one to be able to give that person service.

“It is about how you deal with people’s emotions and how you understand them. We are diversified group of people, with different ways of dealing with things and then therefore as Branch Manager, I need to understand when it comes to my staff as to how to deal with each and every one of them, taking into consideration how they would feel and at what level their emotions are” (R15).

The participant’s response correlated with Gondal and Husain’s (2013) study which argued that emotional intelligence is as controversial a topic as organisational behaviour and psychology, but the factor that authenticates the concept of emotional intelligence is the role that it plays in employee performance and leadership. This is due to the employees’ performance levels impacting on the success of the organisation. Better performing employees are more likely to generate more positive outcomes, such as creating healthy working relationships, high quality of work and workplace commitment.

It was established that emotional intelligence played a significant role within the SARS Durban Branch Operations Division and its practice was evident and in existence. The common feedback was that emotional intelligence is essential and needs to be managed correctly. A few participants did highlight the need for on-going training in emotional intelligence skills. These views will be covered under the relevant theme.

4.5. Understanding the Components of Emotional Intelligence

The key components of emotional intelligence as established by Goleman (1998) are self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management. Mayer and Salovey (1990) identified four branches of emotional intelligence. These include managing emotions, understanding emotions, using emotions and perceiving emotions. The responses provided by the participants were in relation to their own personal lives and in the work environment. It was noted that there was a common perception from the participants as to what the key characteristics of emotional intelligence were. These were in some instances an indirect reference, whilst in others a direct corroboration with the Mayer and Salovey (1990) and Goleman (1998) models of emotional intelligence.

“It is how you deal with your anger, your stress, your ability to reason and what you say, how you interpret what needs to be said from the inside and how people would interpret what you are saying” (R3).

This statement made by the participant correlates with the views of Naseer et al. (2011) who mentioned that certain individuals are relatively competent in the emotional management process as they do not only recognise the emotions of others, but are quite capable of managing these emotions too. The essence of emotional intelligence was summarised by one participant as:

“To me basically it is awareness, its awareness, being in sync and having that level of understanding that what other people’s emotions are and what your emotion is and how the two can relate and communicate with one another” (R5).

Participants in this study provided different views and experiences on the components of emotional intelligence. One participant highlighted a significant starting point to being emotionally intelligent by explaining that it begins with you.

“Interaction with other people. Your own behaviour and attitude. Your reaction. Basically I think it is your attitude and how you react to situations” (R7).

Another participant explained:

“Self-assessment is one of it, and assessment of other people’s emotions and group assessment I would say, how you work in groups, how you implement it. Self-awareness. I know its self-management, awareness of others” (R11).

The response provided by this participant relates to the view of Kannaiah and Shanthi (2015) who stated that emotional intelligence enables employees to optimize their own performance and that of the organisation by promoting and maintaining better relations within the organisation and by allowing the employee to increase their self-awareness, tolerance, trust and integrity.

“Emotional intelligence, I think it includes empathy which helps with decision-making. It is like putting yourself in someone else’s shoes basically. It is about self-awareness, self-control. The way I see it from a leadership perspective in making decisions, if you have to issue out tasks to somebody, especially in a service environment, you would need to take someone’s needs into consideration. If somebody comes in all distraught and upset, you wouldn’t want that person to be facing clients” (R1).

The participant further explained that because one would be focusing on the next person’s needs, it will eventually assist one in making a decision or perhaps trying to assist someone.

The participant’s view corroborated Njoroge and Yazdanifard’s (2014) study that emotional intelligence is a connection between thoughts and feelings and comprises of a rational process that enables an individual to plan, inspire, motivate and achieve positive results through the use of these thoughts and feelings.

“The key components I would say is also how you communicate with others, how you also portray yourself, how you come forward to others and how you manage your emotional state of mind” (R9).

The view shared by this participant is linked to previous research conducted by Emmerling and Boyatzis (2012), cited in Njoroge and Yazdanifard (2014), who posited that emotional intelligence can best be described as a competency which allows an individual to acknowledge, realise and make use of their emotional status to be effective in their job performance.

It was established that although the participants could not identify the components of emotional intelligence precisely, their responses as explained in their own words and from their own comprehension of the components of emotional intelligence were very similar to the prescribed definitions of these components.

4.6. Customer Interaction

This section covered the core area of investigation for this study as it was an objective of this study to gain an in-depth view on the link between emotional intelligence and customer service. It was found that most of the participants agreed that emotional intelligence was important for customer service.

Basharat and Raja (2013) explained that emotional intelligence deals with emotions in humans. As humans are involved in daily interactions in the business world, most organisations are now aligning themselves to becoming more customer centric in order to achieve customer satisfaction. For an organisation to be successful, it is important to create an environment of quality service. Organisations can use the knowledge attained on customers through the use of emotional intelligence to enhance their ability to identify and understand the needs of their customers. The quality of service can be enhanced by implementing and enforcing the correct manners in employees, which can be further developed by empowering the employee through HR procedures and the style of management. Consequently, the concept of emotional intelligence can be applied to the key areas of an organisation that are responsible for ensuring that the quality of service is created and maintained throughout the organisation.

“It is related, because sometimes we come across difficult clients, so they might be shouting, maybe arrogant sometimes. You must be able to handle them in a professional manner” (R14).

This participant’s view is supported by research conducted by Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso (2004), cited in Giorgi, Mancuso and Fiz Perez (2014), which concluded that emotional intelligence is associated with customer relations.

An organisation that provides good customer service will be the preferred choice for customers to differentiate between competitors (Hassan, 2013). Radha and Prasad (2013) highlighted that there is a strong indication in past research that emotional intelligence influences the performance of the service rendered, which is a precursor of customer retention. These views were shared by a participant who said that:

“Yes definitely to me I would say yes. I would say if you see a difficult client and you can read their emotion, you can see that they are irate you obviously have to adjust your response accordingly to make sure that you get the desirable outcome” (R5).

The researcher probed participants on whether there is a link between emotional intelligence and customer service. One participant said:

“Yes. Because the staff is happy and engaged, then it talks to the service that they are going to give to the client” (R4).

Another participant stated:

“Because it is also how you deal with your customers. It is very important how you relate and how you can take care of your emotions, especially if you work with irate clients. It can really help you a lot” (R9).

The view of the participant correlated with Radha and Prasad (2013) who explained that service encounters play a key role in the perception of customers on how they view the quality of service. Therefore, it can be established that emotional intelligence is an important factor in influencing the quality of service. It is therefore essential for emotional intelligence to be incorporated into the employee-customer service encounter. Whilst another participant provided a more powerful response when they stated:

“Most definitely. Like I’m saying its reaction, it is your own reaction, it is how you react to another person; it is how that person reacts to you. Your attitude or behaviour would probably determine how they react towards you” (R7).

Emotional intelligence is a relationship between behaviours, thoughts and feelings. It is used to determine the degree to which an individual is able to regulate the emotional reactions of others, whilst at the same time controlling their own. Barlow and Maul (2000), cited in Suifan, Abdallah and Sweis (2015), argued that there could be a probable link between customer satisfaction and emotional intelligence. Pugh (2001) highlighted that the communal nature of a service encounter yields a contagious emotional effect wherein the customer is likely to notice the emotional reaction that is displayed by the employee during the service engagement. These views related to the response of one participant who stated:

“I think it is very important because when you are dealing with the frontline, taxpayer facing, you got to, very very importantly before you say something, you got to think what you are saying. So the taxpayer is seeing what your image is. How you say things is a reputational risk for the organisation. So I think it is very important that emotions are very well maintained in what you need to say to taxpayers or any customer” (R3).

A participant mentioned:

“Because you have to see how they respond to you, you have to take into consideration their emotions and you have to keep your emotion in check, because if you get an irate client, you have to understand why they are irate, to take that into consideration. So you have to be able to read other people’s emotions, understand why they got that emotion and not take it personal and know how to react to that emotion” (R11).

The participant’s response correlated with research by Njoroge and Yazdanifard (2014) who mentioned that emotionally intelligent individuals display more effective skills in customer and people-oriented professions. Another participant explained how emotional intelligence is useful in rendering good service. The participant stated:

“Because it plays a big part in the person providing the service. In most cases you will be dealing with different types of individuals and if you are intelligent enough to understand somebody else’s emotions, I think you provide a better service” (R13).

However, Agbor (2011) contended that it is generally rather difficult to satisfy everyone or to establish satisfaction amongst a group of individuals, as satisfaction varies from one individual to another. A participant shared a similar view and stated:

“I think it would be. When we get clients, sometimes we get irate clients, and it can bring out the worst in a person and not all of us can be in a customer service environment. Sometimes agents can get uptight about it and display their emotions. Although we of the view that the customer is always right, even though we know that they are not right, somehow we have to keep our emotions in check and make sure that we don’t bring our organisation into disrepute” (R8).

The responses provided by participants indicated that emotional intelligence was definitely a prerequisite for good customer service. By understanding a customer’s emotion and their situation, a service employee can alter their approach in order to provide a customised service transaction for each client. It was earlier indicated that a key objective of this study was to explore the role of emotional intelligence in the customer service industry. It has since been established by the researcher that emotional intelligence certainly plays a significant role within this industry.

4.7. Service Employee Conduct

This study found that majority of the participants shared the view that it is important for service employees to be emotionally intelligent. A participant stated:

“Yes it is important because I’m working with people so some people come with attitude. They can raise your emotions in a negative way, so I must be able to understand and try and control my emotions” (R1).

A service organisation is an environment that requires interpersonal engagement. For employees who are frequently dealing with customers, being emotionally intelligent is a significant ability that can affect how customers are attended to. The views of one participant agreed with this as follows:

“It is important because they are the face of SARS and they deal with the clients. They give the client first contact” (R6).

Whilst another participant stated:

“It is very important and that is how they will be able to offer service as excellently as you want it to be. You need to understand the next person and yes you have a role and you need to not deviate from your role, but you need to understand as well about how you need to deal with the person that is sitting in front of you that requires service. You need to be able to explain if you are not going to be able to assist, explain it correctly and clearly, so that the person can understand as well. They will need to be effective in that sense” (R15).

One participant mentioned:

“Yes, definitely. They must understand why the client is reacting like that, because we all tend to take it personally. This client is rude but it is not personal. It is just how they feel at the moment because of circumstances” (R11).

The view expressed by this participant correlated with a study by Badea and Pana (2010) that the emotional intelligence of service employees can affect the method used in providing a service to the customer. Those with high emotional intelligence are more effective in their interactions with customers.

Another participant shared an interesting assessment of the service interaction:

“Yes. That warmth, that greeting. To understand each other, to go down to that level. They don’t understand your business. You don’t know their business but they know it when you go them. It is very important that we level the playing fields, make the person feel comfortable, make them feel welcome and I think emotional intelligence is important. If you don’t have that kind of characteristics then you should not be serving customers” (R3).

The view provided by this participant correlated with the findings of Nikolaou and Tsaousis (2002) and Rafaeli and Sutton (1990), as cited in Kim (2010), who

mentioned that the affective commitment shown in the service encounter, combined with a positive display of emotions, is likely to yield more success at work.

One participant explained why it is important to provide good service and stated that:

“As an organisation, it is important because you can’t have a situation where you are running an organisational business and the main focus is customer service and you are failing at it. So emotional intelligence has to be your top priority in customer service” (R13).

The response of the participant corroborated Johnston’s (2004) study that explained that achieving service excellence is both visible and uncertain. Good encounters are more frequently remembered than bad ones. The service provided, either poor or excellent, has an emotional impact on customers, creating strong feelings about the organisation and its employees and improving the loyalty towards the organisation.

Another participant stated that:

“It is very important. You cannot fall apart and you must represent the company in a professional manner” (R14).

An individual who is emotionally intelligent is normally considered as witty as they are able to navigate quite easily when faced with a difficult encounter. A participant mentioned:

“Yes, you got to be sensitive, you have to understand, put yourself in that person’s shoes. If you are promoting good service, you going to have to train your staff on emotional intelligence and customer service, anything to make it work smoothly” (R7).

The view of the participant corroborated with a study by Badea and Pana (2010) which revealed that the most common of problems that an individual faces is as a result of a lack in communication or being unable to see the view from another person’s perspective.

Another participant also explained that:

“It is because it is not just about how you work with customers we work with a lot of stress in our environment and people’s emotions can get out of control and it is very important to know how to deal with your emotions because we need to work as a team. We need to work as an office, we need to work as a region, so when we all get together and integrate, we need to be mindful of how we express our emotions” (R9).

The participant further explained that body language is important because when you are assisting a customer and your body language and tone of voice is not correct, then you need to be trained correctly on how to deal properly with a customer so that they experience good customer service and leave satisfied. Another participant mentioned:

“Definitely, because each single client is different and if you as an agent deal with +/- 40-50 different clients a day, they are not all the same, so your response to them can’t be generic. You have to read every single client as they are at face value and then assess what is their emotional state so you can respond to them accordingly” (R5).

The view of the participant was similar to Wu and Shen (2013) who explained that service employees need to exhibit a degree of sincerity in their emotional display that would induce a positive effect on the customer. An employee that is not sincere will not be able to bring about a positive effect on the customer.

Another participant stated:

“Because we deal with the public and you deal with the public on a daily basis with different people who come with different needs and they don’t know how we work. So how you respond to them, they’ve got an expectation and if you can’t deliver on that expectation, its either you get abused, you work under pressure and don’t know what to expect. So you need to be groomed to be emotionally intelligent” (R14).

This response correlated with the research study of Giorgi, Mancuso and Fiz Perez (2014) which revealed that possessing the ability to recognise and understand emotions in dealing with others is essential in service related jobs. An employee who is proficient in emotional intelligence skills is more likely to finalise the needs of a customer effectively and efficiently, while at the same time creating a positive emotional climate and experience for the customer.

“Yes, definitely. If they are emotionally intelligent and when dealing with clients, if they can detect when the client is going to get angry and sometimes they do threaten staff. I suppose if they can detect these things, it is better for them to rather walk away and call for assistance” (R8).

The response of the participant corroborated the findings of Giorgi, Mancuso and Fiz Perez (2014) who established that emotional intelligence is particularly important in instances where employees are faced with challenging and problematic customers. Some studies have realised that emotional intelligence is more essential than general mental ability. It was found that emotional intelligence skills are essential in service employees. However, one participant highlighted that emotional intelligence skills are not only a requirement for employees in a service environment. The participant stated:

“If you look at it, it is not just service staff, it is everybody. They have to maintain some sort of emotional intelligence with any life situation. As much as it is required in the service centre, it is with anybody in their lives” (R10).

The participants who responded favourably revealed that a service employee who is emotionally intelligent is able to observe the behaviour and reactions of a customer and adjust their conduct towards the customer accordingly. It was also established that service employees need to be developed on emotional intelligence skills. Being competent in these skills would allow these employees to provide a more effective, meaningful and emotional service experience for the customer.

4.8. Emotional Intelligence Skills in Service Employee

The study sought to determine if emotional intelligence made service employees more effective in their interactions with clients. Most of the participants agreed that it did improve the effectiveness of an employee when dealing with a client. One participant said:

“Yes. I think they are much more successful. A successful industry is based very much on emotions and how you treat the customer” (R3).

Another participant mentioned:

“Yes, because they understand the people that they are dealing with and they can control whatever situation. They can go an extra mile to resolve whatever issue” (R1).

The view of this participant corroborated with a study by Bulik (2009) which explained that in direct person-related jobs, such as in a service environment, the primary objective is to modify and understand the client physically and psychologically. In doing so, the employee is better equipped in the service delivery process to the customer. These jobs require employees to be well equipped in dealing with emotions, as the ability to understand customer emotions and to control one's own emotions is rather important in direct-service related jobs.

One participant mentioned:

“With the right emotional intelligence skills I wouldn't say effectively, I would say you need to have a higher sense of emotional awareness to be able to be more effective in your client service” (R5)

The participant's response corroborated with a study by Bulik (2009) who mentioned that by having the required ability to effectively deal with emotions and emotional signals in a service environment will assist employees in managing stress and maintaining their own well-being. Another participant provided a varying view and suggested that the development of these skills in an employee is important. The participant stated:

“It is difficult to judge how well a person would, I mean with how much information they have or how well they react to emotional intelligence. Because I think it is personal development. How do you develop that skill in somebody? How do you promote it? It is not easy, like I'm saying it all goes back to attitude. It is personal. Although I'm sure you can teach it, it has to come from within” (R7).

Wu and Shen (2013) mentioned that there is an expectation of the employee to reflect an emotional display. This expectation in turn affects the satisfaction that a customer feels toward the service that is provided. A participant mentioned:

“Possibly. I think it is important that they understand the client, the client’s needs and where they are coming from. In the cases where we have repeated walk-ins, the client can get frustrated and irate. So I think it is good if they can understand where the client is coming from. It is difficult to say if it will make them more effective. It depends, sometimes if the client wants something that cannot be done, like bending the rules, so all the emotional intelligence is not going to help” (R8).

One participant mentioned that emotional intelligence will enable them to serve the customer better and take their needs into consideration. The participant further stated:

“I would say yes, because if the staff are aware of what to take cognisance of, like basically self-awareness, social awareness, you would find that the organisation that they represent will obviously have a good image” (R12).

Another participant that shared similar views to Wu and Shen (2013) explained that if you want to keep the customer happy always, you have got to understand their needs. The participant further stated:

“To understand what it means to them with the type of service you are providing to them. So there is a lot of emotion already going on with the understanding between the parties” (R14).

Importantly, a participant stated:

“The minute the organisation has people with high emotional intelligence skills, it is easier for them to understand the client. Hence the service that is given to the client is on par” (R6).

The participant’s view correlated with the findings of Giorgi, Mancuso and Fiz Perez (2014) which revealed that employment types in the service industry contain heavy emotional intelligence implications as they are linked to job performance. This output measures the service employee’s ability to fully understand the client’s needs and to be competent enough to deal with any emotional issues that arise.

Another participant explained that it is definitely a complex task and individuals need to be skilled to deal with these encounters as they will need to juggle and balance,

upskill, and at the same time deal with the taxpayer. An organisation with the correct emotional intelligence skills will definitely deliver effectively. The participant stated:

“There is a challenge there because you need to juggle the two: the upskilling of the employee to understand how to deal with clients, how to understand emotions of the clients and you also need to deal with the complaints, the client not being happy with how the employee has dealt with his or her issue because the employee lacks emotional intelligence” (R15).

It was noted that all participants revealed that emotional intelligence is a key determinant for employee effectiveness in a service encounter. It was also established that service employees will need to be developed thoroughly on these skills. Such skills will enable the employee to deal with diverse individuals and encounters, whilst achieving the core objective of being effective in the service encounter.

4.9. Emotional Intelligence in Service Delivery

It was noted that most of the participants viewed emotional intelligence as an essential factor in service delivery. Joseph and Wawire (2015) explained that emotions play a key role in mood disorders as these could affect the performance and service delivery of the employee through their inability to manage such emotions. One participant mentioned:

“It is very essential. It is what each and every staff member should be able to master because when the client comes in and you don’t know how to deal with that client, that can go a long way, can tarnish the reputation of the company or the organisation. So you need to make sure that each and every staff member understands and is actually able to master and communicate effectively with the client” (R15).

The response of the participant correlated with a study by Mok, Tsarenko and Gabbot (2008) which highlighted that there is a growing interest in the role of emotions and its impact on customer service delivery.

“Yes. In our environment it is definitely. Because it is also how you portray yourself and it is all about how you relate to the client at the end of the day. It is crucial, because if you have a happy client then it is fine, but if a person leaves and they are not very happy and you can see it, then we’ve done something wrong, we didn’t do something right for the day” (R9).

The view of the participant correlated with the research study of Joseph and Wawire (2015) which highlighted that emotional intelligence positively enhances relations in service delivery as employees can apply emotional intelligence skills when dealing with irate customers and this could change the customer’s view towards the organisation. As a result, organisations that have employees who are highly skilled in emotional intelligence are more able to effectively deliver services to their customers, improve productivity and their confidence to interact with customers. A participant mentioned:

“I would say that one needs to be of a sound mind in order to ensure that they are able to deal with a client” (R16).

The view of the participant correlated with Kasapi and Mihiotis (2014) who highlighted that emotional intelligence is primarily significant in a service environment and specifically where there is regular employee engagement with customers.

Another participant mentioned:

“When you are dealing with people at any time and if you are providing a service to them, you need to know what you are doing. A person who is ignorant will basically not give you a good service, but somebody who has basically taken the time to educate themselves and get themselves informed about their products, they are able to perform better. So then they perform a better service delivery” (R12).

The response of the participant corroborated the research study conducted by Suifan, Abdallah and Sweis (2015) who explained that customer service behaviour encompasses an employee’s inclination to assist a customer by fully understanding their needs and being able to provide the correct information that is required by the customer.

However, one participant was not in agreement. The participant explained:

“No I don’t think so. Because there is only one way that we do stuff, we follow Policy and Procedure. It is the right way. Emotional Intelligence shouldn’t dictate that we change the way we work, because we should follow policy and procedure” (R8).

It was established that emotional intelligence is a skill that can support a fluent and efficient service delivery process. It was further noted that emotional intelligence assists employees in understanding the needs of a client by being in the correct frame of mind to deal with a client’s query and to improve the relationship with the customer during this process.

4.10. Customer emotions

This study found that most of the participants were able to detect the emotions of the customer during the course of the service encounter. The majority of participants indicated that they looked for verbal and non-verbal signals during the course of the service engagement. One participant stated:

“When you talking with somebody, for example we get people here who receive an sms stating that they owe this much, I don’t know how I’m owing this much, sometimes they cry. They say I don’t even earn that money, where am I going to get that money, so you feel for them. You get so emotional as well because you imagine yourself in their shoes” (R1).

The view expressed by this participant correlated with Mattila and Enz’s (2002) study which suggested that the visible emotion of the customer during the service encounter will likely be similar to how the customer will rate the service delivery. It is therefore essential for the front-line service agents to be developed to adjust their engagement styles in line with the emotional responses provided by each individual customer. The findings of this study correlated with the views of a few participants.

Another participant explained the need to be more observant and identify how the client is reacting to the service engagement. The participant said:

“Yes, with their body language, their voice projection and the manner in which they speak, their language. So you will be able to see if this guy is happy with you, satisfied or angry. So you are able to see this just by these things” (R2).

A participant explained how they would engage with a customer and change their approach according to the situation. The participant mentioned:

“Well, I listen to what they are telling me and I will see what they want and analyse from there. The first thing is hello, take his ID and say how can we help you. If he is starting to shout at you, you going to go “oh gosh” there’s something wrong, so you also need to tone down and listen to him. Don’t ignore him” (R10).

The response of a participant highlighted the need to observe the course of the service engagement. The participant explained that the body language, the pitch of the voice and the facial expression would actually show all the signs that this conversation is moving towards the right direction. One needs to be mindful of all those things and analyse how the person reacts to whatever is being advised. The participant stated:

“As you are engaging with the customer, the discussion would actually show as to whether it is going towards the right direction or there will be conflict along the way. So how do you deal with conflict that is imminent? You need to make sure that it doesn’t even get there. You need to make sure that you resolve that completely before it presents itself. So you need to keep on being engaged- the two of you- when you are dealing with regards to a certain query or certain situation” (R15).

The emotions of a customer play a pivotal role in their satisfaction with the product and services offered by an organisation. Wadud (2012) explained that a customer’s mood at the time of the service interaction can influence the outcome of their satisfaction level with the service received. A positive mood can generally influence a positive outcome, while a bad mood can have a negative reaction towards the service encounter. A participant stated:

“You can pick it up when someone does not want to be disturbed, but you still go to greet them and carry on with what you need to do. But you can see the facial expression of someone will tell you whether you need to engage more with a person that you can really form a communication or you just need to back off and do what you need to. The posture of someone, you can pick it up by the way they look at you, the smile. You really know that they are happy with you and that you are performing a function for them and helping them” (R3).

The view of this participant corroborated with research conducted by Ziethaml et al. (2006), as cited in Wadud (2012), which indicated that, generally, the positive emotions overshadow the negative ones as specific emotional reactions could probably have an impact on influencing how satisfied the customer is with the service.

The response of another participant indicated that observing the client and allowing them to explain themselves fully would result in a more positive reaction. A participant mentioned that it is important to communicate with the customer in a correct way so that they understand you and will be able to leave satisfied. The participant further stated:

“You can see when a client is very irate and you need to let him speak first. You need to first calm him. Remember we work with tax every day and people come into our branch. They don’t really know much about tax so you need to let him vent. If you don’t let him vent, he will carry on harping on the same problem” (R9).

Another participant explained the need to communicate effectively with the client. This will aid the service employee to better understand the query. The participant mentioned:

“The more you start talking to an individual and the more you probe about the tax matters, by listening to their explanation and taking into consideration the message that they are trying to put forward” (R12).

The response shared by a participant gave a personal account of their experience in assessing the emotions of a customer to better understand their problem. The participant explained that in some instances, a customer may tend to point their finger at a service employee. An example is a customer who was pointing because their money was deducted from their salary and this left them distraught. There was a real intensity of customer emotions reflected in that service encounter. The participant further stated:

“Because they will indicate that the reason why they are upset right now is because of what? Maybe they haven’t been dealt with properly by someone else in the past and you know where these emotions are coming from” (R14).

Agbor (2011) indicated that the happiness expressed by a customer, which is a signal of satisfaction, is vital and essential for all organisations. A participant explained the need to recognise certain signals that are given by the customer. Uit was stated:

“Look at body language, look at your normal facial expressions, tone of voice and the way the client or customer will respond or react to your statements or what you are relaying to them” (R5).

Another participant explained that the organisation has provided service employees with soft skills training, which developed the employees to gain an understanding of how to manage the interaction with the customer. The participant further explained:

“Because a person’s emotion can change also depending on your reaction as the person providing the service, so with the skill that I have been equipped with, it allows me to determine what stage the individual is at and with that I can control the emotion” (R13).

However, one participant explained the challenge of decoding these emotional signals between different customers. The participant mentioned:

“I guess when you are working with it all the time, you get used to it. You have to be open-minded, understanding and patient. It is difficult to analyse as each person will react differently” (R7).

The study found that most of the participants recognised the need to analyse the emotional status of the customer as the interaction progresses. Some participants indicated that the organisation has developed service employees with the skills to detect these emotional states of customers. The researcher also established that those participants who engaged more in discussions with emotional customers were better able to change their approach to accommodate the emotions expressed by the customer and resolve their queries effectively.

4.11. Development of Emotional Intelligence Skills

The researcher noted that the participants firmly believe that emotional intelligence must be developed not just in the service environment but throughout the

organisation. A frequent question that arises is whether an individual is born with emotional intelligence or whether it is a competency that can be developed in an individual. The reality is that some individuals will possess emotional intelligence as a natural ability more than others but as a skill, emotional intelligence can be developed (Serrat, 2009). A participant mentioned:

“It is important. In the past we have been sent for customer service training so that we can be able to handle and assist the client in that manner” (R14).

However, for this to be achieved, individuals need to be motivated, practice what they are taught and strengthen these skills, which will serve as development to becoming emotionally intelligent. One participant stated:

“Because we all bring how we feel. We say we don’t bring our emotions to work, but we do. It affects you if you have lost a loved one, it is going to affect you. If you are going through a divorce or something difficult or anything, it does affect you. Even if you don’t want it to affect you, it does affect how you feel. You have to be understanding. You have to know how to interact” (R11).

Another participant mentioned:

“Most definitely. It is something we take for granted as we know what is happening, but until you really pay attention to it and you see how emotions can really affect the outcome of any situation, then you understand how important it is that you kind of harvest an emotional awareness in your organisation” (R5).

A participant stated:

“If they are going to invest in that then maybe they are going to get better employees and they will be able to achieve their goals better. If they want their company to succeed they have to make sure that the people that are working for them are capable of doing that job and doing it to the best of their ability. So development of emotional intelligence would help” (R2).

The view of the participant corroborated with research conducted by Radha and Prasad (2013), which revealed that the implementation and enforcement of emotional intelligence skills results in a better indication of customer loyalty and

satisfaction for both customers and employees in the service environment and are therefore considered rather essential amongst service providers.

The views of a few participants revealed that it is essential for emotional intelligence to be developed. A participant stated:

“Because given the nature of our work, the company has got to help us develop emotional intelligence because you deal with people coming from different walks of life, so we must have a high level of emotional intelligence in order to work in the service environment” (R6).

One participant stated:

“If you are willing to provide a service, if your main core of the business is providing a service, firstly as an organisation you always want it to be the best service, so emotional intelligence is one of the key points because you got to understand your client firstly to be able to provide a better service” (R13).

A participant explained the significance of developing emotional intelligence. The participant mentioned:

“It is very important. Because that is how you win clients and how you lose clients. It is very important for management in any other field or any other industry to actually practice emotional intelligence” (R15).

A participant stated:

“It is very important because in customer service you cannot just service someone without showing emotion. In customer service you always want the customer to come back. In any service, that smile, that warmth that you show. I think it is very important that to drive a successful customer service organisation, emotional intelligence is very important” (R3).

The view expressed by the participant correlated with the findings of Jorfi, bin Yacob and Shah (2011) that explained that in order for organisations to be successful, they will need to develop emotional intelligence within their workforce. These skills will enable the organisation to be more effective and improve the interpersonal skills of the employees. Another participant explained that the

challenges for service employee in a service environment stem from working under pressure in organisations that are target driven. Employees are often disengaged because of the way that they are treated and being driven towards achieving these goals. The participant stated:

“We need to put programs in place that will speak to find achieving the target, but at the same time accommodating and looking at the employee as an individual, not just as a tool to get to where you want to go” (R4).

One participant explained the risk factor and how emotional intelligence can mitigate any harm to the organisation. The participant mentioned:

“Absolutely. Especially in the line of work that we do. Organisational risk is very important to us and we have to ensure that the organisation that we work for maintains the reputation that it has and if we don’t control our emotions, we can do or say things that we may regret and it can bring us into disrepute” (R8).

The development of emotional intelligence in an organisation can assist an employee in diverse encounters. A participant explained that the organisation deals with diverse walk-ins, different race groups, different cultures and service employees need to be cognisance of the fact that you cannot point a finger at somebody, which can be viewed as offensive in some cultures. The participant further stated:

“You need to take into consideration that interacting with an individual, you need to have some kind of a rapport, you cannot just come into work and just rant and rave and then do the same thing to the people that are walking in, because we are the face of SARS. So you need to uphold an image and at the same time you need to also understand the predicament that the client is in” (R12).

It was noted that most of the participants were in agreement that emotional intelligence must be developed and that service employees should be equipped to deal with emotional situations. A participant stated:

“I think it is the most important factor, especially if you work in our environment because every customer that you get is different and if you are not emotionally ready for it, it is really going to set you back a lot. So I would say yes, it is very important” (R9).

It was further established that a lack in developing emotional intelligence may impact on the reputation of the organisation.

4.12. Leading Service Teams

All participants agreed that the role of emotional intelligence in a service environment is essential. A great leader enables individuals to enhance their performance levels. Brown (2014) explained that the leadership role requires guiding individuals or a group towards achieving specific goals. A key aspect of the leader would be to acknowledge the employee's emotions while at the same time controlling their own emotions. Kulkarni (2014) explained that while emotional intelligence can promote the way an individual conducts themselves in life and in the way they form and manage relationships, a key area where emotional intelligence can play a significant role is that of leadership effectiveness.

“Most definitely, because in a service environment you are not only dealing with your staff but you are also dealing with the general public and as a leader you basically need to practice what you preach. So if you want your staff to behave in a certain way, then you need to behave in a certain way and likewise if you would like. It is basically mutual respect and you want the client to give you that rapport or basically make that rapport with you. You need to behave in that manner” (R12).

Goleman (1998) highlighted that the best of leaders are always visible to their staff and are constantly engaging in conversation with staff on family and personal matters. This approach creates an atmosphere of openness, allowing for easy communication to take place, which ultimately makes employees feel more comfortable in keeping their managers and superiors well informed.

“You have to be able to, because you are working with ten other people at least, so it's the diversity, different people, different backgrounds, so you have to try and treat them all with respect” (R11).

The participant's view correlated with a study by Kannaiah and Shanthi (2015) which found that good leaders make continuous efforts to improve leadership skills. Leaders that display a positive attitude and are self-motivated can inspire others to follow their path to success (Kasapi and Mihiotis, 2014).

“I think emotional intelligence is a key component of a successful leader. You can have all the degrees and qualifications in the world, you could be the most intelligent person, but if you cannot connect with the people or the person you are supposed to, then you are failing as a leader. You have to, it is imperative that emotion plays more part than your qualifications. For me to be successful, I need to connect with you on a level far beyond my qualifications” (R3).

The view of this participant correlated with a study conducted by Batool (2013) which revealed that those leaders who have outperformed their colleagues not only show strong technical abilities but also have a comprehensively high level of emotional intelligence abilities.

“Because as much as you are saying the employee deals with the public, but as a manager you are dealing with different people from different backgrounds and they come with different stories now and then, so you need to be on a level where you can relate with each and every person and understand their emotions. Then you will know how you can work with them to achieve whatever you want them to achieve” (R4).

The participant's view was similar to that of Mumford, Zaccaro, Harding, Jacobs and Fleishman (2000), as cited in Khalili (2012), which have highlighted that in order to be effective as a leader, it is important that such a leader is able to resolve emotional challenges that may arise in the workplace.

“It is essential in all people. A leader should definitely have emotional intelligence because it is going to pave the way for being a good leader or a bad leader” (R10).

The participant's view correlated with findings from Kannaiah and Shanthi's (2015) study which indicated that strong emotional intelligence skills are key drivers to developing and giving rise to strategic leaders within an organisation. Another participant explained the importance of a leader being emotionally intelligent and the requirement to understand your team first and foremost. It is essential to understand every member on the team and what makes them most effective. The participant further stated:

“When they walk in the door in the morning you must know this person is not here today and no matter how we say it, if that person is not on board, they are not going to do the full potential for the day. So it is best that you try and you need to always go during the day and see your staff and see how they are coping throughout the day. To me, the main factor is that if you want to be a good manager you must have those skills to see where your people are lacking” (R9).

The participant’s response correlated with the findings of a study conducted by Kulkarni (2014) which highlighted that though past research has not specifically measured how the emotions of a leader affect their efficiency, a leader’s feelings is central to their role in leadership. The extent to which a leader will express positive emotions is reliant on their ability to connect with the behaviours of their employees. Kulkarni (2014) further alluded that emotions are a central and important part of the leadership process. It was requested from participants to share whether they felt that their superior should have a high level of emotional intelligence. One participant stated:

“As my superior, I think they should because whenever I have a problem I need to look up to that person. I need that person to know how to handle me. So yes, they should be qualified” (R2)

This view correlates with the findings of Kasapi and Mihiotis (2014) who stated that emotional intelligence assists a leader in being respectful unto and to recognise the feelings of their employees, allowing them the opportunity to generate and share ideas, but more importantly it permits the leader to identify an individual as a person with unique abilities who must be managed accordingly.

“Personally I feel that you need to lead by example. A superior or leader needs to lead by example. Is it a cascading thing? I think every level needs to have its own kind of emotions. The higher you are, I believe the more emotions you need to portray” (R3)

The participant’s view correlated with Chipumuro (2015) who mentioned that successful leaders build trust with employees rather efficiently; listen attentively to their employees; are effective in handling conflict; and as is the custom with all good

leaders, are that they are able to influence employees positively. A leader plays a significant role and must ensure that employees are motivated and encouraged to perform their job functions effectively. It is essential for a leader to portray good characteristics amongst employees as this will lead to the building of trust in the workplace. This practice will create an environment of transparency and openness between the leader and employee. Rivero (2014) mentioned that a leader should have good social skills, which would ensure effective communication with employees. Furthermore, a high level of emotional intelligence in a leader will lead to increased trustworthiness in an organisation. As modern organisations increase their strengths to become more ambitious, their human approach to management decreases, resulting in the underachievement of targets that are set.

A participant in a management role mentioned:

“It is essential. You see with me as a leader, I have around 100 staff members and I need to understand all of them. It is a big group and I need to understand each and every one of them. If I communicate with them, I need to make sure that they are buying into what is being discussed and if I put it anyhow, then that’s when there will be a problem because that is when they will start not being in the right minds when it comes to providing the service that we are to provide to our clients” (R15).

The participant’s view corroborated the findings of Kulkarni (2014) which explained that apart from leaders developing captivating visions, they need to create an effective communication mechanism that enables this vision to be a shared and collective one in their organisation. A leader will need to understand how their employees feel and will need to rely on their understanding of emotions to understand why their employees feel in a certain way. This competency in a leader will influence the emotions of the employee in a positive manner that will make certain that the employee becomes supportive of the leader’s vision.

“Because my superior deals with 76 people and those people have got different emotions, so he has to be up there as far as emotional intelligence is concerned” (R6).

The response of this participant was similar to research by Brown (2014), which highlighted that leadership is quite complex and that a number of factors can

influence the performance of a leader, which will in turn have an effect on the overall performance of the organisation.

It was established that emotional intelligence plays a key role in leadership. Participants indicated that an emotionally intelligent leader is able to guide employees and make them more effective.

4.13. Emotional Intelligence, Leadership and Customer service

The majority of participants agreed that leadership in the customer service industry needs to be emotionally intelligent.

“They will provide training for their employees, make sure that the emotional intelligence of their employees is on the right track, so that they will understand the organisation and everything that is happening and what to expect” (R1).

The participant’s view corroborated the findings of Kreitz (2009) which stated that research has discovered that leadership emotional intelligence is key to effective team performance because a leader that reflects positive emotional intelligence traits is more likely to effectively engage their followers to be innovative and resolve problems.

“Because a leader needs to impart, you need to teach your subordinates, you need to show that the service that you are providing is essential. The customer must leave with a memorable experience and the only way you can do it is by the leader imparting that we need to connect and make the customer feel like they are the only one around” (R3).

The response of this participant correlated with the views of Basharat and Raja (2013) who stated that it is important for managers in an organisation to maintain emotional intelligence as this will enable a greater accomplishment of self-understanding, improve moral and create healthy working relationships. It is therefore critical for leaders in an organisation to acknowledge the importance of enforcing the correct emotionally intelligent behaviour in the workplace. Organisations operating in a service environment can enhance their effectiveness through well-developed emotional intelligence skills, resulting in a better quality of

service to the customer. Companies using emotional intelligence in the workplace are able to offer better service to their customers, which will promote the overall image of the company.

“If you are a leader and you are emotionally aware of those around you, what their state of mind is and how they emotionally react to situations, you are better to know how to place them and how to manage them going forward” (R5).

The participant’s response is similar to the views of Khalili (2012) who stated that an essential link to emotional intelligence is that of leadership. Furthermore, Rosete and Ciarrochi (2005), cited in Gondal and Husain (2013), explained that managers who can understand their employees’ emotions and their own are more likely to achieve the goals of the organisation.

“Like I said, lead by example. So if you are showing that you are taking people’s needs into consideration, you are setting a tone and being a leader, you have followers and your followers are going to see, this is how our leader is behaving and we should also adopt it because he has achieved success in that” (R12).

The views of this participant related to Goleman’s (1998) contention that leadership demands tough decision-making as someone has to tell staff what needs to be done; to keep people committed and obligated; to create awareness; and highlight consequences. Kasapi and Mihiotis (2014) explained that the concept of emotional intelligence permits a leader to bring their own unique attitudes and behaviours to the workplace and as a result, their influence on employees is not limited to only job features but also behavioural and ethical values. The core competencies of emotional intelligence and the traits of an effective leader are interlinked in a manner that would likely yield an enhancement in the working relationship of leaders and their subordinates.

“I think he would have a better relationship with staff if he can understand them and if he has a better relationship with staff, I think happy staff will produce more work. If he doesn’t understand, then they are not going to” (R8).

This response from the participant correlated with research conducted by Kasapi and Mihiotis (2014) which indicated that emotional intelligence assists leaders in

understanding their own feelings and the feelings of others, as well as making them more effective in their interactions with others. They are able to be more objective and caring to the needs of others by applying self- control, which regulates their own instant feelings. A participant mentioned:

“Because at the end of the day we are all one, no matter what your title is. So if the higher powers, if everybody plays a vital role, especially if they are visible and they show that they are interested, they show the staff, greet them in the morning, show them that they care for them, it puts a different angle, whereas you get a person that always hides away and you never see them, you only see them when problems occur” (R9).

The view of the participant correlated with the findings of Jorfi, Bin Yaccob and Shah (2011) which explained that the application of emotional intelligence assists a leader and their employees to identify and comprehend different emotional states and to improve relationships with employees

One participant explained how a lack of emotional intelligence in a leader can affect the employee and ultimately the customer.

“Because you lead by example and then normally you tell the staff what to do and if you don’t do it yourself then they won’t do it. It is not what you say, it is what you do, so they see that. So if you treat them with respect, if you treat them when they are upset and you can calm them down and you are calm then it goes down to them, but if you are a stressed person, it flows down negatively” (R11)

This participant’s view correlated with the findings of George (1995), as cited in Kulkarni (2014), which established that a leader who generally displayed positive emotions was likely to achieve a higher quality of customer service as compared to those teams whose leaders were not positive at work. The leader’s emotions certainly has a lasting impact on the quality of output and the performance achievement of their subordinates.

“They will prepare the agents to tell them this is the situation, this is what happens in a day, you must handle it this way. They are the ones who should be prepared on

emotional intelligence first, not to say that we must not be, but they must lead the way” (R14)

The response of the participant was supported by the findings of Bass (1997), as cited in Brown (2014), who suggested that there is a dynamic relationship between the leader, employee and customer in that each is aiming to achieve the same objective, which is to ensure a positive outcome. The development of emotional intelligence insight will support a leader to become more effective in their role and perform more efficiently and effectively. A similar view was shared by another participant who stated:

“They will aid them. It will aid them to provide better customer service. For example, we received an e-mail from one client saying that with your office, you guys are doing great, the service is to the top level and your staff members are very welcoming. It goes a long way and then the feedback that you get from your clients would actually tell whether you are moving to the right direction or you are off the right direction” (R15)

It was established that the emotional intelligence of a leader is significant and critical in a service environment. The participants argued that leaders need to set the tone, albeit a positive one for service employees. This will in turn influence positive outcomes from employees in their interactions with customers in a service encounter.

4.14. Conclusion

The responses provided by the participants give a clear indication that emotional intelligence plays a significant role in the customer service industry. By applying emotional intelligence skills effectively in a service encounter, an employee is able to understand the customer better, analyse their tone, their expressions and apply different techniques to provide the service that is required by the customer.

Emotional intelligence enables an individual to be aware of their own emotions and this factor will also provide management with a view of whether the employee is in the correct frame of mind to deal with a customer. In the responses provided, it is clear that the participants have a solid understanding of the importance of emotional

intelligence, not just in a service environment but importantly in other daily interactions as well. The importance of emotional intelligence in the leadership of a service environment generated positive responses from the participants who ultimately agreed that a leader sets the tone, leads by example and creates an effective influence on employees. By applying emotional intelligence, a leader is able to develop solid relationships with their employees. The leader's influence results in employees creating a relationship with each customer, thus ensuring that customer and service satisfaction is ultimately achieved. The purpose of the study was to obtain an understanding of the role that emotional intelligence has in a service environment. The participants identified the key aspects of emotional intelligence and how it impacted on them as service employees, on the customer and on the leadership of the service environment.

The next chapter reflects on the key findings of the study and provides suggestions to management on how to improve and maintain emotional intelligence within a service environment. The recommendations and the conclusion of this study will be presented.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the conclusion and the recommendations of this study. To support the recommendations, relevant literature used by the researcher in this study is referred to. The purpose of the study was to explore the significance of emotional intelligence in the customer service industry. The study examined and identified whether the participants in this study could comprehend with emotional intelligence, although not all participants could determine or comprehend the precise terminology or the key components that make up emotional intelligence.

This study examined the impact of emotional intelligence on customer service employees and the leadership of the customer service industry. The study identified that emotional intelligence is a key characteristic of effective customer service. The emotional intelligence of a customer service employee is critical in the service interaction as it displays the face of the organisation, expressing the compassion shown by the organisation to its customers. The study examined the significance that emotional intelligence had on service delivery and managing relations with the customer. Emotional intelligence served as a key factor in achieving effective service delivery and maintaining a productive relationship with the customer.

There was also a need to identify the role of emotional intelligence within the leadership of a customer service environment and to emphasise how a leader's emotions and their ability to manage emotions can influence service employees in their interactions with customers.

The study also identified how emotional intelligence could be enhanced within the customer service industry. The development of service employees and the leadership of a customer service environment, through regular training and development interventions, were identified as a method to assist in becoming more emotionally intelligent. The literature review focused on customer service and leadership and the impact that emotional intelligence has on employees and leaders in a customer service environment.

A qualitative research methodology was used to obtain information on the research subject. The purposive sampling method was used to collect data from the sample population. A total of fifteen interviews were conducted. The data was attained from individuals who were employed in a customer service environment. The interviews were conducted in May 2016. The collected data was analysed and categorised into the themes that were identified and formed the description of the results of this study.

The recommendations provided in this study are based on the key research findings, which propose that emotional intelligence needs to come from within and from regular training on emotional intelligence, so that employees are better suited to handling emotional situations with a customer. The recommendations are supported by a theoretical background on the subject.

5.2. Key Findings

5.2.1. The importance of emotional intelligence

In the study, the importance of emotional intelligence was established as a key factor in understanding human behaviour. Emotional intelligence is the ability to understand, express and control emotions. The understanding of emotions is a key aspect of emotional intelligence. If an individual is displaying negative emotions, it is important to understand what the causes of these negative emotions are (Mayer and Salovey, 1990). The significance of emotional intelligence was emphasised by majority of the participants who acknowledged that emotional intelligence is essential in an individual and in the work environment, particularly an environment that primarily deals with customers.

Individuals are likely to be more effective when they are able to comprehend their own emotions and are able to understand the rationale behind their emotional behaviour (e.g. the reason why they are angry or depressed and their ability to contain and control such emotions). This ability is a fairly important characteristic to possess as it will aid in maintaining and building relationships between employees of an organisation or with the customers of the organisation (Robbins, Judge, Odendaal and Roodt, 2009).

The study found that participants were very aware of recognising their own emotional state and being able to detect the emotions expressed by others too. This trait enables an individual to handle each situation differently and ensures that they are effective in exercising self-management and being in control of the situation. The finding was that individuals felt that emotional intelligence permitted them to control their inner feelings and improve their ability to interact more efficiently. The responses of the participants indicated that emotional intelligence is an important factor in an individual's day to day life. As employees, individuals need to be proficient in how they conduct themselves with the customers of the organisation. The study indicated that the participants were well aware of emotional intelligence and acknowledged that its effective application will result in an employee being well developed to deal with complex customer interactions. Serrat (2009) stated that if an individual is determined to succeed in life, they will need to adopt a more tactful approach in dealing with diverse characteristics, needs and ways of displaying emotions.

5.2.2. Self-Awareness

The findings of the study established that the participants had an insightful knowledge of self-awareness and how to regulate their emotions. Zahid, Wasim and Raziq (2011) mentioned that employees who understand their own emotions and are able to reflect them well are those who can successfully judge the emotional status of others around them. The ability to satisfy a customer requires a deep involvement from the employees of the organisation which is as important as understanding the needs of the customer. The response of the customer is usually dictated by the quality of service that is provided. It is evident from the study that self-awareness is important for employees in a service environment. Goleman (1998) defined self-awareness as the keystone of emotional intelligence because it enables an individual to understand their own emotions as it occurs. The participants shared a common view that self-awareness enables an individual to remain calm, stay focused and conduct themselves professionally and ethically.

The research study also established that self-awareness is important in a leadership role. Sharma, Mishra and Sharma (2014) explained that a basic skill of emotional intelligence is the ability to identify different emotional states that originate from

within. Knowing the emotional strengths and weaknesses would be of great assistance to being an effective leader. The inner self of an individual is in constant response to the outside world and if an individual is unable to identify their own emotional state, it is highly likely that they would not be able to understand the emotional state of others. The findings of the research indicated that a leader needs to display self-awareness regularly. The leader sets the tone for their subordinates and needs to ensure that their emotions do not affect their employees in a negative way. The study found that a leader's ineffectiveness will affect an individual or a leader's ability to manage interpersonal relationships (Mishra and Sharma, 2014). The participants shared a common view overall that self-awareness is essential in the employees and the leadership of a service environment.

5.2.3. Relationship management

It was evident that relationship management is a key step in the emotional intelligence process. Emotions with the right intensity are the drivers of action. The satisfaction of customers is the core element which organisations strategize and strive for in their attempt for survival and to gain a share in competitive markets.

The findings of the study indicated that relationship management ensures that customers are shown warmth, given the attention and assistance that is required and enables the customer to feel comfortable in addressing their issues during the service interaction.

Kim and Young (2009), cited in Esfahani, Jafarzadeh and Nafari (2012), highlighted four key objectives of customer relationship management. These include:

- Encouraging new and existing customers to conduct business with the organisation regularly;
- Encouraging frequent and habitual business transactions with the organisation;
- Transforming short term clients into loyal and lasting ones; and
- Increasing sales through the offering of high quality goods and service to loyal clients.

Managing relationships is a significant part of emotional intelligence. The participants highlighted that ultimately in any service setting, the customer is targeted to transact with and to commit to regular future transactions. This leads to good business. A participant explained that the process of building relationships with your customers leads to the retention of existing customers and the attraction of new customers. Customer relationship management is characterised as being able to develop long-term relationships with customers and regularly providing satisfactory services (Hyung and Young, 2009 cited in Esfahani, Jafarzadeh and Nafari, 2012).

5.2.4. Emotional intelligence in customer service

It was evident in the study that the participants perceived emotional intelligence as a key factor in determining good customer service. The findings of the study indicated that the role played by emotional intelligence in a service environment assists employees to deal with diverse and difficult customers. The use of effective emotional regulation enables service employees to stay calm, keep focused and expedite a resolution for the customer, which ultimately leads to customer satisfaction. Dube and Menon (1998), cited in Johnston (2004), established that feelings of anger and frustration are linked to dissatisfaction, whilst emotions like serenity and happiness result in an increase in satisfaction. Yu and Dean (2001), cited in Johnston (2004), further established that emotions play more of a role in predicting loyalty than satisfaction. The research findings indicated that emotional intelligence in service encounters ideally lead to better services being offered due to a complete understanding of the customer's emotional state and reacting in an effective and efficient manner. Past research has established that emotions play a key role in service quality and satisfaction (Johnston, 2004).

Basharat and Raja (2013) explained that service quality is determined by many dynamics and has since become a valuable area of control for modern organisations. The ingredient that is considered as the mainstay of the service industry is emotional intelligence as it enhances the interpersonal, intrapersonal and technical abilities of the organisation. By practicing these, organisations can fine tune their skills to achieve customer satisfaction. The common view of the participants indicated that it is important for employees of the service provider to display good emotional intelligence skills and these abilities will enable an employee to detect

early signals from the customer and choose their responses carefully so that a potentially explosive service interaction can be diffused professionally.

The literature review on emotional intelligence in customer service has paid attention to the skills that are required to keep a customer satisfied by ensuring that their needs are met whilst at the same time creating a touching service experience. Goleman (1998) explained that how a customer feels at the moment of interaction with the front-line employee is likely to determine how they will feel about the company. In every engagement between a company and its customers, loyalty is either strengthened or diminishes. Highly successful service agents are those who are emotionally intelligent enough to analyse the emotions of a customer. These employees are more likely to practice empathy and stay present with the emotional needs of the customer as the engagement progresses. Emotional intelligence does make a difference in providing excellent service to a customer, including how an employee:

- Creates and constructs a relationship with the customer;
- Recognises the need of the customer;
- Builds a passion for the products and services they offer; and
- Comprehends customers' reasoning for resisting certain products or services (Goleman, 1998).

Zahid, Wasim and Raziq (2011) explained that the importance of emotional intelligence becomes prominent when organisations depend highly on knowledge workers. These workers are key assets to the service industry. Though technology can greatly assist in improving the overall performance of the service encounter, the most important contributor to this process is the human resource factor. If the resource is passionate and competent for this function, then they are likely to generate a better performance level. A few participants explained that emotional intelligence promotes a cautious service response from employees as they will fully comprehend with the customers query, analyse the emotional tones and signals that are presented to them and then carefully enter into a service dialogue with the customer.

5.2.5. Service employees and emotional intelligence

The key findings of the study revealed that emotional intelligence had an important role to play in the conduct of service employees in their daily service interactions. It was established that service employees need the skill of emotional intelligence, particularly when they are assisting negative customers. This skill will support the service employee in channelling their energies away from becoming negative towards the customer as well. It is of importance that employees regulate their emotions. A participant explained that front-line employees are the face of organisation and they need to be emotionally intelligent to keep the customer content and satisfied, whilst at the same time upholding the reputation of the organisation. The impact of emotional intelligence on service employees enables them to manage their stress levels as well. A service environment is known for emotional labour and it is important that the service employee also manages their own emotions and not allow any negative emotions to affect them or the customer that they interact with. Employees that display a high level of emotional intelligence are more committed to the organisation, which helps improve the long term productivity of the organisation. These employees are more competent in promoting the services that are offered by the organisation, which results in retaining and attracting customers. Organisations should therefore use emotionally intelligent employees to enhance interaction with customers so that a positive outcome can be achieved (Bardzil and Slaski, 2003 cited in Kim, 2010).

5.2.6. Emotional intelligence and service delivery

The study established that emotional intelligence is essential in service delivery. When an organisation makes an effort to connect with their customers' emotions, the results can be massive. A company must make a commitment to use emotional intelligence as a key lever for growth in every area within the organisation. Consequently, they can identify the most powerful emotional motivators which customers can be drawn to, and which allow the organisation to design marketing strategies based on these motivators (Magids, Zorfas and Leemon, 2015).

There is always a level of expectation from the customer which once fulfilled positively, will create a desire to return or to leave with a feeling of contentment. The

emotional value of the service experience is equivalent to the monetary worth of feelings when a customer experiences positive service. It is therefore essential to create a remarkable and worthwhile experience for the customer. In so doing, organisations are aiming to create a unique emotional encounter for employees and staff which can result in the organisation gaining a significant competitive advantage within their industry (Brown, 2009). The findings revealed that service employees need to be well educated on customer behaviour and the different scenarios that they bring to the service encounter. When service employees are able to understand the customers and communicate effectively with them, the service interaction is very likely to yield a positive outcome.

5.2.7. Emotional intelligence of leadership in customer service

The key findings of the study indicated that the emotional intelligence of a leader in a customer service environment is crucial as leaders are required to provide a positive influence on service employees and the customer. The process of leadership comprises a significant emphasis on influence. This empowers a group of individuals towards the achievement of a common goal and also influences individuals to achieve specific objectives, while providing direction to the organisation in a manner that makes it more organized and coherent (Kannaiah and Shanthi, 2015). The findings established that a leader is required to exercise empathy towards their employees. A participant explained that a leader can be considered intelligent as a result of their multiple academic qualifications. However, if they lack emotions and are not able to connect with people or employees, then they have failed as a leader. Another participant explained that a leader should understand their staff, feel their emotions and keep them motivated. The compassion shown by the leader will ensure that they win the support of their employees. Badea and Pana (2010) corroborated the view of the participant and explained that a leader who does not possess the ability to empathise will erratically respond and be oblivious to their tone of voice, choice of words and their actions resulting in the creation of negative responses from their employees.

The common view shared by participants is that a leader in any environment, not just in a service environment, needs to be emotionally intelligent. The participants

highlighted that a leader needs to lead by example and have a positive impact on their employees. A top performing manager must have emotional intelligence in order to understand what impact their behaviours and actions have on others in the organisation. As a result, an important factor in determining the success of the organisation and its leaders is the role that emotional intelligence plays (Diggins, 2004 cited in Gondal and Husain, 2013).

5.3. Recommendations for management

The responses of the participant indicated that emotional intelligence is a key trait and is fundamental to effective and satisfactory customer service.

5.3.1. The need for Emotional intelligence in service employees

The findings indicate that employees feel that emotional intelligence does improve their ability to understand their own emotions and ultimately their ability to detect the emotional state of a customer. This ability allows the service employee to adjust their response to the customer. Tumbat (2012) explained that although a customer may come across as being unfriendly or unco-operative, it is mandatory for a service employee to be pleasant and create a sense of warmth during the service interaction.

A customer's perceptions of an employee's attitude and the overall service encounter is crucial for all service organisations. Emotional intelligence applied by a positive employee is likely to leave a lasting impression on the customer. However, a negative approach from the employee can have severe repercussions for the reputation of the organisation (Ashkanasay and Daus, 2002). The organisation has a responsibility to its employees and its customers. Both are considered as stakeholders to the longevity of a service organisation. Emotional intelligence has an impact on customer satisfaction and service delivery (Danquah and Wikero, 2014). Through the effective development of emotional intelligence in their service employees, organisations will fulfil their commitment to delivering service that is efficient and effective. At the same time, the obligation to keep the customer satisfied with the organisation will be achieved as emotional intelligence will enable an employee to create good relationships with a customer. For a customer to

experience positive emotions in a service encounter, service employees must be able to regulate their own emotions and understand the customer's emotional state. The skill of emotional intelligence is thus considered a prerequisite for this outcome (Kim, 2010). It was evident in the study that the service employees of the SARS Branch Operations Division in Durban currently possess a solid understanding of emotional intelligence awareness.

5.3.2. Emotional intelligence training for service employees

All of the participants suggested that emotional intelligence training must be a priority for any service related environment as service employees need to connect with the customer and create a relationship with them. These interventions need to be conducted regularly amongst all service employees. Though training has been provided previously, it has become out-dated and needs to be refreshed within the mindsets of service employees. Some participants recommended that all junior employees must be fully trained on emotional intelligence in conjunction with customer service skills before they commence with face-to-face interactions with clients. A service environment can become very robust and service employees are prone to being abused by customers. Service employees who have a high level of emotional intelligence are more likely to be efficient in their interactions with clients and will express a positive outlook rather than become dejected or negative towards the customer (Kim, 2010). The leadership of the service environment needs to ensure that their service employees are trained to deal with aggressive customers and develop the ability to keep a customer calm. A further recommendation is that emotional intelligence training needs to be practical. Too much theory in a skills intervention such as emotional intelligence can make the service employee lose focus on how to deal with emotional matters in a real life situation. There needs to be some kind of role play that will develop the service employee for these encounters.

5.3.3. Improving leadership skills through emotional intelligence

Leadership in a service environment plays a crucial role in ensuring that service employees are focused and are able to deliver a memorable service experience for the customer. An area that is managed by a leader who displays positive emotions is

likely to produce customer service of a higher quality than a leader who is not aware of their own emotional state (Kulkarni, 2014). The study established that it is important for leaders in a service environment to have a high level of emotional intelligence so that they are able to understand their employees better. The participants recommended that when leaders understand their staff and their feelings, the service levels will improve as concern displayed by the leader will bring about a sense of belonging and togetherness for the service employee.

Leaders who are in tune with their own emotions have a positive influence on their employees as they are well aware of the state of their employees (Kulkarni, 2014). The concern shown by the leader allows the employee to warm up to the leader and support their leader in achieving common objectives. In this instance, the goal would be to achieve a high level of customer satisfaction. It is therefore recommended that leaders within this service environment apply emotional intelligence more frequently in their dealings with their employees. A leader with a positive emotional panache develops their employees to be creative and to solve problems effectively. The emotional intelligence in a leader also serves as an influential factor in achieving higher performance levels (Kreitz, 2009). Therefore, it is important for the employees and the leadership of the service environment to constantly fine tune their emotional intelligence abilities. This approach is recommended so that the leader has a positive influence on the emotions of their employees, who can then display a positive emotional stance on their customers. While it has been found that participants are shown to be emotionally intelligent, it is of significance that they are able to learn all the emotional competencies as well.

5.4. Answering the research objectives

The findings of the research study indicate that the research objectives were addressed by the researcher.

5.4.1. Is emotional intelligence and its importance in the service environment understood by employees in a customer service environment?

It was found that emotional intelligence plays a significant and important part in the customer service environment as it enables service employees and the leadership of

the service environment to be more effective in dealing efficiently with customers and employees respectively. The role of emotional intelligence in the service industry has been relatively under-researched. However, this study found that in this organisation, emotional intelligence serves as the basis for effective customer service, as participants provided a valuable account of how emotional intelligence can aid the service engagement, improve the service employee and the leadership of the service environment to be able to deal with customer and employee emotions more effectively and efficiently.

5.4.2. What is the role of emotional intelligence in service delivery and customer relations in a customer service environment?

It was established that emotional intelligence helped to improve service delivery and served as a basis to enhance customer relations by connecting with a customer. The responses of the participants indicated that emotional intelligence is significant and essential in customer service delivery. There was a common acknowledgement that emotional intelligence is fundamental to an individual's daily liaisons. Some of the responses indicated that it is very important to apply empathy and understand the viewpoint from the customer's side. Everyone is customer at some point in their daily lives, so one should be able to place oneself in either the position of either the service employee or the customer.

5.4.3. What is the role of emotional intelligence and leadership in a customer service environment?

It was established that emotional intelligence is a crucial factor in leadership and equally important for the leadership in a service environment. Participants acknowledged that emotional intelligence in a leader is essential as it provides an employee with direction to a common goal and to positively keep focused on the objectives of their tasks. A leader who connects with their employees is often influential in leading them to achieving success. The common response was that it is crucial for a leader in a service environment to have and to display high levels of emotional intelligence as their employees are influenced by their attitudes, character and behaviours. This cascades to the employees who in turn are then motivated to reflect the same conduct with their customers.

5.4.4. How can emotional intelligence be enhanced in a service environment?

Ultimately, emotional intelligence is a key element in customer service and leadership. It was established that emotional intelligence can be successfully enhanced in a service environment through regular training and development interventions for all employees and by ensuring that the leadership of a service environment are developed to manage their own emotional intelligence skills for the benefit of their service employees and their service environment.

5.5. Recommendations for future studies

Future research can focus on how emotional intelligence impacts on the performance of a service industry. It was established from past scholars that emotional intelligence and its impact on inter-personal skills is integral to effective customer service and leadership (Palmer, Wallis, Burgess and Stough, 2000). This study was conducted to examine the role of emotional intelligence in the service industry and the impact that it had on service employees and the leadership within this environment. A participant shared the view that one speaks about IQ, but EQ is far more important as a person without emotion management abilities is going nowhere. This inability is likely to result in an individual being unsuccessful in their personal or professional lives. Emotional intelligence needs to be taken to another level, be it for one's personal or career development. Future research studies can focus on an individual's perspective of emotional intelligence and how it impacts on their aspiration in life. The qualitative research approach was used in this study. For future research, a quantitative study can be conducted to examine the role of emotional intelligence in a service environment. These results can then be compared to the impact it has on customer service and the leadership of a service environment by using a quantitative approach.

5.6. Implications of the study

This study has made a concerted effort to improve on the literature for the research topic. It was found that previous literature did not methodically cover the link between emotional intelligence, customer service and leadership. The study has established how emotional intelligence can improve service delivery, customer relations, the

efficiency of service employees and the leadership of the service environment. The topic of research which covered the link between emotional intelligence, customer service and leadership is an under-researched topic in South Africa and this study can be used by service organisations to develop emotionally intelligent employees and leaders.

5.7. Conclusion

The belief is that any recommendation suggested in this study could assist the organisation that was examined by enhancing the impact of emotional intelligence in customer service. Regular training, workshops and the development of emotional intelligence amongst service employees and the leadership would support the goals of achieving customer satisfaction, strengthen the bond between the leadership and service employees as well as building vital relationships with the customer. It has been established that emotional intelligence is a prerequisite for any service related job, so any new employee to a service function must be exposed to emotional intelligence skills training as part of enhancing their customer service skills. The study provided recommendations on how the leadership within a service area can improve on relations with their service employees through the effective mastering of emotional intelligence skills. The leadership needs to be cognisant that the emotional intelligence of a leader, not just a leader in a service environment, is a crucial factor that determines the rate at which employees will be influenced positively by a leader. Emotional intelligence that becomes a proficient part of every service employee's daily interaction with their customers will indeed realise the objectives of a service environment, which ultimately is to retain a customer and to keep them highly satisfied with the organisation.

In conclusion, the researcher would like to share a simple yet effective quote on emotional intelligence:

"The rules for work are changing. We're being judged by a new yardstick: not just by how smart we are, or by our training and expertise, but also by how well we handle ourselves and each other" (Goleman, 1998: 3).

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APPENDIX 1: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND LEADERSHIP

Master of Commerce: Research Project
Researcher: Zahir Sayed (0786211438)
Supervisor: Dr. Cecile Gerwel Proches (0312608318)
Research Office: Ms P Ximba (0312603587)

Dear Respondent,

I, Zahir Sayed, am a Master of Commerce in Leadership studies student, at the Graduate School of Business and Leadership, of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. You are invited to participate in a research project entitled: "Exploring the role of Emotional Intelligence in the Customer Service Industry". The aim of this study is to examine if Emotional Intelligence and its importance in the service environment is understood by employees in a customer service environment; explore the role of Emotional Intelligence in service delivery and customer relations in a customer service environment; explore the role of Emotional Intelligence and leadership in a customer service environment; and identify how Emotional Intelligence can be enhanced in a service environment

Through your participation I hope to understand and identify the role of Emotional Intelligence in the customer service industry. The results of the interview are intended to contribute to improved customer service and service delivery. Your participation in this project is voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw from the project at any time with no negative consequence. There will be no monetary gain from participating in this interview. Confidentiality and anonymity of records identifying you as a participant will be maintained by the Graduate School of Business and Leadership, UKZN.

If you have any questions or concerns about participating in this interview or about participating in this study, you may contact me or my supervisor at the numbers listed above.

Thank you for your valuable contribution to my study

Sincerely

Investigator's signature _____ Date _____

This page is to be retained by the participant

APPENDIX 2: CONSENT FORM

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND LEADERSHIP

Master of Commerce: Research Project
Researcher: Zahir Sayed (0786211438)
Supervisor: Dr. Cecile Gerwel Proches (0312608318)
Research Office: Ms P Ximba (0312603587)

CONSENT

I.....(full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

I hereby **consent /do not consent** to recording this interview.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

DATE

.....

.....

This page is to be retained by the researcher

APPENDIX 3: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What do you understand by the term Emotional Intelligence?
2. Explain what are the key components of Emotional Intelligence?
3. Is Emotional Intelligence related to customer service? Please explain.
4. How likely are you to be able to recognise and understand your own emotions?
5. Are you able to “get into someone’s shoes” and understand their emotions?
Please elaborate.
6. Do you feel that it is essential for organisations in the customer services industry to develop and practice Emotional Intelligence? Please elaborate.
7. Is it important for service employees to be emotionally intelligent? If so, why?
8. Is Emotional Intelligence essential in Service Delivery?
9. Are organisations that have employees with the right emotional intelligence skills able to deliver services more effectively? Please explain.
10. In terms of relationship management, why is it important to create a relationship with a customer?
11. Are you able to analyse the emotions of a customer as the interaction continues?
Please elaborate.
12. Is emotional intelligence essential in a leader? Please explain.
13. Should your superior have a high level of Emotional Intelligence? Please elaborate.
14. Do you feel that an emotionally intelligent leader will aid employees in providing better customer service? If so, how?
15. Please share any recommendations that you may have that can enhance or improve Emotional Intelligence in a service environment?
16. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

APPENDIX 4: ETHICAL CLEARANCE FORM



04 May 2016

Mr Zahir Sayed (214579447)
Graduate School of Business & Leadership
Westville Campus

Dear Mr Sayed,

Protocol reference number: HSS/0431/016M

Project title: Exploring the role of Emotional Intelligence in the Customer Service Industry

Full Approval – Expedited Approval

With regards to your application received on 25 April 2016. The documents submitted have been accepted by the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee and **FULL APPROVAL** for the protocol has been granted.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

Please note: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully



Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

/ms

Cc Supervisor: Dr Cecile Gerwel Proches
Cc Academic Leader Research: Dr Muhammad Hoque
Cc School Administrator: Ms Zarina Bullyraj

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

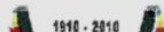
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APPENDIX 5: TURN IT IN REPORT



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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION 1.1. Introduction Customer service is a key element for organisational success. Organisations are constantly striving to ensure that their customers are satisfied, which would ideally ensure customer retention; attract new customers; increase their credibility within an industry; ensure positive reviews for the organisations image and reputation; and ultimately boost revenue inflows and profit for the organisation. To achieve this level requires effort and unprecedented dedication to ensuring that the customer is well taken care off. It is critical for the survival of an organisation to create an incredible experience for the customer. A key aspect in measuring this level of interaction is the role that emotions play in the service environment. Emotions contribute significantly to the life of human beings by impacting on their ethics and behaviours. Cherry (2013) explained that as humans become occupied in employment with an organisation, these emotions play a substantial part in how individuals behave within their workspace. A vital step for an organisation would be to manage these emotions effectively. The process of managing emotions is referred to as emotional intelligence. This process requires an individual to understand their own emotional feelings, the feelings of those that they are in contact with, as well as to build and maintain relationships by managing such feelings accordingly. In a service environment, this will be reflected in the relationships between employees and customers. An emotional feeling can be contagious and therefore the manner in which an employee engages with a customer will affect how the customer will view the company. It is required that employees utilise their emotional intelligence skills to adjust to the

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