

**A proposed framework for the strategic
management of service quality for the South
African Post Office in the North West province**

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DECLARATION

I, Elsie Mbua Eposi, declare that this study entitled, 'A proposed framework for the strategic management of service quality for the South African Post Offices in the North West province,' is my original work. This thesis has not been submitted for a degree at this or any other university. All materials used in the study have been duly indicated and acknowledged through references.



Signed _____

Date 26/03/2021

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the Almighty God

who showered me with amazing grace to complete this study.

To my parents, the late Mr Mbua Lingongo, Mrs Enanga Mbua,

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AHP	Analytic Hierarchy Process
ASQ	American Society of Quality
CAs	Certificate Authorities
CFA	Confirmatory Factor Analysis
CSI	Continual Service Improvement
DoC	Department of Communication
DPSA	Department of Public Service Administration
EMS	Express Mail Service
EMS	Emergency Medical Services
EU	European Union
GAO	Government Accountability Office
GIS	Geographic Information System
GPS	Globe Postal Service
GSM	Global System for Management
GWM&ES	Government-wide Monitoring and Evaluation System
HR	Human Resource
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IHIP	Intangibility, Heterogeneity, Inseparability, and Perishability
KBM	Klerksdorp Branch Manager
KFE1	Klerksdorp Frontline Employee 1
KFE2	Klerksdorp Frontline Employee 2
KPOBM	Klerksdorp Post Office Branch Manager
KPOFE1	Mafikeng Post Office Frontline Employee 1
KPOFE2	Klerksdorp Frontline Employee 2
LFE1	Lichtenburg Frontline Employee 1
LFE2	Lichtenburg Frontline Employee 2
LPOFE1	Lichtenburg Post Office Frontline Employee 1
LPOFE2	Lichtenburg Post Office Frontline Employee 2
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MBM	Mafikeng Branch Manager
MFE1	Mafikeng Frontline Employee 1
MFE2	Mafikeng Frontline Employee 2

MPOBM	Mafikeng Post Office Branch Manager
MPOFE1	Mafikeng Post Office Frontline Employee 1
MPOFE2	Mafikeng Post Office Frontline Employee 2
MPSHRD	Ministry of Public Service and Human Resource Development
NDP	National Development Plan
NPM	New Public Management
NPS	Nepal Postal Service
NW	North West
NWP	North West province
NWPO	North West Post Office
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PALAMA	Public Administration Leadership and Management Academy
PBM	Potchefstroom Branch Manager
PFE2	Potchefstroom Frontline Employee 2
PFEI	Potchefstroom Frontline Employee 1
PKI	Public Key Infrastructure
PPOBM	Potchefstroom Post Office Branch Manager
PPOFE 1	Potchefstroom Post Office Frontline Employee 1
PPOFE 2	Potchefstroom Post Office Frontline Employee 2
PSC	Public Service Commission
PTC	Posts and Telecommunication Corporation
RBV	Resource-Based View
SA	South Africa
SA	Strongly Agree
SAEPA	South African Express Parcel Association
SAMDI	South African Management Development Institute
SAPO	South African Post Office
SBU	Strategic Business Unit
SCP	Strategic Corporate Plan
SD	Strongly Disagree
SETA	Sector Education and Training Authorities
SGEI	Services of General Economic Interest.
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
SS	Service Strategy

TCDC	Trust Centre digital Certificates
UPU	Universal-Postal-Union
USA	United States of America
USO	Universal Service Operation
USP	Unique Selling Proposition
USPS	United States Postal Service
UPSC	Union Public Service Commission
ZAM	Zeerust Area Manager
ZFE1	Zeerust Frontline Employee 1
ZFE2	Zeerust Frontline Employee 2
ZPOAM	Zeerust Post Office Area Manager
ZPOFE1	Zeerust Post Office Frontline Employee 1
ZPOFE2	Zeerust Post Office Frontline Employee 2

ABSTRACT

The strategic management of the quality of services provided by the postal sector in South Africa, particularly in the North West Province, is a contentious issue. This is exacerbated by the growing concerns with regard to the quality of services provided by the sector, despite managerial measures put in place by government, management of the post office, managers and frontline employees to curb the crisis. The purpose of this study was to identify factors that could enhance the strategic management of the quality of services in the postal sector and propose a quality framework on the strategic management of services for post office managers and frontline employees in order to improve the quality of services for consumers in South Africa. Using an explanatory sequential mixed methods research design, data was collected from three hundred and eighty-four (384) consumers of the post office, using a structured questionnaire. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with five (5) postal managers, and fifteen (15) frontline employees from five postal branches (Mafikeng, Zeerust, Klerksdorp, Potchefstroom and Lichtenburg) in the North West Province, South Africa. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse the quantitative data obtained, using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 24, Pearson correlation analysis, standard multiple regression and analysis of variance (ANOVA), while Atlas-Ti 8.3.24 was used to analyse qualitative data.

The findings established vast opportunities for the postal sector to strategically enhance the strategic management of services. Effective strategic implementation, effective training and development, motivation and effective monitoring, as well as an evaluation system are the most influential components to use in improving the quality of services within post offices. Other factors identified include creating an effective communication system; consistency in improving services; instilling confidence and trust among consumers; fostering special treatment to consumers; and the provision of high-quality services.

The study identified challenges that affect both managers and frontline employees in designing and implementing effective strategies to provide quality services to consumers. These are poorly defined strategic planning; lack of resources to properly implement the strategic plan; lack of clarity on the strategic plan; difficulty for staff to implement the plan; lack of effective communication on a strategic implementation process; inability of stakeholders to claim ownership of the strategic implementation process; little attention given to strategic

implementation by management; stock problems; limited budget to run post offices; lack of financial resources; shortage of staff; system problems; lack of equipment; delays in the delivery of postal products; lack of good performance management; ineffective tracking and monitoring system; lack of proper infrastructure; misplacing of mails and parcels; and inability to deal with complaints regarding non-reception of proper services.

Based on the findings of this study, there is need for management of the postal sector to provide adequate and quality services to customers, through an effective strategic implementation plan, effective training and development, motivation, as well as an effective monitoring and evaluation system. There is also a need for managers and frontline employees to be at the forefront and to provide high quality services to consumers as this will create a positive impression and consumer satisfaction.

The proposed framework could assist government, managers and frontline employees to ensure adequate collaboration in different activities in their endeavour to create responsible strategic management of quality services for the postal sector in the North West Province.

Keywords: Quality service, strategic management; postal sector; expectation, perception, determinants, service excellence, consumer satisfaction, framework

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CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Service quality has become a critical issue in enhancing business in today's highly competitive marketplace (Ross, 2017). More specifically, to survive in a highly competitive service provision environment, it is essential to offer consumers high-quality service. Consumers today demand quality and from their point of view, quality is an integral and expected part of service (Hamari *et al.*, 2017). The business environment has become more competitive and turbulent, and service industries are increasingly concerned with obtaining sustainable competitive advantage (Quirke, 2017).

The South African Post Office (SAPO) is the national postal service of South Africa and a state-owned enterprise. In terms of South Africa law, the post office is the only entity legally allowed to accept reserved mail and as such operates a monopoly (SAPO, 2014). In its vision and mission statement, SAPO is committed to providing an efficient and affordable communication service to all people in South Africa. The expectations of all SA customers in terms of service quality from SAPO are very high. These high expectations have to be met if the organisation is to remain a viable and significant player in the services sector. Quality of service sets organisations apart if they are to remain competitive and differentiate their offerings from competitors (Siddiqi & Shadbolt, 2016).

The traditional core business of public postal operators in the world is to deliver mail and parcels. However, the surge of technology, such as patronage of alternative efficient communication channels, has led to the decline in mail volumes. Aside from the impact of the surge of technology, the core business of the postal sector has dramatically changed over the years. Most postal organisations have had to partner with other industries to increase services offered and to stay afloat given the impact of technology on the traditional core business of postal operators. As reported in the White Paper (The United States of America, 2014), financial services have replaced the mail business as the main revenue generator for the public postal sector. In a bid to increase their revenue streams, postal administrations in the world and Sub-Saharan Africa in particular have signed partnerships with financial services institutions such as Money Gram, Western Union, and Money Express (Clotteau & Anson, 2011). However,

partnering with other industries to increase the services offered without attending to service quality in the face of fierce competition does not guarantee consumer satisfaction nor an increase in revenue. This study examines the strategic management of service quality of postal consumers in the North West province, scrutinises the aspects that could contribute towards improved consumer satisfaction whereas empirically striving to offer a structure that could allow SAPO toward improve maintainable service quality. This chapter presents the contextual to the study, the aims of the study, the research questions and objectives, the expected contribution, its delimitation, and structure of the thesis.

1.2 Rationale for the research

SAPO is a major contributor to the growth and change of the SA economy (SAPO, 2016). As such, the collapse of SAPO would have detrimental effects on the growth of the SA economy. In the face of rapid technological advancement worldwide, the organisation is threatened as its traditional core business of mail delivery (letter posting) could collapse due to fierce competition from other technologically advanced systems such as emails. However, it is unlikely that the organisation and the services it offers shall disappear completely. This sector is considering several strategies to remain relevant amidst the tough competition. One of the strategies to keep this organisation afloat in the face of its competition and to continue to contribute towards the growth of the SA economy is ensuring quality service delivery that satisfies consumers. However, the provision of quality service is unfortunately parlous as reports continue to show otherwise. It is in this light that this study was conducted.

The mandate of SAPO in terms of its regulatory requirements as enacted in the SAPO Mandate and License Agreement (SAPOMLA) is to successfully achieve an annual target delivery standard of 98% within the activities of delivering ordinary mail (this excludes fast mail, speed services, and parcels). Despite its license agreement and the regulatory requirements of the postal sector in South Africa, reports display that postal branches perform underneath expectations in providing postal services to its consumers (SAPO, 2014).

The SAPO has experienced poor service delivery and this has affected customers' perceptions of service quality. Customers of the post office complain of poor service rendered, postal products reaching the right address, delays due to congestion, and network problems. It is further noted

that customer patronage at post offices has significantly declined due to failure to respond to customers' changing needs, who also often complain of long queues in anticipation of services (SAPO, 2014). Customers service delivery at SAPO branches is in decline and this has affected the quality of service and the satisfaction of customers. Furthermore, there is no proper customer service strategy regarding what needs to be done to improve the customer welfare, as per the SAPO Annual Report (2016). Msosa (2015) observes that consumers complain of poor service quality such as waiting for several days to receive postal services due to poor postal networks, inability to access services due to congestion and network outage.

Various scholars (Panzar & Menk, 2011; Suleiman, 2011; Hlekane, 2013; Speckman, 2013; Okholm *et al.*, 2018) investigated the challenges of low-quality services rendered to postal consumers, its penalties on service delivery, also recommended potential procedures to solve the challenges. Their findings indicate that postal sectors are operating below expectations, thus a number of recommendations have been suggested on how to advance the service quality, and these are detailed in following paragraphs of this study.

The South African postal service must strive to eradicate challenges that hamper the organisation's success. The extent of poor strategic management and service quality within the postal services in South Africa is quite disturbing. A report delivered through the SAPO in 2016 affirms that the post office sector has been identified as a major contributor to the growth and change of the South Africa economy (SAPO, 2016). However, concerns are raised in the report about the service quality rendered by SAPO to the point where SAPO is operating below its optimal level. Anette *et al.* (2016) confirm that the service quality of SAPO is generally perceived as unsatisfactory and failing to meet the expectations of consumers.

In order to comprehend service excellence, it is imperative to comprehend the sector in which service excellence ought to be provided as in this case. According to Lovelock and Patterson (2015), the services industry is made up of sectors such as education, accommodation, entertaining, transport, leisure, consulting, the law enforcement agency, and postal services. These organisation are in the business of providing services and not tangible goods. The service sector has similar characteristics of rendering services to members of the public which highly determine their achievements as well as the perception of service quality offered.

Postal services involve a series of processes, activities, and planning and is divided into service units of operation. Each unit is called a strategic business unit (SBU), tasked with specific capabilities that collectively contribute towards the overall revenue of the postal service, as mentioned by the National Treasury (2015). The units of operation in SAPO are logistics, postal banking, retail, mail and lastly e-business (SAPO, 2016). Concerning the challenges identified as plaguing postal services in SA, the objectives of growth and expansion necessitate acquiring an in-depth understanding of services management because exerts a huge impact on the daily business activities of service industries, especially those operating within the logistics and postal sector (Bartlett & Beamish, 2018).

From the above discussion, it is clear that SAPO faces tremendous challenges amongst them the loss of consumers, revenue, and resources, compounded by emerging competing markets. This study develops a framework for the strategic management of service quality to improve consumer satisfaction at SAPO branches in the North West province of South Africa.

1.3 Background to study

Traditionally, communication in society and business has been conducted through the telephone, fax, and letters (Dillman *et al.*, 2014). The White Paper on the Postal Policy of South Africa 1998, identified postal services as the most basic and common means by which messages are communicated and goods delivered. This White Paper stated that postal services form a basic link serving the entire population, constituting an important medium of business communication (Dillman *et al.*, 2014). As such, management is devoted toward facilitating the growth and development of this sector, ensuring the provision of universal and affordable postal services to all South Africans, irrespective of race, gender, class, age, or geographic location (Parnell & Pieterse, 2016). The overarching goal of the policy framework is to ensure accessible, equitable, efficient, effective, and affordable postal services.

Although SAPO is government-owned, it is operated independently and expected to be profitable. However, SAPO faces several challenges, foremost of which is the vast service area, much of it remote and sparsely populated (SAPO, 2014). Therefore, universal service obligations provide an acceptable level of effective and regular postal services to all areas including rural areas and small towns where post offices are not supportable (SAPO, 2015). The postal services sector is an important component of the economy of South Africa, contributing approximately 3.16% to GDP (SAPO Strategic Plan and Annual Performance Plans, 2015),

including the courier and express parcel market. SAPO enables individuals and business operations to play an important role in the delivery of postal services. Letter-post is declining both in terms of volume as well as a percentage of total revenue generated in this sector (SAPO, 2014). The declining trend in letter mail volumes is ascribed to the global recession and electronic substitution effects (SAPO, 2015).

Despite this trend, the need for postal services is unlikely to disappear. While efforts are made to bridge the wide digital divide in South Africa, postal services remain important for people and communities who do not readily have access to e-mail or the internet. This is the case for example, when applying for jobs or keeping in touch with family (Briones *et al.*, 2011). The postal network in South Africa also serves as a conduit for the government communication with communities in rural parts of the country, as well as communities without access to electronic media (Braman, 2011).

1.4 Problem statement

The strategic management of excellent service quality is a serious challenge in the postal service sector, thus, threatening client satisfaction (Boxall & Purcell, 2011). Problematic service quality emanates from poor employee attitude, poor expertise, and poor work ethics, as mentioned by Musikavanhu (2017). It may also be a result of middle managers lacking skills in service excellence and having just a nominal level of education, as explained by Sutherland and Wöcke (2011). Furthermore, SAPO is also associated with generally low levels of competency and understanding of the quality imperative in service provision (Botha *et al.*, 2012). Considering that most of these traits are evident in South Africa, this study submits that the level of service quality in the South African post offices is low (South Africa Auditor-General Report, 2014).

Following on the crisis in service quality, the retail division of SAPO recently conducted a satisfaction survey (SAPO, 2014) with mystery shoppers and mystery callers. The survey was one of the most extensive studies concerning the performance of the South African postal sector. This survey included 165 branches of all types with a sample size of 11 297 and the study identified the following concerns: (1) staff issues: staff shortages, staff attitude, and staff knowledge of the products and/or services; (2) processes: queue length and parcel arrival notifications; (3) infrastructure: inadequate signage and system-related issues.

According to the SAPO Annual Report 2015/2016, clients reported on the uncourteous attitude of some staff, delays in receiving mail, wrong distribution of mail, inability to enforce decisions, delays in responding to consumer complaints, and the unwelcoming atmosphere of some of the post offices, especially at counter level. Dissatisfied clients tend to have a negative perception about the service provider, SAPO as in this case, and these clients often tend to share their unpleasant experience with at least ten others (SAPO Annual Report 2016). This specific study offers a deeper understanding of service quality by integrating together the perspectives of demand and supply, that of management and frontline workers (supply), and consumers (demand).

Frontline employees play an extraordinary role in the execution of service quality as discussed by many authors and researchers (O'Cass & Sok, 2013; Iyer & Johlke, 2015; Wang *et al.*, 2017). Employees who work in consumer service positions in an organisation interact with consumers and ought to ensure that a high level of satisfaction is achieved (Van-Scheers & Botha, 2014; Neha, 2018). However, the capabilities of frontline employees to satisfy consumers depend on the environment in which the organisation operates.

Furthermore, during the 2014 national strike, the South African post office lost R1billion of its revenue due to consumers switching to other options, as indicated in the South Africa Auditor-General Report (2014). It has proven extremely difficult to recover lost consumers (Wangand & Alexander, 2018). The decline in revenue, however, has been reduced from 14% as experienced in the 2014/15 financial year to 4% in the 2017/18 financial year. The strike affected all the South Africa post office operations, however, SAPO operations have begun to stabilise since the 2016/17 financial year, as reflected in the improvement in the delivery standard for letters, from 69.22% in the 2014/15 financial year to 77.69% in the 2017/18 financial year (SAPO Corporate Plan 2018/19–2020/).

From the concerns raised, it is, therefore, necessary to investigate the strategic management of service quality offered by the South Africa postal sectors to its consumers; to identify the various strategic management problems related to service quality rendered. This study subsequently develops a framework that could be used to nurture a supportable postal service quality principles and arrest the deteriorating situation in the strategic management of service quality for the postal sector. This would not only be applicable to the North West region but all over South Africa. The problem of this study is **the increase in poor service delivery rendered to postal**

consumers due to the various challenges affecting the strategic management of service quality with managers, frontline employees, and consumers. The definitive stance in this study is that if those challenges are identified and resolved, the persistent poor service quality rendered to the consumers in the SAPO in the North West province cannot be improved. This crisis continues to give a competitive advantage to competing industries offering similar services, thereby reducing the contribution of SAPO to the growth of the SA economy.

1.5 The aim of the study

This study proposes a framework for the strategic management of service quality for managers and frontline employees at the service units, designed to improve their consumers' satisfaction at the branches of the SAPO in the North West province, South Africa. Overall service delivery and the level of current consumer service are examined with a view to making recommendations for the strategic management of service quality at the SAPO.

1.5.1 Research objectives

To address the concerns regarding the strategic management of service quality at the service units of SAPO in the North West Province, the following quantitative and qualitative research questions are formulated.

The quantitative research questions are:

- What are the challenges of strategic management of service quality at SAPO in North West province?
- What are the expectations and perceptions of management with regard to service quality?
- What are the expectations and perceptions of frontline employees with regard to service quality?
- What are the expectations and perceptions of consumers with regard to service quality at SAPO outlet in the North West province?
- What conclusions and recommendations can be made to SAPO's management concerning the strategic management of their service quality in the North West province concerning the strategic management of their service quality?

The qualitative research questions are:

- What are the challenges of strategic implementation of service quality with managers, frontline employees, and consumers in the SAPO outlet in the North West province?
- How can training and development be used to enhance service quality with managers and frontline employees in the SAPO outlet in the NWP?
- How can motivation be used to enhance service quality with managers and frontline employees in the SAPO outlet in the North West province?
- How can monitoring and evaluation be used to enhance service quality with managers and frontline employees in the SAPO outlet in the North West province?

1.5.2 Study objectives

The primary objective of this study is set to design of a framework for the strategic management of service quality for improving consumer satisfaction of SAPO in the North West province.

The secondary objectives are addressed by a review of literature together with empirical research using a mixed-methods approach and the secondary objectives of both the quantitative and the qualitative are grouped below.

The quantitative secondary objectives are designed to:

- Identify the challenges of the strategic management of service quality at post offices in the North West by means of an empirical study.
- Evaluate the expectations and perceptions of managers with regards to service quality at SAPO in the North West by means of an empirical study.
- Assess the expectations and perceptions of frontline employees with regards to service quality at SAPO in the North West by means of an empirical study.
- Measure the expectations and perceptions of consumers with regards to service quality at the SAPO in the North West by means of an empirical study.
- Draw conclusions and recommendations concerning the improvement of the service quality rendered by means of a proposed framework.

The qualitative secondary objectives are designed to:

- Identify the challenges of strategic implementation of service quality with managers, frontline employees, and consumers in the SAPO in the North West by means of an empirical study.
- Explore how training and development can be used to enhance service quality with managers and frontline employees in the SAPO in the North West by means of an empirical study.
- Examine how motivation can be used to enhance service quality with managers and frontline employees in the SAPO in the North West by means of an empirical study.
- Establish how monitoring and evaluation can be used to enhance service quality with managers and frontline employees in the SAPO in the North West by means of an empirical study.

1.6 Contribution of the study

Firstly, this study explores the strategic management of service quality with managers, frontline employees, and consumers on their perception and expectations on service quality in the context of the public sector in a developing country. This is designed to improve knowledge of the strategic management of service quality as there is limited research currently focusing on the perspectives of management, frontline employees, and consumers on consumer satisfaction of service quality in the public sector.

Secondly, this thesis enriches the literature on the strategic management of service quality in the public sector by assessing the dimensions considered to be important in service quality in the post office with the use of the SERVQUAL Model. To reach this goal, there are additional dimensions to service quality from the perspective of management, frontline employees, and consumers which needs to be thoroughly explored. Thirdly, this study provides managers with relevant feedback from the service unit, which are pursued to add value to the delivery of service quality by post offices. By enhancing employees' understanding of service quality, it is possible for organisations to revise their strategies and focus on interventions to achieve consumer satisfaction. The finding compels management to commit the necessary resources to improve the service quality rendered by frontline employees at post office branches, to enhance consumers' satisfaction and make concrete recommendations to the management of post offices as this enables them to satisfy their wide range of consumers, and above all, to make the South Africa post offices centres of excellence.

Finally, the development of a framework for the strategic management of service quality could improve collaboration between management and frontline employees to improve their service quality to the postal service consumer in the North West province. As this study proposes a framework for a sustainable strategic management of service quality, the guidelines of the research are anticipated to provide direction to management as well as post office employers in making reasonable decisions and strategies concerning high-quality service to postal service consumers. With the improvement of service quality, there is the likelihood of a possible improvement of SAPO generally as it remains relevant in the face of stiff competition, thereby improving its contribution to the growth of the SA economy.

1.7 Theoretical foundation

Many businesses rely on postal services, letters and/or courier and express parcels in undertaking their daily operations, as explained by Bailly and Meidinger (2011) and Borsenberger (2014). This includes services such as sending out bulk mail (which would typically comprise account statements) from retail and banking organisations, as well as using the postal network as a marketing and advertising medium (SAPO, 2014). From a commercial perspective, the postal service sector should ideally be of high quality and efficiency so that the economy of South Africa is supported by a strong postal, courier and express parcel service (Jaag, 2014; Ellison *et al.*, 2016).

There is thus a need to fulfill the social obligations of this sector while ensuring that it remains commercially viable. The social objective is characterised by universal service obligations and is driven by affordability, equity, and keeping costs down; while the commercial objective is driven by profit maximisation, efficiency, and service quality imperatives (Brown & Heller, 2017).

This study is grounded on the following theoretical foundations: Systems theory, profit maximizing and competition-based theory, decision-making theory, the human resource-based theory, theory of planned behaviour and contingency concept. These theories were carefully considered and chosen because they address and offer answers to the challenges facing the overall management performance of organisations (the postal sector in this case). Hence, this study investigated the strategic management of service quality for postal services. The framework that was tested in this study was conceived from a concept-analysis as indicated in

Table 1.1 about the views of different authors on the factors affecting service quality in the services sectors.

There is consensus that service quality depends on two variables: expected (desired) and perceived service (Zeithaml *et al.*, 2012). Expectations are beliefs about a service standard or reference point contrary to which quality is arbitrated (Wilson *et al.*, 2008), while perceived service quality is an evaluation process where the expected service is compared with the service received, as explicated by Lai and Chen (2011). Parasuraman *et al.* (1985) proposed the gaps model for service quality and identified five service-related gaps, namely: (1) the customer and management perception gap, (2) the management perception and service quality specification gap, (3) the service quality specifications and service delivery gap, (4) the service delivery and external communications gap, and (5) the expected service and perceived service gap. A modified model proposed by Parasuraman, *et al.* (1985) encourages researchers to identify other relevant components to extend the SERVQUAL model. Various other researchers have continued to refine the original model and a concept-analysis undertaken is presented in Table 1.1.

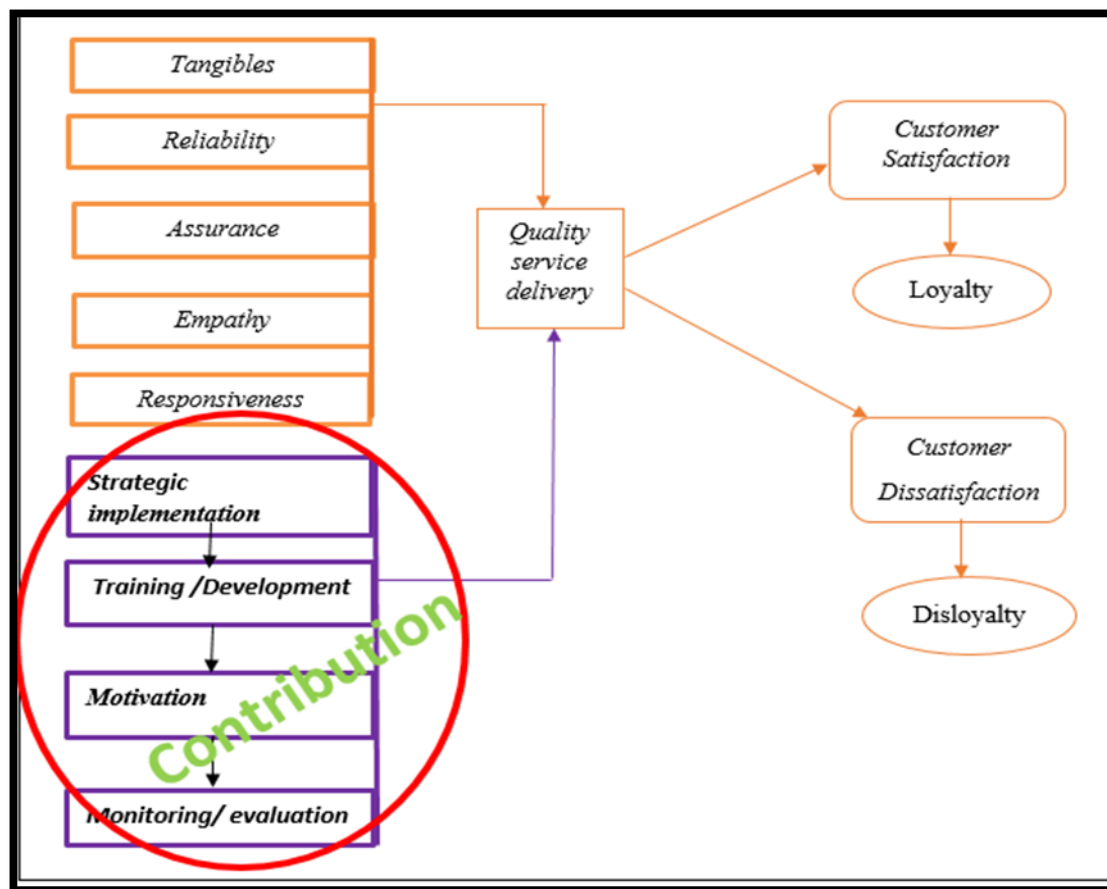
Table 1.1: Concept analysis of factors influencing service quality

Dimension	SERVQUAL model	Extended SERVQUAL	Extended SERVQUAL	Extended SERVQUAL	Extended SERVQUAL	This study 2020
	Parasuraman <i>et al.</i> (1985)	Kumar <i>et al.</i> (2009)	Wong and Fang (2012)	Azman <i>et al.</i> (2016)	Promkaew & Tembo (2017)	
Tangibles	×	×		×	×	×
Reliability	×	×	×	×	×	×
Responsiveness	×	×	×	×	×	×
Assurance	×	×	×	×	×	×
Empathy	×	×		×	×	×
Connivance		×			×	
Product			×		×	×
Readiness to recommend				×		×
Retention				×		
Word-of-mouth				×		×
Standard operating procedures					×	

Information and communication technology					×	
Employee empowerment					×	
Convenience and manpower					×	
Strategic implementation						×
Training and development						×
Motivation						×
Monitoring/evaluation						×

With the original SERVQUAL model as indicated in Table 1.1, many researches such as Kumar (2009), Wong and Fang (2012), Azman *et al.* (2016), Tembo (2017) and this study identified several service quality-related gaps as shown in the concept analysis above. This study proposes incorporating the following additional factors: strategic implementation, training and development, motivation, and also monitoring/evaluation for the strategic management of service quality at the SAPO. Based on the idea analysis bestowed in Table 1.1, a framework (Figure 1.2) is incorporated to generate answers to the research questions for both the quantitative and qualitative parts of this study. The detail in Table 1.1 and Figure 1.1 are explained in the empirical section of this study. Figure 1.1 portrays the factors blame for influencing the strategic management of service quality in the SAPO. Moreover, a strategic management team is responsible for relating all the managerial qualities to influence employees on service quality performance to provide consumers with higher levels of service quality to satisfy their need for such at the postal services branches. Figure 1.1 presents an initial framework constructed for this study.

Figure 1.1: Initial framework



This study identified the following additional factors as indicated in Figure 1.1: association with managers and frontline employees that will help in the improvement to influence the strategic management of service quality in the SAPO. Based on the concept analysis presented in Table 1.1, a framework (Figure 1.1) is proposed and tested in the empirical section of this study. Figure 1.1 depicts the factors this study deemed responsible for influencing the strategic management of service quality in the SAPO. Furthermore, it is debated that managers and frontline employees are accountable for merging all their managerial abilities to influence postal consumers to remain loyal using their postal services.

1.8 Literature review

A preliminary review of the literature was undertaken and the following keywords were used: challenges of strategic management, characteristics of strategic management, consumer expectation and perception on service quality, consumer satisfaction, and service improvement strategies, frontline employee's perception of service quality, management perception on service

quality, service quality, service excellence, strategic management, strategic management practices, strategic management process, service management, public sector strategic practices and South Africa post office. These keywords were included in the questionnaire and interview guides used as research instruments. The study incorporated academic articles and journals accessible from computer databases which include inter alia Google Scholar, Emerald, SAGE Publications, National ETD (portal which includes South African theses and dissertations), and EBSCOhost. Relevant textbooks were also used for this study.

1.9 Research methodology

The research methodology consists of empirical and non-empirical investigations. In order to satisfy the data needs of a scientific research study, an appropriate methodology must be used (Lapan *et al.*, 2012; Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). In social research, philosophical assumptions, design, and methods influence the research approach (Creswell, 2014). There are many research methods, such as the qualitative method, the quantitative method, and the mixed method of research (Creswell, 2014; Palinkas *et al.*, 2015; Bryman, 2017). For the aim of this study, a mix of qualitative and quantitative methodologies (mixed methodology) was selected. McCusker and Gunaydin (2015), Rahi (2017) and Brannen (2017) concur that, in practice, both quantitative and qualitative methods are commonly used within a single study to form ways for a transparent understanding of the research topic and to make provision for assembling and analysing both quantitative and qualitative data which allows for the integration of findings drawn in a study. The method in this study strengthens the findings by comparing and discussing results obtained through interviews with the management and frontline employees and supplemented by a survey with consumers. Both qualitative and quantitative methods, as expanded upon below, were crucial to assemble the desired data to deal with the research problem and propose a framework for the strategic management of service quality (Flick, 2014; Halcomb & Hickman, 2015; Violante & Vezzetti, 2017) in a public sector setting.

The literature review in this study covered the secondary research questions and this was ensured by an empirical investigation, based on the selection of the mixed methods. A synopsis of the research methodology followed is subsequently presented and a full delineation of the research methodology is in Chapter 4. The quantitative approach precedes the qualitative one.

1.9.1 Quantitative research method

Quantitative research is a set of systematic steps of scientific research based on quantitative principles (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2012; Sarma, 2015; Leung, 2015). Creswell (2013) and Davies and Johnson (2015) advise that the quantitative method is mostly used by examining the link among variables, measured using detailed instruments, and analysing data using statistical procedures. This method enabled making statistical inferences on the data captured regarding the consumers' expectations and perceptions of service quality rendered by the SAPO.

1.9.1.1 Population and sampling

To ascertain the behaviour of a complete population, subsets known as samples (which are similar within a population) are examined (Gray, 2014). Bhattacharjee (2012), Kennedy-Martin *et al.* (2015) and Moser and Korstjens (2018) maintain that sampling assures that the outcomes of the study represent the verity characteristics of the complete population. Sampling is done in order to study the characteristics of a bigger cluster and to reduce expenses, save time, and avoid the inconveniences of planning appointments with the entire population (Gray, 2014; Patten & Newhart, 2017; Thai & Page-Gould, 2018). Altinay *et al.*, (2018) outline sampling because the process by that the choice of participants who represent the population researched.

The population in the North West province of South Africa was 1 075 054 in 2018. (DoE, 2018). Out of the five districts municipality, two were selected for this study, that is, the Ngaka Modiri Molema and Dr. Kenneth Kaunda. The population of the two district municipalities selected are as follows: Klerksdorp: 420 732, Lichtenburg: 26 338, Mafikeng: 307 520: 162 765, and Zeerust: 157 699.

Since this study adopted the mixed methods research approach, varying sampling techniques were used, such as stratified and convenience sampling. For the quantitative methods, the study population was stratified into strata as characterised by postal service consumers. What makes this selection generalizable to the entire population is that similar characteristics can be found in other postal service branches, such as consumer-related variables (gender, age, employment status,) which are vital for drawing inferences for the purpose of the study (Relmer & Van Ryzin, 2011). The Statistics Consultation Services of the North-West University were consulted on generalizing strata to North West province before distributing the questionnaires (n=384).

To attain stratification, five postal service branches were selected: Mafikeng (Molopo post office), Zeerust (Zeerust post office), Lichtenburg (Itsoseng post office), Klerksdorp (Freemanville post office) and Potchefstroom (Noordbrug post office) for equal distribution of the 384 questionnaires. The selection was based on the service quality performance of the branches. In the qualitative methods of this study, convenience sampling was applied to the strata to select postal service consumers. Convenience sampling was used in selecting research participants in the Post Offices because it is a quick, easy, and cheap method (Denscombe, 2016).

1.9.1.2 Data collection method

Data collection refers to the process by which data are collected from respondents (Gray, 2011; Burns & Bush, 2014). For the quantitative phase, a self-administered questionnaire was used to collect the data from respondents, and self-administered questionnaires as a research instrument is detailed below.

1.9.1.3 Self-administered questionnaires

De Vos and Strydom (2011) and Clow and James (2014) describe a questionnaire as "a set of questions on a form which is completed by the respondent in respect of a research project". Babbie (2011) explains that a questionnaire is one of the survey strategies used to collect data for analysis. Questionnaire development is a crucial stage of the research process because the quality of the data collected depends on the superiority of the questionnaire. Furthermore, questionnaires should achieve clarity and be relevant by diagnosing specific deficiencies affecting the business (Zikmund *et al.*, 2010). Remler and Van Ryzin (2011), developing a good questionnaire is vital for successful quantitative research. In this study, the questionnaire used to solicit responses from participants is closed-ended. The questionnaire was solely designed for obtaining facts and opinions about the phenomenon under study: that is, to evaluate service quality at the post offices, postal service consumer expectations, and perception of SAPO's service.

The questionnaire designed for this study was separated into two sections (A and B). The focus of Section A is on the demographical information of respondents, thereby facilitating the identification of the independent variables for the study. The focus of Section B is on the secondary research questions formulated for this study, namely: post office employees'

willingness to assist, post office employees are never too busy to attend to requests, post office employees do provide speedy service, post office employees do indicate by when a service is rendered or completed, thus addressing the dependent variables (expectations and perception of consumer-related variables). In this study, a letter of introduction was presented to participants before the survey.

1.9.1.4 Data analysis

Data analysis is a procedure of converting collected data through a statistical summary into information that is meaningful and reasonable (Bastick & Matalon, 2012; Newton & Rudestam, 2013; Wickham, 2016). In addition, data analysis helps researchers to extract meaningful information and properly describes the inherent characteristics of the phenomena (Burns & Bush, 2014; Jebb *et al.*, 2017). Furthermore, data analysis is important because unprocessed data provides little explanation and meaning to researchers. Quantitative data analysis techniques were used to clarify and interpret the relationships between variables (Msosa, 2015; Albers, 2017). In this study, both Excel and SPSS were used. Data entry was done through Excel and then exported to the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 24 where data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. A professional statistician was engaged to analyse data. The data collected for this study through the questionnaire were analysed as per the objectives stated for this study.

1.9.1.5 Data analysis and statistical techniques

Data has no meaning unless analysed and interpreted. The data were analysed with the Excel and computer software Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The closed-ended questions were assigned numbers according to the Likert scales and captured into the statistical computer program. Descriptive statistics and multivariate analysis were used to process the data for interpretation.

The above discussion elaborated on the data collection methods used; the quantitative part with self-administered questionnaires to collect the data needed. The qualitative part with semi-structured interviews comprise the following section of the discussion.

1.9.2 Qualitative approach

The design in this study allows for a follow-up process for a deeper understanding of the quantitative results obtained using questionnaires in the first phase. The methodology used for quantitative phase 2 is discussed in terms of site and participant selection, data collection strategy, and data analysis. The subsequent discussion explains the second component of this study.

1.9.2.1 Site and participant selection

The sites selected for the qualitative phase were five postal service branches from the Ngaka Modiri Molema and the Doctor Kenneth Kaunda districts in the North West province and the local areas where fieldwork was undertaken are: Mafikeng (Molopo post office), Zeerust (Zeerust post office), Lichtenburg (Itsoseng post office), Klerksdorp (Freemanville post office) and Potchefstroom (Noordbrug post office). In total, five (5) managers were purposefully selected, (one from each postal service branch), as well as twenty (20) frontline employees were selected (4 from each postal service branch), giving a total of 25 participants selected for the qualitative phase of this research design.

1.9.2.2 Data collection strategy

One-on-one semi-structured interviews were conducted with the managers and frontline employees, to elaborate on the views and thoughts of consumers regarding the service quality in the SAPO as per the quantitative data obtained. However, the interview guide for the managers differs from that of the frontline employees to place more focus to how manager's strategies and manage their services and prepare frontline employees, monitor performance and feedback, improve capacity-building for frontline employees, and to strategically use service quality to generally enhance consumers' satisfaction. During the interview sessions, an audio-tape recorder was used to capture all the detail of the conversations for the aim of transcribing and coding the data during data analysis. The permission of the respondents was secured before the recording device was used. Participants were made aware that the recordings would be used for academic purposes only and that it would be destroyed after analysis had been completed.

1.9.2.3 Data analysis

The recordings were transcribed and the statistical software Atlas-Ti was used for analysing the transcribed interviews using an a priori method of determining themes. The output (quotations and codes) and network diagrams are incorporated into the delivery of this research report.

1.10 Validity, reliability, trustworthiness and ethical approaches

The concept of validity and reliability is posited as originating from the quantitative methods of research which recently have been adopted for qualitative studies (Relmer & Ryzin, 2011). Susanne (2012) affirms that methods used to establish trustworthiness in scientific research include internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity. In this study, construct validity and reliability were obtained by formulating the questionnaire and semi-structured interview guides from the reviewed literature, while trustworthiness enabled comparing the results of the quantitative and qualitative to elucidate any misinterpretations and reduce any bias. Finally, ethical approach to this study ensured that respondents and participants were provided with the right to partake voluntarily, and also guaranteed that participants at all levels were protected against harm. Respondents participated voluntarily, and they were protected against harm.

1.11 Discussion and recommendations

An extensive discussion of the results obtained from the statistical analysis of both the quantitative and qualitative methods are presented later on in this thesis. The proposed framework of this study serves as a recommendation to improve the strategic management of service quality for managers and frontline employees in the SAPO to achieve consumer service excellence at the various postal branches.

1.12 Concept clarification

Throughout this study, the following terms are utilized for the purpose of conceptualizing the strategic management framework of service quality as a strategy to enhance consumer satisfaction.

- Postal services

From a technological perspective, postal services is a delivery or transportation service, for carrying goods from one point to another. Indeed, there is no clear dividing line between postal services and other delivery services, such as the delivery/transportation services offered by commercial shippers or freight forwarders, or the door-to-door delivery services provided by deliverers of advertising and other forms of direct mail (Morganti *et al.*, 2014). Postal services deliver addressed goods for which the nature and volume of the goods are such as to support regular, scheduled, dense deliveries in a region (where dense refers to a delivery network which delivers to or passes close by every delivery point in a region). This ability to exploit economies of scale and scope in delivery through regular, scheduled, dense deliveries, distinguishes mail services from other delivery services (Manners-Bell, 2016; Watetu, 2017).

- Quality

Blessic *et al.* (2011) define quality as that which is able to meet consumer expectations. The American Society of Quality (ASQ) (2017) defines quality as "the totality of features and characteristics of a product or a service that bear its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs." The International Standards Organisation (ISO) (2017) defines quality as "the degree to which a set of inherent characteristics of an object fulfill requirements." Therefore, quality is the skill of a good or service to meet the requirements of a user.

- Service

The American Marketing Association (cited by Kapoor *et al.*, 2011) defines service as "activities, benefits or satisfaction that are offered for sale, or provided in connection with the sale of goods". McColl Kennedy (2011), Beltagui *et al.* (2016) and Wirtz and Lovelock (2016) refer to services as "acts, performances, and experiences". For the purpose of this study, services are the acts, performances, and experiences consumers purchase from the postal sector.

- Consumer

A consumer is an individual who buys products or services for personal use and not for manufacturing or resale (Belk, 2014; Matzler *et al.*, 2015; Edbring *et al.*, 2016). A consumer is someone who can decide whether or not to purchase an item and someone who can be influenced through marketing and advertisements (Rani, 2014). Every time someone goes to a store and purchases a toy, shirt, beverage, or anything else, they are making that decision as a consumer (Berger, 2019).

- Frontline employees

Frontline employees answer the phone or help a consumer in person in shops, banks, and hospitals (Lovelock & Patterson, 2015; Akkawanitcha *et al.*, 2015.). Front-line employees are the first port of call for most consumers, they have a strong impact on user experience and influence the public's perception of the brand they represent (Bagley, 2015).

- Service quality

Service quality is an immediate output of the inputs into a system, such as a workforce or finances (Choi *et al.*, 2015). Tsang *et al.* (2011) and Myrden and Kelloway (2015) assert that quality service is maintained by the nature of the service, as the performance (behavior) of employees is the actual product purchased by customers. Service quality is referred to as the provision of such services that are considered essential to make sure an inexpensive and acceptable quality of life (Dlulisa, 2013; Dabestani *et al.*, 2016; Chang, 2017).

- Strategic management

Strategic management is the art and science of an organisation in formulating, implementing, and evaluating cross-functional decisions that will enable achievement of objectives (David, 2012; Wambugu & Waiganjo 2015; Syukron 2017). Smith (2014); Rothaermel (2016) and Ansoff (2018) refer to strategic management as an approach that is based on the complexities of the total business environment.

- Perception

This is the subjective interpretation by people of experiences incurred throughout the acquisition of product and services (Horner & Swarbrooke, 2016). The views or perspective of consumers is regarded as the views of the consumers of their experiences with the buying of SAPO services in this study.

- Expectation

The expectation is that the want of a consumer for a desire to be consummated or the force that drives a customer to get a selected good or service (Mason *et al.*, 2015). The consumer sets specific criteria that must be met for an expectation to be fulfilled (Acimovic & Graves 2015; Horner & Swarbrooke, 2016).

1.13 Conceptual framework

A conceptual framework refers to the ideas or a structure according to which something is developed (Mudzanani, 2013). This study is designed to discuss issues that contribute towards devising a service quality framework and to propose new ways for frontline employees in dealing with their consumers regarding service delivery. In addition, management needs to be knowledgeable concerning the benefit of frontline employees in terms of the service rendered to consumers and devise ways for motivating their employees to aim to exceed consumers' expectations.

1.14 Delimitation and limitations of the study

This study is delimited to post offices in the North West province in two selected districts. The participants of this study are post office consumers who receive services, managers who are intricate in the overall strategic planning of the organisation, and frontline employees who render services at the post offices. This study is confined to matters related to the strategic management of service quality for management and frontline employees to improve consumers' satisfaction with the South Africa Post Office: A case of the North West province, and which could be applied to other post offices throughout South Africa.

All research studies have some limitations caused by either time and/or monetary fund constraints. The subsequent limitations were encountered throughout this research study:

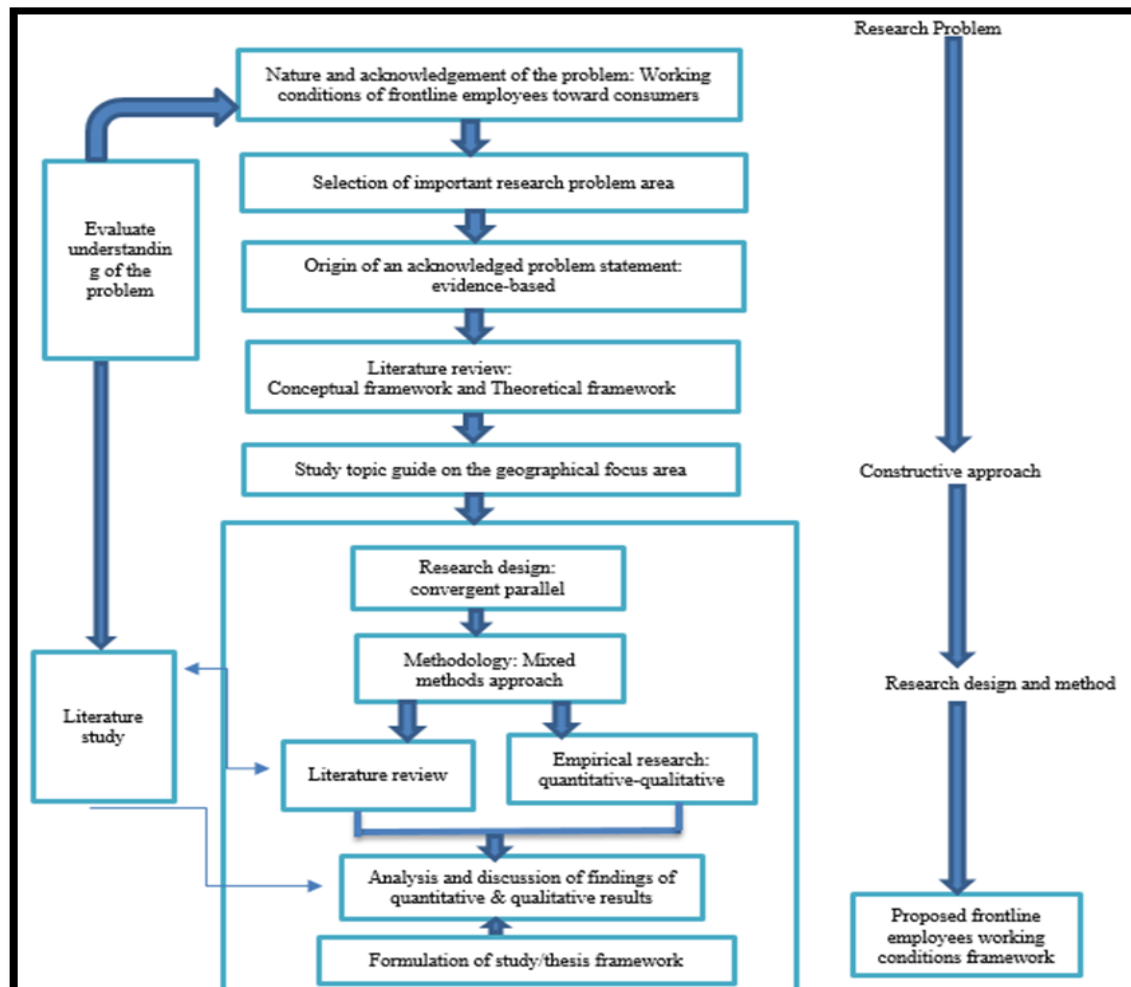
- Exposure to the subject matter, the researcher has never worked in a fully-fledged services delivery management unit in the post office. Therefore, a number of the matters stated in the research haven't been explored physically before.
- Non-availability of sufficient material and financial constraints on the subject of research were also limitations.
- There is very little research on the strategic management of service quality in the postal sector of South Africa, resulting in only a few local previous studies to benchmark this study against.

1.15 Thesis conceptual map

The thesis map outlines the study diagrammatically in a recursive plan. The subject on the progress and results obtained, the stages as shown in Figure 1.2 below, were re-adjusted and/or reconducted in order to achieve desirable results (Mavetera, 2011). This framework guided the

organisation of the structure of the chapter mapping of this theses. Figure 1.2 presents the initial framework constructed for this study.

Figure 1.2: Thesis conceptual framework



Source: Adapted from Mavetera (2012)

1.16 Structure of the thesis

This study is structured in the following manner.

Chapter 1: Introduction and motivation

This chapter provides a general summary of the study, together with the introduction and motivation, the background of the study, the problem statement and research questions, aims of the study, the research design and methodology through which the research is conducted, the

delimitation of the study, ethical aspects of research, the proposed contribution of the study, defining of the key terms, and lastly the thesis map of the study.

Chapter 2: Strategic management and service quality

Chapter Two is devoted to the theory of strategic management of service quality, the origin of strategic management, importance of strategic management, strategic management practices, the process of strategic management practices, as well as the challenges to strategic management implementation. The study further discusses understanding of the concept service quality, service quality defined, perception on service quality, perceived service quality, customer perception of service quality, and management and employee perceptions of service quality. Expectation on service quality, customer expectations, levels of customer expectation, effects of customer expectations on customer satisfaction, strategies for exceeding customer expectations was also discuss. However, the service quality dimensions (SERVQUAL model), measuring service quality, measuring service quality using SERVQUAL, criticisms of the SERVQUAL model, and application of the SERVQUAL MODEL in the postal sector was also discuss. The literature of consumer satisfaction, customer service as a driver of customer satisfaction, the relationship between and customer satisfaction and service quality, the customer service encounter, service failure as well as service recovery strategies were also discussed. Finally, the proposed conceptual framework is dealt with in this chapter.

Chapter 3: Strategic management in the public sector

Chapter 3 reviews relevant literature and provides understanding of service management, the service management process and function of service management. Understanding of a public sector, the role of public sector in service delivery and the challenges associated with public sector service delivery was discuss. The literature further discusses postal services in the public sector, the international scenario of postal service, the postal services in selected countries, the role played by the of postal services in socio-economic development, the factors that led to the decline in support of postal services and effects of the decline in postal services. However, the study further discusses public sector South Africa, a brief history, SAPO vision, mission and value, the importance of SAPO, the present scenario of SA postal services, SAPO strategic planning model, the macro and the micro environment South African postal services units, and the problems and challenges in the SAPO.

Chapter 4: Research design and methods

The focus of this chapter is on pragmatism paradigm, research design, research approach, and methodology (quantitative and qualitative phases). Population, sampling methods, data collection techniques are also discussed. This chapter also includes ethical considerations, validity, reliability, trustworthiness, and benchmark for thesis evaluation criteria are also discussed.

Chapter 5: Quantitative and qualitative research results

In Chapter Five, the presentation and discussion of the quantitative research results obtained from the survey with the postal consumers are centralised. It further presents the inferential statistics of the quantitative element, so exposing the interrelationships existing among interacting variables. Whereas the qualitative research results emphasis is placed on the presentation and discussion of the qualitative research results obtained from the interviews with postal managers and frontline employees. In the qualitative, a network diagram is presented as a part of the qualitative component to simplify the findings obtained from the respondents.

Chapter 6: Overview of the research, conclusion, and recommendations

This chapter presents an overview of the study, the discussion of the findings obtained from the quantitative and qualitative components. It further presents the contributions of this study which serve as a guide to the managers and frontline employees and other services sectors in the improvement of the strategic management of service delivery. The limitations of the study, recommendations, and the conclusion are proffered in this chapter.

CHAPTER 2

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT OF SERVICE QUALITY

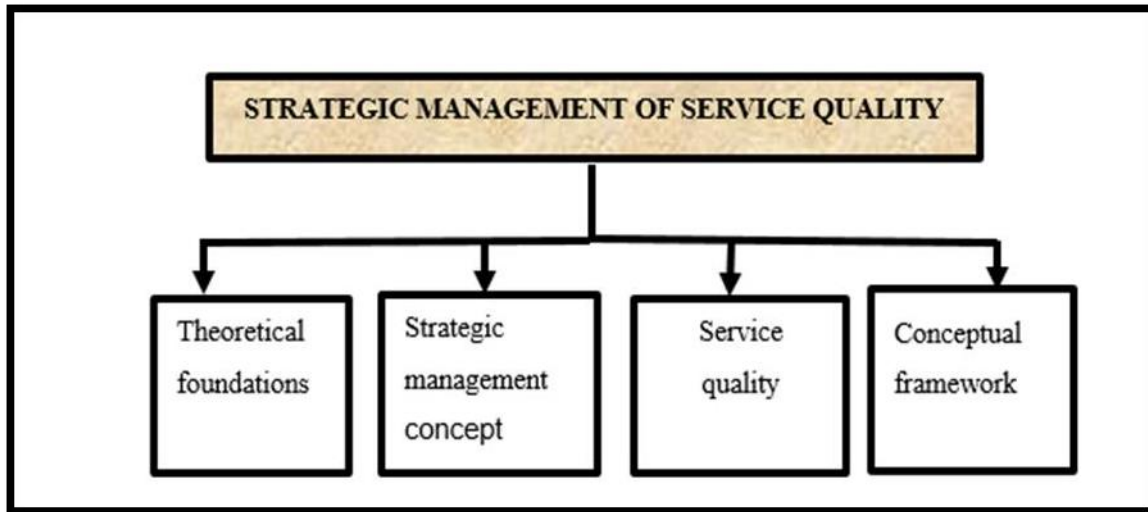
2.1 Introduction

This Chapter engages in an intense literature review of the strategic management of service quality theories and how these theories can aid an organisation to enhance the strategic management of their service quality. The review of the literature is divided into two chapters. This includes Chapter Two, which is a presentation of a number of theories and concepts on the strategic management of service quality, and Chapter Three, where the focus is on service management in the public sector. This division is due to the reality that these are two very broad areas with different but interrelated scope as applicable to this study. Secondly, the division is intended to provide for an in-depth review that allows for coherence whilst extensively covering and identifying gaps in the theories separately from the conceptual framework of the two broad areas without losing the golden thread.

The literature review is selective of studies that advocate the environmental approach to the strategic management of service quality. Strategic management is a young discipline conceptualised 30 years ago. As such, there are very limited acclaimed theories underpinning the discipline. It is based on developing new ways of thinking that are needed by an organisation (management) to solve the issues facing the field of business policy. In this Chapter, strategic management is conceptualized to have a strong impact in improving service quality in the public sector at different levels striving to exercise their responsibilities, such as managers and employees who are tasked with the strategic and operational levels of management. The theories adopted for this study were selected for the reason that they address and provide solutions to management issues surrounding the optimal performance of organisations (the postal sectors in this case). The strategic management of service quality is further addressed to examine the interconnection between effective strategic implementation and work performance and to ensure higher productivity and achieving the goals of the post office. The concept of service quality examined the perception and expectation of service quality with consumers, managers, and frontline employees in the postal sector. This chapter further addresses the conceptual framework of this study as a proposed framework to enhance the strategic management of service quality amongst managers and frontline employees in order to improve consumers' satisfaction with the postal services.

A chapter map of the four main sections of this chapter is presented in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1: Chapter map



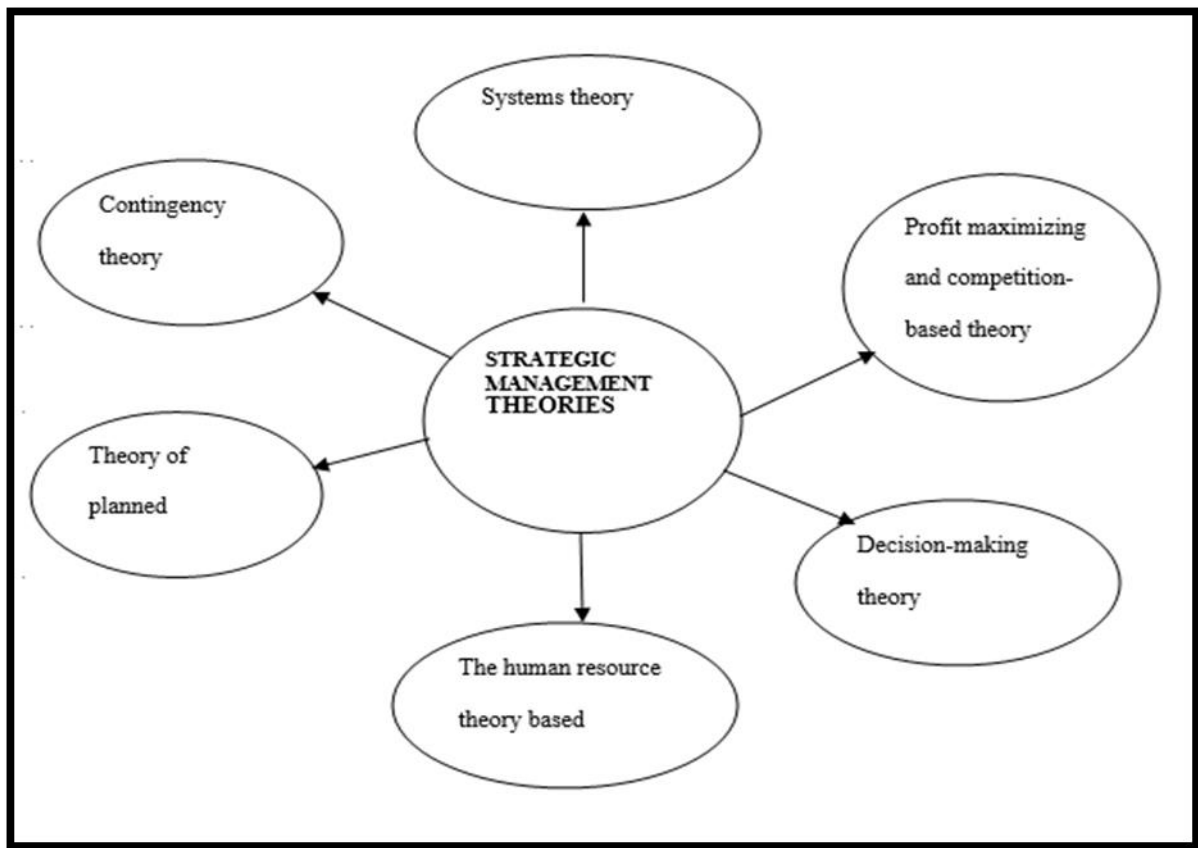
The first section of this study focuses on the theoretical foundations of strategic management theories as explained below.

2.2 Theoretical foundations

The theoretical foundations refer to the knowledge constructed for a research study. It serves as the structure and rationale for the study, the problem statement, the purpose, the significance, and the research questions (Patton, 2014). In the views of Moon and Blackman (2014) and Ambira (2016), the theoretical foundation are the supporting ideas of a study where significant opinions and philosophies about the nature of knowledge are constructed. A theoretical framework supports and directs a study by providing a structure and describing how a study is philosophically and methodologically structured. The theoretical frameworks for this study were chosen to provide ideas on how to approach strategy management of service quality. The study adopted various approaches and the supporting theories were drawn from a wide assortment of management theories to elaborate the present ideas.

This study narrowed the theories down to systems theory, the profit maximizing and competition-based theory, the decision-making theory, the human resource-based theory, the theory of planned behavior, and lastly, the contingency theory.

Figure 2.2: Strategic management theories



Source: Adapted from Sheldrake (2003)

Figure 2.2 is a delineation of each one of the theories.

2.2.1 Systems theory

A system is a unit consisting of several related parts that function as an entity in a dynamic state of equilibrium (Hellriegel *et al.*, 2008). In this regard, an organisation is regarded as a structure with several units that work together within their internal and external environments to achieve their set objectives (Mele *et al.*, 2010; Coetzee & Van Niekerk, 2012). An organisation is considered as an entity that co-operates with the external environment thereby converting input into output and receiving feedback from the external environment. This theory advocates the need to understand the environment, social relationship dynamics, individual lifestyles and perceptions; and individual conditions before making decisions (Hellriegel *et al.*, 2009; Mele *et al.*, 2010).

System theorists consider an organisation to be subdivided into different sections or departments to ensure that departments function efficiently and effectively through interrelationships with each other (Mele *et al.*, 2010). The inability of one department to perform as expected will invariably affect the performance of other departments and ultimately that of the entire organisation. Furthermore, systems theorists emphasise the need for different departments to have extensive knowledge of their visions, developmental programmes (including quality development), knowledge of their environment, management of their relationships with the external environment, adapting to the existing conditions in the marketplace, and courage in handling difficult times (Mele *et al.*, 2010; Luhmann *et al.*, 2013; Salim, 2014). To run a successful organisation, managers need to plan to ensure that the entire system functions and this will only be possible through the interpretation of feedback and analysing business circumstances to find a suitable balance in resolving problems. This is also achieved through adjustments on the implementation of policies, and lastly redefining the organisational structure to promote a suitable performance (Teece, 2010; Goetsch & Davis, 2014; Kerzner, 2017).

Concerning this study, the post office is regarded as a system while the several departments, such as human resources, the mail and parcel unit, the retail unit, the posted bank unit, the supply chain unit, the properties unit, the logistics unit, and others are regarded as sub-systems; and consumers constitute the external environment. There is a need for management of the post office branches to adopt the objects and tactics of the systems theory to ensure that the strategic management of service quality at all branches of the post office post is a success. The objects of this theory involve effective communication and co-operation between the private and public services, its consumers, and efficient service delivery to ensure the organisations do provide the desired level of services to its consumers (Scarso & Bolisani, 2012; Daunton, 2015).

The adoption of this theory would enable the managers of postal branches and frontline employees to interact with consumers in establishing the best method for the handling of service delivery of postal services. Besides, the theory emphasises the need for organisations to engage in developmental programs in their capacity building; technical improvements to handle service delivery matters competently to achieve consumer satisfaction and service excellence at the branches in the North West province.

2.2.2 Profit maximizing and competition-based theory

The profit-maximizing and competition-based theory is based on the notion that a business organisation's main objective is to maximize long term profit and developing sustainable competitive advantage over competitive rivals in the external market place. The industrial organisation perspective is the basis of this theory as it views the organisation's external market positioning as the critical factor for attaining and sustaining competitive advantage, or in other words, the traditional industrial organisation perspective offered strategic management a systematic model for assessing competition within an industry (Porter & Newman, 2004; Kyriazopoulos & Samanta, 2012). Thus the adoption of this theory would enable the management of post offices, to adopt effective strategic management of service quality in order to gain a competitive advantage in the market place. Besides, the theory emphasises the need for post offices to provide its consumers with a high-quality product as well as high-quality service to achieve consumer loyalty at/by the branches in the North West province.

2.2.3 Decision-making theory

The decision-making theory refers to a situation whereby several courses of action are selected from two or more alternatives to resolve a specific problem (Akrani, 2011; Meyer, 2013). Decision-making is done to achieve an objective or to solve a specific problem. The Decision-making Theory, also referred to as the Rational Theory, is an instinctive and interdisciplinary approach that determines how organisations decide on the path to follow given unknown variables in an uncertain environmental framework (Jefford *et al.*, 2011; Pettigrew, 2014). The Decision-making Theory places emphasis on the best decision making strategy with perfect accuracy which is rational and based on logical concepts that are aimed at enhancing the capacity of management (post offices) to formulate productive policies.

Growing the quality of the decision-making process in organisations improves work effectiveness, impacts lives, and changes the organisational direction. The Decision-making Theory expresses the need for management to think rationally when under risk and uncertainty to select the best alternative amongst options. The theory provides management with structure and discipline to make decisions and it encourages the consideration of factors that are logically incorporated into the decision-making process. SAPO management, branch managers, and frontline employees all need to understand the prescripts of this theory to be able to make a logical choice amongst available alternatives. Understanding this theory enables managers and

frontline employees in a post office to evaluate the pros and cons of options, forecast the outcome of each possible choice, and then determine the best choice for each situation; even before making the decisions. This theory could enable post offices to determine the best strategy to implement to achieve strategic management of service quality for postal services in any given situation.

2.2.4 The human resource-based theory

The human resource-based theory of strategic management underscores the significant role that the human element plays in the strategy development and organisational success. It originated from the tenet that the source of organisations' competitive advantage is the organisation's skilled and efficient personnel, which cannot be easily copied by competitors (Ologbo *et al.*, 2012). In the views of Omari *et al.* (2011) and Thorson (2016), this theory stresses the important role of the human aspect in the strategic development of organisations. Human resources (also referred to as talent management) can positively affect organisational performance by empowering and understand the convolutions of several transferred organisational processes and implement the processes reasonably by observing quality, security, and timelines features. However, this effect is not direct and it is the internal intellectual resource management that boosts performance. Further, these effects take place when the organisation's strategy merges all these components as core competence (Jardon & Gonzalez, 2013; Wolff & Kim, 2020).

The human resource-based theory is often used as the basic background for studying strategic management of service quality. Some human resource practices are always better than others and therefore organisations that adopt these practices will report better performances. Organisations must adopt specific human resource policies and practices for different strategies and hence an organisation's human resource policy must be consistent with other elements of the organisation for the strategies to be effective. Organisations can produce personnel behaviours that are consistent with their strategy by putting in place appropriate human resources policies and practices in place in order to produce high-quality service (Rose & Kumar, 2006; Aswathappa, 2013; Mwaniki & Gathenya, 2015). Jardon and Gonzalez (2013); Teece (2014) and Cameron *et al.* (2014) postulate that human resources are a source of competitive advantage as it assists in the development of essential capabilities which places the organisation above its competitors, hence, influences high service quality performance. These essential competencies are vibrant capabilities of greater hierarchy that incorporate, construct, and reorganise internal and external dynamics of an organisation to create value. These competencies become competitive

advantages when a firm achieves a healthier performance than its competitors. Competitive advantage originates from human capital but it perhaps does not directly influence performance and it may require the amalgamation of other factors of core competencies but these links are unknown (Evans & Lindsay, 2013).

Hollenbeck and Jamieson (2015) and Ogunyomi and Bruning (2016) explain that in human-resource based theory, human capital is one of the major resources that an organisation can possess. The human resource-based theory elucidates how human resource management policies are developed. The theory underscores the significance of different interested parties who form an organisation (Iannello, 2013; and Al Ariss & Sidani, 2016). The values and attitudes of these stakeholders determine the long-term goals and impact on how the management of employees is accomplished. It also recognises that the operation of such an organisation is constrained by organizational, social, and product components (Grant, 2016). The human resource-based theory tends to believe that human capital can be a source of competitive advantage for an organisation, that human resource management practices have the most direct influence on the human capital of a firm and, that the complex nature of human resource management systems of practice can enhance the inimitability of the system in order to obtain high service quality (Bratton & Gold, 2017; Kianto *et al.*, 2017). The human resource-based theory emphasizes the human element in the strategy development process of an organisation (Sparrow *et al.*, 2016; Noe *et al.*, 2017). This theory relates to this study since strategic management requires human resources to make decisions and effectively implement various processes. It is for studying strategic management of service quality to understand the existence of unique resources and capabilities in an organisation that can give it an edge through the strategic management process, in a manner that will positively influence the organisation's performance.

2.2.5 Theory of planned behaviour

The Theory of Planned Behaviour links belief and behaviour and predicts peoples' intentions to engage in the behaviour at a particular time (Moss, 2016). This theory intends to explain all behaviors over which people have to exert self-control. The key component of this theory is the behavioral intent, which is influenced by attitude on the likelihood that the behaviour will have an expected outcome and the subjective evaluation of the risks and benefits of that outcome (Jimmieson *et al.*, 2008). The Theory of Planned Behaviour emphasises that human behaviours are governed not only by personal attitudes but also by social pressures and a sense of control.

This Theory, when coupled with a few modifications, can generate some fascinating predictions (LaMorte, 2016). For example, individuals are more likely to execute, rather than neglect their intentions, such as a plan to refrain from services quality, if they express these plans on more than one occasion. This theory posits that human behaviour is deliberate and planned, therefore it can be changed. In essence, it means that the performance of a behaviour is determined by intentions and behavioral control. In this case, employing this theory would enable organisations (a post office) to understand the behavior of people in a given circumstance. Post offices in the North West province need to understand the prescripts of this theory to grasp early warning signals from postal consumers concerning poor quality service and the measures that could be applied to rescue the situation to achieve high service quality.

2.2.6 Contingency theory

Contingency or the situation theory, as propounded by Fredler (2015), stresses the significance of using diverse approaches to resolve issues that may arise in an organisation (Sauser *et al.*, 2009). Flynn *et al.* (2009) and Ahimbisibwe *et al.* (2015) posit that management should use different approaches to address different situations. The contingency concept, therefore, implies that organisations should interact continuously with the internal and external environment thereby receiving feedbacks and also developing adaptive features to overcome challenges that may arise as circumstances change (Ndoloh, 2016). Hellriegel *et al.* (2016) affirm that the contingency theory suggests that management should make their decisions based on the present need of the surrounding environment. In this respect, it is important to note that different situations may require different problem resolving mechanisms. Organisations need to scan the external environment to identify suitable problem resolving mechanisms to apply.

South Africa's post offices need to adopt the contingency approach in the management of strategic service quality. Management needs to communicate adequately with consumers to understand their challenges to thereby identifying views and difficulties arising in the service delivery and devising strategies to resolve them to improve effective postal service excellence. The contingency model of leadership establishes that the leader's behaviour should be directive, supportive, participative, and achievement-oriented to ensure that the set goals will be actualised and to ensure performance. The model further depicts that management should combine the leadership styles which include task motivated and relationship motivated styles with situation controlling capacities to ensure effective work performance or output.

In this case, this theory encourages capacity building in post offices, technical support in service delivery, socio-economic support with consumers and encourages collaboration between post office managers, frontline employers, and postal consumers to enhance responsible service delivery. It further supports post offices to interact with its consumers, thereby understanding the problems surrounding for postal services, thus identifying solutions to enhance sustainable service quality.

Concluding the above discussion, the resource-based theory in this study hinges on the premise that the source of a competitive advantage lies in its internal resources as opposed to its positioning in the external environment. The theory will also enable SAPO management to interact with its postal consumers in order to establish an effective postal service delivery. Profit maximizing and competition-based theory in this study focuses on ensuring that SAPO's main objective to maximize long term profit and developing sustainable competitive advantage over competitive rivals in the external market place will be achieved. The decision-making theory in this study will enable SAPO management to think rationally when under risk and uncertainty to select the best alternative amongst options. The human resource-based theory in this study emphasises the importance of the human element in the strategic development of SAPO. The theory of planned behaviour in this study could enable SAPO management to understand the behaviour and reaction of postal consumers toward its services. The contingency theory in this study draws the idea that there is no one or single best way or approach to managing organizations. It recommends that organizations should develop a managerial strategy based on the situation and condition they are experiencing (Ainuddin *et al.*, 2007; Salas *et al.*, 2015; Ansoff *et al.*, 2018).

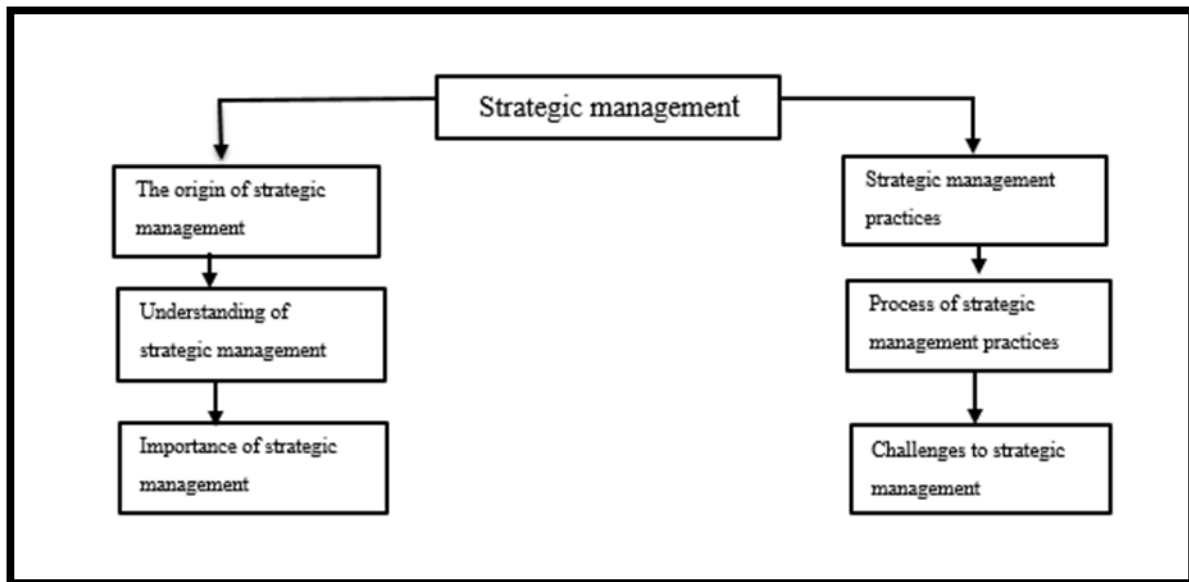
The various theoretical foundation explained in the preceding suggest that post offices could adopt to manage and improve the strategic management of service quality, in an attempt to improve the postal service quality of consumers. The subsequent section of the discussion explains the concept of strategic management which is necessary to manage postal services and to improve the strategic management of service quality.

2.3 Strategic management of service quality

Strategic management is very important in determining the future goals of in an organisation. In the face of the growing need to improve service quality in the SAPO, strategic management is key. For managers and frontline employees to take a step to improve the service quality of the SAPO, there is a need for a detailed understanding of strategic management to make the right

decisions to actualize that specific objective. This section outlines strategic management as informed by different scholars of management by examining the following as indicated in Figure 2.3 below.

Figure 2.3: The strategic management of service quality concept



2.3.1 The origin of strategic management

Strategic management was born amid huge optimism and industrial growth in the 1960s and early 1970s. Initially, organisations tried to cope with the new and, at the same time, rapidly- changing economic, technological, and organisational developments through some form of long- range planning. Long-range planning, in its initial form, soon ran into numerous problems when it became evident that simply forecasting past events as projections of the future could not always provide accurate results, nor achieve the organisation's desired objectives (Burnes & James, 1992; Katsioloudes, 2012; MacIntosh & Maclean, 2014; Lowell, 2016). Organisations needed to transform strategic planning into a vital management discipline (Porter & Prenzler, 2012; Babafemi, 2015).

Consequently, long-range planning was replaced by strategic management, which incorporates the possibility that changes and trends can and do occur and it is not based on the assumption that development can be assured (Burnes, 1992; MacIntosh & Maclean, 2014; Canton, 2019). Whereas long-range planning was essentially concerned with plotting trends and planning actions to achieve identified targets, all of these aimed at financial goals and budgetary controls,

the focus of strategic management is on environmental assumptions that underlie market trends (Burnes, 1992; Kono, 2015; Holloway, 2017).

2.3.2 Understanding of strategic management

Businesses such as postal sectors need to monitor their internal and external business environments to effect change in their business and service processes. To pledge change in a commercial environment, there is a need to implement strategic management to accomplish the desired purposes of an organisation. This section presents an understanding of strategic management by several authors in the field of business management.

In terms of strategic management, several authors such as Mapetere *et al.* (2012), Meyer (2012) and Ohaegbu and Awele (2015) and Meyer (2016), have considered strategic management as the most critical and fundamental process for public sector organisations in achieving their desired outcomes. However, Jelenc (2009) claimed that the central part of effective strategic management is judged as a proper integration of strategy formulation and strategy implementation. Eden and Ackermann (2013), explain that strategic management is a collection of ongoing activities of strategic analysis, strategy creation, implementation, and monitoring. It is also the art and science of formulating, implementing, analysing, and evaluating cross- functional decisions that enable an organisation to achieve its objectives (Verweir, 2014). Anna (2015) defines strategic management as a management process by which future goals of change are determined and current decisions to actualize a specific objective are decided upon. Grant (2016) affirms that the strategic management system organizes the resources in alignment with vision, mission, and strategy throughout the organisation. Grant (2016), further ascertains that strategic management does not predict the future, but prepares the organisation for it by knowing the exact steps to implement a strategic plan.

Looking at strategic management from a survival and growth angle, Strydom (2015) regards it as the process of determining how to reach the organisation long-term goals with the resources expected to be available. It involves the major strategic issues of an organisation and it must meet certain criteria which include the relationship between the organisation and its external environment and the involvement of the organisation, as a whole, in decision-making. Strategic management concentrates on the fate, survival, and growth of the organisation and its leaders are actively involved in advancing positive organisational change toward quality and quality assurance. From the above definition, strategic management is widely defined as an ongoing

process of shaping the future of public sector such as (SAPO). Ansoff *et al.* (2016) emphasize that strategic management should be results-oriented and should, thus, focus on results not currently achieved by the actions of the organisation rivals through the process of strategic management. The next section is a deliberation of the importance of strategic management.

2.3.3 The importance of strategic management

Strategic management is very important to any organisation, because it provides overall direction by developing plans and policies designed to achieve objectives and then allocating resources to implement the plans. Tapera (2014) and Salum (2017) identify two primary reasons why strategy is important in an organisation. The first is that management needs to proactively craft how the organisation's business will be conducted. They further assert that a clear and well thought out strategy is management's prescription for doing business, its road map to competitive advantage, its game plan for pleasing customers, and improving financial performance. Secondly, they say that a strategy-focused enterprise is more likely to be a strong bottom line performer than a company whose management views strategy as secondary and puts its priorities elsewhere. Effective strategy formulation and execution have a significantly positive impact on revenue growth, earnings, and return on investment. Thus, SAPO needs to take into account an effective strategic management plan in order to reach its overall objectives.

The benefits of strategic management can either be financial benefits and non-financial benefits. Financial benefits include improvement in sales, profitability, and productivity. There are also non-financial benefits as indicated by Tappura *et al.* (2015) and O'Neill *et al.* (2016). Strategic management improves the understanding of competitor's strategies by enabling a company to understand the difference with its competitors and being aware of threats. It allows reducing resistance to change, enables the exploitation of more opportunities, defines the management issues objectively, provides a framework for an organization to coordinate and control the activities, promotes the communication among the employees and managers and finally, it encourages people to think more about the future of a company (Huiru, 2011; Hall *et al.*, 2017). Thus, it is also necessary for SAPO to assess the competitive strength of the organisation, its structure, and the strength of competitors so that counter-strategies can be devised to protect the organisation.

Aldehayyat and Twaissi (2011), summaries one of the benefits of strategic management is to improve co-ordination within an organisation by bringing together all the departmental strategies

within the overall organisational strategy. Strategic management is also important for control through the review of organisational performance and its progress toward goals or objectives. Furthermore, a strategic plan is used for identifying and pursuing future marketing opportunities, for enhancing communication between staff internally within an organisation and for improving the overall organisational performance. Osei-Poku (2012) adds that organisations plan and monitor their activities to focus on resources and efforts for their ultimate survival. Strategic management also increases organisational efficiency and effectiveness through the improvement of both present and future operations. It offers a background for the management's vision of the future and thus determines how the organisation will change eventually to benefit from the new opportunities (Osei-Poku, 2012). In this case, SAPO should bring together all the functional departments to work together in achieving its overall goals or objectives as stated in the company's strategic plan.

Several scholars, (Kaner, 2014; Ferlie & Ongaro, 2015; Joyce, 2015) explain that strategic management helps organisations (whether private, public, or non-profit) to think strategically. It also helps an organisation to clarify its future direction, enables it to make today's decisions while considering their future consequences. Strategic plans develop a coherent and defensible basis for decision making as well as exercising maximum discretion in the areas under organisational control. Finally, strategic management helps solve major organisational problems, improve overall corporate performance, deals effectively with a rapidly dynamic environment, and helps build teamwork and expertise. Eden and Ackermann (2013) and Wagner and Hollenbeck (2014) add that strategic management is beneficial to organisations through the enhancement of strategic thinking, acting, and learning within an organisation as it helps in understanding context, clarifying mission, selecting the best strategies, negotiating measures and standards of performance. It also leads to improved decision making as it helps the personnel make decisions related to organisational purposes and in relation to future strategic outcomes. Enhanced organisational effectiveness, responsiveness, and resilience can also be attributed to strategic management (Ortiz-de-Mandojana & Bansal, 2016). Strategic management also enhances the effectiveness of broader societal systems; improves organisational legitimacy; and has direct benefits for the people involved through improved morale, the fulfillment of job responsibilities, improved competency, enhanced job prospects, and reduced anxiety (Drennan *et al.*, 2014; Kim & Thapa, 2018). Thus, this important emphasis on the best decision making strategy with perfect accuracy which is rational and based on logical concepts that are aimed at

enhancing the capacity of management (SAPO) to formulate creative policies that will enhance high service quality.

Serval scholars, (Eden & Ackermann, 2013; Oakland, 2014; Burke, 2017; Hayes, 2018) confirms that most significant benefits of practicing strategic management in an organisation are that it ensures the company's ability to prevent problems, provides unity in conception and action at all hierarchical levels within the company. It ensures consistency of strategic decisions with the current and tactical ones and better coordination of all operational and functional units within the organisation contributes to the clarification and understanding of the organisation's mission and the purpose of the organisation and, by defining explicit strategies, helps to increase employees' motivation and to reduce resistance to change. It is also believed that the most important advantage of strategic management is that it significantly improves the economic and financial results of an organization, quickly develops and strengthens its market position, and appreciably improving its competitiveness (Beliaeva *et al.*, 2018). Likewise, SAPO management should lead, support, and direct managers and employees in all circumstances to achieve the desired objectives of the post office.

Athapaththu (2016) asserts that the benefits of strategic management include enhanced communication through dialogue and participation; this leads to greater commitment towards achieving objectives, commitment to implement strategies, and commitment to working hard. The result is that both the managers and the subordinates come together to help the organisation succeed.

Parker *et al.* (2019) confirm that strategic management allows organisations to be more proactive than reactive in shaping its future as it allows organisations to initiate and influence (rather than just respond to) activities. This helps an organisation to exert control over its destiny. Parker *et al.* (2019) farther state that the principal benefit of strategic management has been to help organisations formulate better strategies through the use of a more systematic, logical, and rational approach to strategic choice. In the views of Gallus and Frey (2016) and Lasserre (2017), strategic management has other benefits that are not necessarily financial benefits to an organisation. These benefits include improving managers' understanding of their competitor's strategies, it allows reducing resistance to change, it defines the management problems objectively, it provides a framework for a company to coordinate and control the activities in an organisation, it promotes the communication among the employees and managers in an organisation, and, it encourages having a strategic thinking style by inspiring the people to think

more about the future of the company. The SAPO management needs to communicate adequately with managers and frontline employees and facilitate mechanisms to articulate the needs of postal consumers then identify opinions and matters arising related to service quality.

The above discussion provided the benefits and stressed the importance of strategic management. From the literature presented, it is evident that strategic management is important for every organisation for several reasons. Most importantly, it is not only concerned with putting strategies in place to ensure that organisations adapt to the changing and competitive business environment, but it emphasizes the need to plan for the future of the organisation. This provides concrete insights on how strategic management can contribute to not only tackle the current challenges concerning service quality in the SAPO but can also help shape the vision of the sector for long term success. As such, SAPO needs to review its strategic management practices. The subsequent section takes a closer look at strategic management practices.

2.4. Strategic management practices

Strategic management practices are the processes and approaches of specifying an organisation's objectives, developing policies and plans to attain these objectives, and allocating resources to implement the policies and plans. In other words, strategic management can be seen as a combination of strategy formulation, implementation evaluation, and control (Muogbo, 2013; Musya & Rugami, 2016; Mohammed, 2017; Ong'ondo, 2018). It is the process of examining both present and future environments, formulating the organisation's objectives, implementing and controlling decisions focused on achieving these objectives in the present and future environments (Nzewi *et al.*, 2017). Strategic management is based on the belief that an organisation should continually monitor internal and external events and trends so that timely changes can be made (Chelanga *et al.*, 2017). An organisation must be capable of astutely identifying and adapting to change. The need to adapt to change leads the organisation to key questions such as: what kind of business should the firm engage in? Is the firm in the right field? Should the firm reshape its business? What strategies should it pursue? Other cognate questions could also be raised (Aluko *et al.*, 2004; Dauda *et al.*, 2010; Teece, 2016).

In the view of Plance (2016), the prime task of strategic management is thinking through the overall mission of a business, that is; asking the question what is our business? This leads to the setting of objectives, development of strategy and making of today's decision for tomorrow's

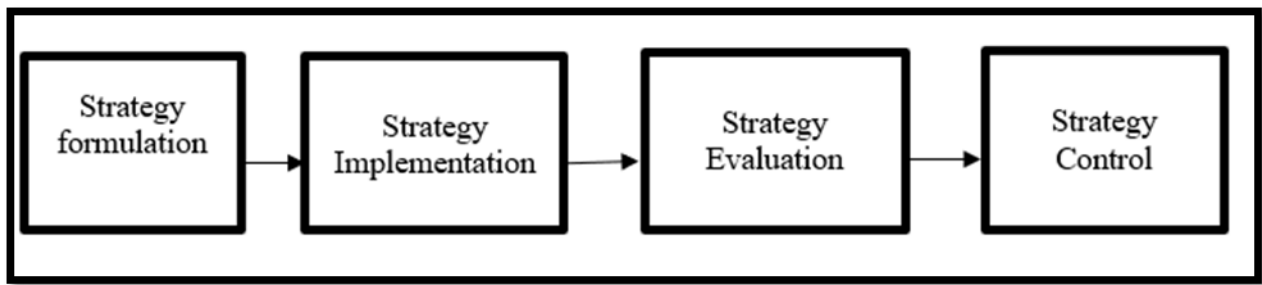
results. This should be done by balancing the present objectives and needs against those of the future in the light of available resources (both present and future) of humans and materials.

The adoption of strategic management practices among most businesses remains *efette*. Owners or managers of small business rarely articulate the business strategy or engage in any formal planning (Purce, 2014; Kihia, 2017). Njeru (2015) explains the reasons for lack of strategic management practices in most businesses vary from lack of time to prepare the plans, unfamiliarity with strategic planning, lack of skills, and lack of trust and openness on the part of owners. Their strategic management practices should entail relatively short planning horizon, be informal and not overly structured, encourage the participation of employees and outside parties, avoid early setting of objectives as this interferes with creative thinking and focus on strategic thinking, not just planning (Lawal *et al.*, 2012; Bryson, 2018). From the discussion provided above, it is clear that SAPO needs to adopt effective strategic management practices that would enable it to remain stable, stay in the line of business, add value to its products and services, and out-compete rivals through the process of strategic management practices. Following is a deliberation of the strategic management practices.

2.4.1. The strategic management practices

Strategic management is an essential component of businesses. Strategic management entails evaluating business goals, the organisation's vision, and objectives, as well as future strategic plans. Also, a strategic management process is employed to ensure that the business runs effectively and efficiently. Shaw and Maythorne (2013) suggest that strategy ought to include several ways of implementing organisational change, from short-term advances to long-term innovations. Ungerer *et al.* (2015), for example, opinr that organisation strategy management process is a four-stage process responsible for an integrated closed-loop system linking strategy to operational plans, implementation, review, and learning. The four steps involved in the strategic management practices commence with the assessment of the internal and external environments, which links up with strategy formulation, implementation, evaluation, and lastly, control (Hitt *et al.*, 2017). A pictorial representation of this process of strategic management practice is represented in Figure 2.4.

Figure 2.4: Process of strategic management practices



Source: Adapted from Hitt *et al.* (2017)

The following section outlines the four stages of the process of strategic management practices in an organisation.

2.4.1.1 Strategy formulation

At this stage, firms are focused on achieving their set goals which have a long term influence on their organisational performance. A major focus of the institution is the influence by externalities, and the weaknesses of the organisation as compared to its strengths (Wheelen & Hunger, 2013). Strategy formulation involves developing a vision and mission, identifying a company's external opportunities and threats, defining internal strengths and weaknesses, creating long-term objectives, coming up with alternative strategies, and choosing specific strategies to follow (Babafemi, 2015). In this stage, the management decides what new businesses to venture into, what businesses to drop altogether, resource allocation, whether to expand or diversify tasks, whether to go into global markets, and whether to merge or form a joint venture (Pearce & Robinson, 2011; Glover & Kusterer, 2016; Lasserre, 2017). Strategy formulation decisions commit the organisation to specific products, markets, resources, and technologies over an extended period. Strategies determine the long-term competitive advantages of the organisation. Strategic decisions have major multifunctional consequences and enduring effects on an organisation (Gunter *et al.*, 2016). Strategy formulation entails matching strategies to the environment the firms operate. Forces in the external environment are so dynamic and collaborative that the impact of any single element stirs a ripple effect (Wheelen & Hunger, 2013; Mulei, 2016).

Matching the external environment, internal environment, resources in terms of financial and human capital results in a good strategic process which will, in turn, bring about long term

strategies that are geared towards the goals and objectives of the organisation in question as compared to other competing firms in a similar business environment. Therefore, in formulating the strategies, management should exercise caution not to exclude any of the strategic planning practices (Mulei, 2016). In this case, an effective strategy formulation would make it easier for SAPO to communicate to all members in the organisation, provides employees with a clear vision of what the purposes and objectives of the firm are. The subsequent section explains the next step in the strategic management process in an organisation.

2.4.1.2 Strategy implementation

Strategic management, formulation of the strategy, and its implementation are important tools of the organisation for its future development and for maintaining competitiveness. Mathore (2016) affirm that strategy implementation dictates that an organisation create annual objectives, comes up with policies, motivates staff, and allocates adequate resources to enable the execution of formulated strategies. It involves developing a culture that supports strategy, forming an effective organizational structure, readdressing marketing forces, preparing budgets, developing and making use of information systems, and associating staff compensation to organisational performance (Sikora & Ferris, 2014; Bryson *et al.*, 2018).

The management of an organisation depends largely on strategy implementation. This offers a road map on how an organisation should be run to achieve its mission, vision, and strategic goals (Bamberger *et al.*, 2014; Jenkins & Williamson, 2015). The application of strategies has crossed the normal norm of their applicability in the profit-making organisation to even those that are not geared towards profit. Christian religious institutions find strategic management applicability vital to their operations which is a deviation from their normal way of solving their operational shortcomings (Ndung'u, 2016). Njihia (2009) and Baum *et al.* (2016), organisations that have been applying strategies, for example, the Porters and Ansoffs strategies have been performing in exemplary ways as compared to those that have not been well applying the strategies. Maroa and Muturi (2015) elaborate that 90% of well-formulated strategies fail at the implementation stage and only 10% of formulated strategies are successfully implemented. The successful implementation of the strategy is fully dependent on the involvement of all the participants in an organisation. Communicating the progress of implementing the strategy to the stakeholders assists them in determining whether corrective action is required (Pearce & Robinson, 2013; Klettner, 2014; Maroa & Muturi, 2015).

Strategy implementation has become a key focus for organisation and continues to attract attention as it plays a key role in the success of firms today worldwide. Johnsons and Scholes (2008) and Bryson (2018) suggest that in knowledge-based economies people are truly the most valuable asset which human resources policies need to reflect. Strategy implementation is the translation of strategy into action. It entails the institutionalisation and operationalisation of strategies and managing the ensuing change (Johnson & Scholes, 2008). Thus, for SAPO to successfully implement its strategic plan effectively, requires visible leaders who passionately carry and communicate the vision in a manner that influences employee's behaviour towards attaining this vision. SAPO top management needs to encourage a participative strategy implementation process to achieve superior performance that will lead to high service quality.

The following segment is an explanation of the process of strategy evaluation, the third step in the process of strategic management practices.

2.4.1.3 Strategy evaluation

Strategic evaluation is an important tool for assessing how well a business has performed, relative to its goals. It is an important way to reflect on achievements and shortcomings and useful for reexamining the goals of an organisation, which may have been set at a different time, under different circumstances. Punt *et al.* (2016), Maroa and Muturi (2015) and Baylan (2018) avow that strategy evaluation is the process of comparing the actual performance against the desired performance. Strategic applications in organisations have been viewed from a different spectrum, with some researchers viewing the influence of strategy on performance as statistically significant (Cadez & Guilding, 2012; Cohen, 2014; Bailey *et al.*, 2018). Strategy evaluation includes reviewing the existing strategies to determine if they are offering the desired solutions (Lasserre & Hendon, 2017; Brozovic, 2018).

Lastly, the evaluation process addresses the aspect of amending the developed strategies to achieve a competitive advantage. This is feedback on the original plan and reiterated until most of the organization is in concert with the plans (Malhotra, 2017; Bryant, 2019). In the views of Eden and Ackermann (2013), Simon *et al.* (2014) and Punt *et al.* (2016), strategy evaluation is the ultimate stage in strategic management where the management must know when specific strategies are not working properly. Punt *et al.* (2016) explain that strategy evaluation is the main means for determining when specific strategies are not functioning well. Booth (2015) explains that all strategies can always be modified in the future because both external and

internal factors keep changing. The three essential activities by which strategies are evaluated include reviewing external and internal factors on which current strategies are based and then measuring performance and taking corrective actions (David, 2011; Pearce & Robinson, 2011). Conducting performance evaluation at least annually is important on long term status or the mission or the vision of the organisation (Jacobs, 2017). This step of evaluation compares the previous performance after strategy implementation (Aminikhanghahi & Cook, 2017). This helps the management generate necessary changes or adjustments to the strategies. The revised plan of the organisation should respond to the emergent strategies which could affect the organisation's intended courses (Athapaththu, 2016; Owich, 2018). From these discussions, it is clear that if effective means are available for measuring performance and if performance standards are set in the right manner, then the SAPO strategy evaluation would become easier.

The next discussion expounds on the strategy control, the fourth step in the process of strategic management practices.

2.4.1.4 Strategy control

Strategy control is an important component of the strategic management process as chosen strategies could become obsolete to the organisation's environment changes. Strategic control identifies and interprets critical events, or change triggers, in the external environment that require a response from the organisation. Pearce and Robinson (2011) explain that this is a process of checking and monitoring strategies as it undergoes a series of implementation procedures to ensure that the firm meets the required threshold, to determine if the companies have met the desired results. The review of monthly, quarterly and annual reports is one of the means for evaluation and control of a strategy (Nickols, 2016). The reviews require an analysis of, for instance, the profit margins, sales; earnings per share, and return on investment to assist management in determining the effectiveness of the strategy (Haynes, 2017). Pappas *et al.* (2017) examined the joint influence of control strategies and market turbulence on strategic performance in sales-driven organisations. Results from the survey of sales-driven organisations indicated that self, professional, activity, and output control systems had varying effects on participation in strategic activity. In this case, SAPO managers need to ensure that the company progresses in the intended direction and that the speculations about major shifts in the business environment are accurate.

Following the delineation of the strategic management practices as well as the four stages of the process of strategic management practices that SAPO could use in obtaining high service quality, the subsequent section elaborates on the challenges to strategic management that act as a barrier for the organisations reaching their overall objectives.

2.4.2 Challenges to implementation of strategic management

There are numerous reasons for organisational failure in the implementation of strategy management that top management needs to be acquainted with, should they want to improve organisational effectiveness and efficiency. This deliberation provides some of the major reasons why organisations fail to implement a strategy. Table 2.1 presents a compendium of the factors identified by various scholars that impede strategy implementation.

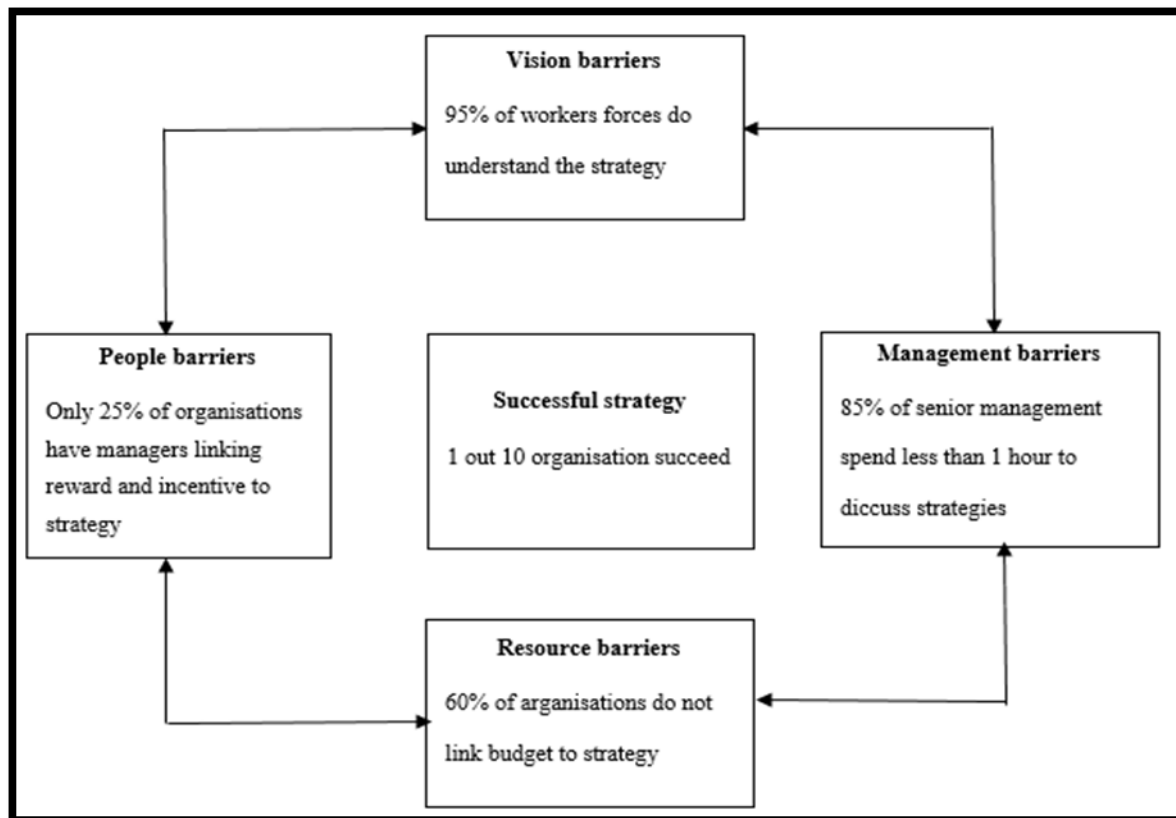
Table 2.1: Concept-analysis of factors that negatively affect strategy management implementation

Source	Vision barrier	Management barrier	Resource barrier	People barrier	Poor leadership	lack of implementation of plans	Dealing with complexities	Communication	Technological	Culture, environment, and change management
O'Donnel & Boyle (2008)	√	√	√	√			√	√	√	√
Kaplan & Norton (2008)	√									
Jone Hill (2010)					√					
Ehlers & Lazenby (2010)	√				√				√	√
DuBrin (2011)		√					√	√		
Kotter (2012)	√						√	√		
Beer (2013)			√				√	√		
Barton & Ambrosini (2013)		√		√			√	√		
Thornton (2013)				√			√	√		
Miller <i>et al.</i> (2013)			√						√	√
Eustace & Martins (2014)	√				√	√				
Rajasekar (2014)					√	√			√	√
Ungerer <i>et al.</i> (2015)					√	√			√	√
Siddique & Shadbolt (2016)		√			√	√				
Gime (2016)			√		√	√				
Yuen & Lim (2016)			√						√	√
Olson (2017)			√		√	√			√	√

Kaplan and Norton (2008) explain that ‘organisational failures might occur due to a lack of strategy definition by top management to efficiently administer their operations’, as there is a lack of integration between practices while an all-inclusive management system is deemed lacking. Four main barriers that contribute towards failure in strategy implementation are

highlighted in Figure 2.5, namely vision, management, resources, and people barriers. The following segment extends the discussion on the understanding of strategy implementation by management.

Figure 2.5: Strategy implementation failure



Source: Kaplan and Norton (2008)

The next section explicates the barriers indicated in Table 2.1 and Figure 2.5.

2.4.2.1 Vision barrier

The organisational vision refers to a statement that encapsulates the core beliefs and values of an organisation. A vision barrier is created when many of the employees do not comprehend the specified approach of the organisation, which leads to an inability to follow the strategic direction of the organisation (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2010). It is observable in Figure 2.5 that 95% of the workforce does not understand the strategic vision of the organisation. In this regard, Kaplan and Norton (2008) and Ehlers and Lazenby (2010) opine that a vision statement should be inspirational in guiding employees in achieving organisational objectives. Vision statements

are difficult to implement as there is a wide gap between paperwork and the daily actions of employees, and management should devise ways to educate employees on the vision and strategic goals of the organisation so that all employees take ownership of such vision. From this discussion, it is clear that if the SAPO vision statement is not communicated or implemented correctly, then the organisation cannot translate its strategy into action. Thus an effective SAPO vision and mission statement moves the organisation strategic planning process from the present to the future.

2.4.2.2 Management barrier

Even though managers view strategy implementation as a top management activity, many managers do not meet the strategic goals set by their organisations. It is observable in Figure 2.5 that 85% of senior management do not spend quality time discussing matters related to organisational strategies and strategy implementation (Kaplan & Norton, 2008). Management, according to DuBrin (2011), is regarded as the attainment of organisational goals efficiently and effectively by planning, organising, coordinating, directing, and leading. Managers are expected to devote time discussing these elements of management and implementing the objectives of strategic management to ensure that the objectives of the organisation are achieved. To achieve the desired goals in a postal context, post office role players should endeavour to discuss organisational strategies and strategy implementation with all members of top management so that detailed duties are assigned to specific individuals who should be held accountable.

2.4.2.3 Resource barrier

Organisational resources, such as human and financial, should, according to Yuen and Lim (2016), be placed in the right position in an organisation for the attainment of organisational growth. This proposition, according to Kaplan and Norton (2008) and Knott (2016), entails that management should examine the competencies of employees before allocating them to specific duties in order not to waste talent and resources. It is observable in Figure 2.5 that 60% of organisations do not align their budgets with their strategy. This signifies that financial resources are not optimally utilised and by extension many resources are wasted or are incorrectly channeled towards unprofitable ventures that do not yield positive results or which are not indicated in the strategic goals of the organisation. In this regard, poor resource allocation and the management thereof are viewed as a significant barrier to strategy implementation (Yuen & Lim, 2016). In this case, SAPO role players should ensure that the right resources are employed

and they should also ensure that the available resources are channeled into positive investments as this could result in the proper implementation of the strategy.

2.4.2.4 People barrier

The fact that management is disinclined to dedicate adequate time to discussing issues related to strategy implementation invariably leads to under-provision of incentives for strategy execution (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2010). Figure 2.5 depicts that 75% of incentives are not linked to strategy execution. This is also caused by management's inability to work as a team in strategy execution (Barton & Ambrosini, 2013). Thanyawatpornkul *et al.* (2016) affirm that incentives are not linked to strategy execution. This is also caused by management's inability to work as a team in strategy execution (Barton & Ambrosini, 2013; Jarzabkowski & Kaplan, 2015). Strategy implementation is made difficult because of the inherent resistance to change and management issues in organisations. Management is expected to reach a consensus on the actual path to follow in implementing strategy effectively and timeously. Management should thus constantly review its strategy and make necessary adjustments to guarantee success (Hornstein, 2015). In a situation where management fails to implement necessary measures to strengthen the capacity of the organisation, Barton and Ambrosini (2013) postulate that this is known as the 'people barrier' to strategy implementation. Jones and Hill (2014) affirms that the involvement of lower-level management in the success of strategy implementation is important, particularly in today's technology drive where imminent success is often based on 'luck and chance discoveries rather than on rational strategy.' In this case, an engaged employee is aware of the business context and works with colleagues to improve performance within the job for the benefit of the organization. Thus, SAPO management must work to develop and nurture engagement, which requires a two-way relationship between employer and employee.

2.4.2.5 Issues with organisational leadership and commitment

Poor leadership, according to Rajasekar (2014), is among the factors that cause the failure of strategy implementation. There is a need for managers to guide and control the nature of activities in an organisation. Girma (2016) affirms that logical action and good decisions by top management in the process of strategy implementation enable an organisation to achieve its objectives. It requires that top management should adhere to the norms, policies, and rules of the organisation while they constantly communicate with employees, to keep them on the right track (Eustace & Martins, 2014). Organisational leaders should learn how to appreciate and nurture

talent, build trust, develop close ties between employees, confront challenges, and communicate satisfactorily with employees (Mitchell, 2015). Leaders are expected to develop managerial competency in an organisation by developing employees' skills, time management skills, decision-making capabilities, and accuracy in goal attainment. The greatest tasks of leaders are to motivate employees during the work process, to manage stakeholders in the business environment, to set attainable goals, to clarify tasks, and to delegate authority to ensure that strategy implementation will be successful (Mitchell, 2015). In this case, SAPO leaders ought to be able to take control of the organisational situation to ensure that nobody defies the rules of operation in the company. SAPO needs to carry out a situation analysis to determine its strengths and weaknesses. It needs to maximize strengths and avoid the weaknesses.

2.4.2.6 Lack of proper implementation of plans

Managers are expected to state clearly the vision, mission, and value statements of the organisation, which should be supported by reasonable action to achieve the stated objectives of the organisation (Olson, 2017). The implementation of strategic plans needs to be clear, while managers are required to communicate reviews and agreements on contingencies with employees (Kaplan & Norton, 2008). The inability to implement plans as agreed upon by top management can, however, frustrate the efficient implementation of strategies. The following process, as recommended by Brinkschroder (2014) and Olson (2008), should guide strategy implementation:

- Management should decide on a strategic plan after agreeing with all stakeholders involved in the strategy implementation process.
- Organisational budgets should be well aligned to annual goals, which ought to be based on specific financial estimates.
- Management should assign responsibilities to different groups of stakeholders.
- A scorecard should be available for tracking and monitoring all plans.
- Management should establish a performance management system to measure the performance of employees and all stakeholders involved.
- The totality of plans should be communicated to stakeholders.
- Weekly or monthly meetings should be held based on strategy implementation reporting and monitoring.

- Management should set up review dates at which time the line strategic plans should be reported, deliberated, and reviewed.

In this case, SAPO needs a successful strategy implementation plan, which means every person in the company works together and contributes to the effort of strategy implementation. Thus, a successful strategy implementation leads to better organisation performance as well as high service quality.

2.4.2.7 Dealing with complexities

Strategy implementation is a complex process with many variables, requiring experienced leadership (Strohhecker & Grobler, 2012). Dealing with complexities is an expected quality of top management members because they are required to make highly ethical decisions in times of complex situations. Highly ethical thinking, as described by Thornton (2013), is a higher degree level of thinking that enables management to understand the challenges of an organisation from different perspectives in the process of making organisational decisions. Thornton (2013) posits that organisational complexity is the intellectual capacity of managers to take notice of the issues surrounding the organisation and to develop measures to resolve them. To implement organisations' strategies effectively, managers should deal with complexities and think in multiple ways that would provide more insights into the current problems. More so, managers should adopt systems thinking in such a way that the organisation is viewed as an adaptive structure, purposefully search and integrate emerging information for versatile solutions, and connect with employees to resolve organisational issues. In dealing with complexities in organisations, Rajasekar (2014) affirms that managers should be able to think widely and expand opportunities to ensure that the organisation's strategies are duly implemented. In this case, successive strategic implementation plans must include crisis and risk management plans to handle such crises in a mature manner. A plan must always be an improvement of a previous one, otherwise, the entire company may lose track of its activities and this will contribute towards huge losses.

2.4.2.8 Inability to communicate effectively as a challenge to strategy implementation

Communication is the procedure of passing information from a sender to a receiver and from a receiver to a sender through a chosen medium (Wells, 2011). Koschmann (2012) postulates that organisational communication involves the employees and/or stakeholders of an organisation exchanging information within and outside their business environments. To effectively

implement organisational strategies, communication should flow among the stakeholders of an organisation. Beer (2013) advocates that the effective communication of strategies in an organisation contributes towards the efficient execution of strategies. Furthermore, the inability of managers to communicate organisational strategies to employees in such a way that all will comprehend it could inhibit the implementation of the strategy. Thus, Barrick *et al.* (2015) confirms that employees do not understand the organisational strategy, which hinders strategies from being implemented well and as such causes the organisation to lack possible vision. In this case, having clear and effective communication should be seen as one of the main solutions for strategy implementation challenges.

2.4.2.9 Technological barriers as a challenge to strategy implementation

The concept of technology refers to the scientific application of machinery and other devices to the work process to achieve the purpose of an organisation (Marx, 2010; Wahab *et al.*, 2012). Because technology is considered a solution to some problems in an organisation, management should be creative in ensuring that it is applied competently to achieve the goals of the organisation. Some organisations (and post offices) do not provide enabling technological advancement, which inhibits the implementation of their strategic goals. According to the Auditor-General's (2017) report, South Africa struggles to provide and maintain infrastructure to enable industrial, commercial, and household sectors to function effectively, therefore organisations (post offices in this case) need to invest in a strong network of technology that is designed to support the implementation of organisations' strategic objectives.

2.4.2.10 Culture, environment, and change management

Culture refers to a set of standard characteristics and a common form of knowledge, behaviour, and understanding adopted by people living in a given community, and these are dispersed through socialisation (Zimmermann, 2015). In the same vein, O'Donnel and Boyle (2008) posit that organisational culture and culture are intertwined as they deal with the practices organisations adopt for handling people and business processes.

To implement a strategy in an organisation, Ehlers and Lazenby (2010) assert that there is a need for change management in organisations, which includes the organisation's implementation of diverse strategies to move from a current state to a higher level. Ehlers and Lazenby (2010) and Siddique and Shadbolt (2016) confirm that the implementation of strategic management in

organisations requires active leadership that is liable to convert the input into output. In this respect, O'Donnel and Boyle (2008) acknowledge that the implementation of the strategic management process requires leaders to create an appropriate environment for change, and leaders who position themselves as champions who adopt employee engagement and empowerment, employ team orientation, assessment of change, and train employees.

In the business environment, in the views of Pollack and Pollack (2015), organisations would not need to be too concerned regarding threats from the external environment if their change processes have been adequately planned for. Miller *et al.* (2013) note that change is determined by cultural heritage and that employees could be influenced to adapt or change their behaviour, which leads to organisational culture. Managers are expected to establish a culture that enables the implementation of strategic management to move the organisation forward. In the absence of creating a favourable environment for change, Ehlers and Lazenby (2010) and Cândido and Santos (2015) confirm that the implementation of organisational strategies would not be possible. The above discussion dealt with additional reasons for failure in the implementation of the organisational strategy. It must be noted that management can make progress in the implementation of strategy if these factors are considered (Rouleau & Balogun, 2011; Radomska, 2015). In this case, SAPO management should establish an effective organisational culture that would enable the implementation of strategic management to move the organisation forward to reach high consumer demand.

The following section explains the concept of service quality which is an important component in every service organisation (in the case of SAPO) since it determines customer satisfaction. Quality affects the success or failure of a business. SAPO products and services ought to meet the required quality standards and to enhance the strategic management for postal services.

2.5 Service quality

Service quality is a concept that has created considerable interest in the research literature because of the difficulties in both defining and measuring it. The need to understand and measure service quality is related to the growing recognition that it is more profitable to retain satisfied customers than to be continually seeking to recruit new customers to replace lapsed ones (Kermani, 2013; Kumar & Reinartz, 2016). Customer satisfaction and service quality are often treated together as functions of customer's perceptions and expectations and research has

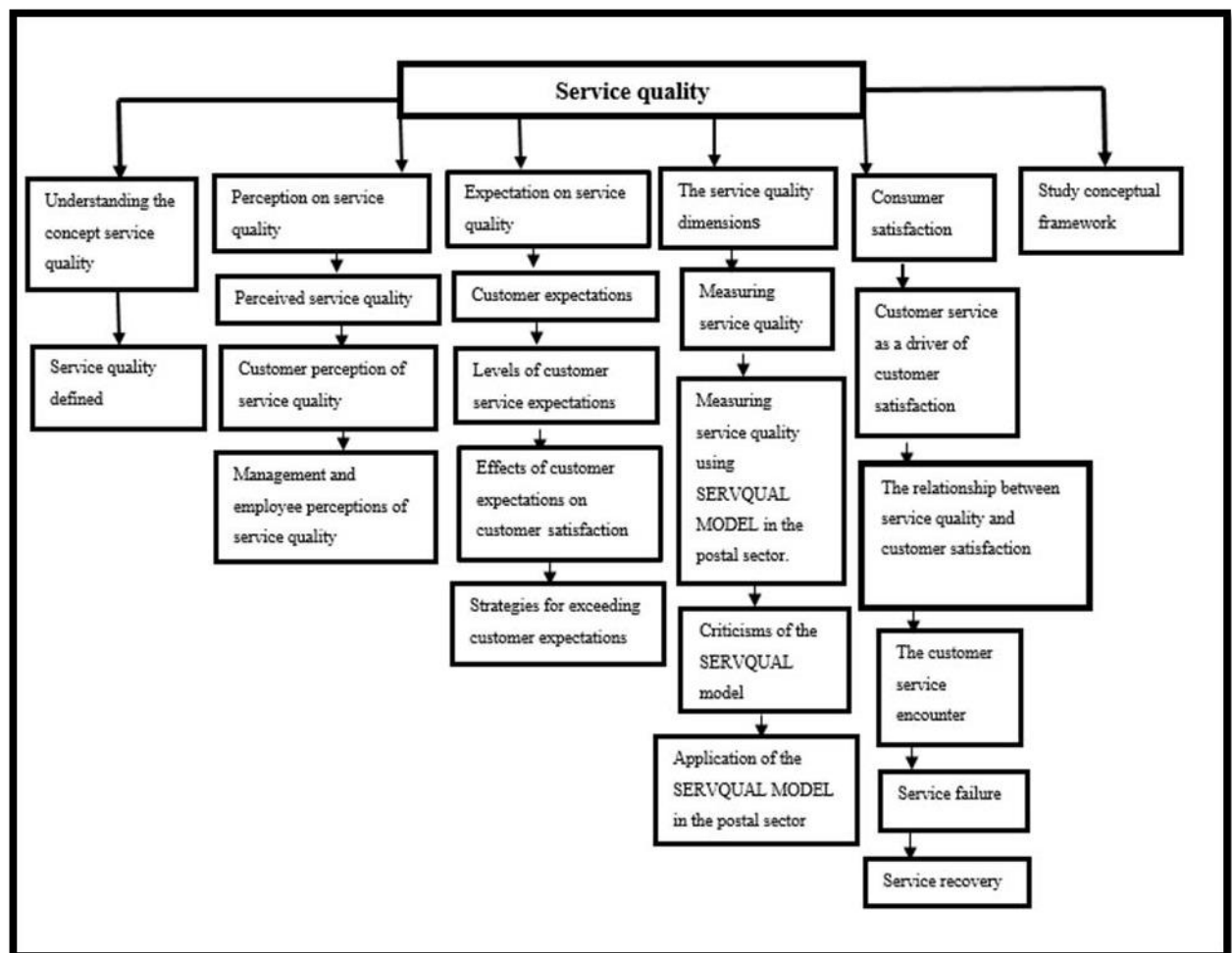
shown that high levels of service quality contribute significantly to profitability (Ledhari *et al.*, 2011; & Wicks & Roethlein, 2014; McCallaghan, 2015).

Dhar (2015) and Izogo and Ogba (2015) affirm that service quality must be measured to improve the quality of a service organisation. Practitioners and academics are eager to measure service quality accurately and thereby understand its consequences and eventually determine methods for improving service quality in the search for a competitive advantage (Siadat, 2008; Huang *et al.*, 2015; Baah, 2016).

Service quality is a universal concept. By providing good service quality, any business increases revenue, improves customer service, and customer loyalty (Setó-Pamies, 2012). According to Wirtz and Lovelock (2016), strategies in marketing and sales help in attracting new customers for the business, but it is amazing customer service that keeps people coming back for more. This encourages each business to offer its customers quality service and to become known for it. In this way, companies can differentiate themselves from the competition. Every business must recognise the reality that customer service is imperative in the success of the business (Piercy, 2016; Wheeler, 2017).

The purpose of this section is to analyse the concept of service quality, and how excellent service quality can improve a company's (SAPO) customer satisfaction levels and ensure that the customer returns. Figure 2.5 gives a layout of the section on service quality.

Figure 2.5: Layout of service quality



2.5.1 Understanding of the concept of service quality

Service quality is dealing with clients and consumers respectfully and helpfully. An example of quality service is a SAPO worker helping a consumer process a return efficiently and helpfully, leading to consumer satisfaction. Lal *et al.* (2014) affirm that the manner of treating customers at the time of delivering service is referred to as service quality. Service quality is considered as the combination of different experiences through the interaction among customers, employees, and the organisational environment (James, 2011; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Voorhees *et al.* (2017) mentions that service encounter is a very important step for the customers to perceive the service quality. Through the service encounter, they can easily capture the difference between previous and present experiences and measure the overall service quality. It is not easy for the organization to identify their lacking, measure service quality, and improve themselves

according to the customer's needs. The easiest way to measure service quality is understanding the service attributes by giving priority to the customer's consideration (Murali *et al.*, 2016).

According to the customers' consideration, the long waiting time for the service creates a negative impact on the customer's perception about service. The less time they have to stand for receiving service is understood as service quality and this should be a major concern for the company to improve their service and retain customers (Mikolon *et al.*, 2015). Kumar (2016) argues that service quality is contributed by not only the service itself but also the production process, the time of production, the employee's behavior to the customers, the delivery process, and the waiting time for accepting service. With the delivery of the final service, both the company size and the operational procedures have a great contribution to the service quality measurement (Kurniawan, 2016).

The concept service quality is the negotiation process between customers and service providers where resource allocation and management are done equally to satisfy both party's interests as consumer's perception of service quality and employee's job satisfaction are interrelated (Sultana & Rana, 2010). For some services without the help of the customers, service production is not possible. Consumer participation is a very important facet in delivering service. This participation of both service providers and customers at a time in the service delivery process also has a great impact on the consumer's evaluation of service (Chen & Chen, 2017).

2.5.1.2 Service quality defined

Globalisation and free trade agreements have resulted in creating highly competitive markets within service firms. Delivering superior service offers a firm a competitive advantage over its competitors, which stresses the importance of providing a high quality of service. There is difficulty in reaching consensus in defining service quality because service is an abstract and elusive construct (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988). Some researchers have defined service quality as a form of consumers' attitudes toward a specific service and their overall evaluation of the service provided (Parasuraman 1985; Dedek, 2016; Iqbal *et al.*, 2016). It is the consumer's judgment of a service provider's excellence through evaluating the service received, and this evaluation is related but not equivalent to consumers' satisfaction (Dedek, 2016). Ali and Raza (2017) define service quality as delivering zero-defects service to consumers. They crafted their definition from the idea of providing "100% defect-free" products in the manufacturing sector.

The widely used definition of service quality is the difference between consumers' perceptions of the services provided by a service firm and their expectations toward that service (Quinn, 1997; Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988; Gronroos, 1984). This definition remains the most cited definition by the other researchers for defining service quality (Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Ojo, 2010; Ismail & Yunan, 2016; Iqbal *et al.*, 2016; Kaushal, 2016; Mestrovic, 2017). This definition implies that, when consumers' perceptions exceed their expectations, they are satisfied and the service organisation delivers superior service, while when consumers' perceptions are less than their expectations, this indicates that consumers are dissatisfied with the service and the firm provides an inferior service. Service quality is based on the notion that consumers always have an expectation of such service, and this expectation may vary from country to country, culture to culture, and person to person, which makes measuring service quality a challenging task. Hence, service quality is an obligation for all post offices to remain competitive, have good revenues and meet their customer needs and wants.

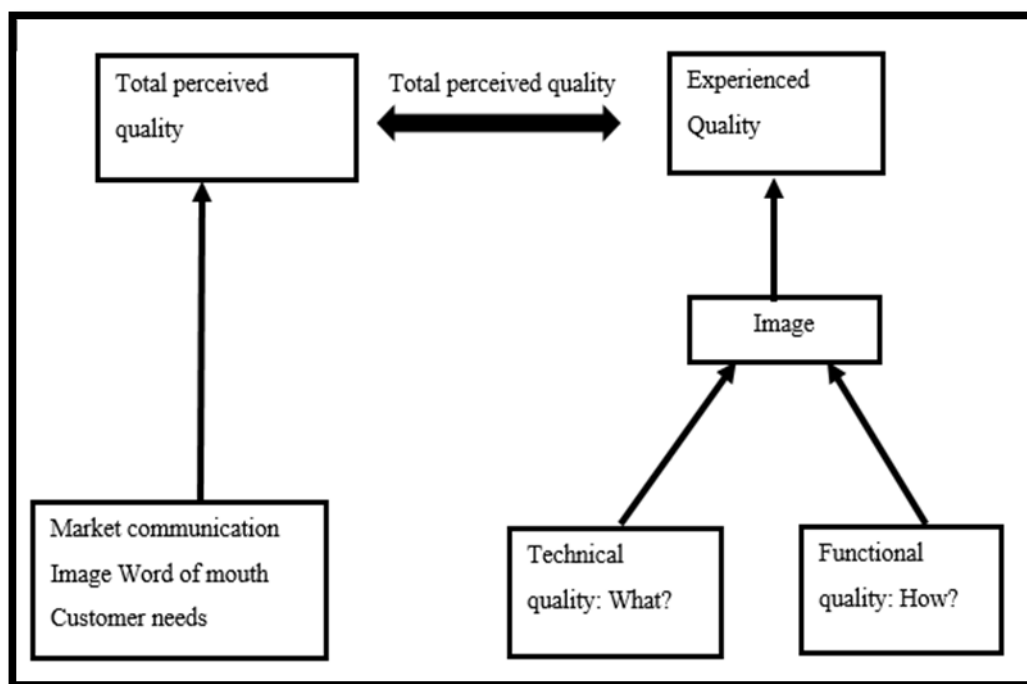
2.5.2 Perception of service quality

Quintana (2016) suggests that when it comes to customers, it is their perceptions of the quality of service one offers that determines success. The final measure of quality customer service is simply how the customer perceives it. Perceptions are considered relative to expectations. Customers perceive service in terms of the quality of the service they receive and whether or not they are satisfied with their experiences (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988; El Saghier & Nathan, 2013; Jiang *et al.*, 2016). The perceptions that customers form are vital to a service organisation, as the services they offer are intangible and sales rely heavily on a positive perception (Fianto *et al.*, 2014; Kifle, 2017). Perception becomes an influential factor when comparing customers' satisfaction with the service that is provided to them. In the context of this study, a possible example could be postal consumers developing a negative perception of service quality when services rendered by SAPO fall below their expectations, thereby creating dissatisfaction. Therefore, SAPO should identify their customers' perceptions of service quality to develop mechanisms that improve or maintain the quality of service provided to their customers.

2.5.2.1 Perceived service quality

Perceived service quality is derived from the service environment, conceptualisation, and delivery. Service conceptualisation means that quality of service can be assessed based on attributes whereas the service environment means that several elements affect quality Ali *et al.* (2016) and Felix (2017). These environmental factors in a Post Office setting may include employees, cash availability, ambience, electricity, network, and even other customers (Jolibert *et al.*, 2012). The physical environment is influential through shaping or undermining the service experience. The appearance of the business environment and its surroundings is crucial to service quality assessment (Wirtz *et al.*, 2012; Quach *et al.*, 2016 Meesala & Paul, 2018). Service delivery means that the service experience between employees and customers or any other support mechanism has a bearing on perceived service quality (Jolibert *et al.*, 2012; Arcand *et al.*, 2016; Narteh, 2018). Figure 2.6, illustrates the service quality based on the six indicators.

Figure 2.6: Service quality based on six indicators



Source: Grönroos (2017)

Service quality hinges on perceived and expected service assessment. However, firms need to scrutinise the business environment to evaluate elements that are within and beyond the

organisation's jurisdiction or authority. As highlighted in Figure 2.6, an organisation has control over advertising, word of mouth, and any form of market communication and these contribute to customers' expectations. Furthermore, quality has two dimensions and these are technical and functional. Quality in technical terms is the outcome of a service interaction between the employee and the customer. Quality in functional terms is the procedure used to render service by a service provider and encompasses things like the conduct of employees both in terms of behavior and job performance. However, these two attributes do not operate in isolation or independent of each other. As such, a good outcome is not a sufficient measure of good quality if the process has certain flaws (Gronroos, 2017).

The third dimension of quality exists in the image. This view holds that service quality is assessed based on the image of the organisation. The image of a service provider depends on the organisation's communication and the needs of the customer. Customer expectation and image of the organisation is formed from the information they get from the company or based on previous encounter and performance (Winer & Dhar, 2011; Batra & Keller, 2016; Piccoli *et al.*, 2017). Customers may sometimes forgive organisations that enjoy a favourable image in an event of a minor mistake but if mistakes are repetitive, there is a danger of a service provider spoiling its market image (Aldaihani & Ali, 2018). In this case, SAPO needs to understand the needs of their customers and provide goods and services that meet their needs better than their competitors. Therefore, it is important to understand the expectations of the customer because customers make their purchases by thinking critically about their requirements.

2.5.2.2 Customer perception of service quality

Perception is one of the crucial components used in service quality evaluation and involves making judgments using the mind or senses, beliefs, culture, language, past experiences, values, interests, and assumptions (Shanthakumari & Kannan, 2010). Customer perceptions do not always depend on the reasonable judgment and can be affected by other forces such as depression, bitterness, and dissatisfaction. As such, perception is a puzzle and it is imperative to anticipate customer resistance based on previous service encounters and also strive to provide excellent service all the time so that the current perception is positive. Customers cannot remember every detail of previous experience but they only retain the overall feeling and such feeling combined with other experiences create their perception of the service provider (Harris, 2013; Dong & Siu, 2013). In this case, customer perception plays a vital role in a company's (SAPO) ability to attract new customers and to retain existing customers. Thus SAPO can

control many of the factors that build an individual's perception of the company product and service.

2.5.2.3 Management and employee perceptions of service quality

In every service organisation (such as SAPO) managers and employees' perceptions can affect organizational productivity positively when they are willing and committed to organizational goals. When employee's perceptions are considered, staff absenteeism is reduced, there's a greater organizational commitment, improved performance, reduced turnover, and greater job satisfaction. Piaralal *et al.* (2016) and Musikavanhu (2017) affirm that an organisation, management, and employees play a major role in excellent service quality provision as excellent service quality results in retention of current customers and luring of new customers. Most studies on service quality have focused on measuring the customer perceptions of service quality neglecting management and employees' perceptions (Torres *et al.*, 2013; Dedeoglu & Demirer, 2015). In the views of Torres *et al.* (2013) and Rauch *et al.* (2015), there is a need to examine various stakeholders' perceptions to be able to determine the differences and similarities of their service quality perceptions and in turn, use those for the improvement of service quality. Barriers to achieving excellent service quality can be limited by assessing the variability in the perceptions of the stakeholders (Dedeoglu, & Demirer, 2015).

The traits and conduct of management are important factors in service quality. As such, management is responsible for creating an organisational culture in which employees must work and follow. This can be made possible through dedication to service quality (Piaralal *et al.*, 2016). Harrington and Keating (2006), Post and Preston (2012), Mok *et al.*, (2013), Wu and Ko (2013), Dhar (2015), Felix (2017) and Meesala and Paul (2018) are all in agreement that managers of service organisations lack in the area of service quality commitment. In a study of service quality in the Botswana hospitality sector, results confirmed a lack of commitment by these managers and employees to this effect (Musikavanhu, 2017).

Organisation management and managers have a major role to embed service quality in their strategic leadership. This can be achieved by communicating and implementing the organisation's vision, mission, and objectives (which embeds the concept of service quality culture) to their front line staff (Fernandes *et al.* 2017; Engert *et al.* 2016; & Cameron & Green, 2019). Organisations managers have an important role to implement service quality as they work closely with customer service staff and customers and that they also relay information between

the employees and senior management (Alonso-Almeida *et al.*, 2012, DeCenzo *et al.*, 2016; Voorhees *et al.*, 2017). Despite this, managers/supervisors are perceived as generally resisting initiatives towards service quality due to fright and a lot of day-to-day work (Harrington & Keating, 2006; Tarí *et al.*, 2014). The study in India's post office revealed that India post office had disintegrated methods to service quality such that a customary approach was required involving empowering employees and management and committing to providing resources that enable the provision of excellent service quality (Vijay Anand & Selvaraj, 2015). Narula and Arora (2019) reported on service quality of the Post Office Saving Bank showing that there were significant differences between perceptions and expectations of customers thereby implying a negative service quality gap for most of the items seeking the attention of top management. In line with organisational objectives, management requires the ability to continuously forecast changes in customer demands and aligning their operations with consumer needs. This leads to a need for investigating management expectations and perceptions so that they can be aligned to the organisation's strategy and customer expectations and perceptions (Bititci *et al.*, 2016; Slack & Brandon-Jones, 2018). According to scholars (Crick & Spencer, 2011; Musikavanhu, 2017; Prayag, 2019), expectations and perceptions of customers are complicated because of their involvement in service delivery. Such a problem is also proliferated if there is a gap between management views, employees' views, and customers' views of service quality.

Perceptions of managers were quite different from expectations of customers (Gap 1 in the gap analysis model of Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985). For example, Douglas and Connor (2015) verified that customers place the tangibles concept at the lowest level of their expectations while management place tangibles at the highest level of customer expectations of service quality. Such a discrepancy could also be attributed to customers who assess service quality as a global perception rather than a single factor (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985; Kallweit *et al.*, 2014; Paul *et al.*, 2016; Ali & Raza, 2017). These perceptions can either be overemphasised or underemphasised (Musikavanhu, 2017). In an application of the SERVQUAL model, Saleh and Ryan (1991) found out that management overemphasised the expectations of guests and in a study by Musikavanhu (2017) management underemphasised the expectations of guests. These results are similar to the earlier studies in the postal sector by Crew and Kleindorfer (2013), Opoku, and Arthur (2015), Dickinson (2017) and Dedeoglu and Demirer (2015) which all concluded that both management and employee's perceptions of service quality were higher than the customers' perceptions. Appaw-Agbola and Afenyo Dehlor (2011), in a study on service quality perceptions of hotels in Ghana, concluded that managers were not sure of their ability to meet the tourists' expectations.

Therefore, such misunderstandings may cause discrepancies in service quality. It is, therefore, necessary to make the gap between managers and customers' expectations converge to attain excellent service quality (Hassan *et al.*, 2015; Musikavanhu, 2017).

Likewise, employees play a major role in customer satisfaction. Employees are internal customers of the organisation hence their perceptions will influence the level of service quality rendered to customers (Khan & Fasih, 2014, Musaba *et al.*, 2014; Zameer *et al.*, 2015). Douglas and Connor (2003) and Bucak (2014) observed that regarding customer expectations, employees undervalued the expectations of customers in their studies on the application of SERVQUAL in hotel sectors. Not only did they undervalue the expectations of the customers, but they also undervalued the significance of the determinants of service quality. In this case, customers placed assurance and responsiveness first while employees rated tangible elements as the most important. Since employees are usually in contact with customers, such discrepancies are costly to the organisation and as such must be avoided. In a study on service quality of Namibian hotels, Musaba *et al.* (2014) concluded that the employees' expectations of service quality in Namibian hotels were higher than their perceptions of service quality.

In the views of Crick and Spenser (2011), Guest (2014), Walden *et al.* (2017), and De Boeck *et al.* (2018), employees are very important components of an organisation. Tuna (2016) affirms that employees form an image of the company through their physical appearance, behaviour, and how they deliver their service. Hence, employees' personalities, behaviours, and values concerning the organisation have a direct influence on customer satisfaction positively or negatively (Mathieu & Babiak, 2016). How employees manage the customer service encounter has a positive or negative contribution to the service quality delivered to the customer hence the service encounter needs to be well managed Voorhees *et al.* (2017). To manage the service, the employees need to be well trained in the areas of skills and conduct resulting in excellent service quality (Harrington & Akehurst, 2012; Nyamori, 2015). In addition, employees need to be trained to be resourceful and empowered to make decisions especially regarding service recovery (Mangwiro *et al.*, 2015). The employees' ability to believe in themselves contributes to the customer's perceptions of the service encounter as customers want to be served by employees who are confident of themselves (Musikavanhu, 2017). Pahi *et al.* (2017) also observed that the employee's adaptability in service encounters does not influence customers' perception of service quality as they argue that service encounters are situation-specific. Hence, the adaptability might not necessarily affect service quality.

There is, therefore, a need for human resources practices that favour excellent service quality from the employees. One of these is a policy on the development of employees equipping employees with the necessary skills required for excellent service quality such as service recovery skills in case of failure. These skills include both the technical skills and the interactive skills (Sitzmann, 2011; Lussier & Hendon, (2017); Noe & Kodwani, 2018). The empowerment of employees is also another key factor in delivering excellent service quality. Wirtz and Jerger (2016) and Jyoti *et al.* (2017) affirm that employees need the power to solve problems encountered by the customers. This can be done through the creation of environments that enables the employees to make decisions (Piaralal, 2016). Empowering employees enhances their productivity as they get highly motivated to work. Besides, employees become very enthusiastic, and such positive energy is welcomed by customers. Managers, therefore, need to develop trust and confidence in their employees because empowerment may also reduce waiting time for complaint handling (Mangwiro *et al.*, 2015).

The organisation is also able to get information about its customers consistently from the employees thus avoiding dissatisfied customers (Crick & Spenser, 2011; Morsy, 2015; Hussain *et al.*, 2015; Berezina *et al.*, 2016). However, empowering employees to make decisions might be burdensome to the employees. This is because employees are then forced to live with the consequences of their decisions which might have negative repercussions on their employment record. Empowered employees are also likely to be more frustrated as they are expected to play multiple roles (Agutu, 2017; Musikavanhu, 2017). Hence, there is a need to balance the expectations required by the employees. Managers need also to institute organisational practices that encourage, reward employees for high performance, and support employees for career advancement (Mayor, 2002; Piaralal, 2016). Daft and Marcic (2016) established that managers resolved to treat employees as customers. As such, the managers created a conducive environment for the employees resulting in the employees being highly productive (Krekel *et al.*, 2019). From the above point, it is evident that an employee is one of the most influential factors in service quality. Hence, in this study, understanding employee perceptions of service quality is relevant because their perception of the work environment determines what kind of service quality the organisation could offer to the customers. In other words, the perception of SAPO employees contributes to the delivery of high-quality services. The concept of expectation on service quality is elucidated in the subsequent discussion.

2.5.3 Expectation of service quality

Service quality is one of the most important competitive factors in today's businesses. Thus, if the service quality is not sufficiently high, the service provider (SAPO) is likely to disappoint its customers regardless of their expectations. Oliver (2010) explains that expectation is an anticipation of future consequences based on prior experience, current circumstances, or other sources of information. In the view of Mudie and Pirrie (2012), expectations are usually formed before the usage of service but may also occur where a customer is actively involved in the delivery of service. Some researchers maintain the idea that expectations serve as a comparison standard to judge the performance of service delivery (Oliver & DeSarbo, 1988; Carlsson, 2010; Hossain & Quaddus, 2012; Nicolaides & Grobler, 2017; Gebremichael & Singh, 2019). One important contribution made by Gebremichael and Singh (2019) towards understanding the kinds of standards used is that expectation is important for consumers to form disconfirmation beliefs and satisfaction feelings. However, the authors argue that it is not the only standard that consumers use. Hence, customers have many sources of information (such as word of mouth, publicity, expert opinion, communications, and prior exposure to competitive services) that lead to expectations about future service encounters with a particular company (Voorhees *et al.*, 2017). In this case, management can therefore either misjudge the expectations of customers by either exaggerating or underrating the expectations or even think that they know the expectations of customers when they do not. Hence, the need to evaluate the expectations of customers concurrently with evaluating those of employees as well as managers. The following concepts will be discussed under expectation on service quality.

2.5.3.1 Customer expectations

Expectations are formed from factors such as company advertising messages, information from friends, and the customer's requirements. For instance, if a product just meets expectations, a customer is less satisfied than if a product exceeds customer expectations. The reality is that any performance below expectations is a recipe for customer dissatisfaction (Winer & Dhar, 2011; Berndt & Tait, 2012; Pearson, 2016). Furthermore, expectations can be positive or negative. Expectations are outcomes derived from customers' experience. Customers approach service encounters harbouring a variety of expectations. Sometimes, service providers erroneously believe that customer expectations are farfetched and cannot meet them. This notion usually emanates from the fact that service providers miscalculate the expectations of customers (Harris, 2013; Msosa, 2015; Maguire & Geiger, 2015).

Customer expectations are desires or wants of the customer. Simply put, in the eyes of customers, expectations are regarded as what they anticipate to be offered by the organisation rather than what they are currently offering. In most cases, expectations are not met and customers do not get what they expect from the service provider. However, it is the customers' perception that counts rather than the reality of performance (Brink & Berndt, 2009; Oliver, 2014; Piercy, 2016). In addition, service providers have themselves to blame if they create unrealistic expectations of their services and products. This is so because the factors that influence customer expectations are within the control or jurisdiction of the organisation whereas the customer has control over past experience and information about competitors (Bateson & Hoffman, 2011; Rosenbaum-Elliott, 2015; Schaltegger & Wagner, 2017).

In promoting and differentiating the service, companies should avoid raising the level of expectation above the level which service personnel or consultants can consistently perform. If the sales force, promotion activities, product launches, messages, or any marketing intervention creates unreasonable expectations, the real service will upset customers. As such, the need to manage customer expectations is very critical (Zeithaml *et al.*, 2013; McDonald & Wilson, 2016; Wild, 2017). Furthermore, service providers should be careful when making promises through advertising and media platforms because they create expectations. Customers understand and interpret promises differently and it is also not easy to stick to and live up to promises. Concerning promises, marketing creates expectations and has the responsibility to communicate with customers. However, meeting and living up to the promises is the task of every department. The drawback of the absence of cross-functionality between business units is that marketing efforts will be in vain and customer needs will not be met (Msosa, 2015; Gronroos, 2017). In this case, customers' expectations are very important in the analysis of service quality in the postal sector. Hence, in other, for SAPO to remain competitive in the postal sector must meet the expectations of customers'.

2.5.3.2 Levels of customer expectation

Customers' expectations can be ideal or desired and customers in this category expect certain things to be done based on messages or pledges the organisation made. The customers assume that a certain level of service should be provided (Bateson & Hoffman, 2011; Msosa, 2015). In other words, the ideal or desired level of expectation reflects the hope and wishes of the customers (Nabi, 2012; Govender & Msosa, 2015). A study conducted by Yongchaitrakool (2014) on the effect of customer expectation, customer experience, and customer price

perception on customer satisfaction in the hotel industry indicates that in any service-oriented industry, the element of customer expectation is significant to provide quality service. Further in his study, Yongchaitrakool argues that there are two levels of customer expectation, desired and adequate. The desired expectation is what customers expect to receive from the service providers, whereas adequate expectation is defined as the service performance that customers can accept. The desired expectation is at a higher level than adequate expectations. It is related to the customers' evaluation (Yongchaitrakool, 2014).

Brink and Berndt (2008) and Nguyen (2014) came up with the explanations that the gap between the desired and adequate service is called the zone of tolerance and that customers can accept the zone of tolerance at different levels, depending on the provided service and other conditions. For example, if the price is increased, customers tend to have more desired expectations (zone of tolerance is decreased) which means that they expect to receive more service. An argument by Kinyingi (2018) states scholars mentions the relationship between customer expectation and satisfaction in that customers will be satisfied if a company or hotel provides services above their expectation as customers who pay for service or product, normally expect that this service or product is worth their payment.

Mason and Simmons (2012) Sabanari *et al.* (2017), also connect service quality with customer expectation as they found that customer expectation occurs when customers predict the service quality by using their characteristics, attitudes, and preference. Customers perceive the services differently depending on their perception and expectation whilst customer satisfaction will be judged by the provided service and customer expectation (Yongchaitrakool, 2014).

Study conducted by William *et al.* (2016) on assessment on customer expectations in service quality, customer expectations are beliefs on service delivery that serve as a standard against the performance done. Further, customers develop a certain set of expectations based on a variety of inputs and consider their previous experiences with services in general and with each specific kind of service they have encountered (William *et al.*, 2016). Customers also develop expectations when they hear about services from others. If you hear that your friend was delighted with her stay at a particular hotel, you are more likely to expect that same level of service if you stay there. Customers also form expectations based on the service provider's advertisement and promotions (Fan & Suh, 2014; Habel *et al.*, 2016)

Study conducted by Kinyingi (2018) on customer satisfaction modeling in hotel industry a case study in Kenya customer expectation is described as mutable internal standard which is based on a multitude of factors including needs, objectives, past personal or vicarious experiences with the same establishment Hotel, with similar establishments, and the availability of alternatives. Mohajerani (2012) goes ahead to adopt the customer expectation scale had been adopted from a study from Turkyilmaz and Ozkan in (2007) indicating that customer expectation had four parts which were: Expectation for the fulfillment of personal need; Expectation for overall quality; Expectation for product quality and expectation for service quality.

An underpinning theory has drawn by Mutale (2014) on expectation disconfirmation theory. This theory posits that expectations, coupled with perceived performance, lead to post-purchase satisfaction. This effect is mediated through positive or negative disconfirmation between expectations and performance. If a product or service outperforms expectation post-purchase satisfaction will result (positive disconfirmation). If a product or service falls short of expectations the consumer is likely to be dissatisfied (negative disconfirmation). The dominant model of customer satisfaction is the expectation disconfirmation theory. Disconfirmation theory declares that satisfaction is mainly defined by the gap between perceived performance and expectation which is a promising approach to explain satisfaction (Awara & Anyadighibe, 2014).

Expectations are formed by personal experience and understanding of the environment, taking into account practice feasibility based on expectancy theory. Perceived performance is a relatively less influenced estimation of performance based on objective judgment rather than emotional reactions. Expectation disconfirmation occurs in three forms: Positive disconfirmation which occurs when perceived performance exceeds expectations; Confirmation which occurs when perceived performance meets expectations; Negative disconfirmation which occurs when perceived performance does not meet and is less than the expectations (Awara & Anyadighibe, 2014).

Further, Awara and Anyadighibe (2014) argue in that, it is more feasible for customers to be satisfied if the service performance meets (validation) or exceeds (positive confirmation) their expectations. Quite the reverse customers are more likely to be dissatisfied if the service performance is less than what they expected (negative disconfirmation) discuss that taking expectation disconfirmation as the only determinant of satisfaction. Therefore, this theory does not cause the fact that if high expectations are confirmed, it would much more lead to

satisfaction than confirmation of low expectations. To resolve this drawback perceived performance is included as an additional determinant of satisfaction. In other words, the only way for SAPO to ensure satisfaction is to empirically create disconfirmation by manipulating expectations and performance.

2.5.3.3 Effects of customer expectations on customer satisfaction

Customers are viewed as champions in modern marketing as they seek to satisfy a set of needs and wants that are partly related to the essential services offered. Further, it is in the customer expectations on how these needs and wants are met consistently form impressions about the actual service offered to them in comparison with their expectations (William *et al.*, 2016). Arguably, the performance of every organisation depends on how well it satisfies its sophisticated customers. Unsatisfied customers with a product or service are customers that can opt for another company or spread negative advertising by ‘word-of-mouth’. Aside from customer dissatisfaction, there are more finally satisfied or indifferent customers that can be drawn to the competition (Wan, 2013; Chang, 2015).

Msosa (2015), explain that on assessing customer service in the postal industry case study of Malawian public postal service, customer expectation is defined as beliefs and sensitivities that each customer has about service derived from what they require from it and supposes it to do. Amissah (2013) in the academic study on tourist satisfaction with hotel services in Cape Coast and Elmina, Ghana, expectations are described as the desires or wants and are in most cases different from what the customer gets.

Study conducted by Anwar (2017) offers a description of the process in which the customers create their expectations concerning the performance of their providers. Campos & Marodin (2012), Msosa (2015), Sarkar (2017) and Shifferaw (2018), dissatisfaction in services is caused by existing gaps between the expectations and the results perceived and they identified the five potential gaps in services as derived by Parasuraman *et al.* (1985) as follows: consumer expectations and management of perception of expectations; perceptions of the management of consumer expectations and specifications of quality in services; between the specifications about the quality of service and the service given; between the service offered to the client and that which is communicated about the service; between the expectations of the consumer and the perceptions of the service received. Hence, customer expectation has a significant positive effect on customer satisfaction. Thus it is important for SAPO to find out about their customers

'expectations in advance because a failure to meet or exceed these expectations could lead to dissatisfaction and defection.

2.5.3.4 Strategies for exceeding customer expectations

In a services organisation (in the case of SAPO) exceeding consumer's expectations on a regular basis is the best way to satisfy them and retain their loyalty. It's five times harder to win a new customer than it is to service your existing customer base so it's essential that organisation team builds long-lasting relationships with its consumers so they do remain loyal. Going the extra mile is what service providers should institutionalise to provide top-notch service because it is noted by Johnston and Marshall (2010) that unmet expectations create a performance gap and more complaints. Harris (2013) suggests the following strategies could be used to exceed customer expectations.

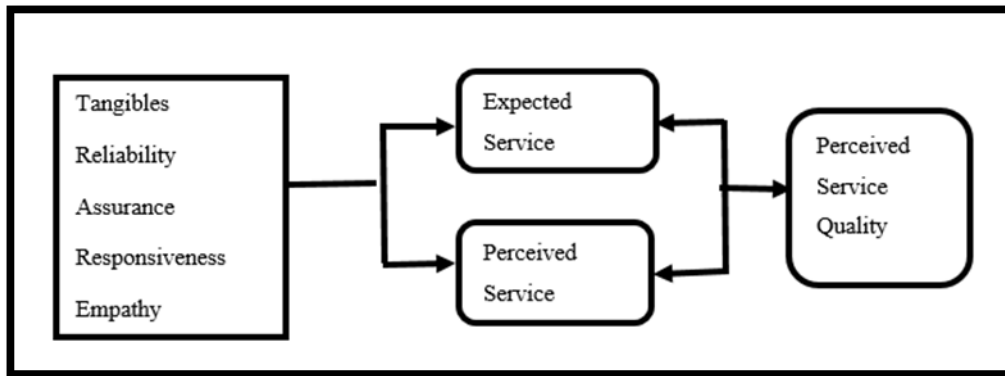
- *Become familiar with your customers:* service providers need to study the behavior of their customers and understand why they are patronising their products and services. In addition, efforts should be made to know what they like and dislike.
- *Ask your customers what their expectations are:* service providers should establish the benefits customers are deriving from patronising their services and also ask them areas for improvement.
- *Tell your customers what they can expect:* service providers should always communicate their promises to customers as a way of building up their expectations.
- *Live up to their expectations:* service providers should ensure that they deliver their promises and also find a way of establishing if the promises are being met.
- *Maintain consistency:* Service providers should communicate to customers what they can deliver continuously and not once-off.
- *Communicate with customers using the methods they want:* customers should be given a chance to dictate a platform they want to use in accessing a service and it is the responsibility of the service provider to provide the preferred platforms (Harris, 2013). After having a clear understanding of the concept of service quality, the service quality dimensions are discussed in the next section.

2.5.4 The service quality dimensions (SERVQUAL model)

Abukhalifeh and Som (2012), explain that SERVQUAL model allows customers to evaluate the quality of a service based on five distinct dimensions namely tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy on which service quality and customer satisfaction can be judged (Gupta & Gupta, 2012). The model was developed by Parasuraman *et al.* (1988) as a tool of identifying service quality shortfall and is based on the premise that customers can evaluate a firm's service quality by comparing their perception of its service quality with their expectations (Auka *et al.*, 2013; Waitiki, 2014; Debasish & Dey, 2015).

Eshetie *et al.* (2016) and Kinyingi (2018) argue that commitment towards quality improves the consumer's level of satisfaction and increases profits as well as consequently the benefits gained by the consumers and the employee. Eshetie *et al.* (2016), further highlights that on the opposite, mistakes in service providers cost the organisation money and its reputation may suffer. This is the "non-quality cost" concept. The scenario created by non-quality service can be daunting for any service manager. However, an unhappy consumer does not usually express his or her unhappiness to the management of a business, but will on average, inform at least nine other people about poor service experiences. However happy consumers will, by contrast, only inform three people about his or her good service experiences in the service sector (Zhang *et al.*, 2014; Manhas & Tukamushaba, 2015). Eshetie *et al.* (2016) argue that the SERVQUAL instrument is used to assess consumer perceptions and expectations regarding the quality of service. The original SERVQUAL instrument has five generic dimensions. These dimensions express how consumers view service quality. The dimensions include the following as illustrated in Figure 2.7.

Figure 2.7: Service quality dimensions



Source: Adapted from Parasuraman *et al.* (1985)

Figure 2.7 above as illustrating the five dimensions of service quality in and an attempt has been made to relate the dimensions to postal services:

2.5.4.1 Tangibles: Representing the service physically

This refers to the appearance of the organisation and its staff members, equipment personnel, physical facilities at the organisation and units of the organisation, communication materials, and visual materials for customers (Minh *et al.*, 2017). Elements within the tangibles dimension are cleanliness, space, atmosphere, the appearance of the server, and location (Awara & Anyadighibe, 2014). SERVQUAL model further, the model measures customer expectations and perceptions of service quality. The quality gap (Q) is calculated by subtracting the expectation (E) from the perception (P) value i.e. $P - E = Q$. Summation of all the Q values provides an overall quality rating which is an indicator of the relative importance of the service quality dimensions that influence customers' overall quality perceptions. SERVQUAL is a standardized instrument that has been applied across a broad spectrum of service industries. This dimension deals with appearance. Consumers' perceptions of quality care are based on physical evidence (De Jager & Du Plooy, 2007; Amoah *et al.* 2016; Makanyeza & Chikazhe, 2017). This includes the environment in which the service is delivered. By improving the physical appearance of the facility, post offices can signal quality to its consumers (De Jager & Du Plooy, 2007; Saghier & Nathan, 2013). Hence, the tangibles at the service unit of SAPO must provide added value to consumers.

2.5.4.2 Reliability: Delivering on promises

The reliability dimension of service quality refers to the ability of service organisations to perform the promised service dependably and accurately, and thus reflects the consistency and dependability of an organisation's performance Rodriguez *et al.* (2012). Wilson *et al.* (2008), Lemke *et al.* (2011), and Moletsane *et al.* (2014) state that reliability means that the organisation delivers on its promises about service delivery, service provision, and problem resolution. Even though unreliable service providers are extremely frustrating for customers, a disturbing number of organisations still fail to keep their promises regarding service delivery. In many instances, the customer is ready to spend money if only the service provider will show up and conduct the transaction as promised (Bateson & Hoffman, 2011; Trevinal & Stenger, 2014). Reliability is consistently the most important determinant of perceptions of service quality (Wilson *et al.*, (2008); Karim & Chowdhury, 2014; Onyeaghala, 2016; Shabbir *et al.*, 2017; Meesala & Paul, 2018).

Reliability as a dimension of service quality serves as an important factor in promoting loyalty to customers by providing accurate services (Nyandoro, 2012; Johnson, 2017; Mabaka, 2019). Thus, the above discussions on reliability as explain by different authors in the service sectors can be applied in the postal sector to deliver reliable services as promises to postal consumers.

2.5.4.3 Assurance: Inspiring trust

This refers to the knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire, convey trust and confidence in hotel guests. The assurance dimension may be measured using elements of knowledgeable trained professionals, communication, and taking care of the customer (Awara & Anyadighibe, 2014). Auka *et al.* (2013) argue that this dimension represents the extent to which a consumer gain trust from a provider and the prospects of having confidence with the organisation to provide the requested service securely and competently. Moreover, the impact of assurance in fostering consumer loyalty remains important (Saghier & Nathan, 2013; Timney, 2017) which can be achieved even during the first consumer contact with the employees by showing courtesy, friendliness, and honesty (Steenkamp, 2015). However, trust and confidence of consumers may also be lost during the first consumer contact through misinformation as Business Ethics Briefing (2014) claims that giving wrong information can lead to a serious effect on the organisation's reputation.

Therefore, it can be argued that there is a need for service providers to ensure correct information dissemination to build trust with the consumers. Further, organisations need to communicate their expertise and competencies repeatedly before they do the work to establish a consumer relationship (Tuang & Stringer, 2008). Hill and Lineback (2011) and Hanaysha (2016) contend that this can be done through collective work efforts of varied skills, knowledge, and concentration of the employees. Through this, as claimed by Boateng and Okoe (2015), consumers slowly gain trust and confidence in the organisation. Hence, the post sector with a strong brand can convey trust and confidence. The evaluation of high and low service quality depends a great deal on how consumers perceive the actual performance based on their expectations.

2.5.4.4 Responsiveness: Being willing to help

This refers to service sectors' willingness and flexibility to serve and help customers (Minh *et al.*, 2017) in a timely, efficient manner and includes items such as helpfulness, friendliness, and warmth of the service staff (Rauch *et al.*, 2015). Wang (2015) and Lemon and Verhoef (2016) point out that if the waiting time that the customer experience is shorter than expected, the consumer will have higher satisfaction. Abbasi (2013) and Åberg and Khatri (2018) agree that consumer waiting time has a negative influence on consumer service perception. They added that if the waiting time is too long, the service companies might lose transaction as a consumer consider waiting time as a sacrifice to get the service. Moreover, Promkaew and Tembo (2017) contend that providing the service without promptness causes delays which make customers unhappy. McQuilken *et al.* (2017), also claim that this causes negative feelings such as irritation, annoyance and frustration. Thus, the organisation should find a way to deal with the waiting time of the consumer as it influences the service quality.

Wilder *et al.* (2014) contends that by understanding the need of the consumers, the organisation will be able to deliver the service better to align with those needs. In agreement with this concept, Wong and Sohal (2016) point out that understanding consumer's specific needs at heart provides a strong signal in the service quality and performance of the service delivered towards the customer. Understanding clients can be argued to trigger the willingness of employees to help. According to Liu and Lee (2016) willingness to help is "the extent to which frontline staff members provide help to the customer and show a willingness to serve".

Moreover, Keh *et al.* (2013) point out that the employee should not be too busy to respond to the request from the consumer. Added by the same authors, willingness to help is not only the availability of the employees to help the consumer but they also need to have a motivational aspect of their behavior that links to intrinsic motivation. In other words, an act of help with deep emotions. Thus, the willingness of the employee to spend extra time and effort in helping the consumer is a cause of delight (Liu & Lee, 2016). This may include postal service frontline employees responding to a consumer's request promptly and dealing with consumers' problems and queries immediately.

2.5.4.5 Empathy: Treating customers as individuals

This is related to the caring personal attention extended to customers, as well as the level of understanding personnel demonstrate relative to customer needs (Rauch *et al.*, 2015) and the consideration, individualized attention the service provided to consumers (Eshetie *et al.*, 2016; Kleisari & Markaki, 2019). Auka *et al.* (2013), Waddington (2016) and James and Montgomery (2017) is in agreement that empathy is reflected in an organisation's ability to facilitate access, communication, and understanding of the consumer. Thus, empathy is an act that should give consumers a greatly satisfying experience as they seek and request the service from a provider (Fluss, 2016).

Chiang and Wu (2014) clarifies that individualized services concern the provision of equal access and opportunity to service delivery by establishing flexible alternatives to customers that do not fit into standardized structures. This is further agreed upon by Karami *et al.* (2016) who said that personalization of employees' services is a significant predictor of consumer satisfaction. Service delivery should not in any way inconvenience the consumers to strongly influence the degree of consumer satisfaction (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988; Eshwarappa, 2014; Selvakumar, 2015). Auka *et al.* (2013), Govender and Msosa (2015) and Tweneboah-Koduah and Farley (2016) are of the view that empathy is evaluated on the following: individualised attention, convenient operating hours, understanding of the staff, and the knowledge employees have about the needs of consumers. When employees express these, positive and satisfied consumers are generated (Ariani, 2015; Atteia, 2016).

Contrary, negative and discriminatory practices affect an organisation within the locality it serves (Pullen *et al.*, 2017). Worse still, discrimination is detrimental to the organisation if it is front office personnel representing the public sector (Cech & Pham, 2017). Thus, in today's

competitive world when the general perceptions of service quality are declining, "knowledge of the factors that influence consumer evaluations in service encounters is therefore critical" (Bitner, 1990). If the main service is not performed reliably, consumers may assume that the company is incompetent and may switch to an alternative organisation.

Thus, dimension measures how to increase the productivity of service quality to consumers. Postal service managers and frontline employees can demonstrate empathy by providing consumers with their undivided attention when listening to their concerns, and reassuring consumers that they do care and understand their unique situations (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988; Saghier & Nathan, 2013). Following is a deliberation of the measuring of service quality.

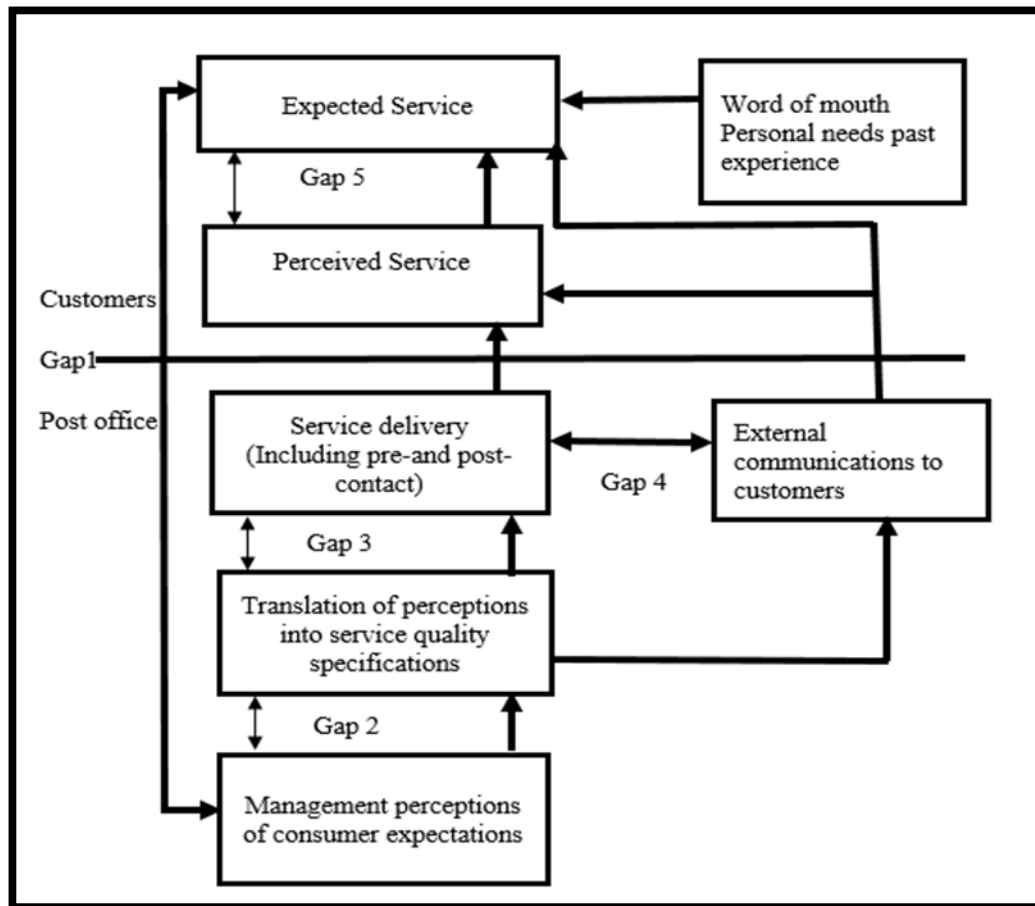
2.5.5 Measuring service quality

The performance of customer service quality in an organisation can be evaluated by assessing different aspects of quality. Numerous scholars have come up with models for measuring quality. Some of the models used are the critical incident technique, the Service Quality gap model (SERVQUAL). The SERVQUAL model is an analytical tool and enables management to identify service quality gaps which may be affecting the quality of service. The model is extremely focused and is especially helpful to management because it identifies service quality factors from the viewpoint of the consumer (Harmse, 2012). The five dimensions of service quality are: reliability, assurance, tangibles, empathy, and responsiveness and these were investigated using a research survey based on the SERVQUAL model (see Annexures A).

2.5.5.1 Measuring service quality using SERVQUAL

Several models have been used to assess the quality of services but the main focus and discussions have been on the Service Quality model (SERVQUAL) and the Service Performance model (SERVPEF) (Franklin & Balaji, 2013; Msosa, 2015; Govender & Msosa, 2015). However, the application of these models has been the subject of intense debate. While both models agree on perception as the yardstick for evaluating quality, Parasuraman *et al.* (1988), Al-Ibrahim (2014) and Pathak (2015) included expectation as another important element for service quality evaluation. In their studies, service quality is evaluated by the gap between perception and expectation. Ali and Radam (2010), Gautam (2015) and Park and Yi (2016), the gap model posits that service quality is considered adequate when performance is similar or higher than expectations. Figure 2.8 below indicates the gap model of measuring service quality.

Figure 2.8: The **GAP** model of measuring service quality



Source: Parasuraman *et al.* (1985)

Figure 2.8 highlights the five gaps of quality in services and the attributes that have an impact on customer perception and expectations, such as word of mouth, personal requirements, previous experience, and outside communication. An overview and remedies in respect of the five quality gaps as indicated in Figure 2.8 are provided above.

- **Gap 1:** Customer's expectations and management's perceptions gap. This situation can arise due to the absence of initiatives by management to get customer feedback. The importance of research should not be overlooked by management as it may help to understand customers' expectations and other elements that are critical to service quality evaluation. The South Africa postal corporation can organise frequent customer satisfaction surveys and mystery shopping exercises to facilitate the collection of information on the performance of the service and customer expectations (Jobber & Ellis-Chadwick, 2013; Msosa, 2015).

- **Gap 2:** Management's perceptions and service quality specifications gap. To close this gap, any organisation such as the South Africa Post Office should introduce effective service processes, specify quality standards, and also ensure that employees understand the service standards and priorities. Furthermore, service providers can standardise work processes to foster consistency and reliability by using soft technology (Wirtz *et al.*, 2012; Msosa, 2015).
- **Gap 3:** Service quality specifications and service delivered gap. This gap arises when there is an absence of management assistance or commitment to employee training and other resources that facilitate the execution of work. Without support, even the best-performing employees can be demoralised if they, for example, are using faulty and outdated equipment. It, therefore, follows that when employees are not properly motivated and supported, there is low productivity, unsatisfied customers, and the delivery gap increases (Bateson & Hoffman, 2011). Furthermore, failure to recruit high-quality staff and also to train existing members of staff to affect the provision of uniform or steady service, and this may eventually result in poor service quality (Jobber & Ellis-Chadwick, 2013).
- **Gap 4:** Actual service delivered and external communication gap. There is a need to close internal and external communication gaps by making sure that communication is realistic and universally understood by customers. This can be done by, among other things, involving frontline employees to contribute to the development of communication programs (Wirtz *et al.*, 2012). The communication gap arises due to over-promising. Sometimes overpromising can facilitate a sale for the first time but there is a likelihood that a dissatisfied customer will not do business with the organisation again (Johnston & Marshall, 2010). It is therefore important for an organisation to come up with initiatives they will be able to maintain rather than promising what they will most probably not be able to reasonably deliver continuously (Ferrell & Hartline, 2011; Pride & Ferrell, 2016; Alzaydi *et al.*, 2018).
- **Gap 5:** Consumers' expectation and perception of service gap. Parasuraman *et al.* (1985) explain that gap five is the total sum of all the four gaps and the decision whether quality is low or high depends on the actual performance being consistent with initial expectations. To close this gap, organisations should provide tangible proof of signs that can be seen in the service being delivered (Wirtz *et al.*, 2012; Tsiotsou & Wirtz, 2015).

There is a wide range of dissatisfied customer reactions. Any type of reaction will anyway cause damage for the organisation, direct that will lead in the decrease of sales or indirect that is a less favorable consumer attitude. Dissatisfaction is the main cause of what is called the "destruction of consumers." Thus, this study also adopted these models in order to compare the management,

employees' and consumers' expectations, and expectations of service quality in the postal sector. The Gap models has been used to develop the conceptual framework for this study. Following is a deliberation of the criticisms of the SERVQUAL model.

2.5.5.2 Criticisms of the SERVQUAL model

Despite its popularity in the service quality literature, SERVQUAL has not been without criticism. Martinez and Martinez (2010) suggest that service quality is multidimensional and cannot operate independently from its dimensions. Furthermore, the dimensions of service quality are not universal and comprehensive such that they cannot be used to measure quality in various sectors or be implemented wholesale (Gupta & Dev, 2012). Similarly, the conceptualisation of the SERVQUAL model raises a lot of questions and according to Al-allak and Bekhet (2011), SERVQUAL has operational shortcomings and does not fit for all scenarios, countries, and industries and hence researchers should try to explore other tools for measuring quality that can be adapted to their studies. In addition, the usage of the gap score in the model has also been questioned and some researchers believe its findings cannot be considered first hand or real (Ladhari *et al.*, 2011; Ozretic-Dosen & Zizak, 2015).

It is not appropriate to measure expectations and perceptions together after a service experience. The intention of measuring expectations is to understand what a customer thinks of the service before usage and not after consumption. However, this seems to be the practice among scholars and practitioners when measuring service quality (Palmer, 2011). The use of post-hoc expectations makes the SERVQUAL model unreliable and the application of functional and technical attributes of quality is redundant. It is also cumbersome to ask participants to provide feedback on two questionnaires. Asking respondents to rate a service before and after consumption would effectively reduce their interest to participate in the study because the process is time-consuming (Adil *et al.*, 2013). There are two major criticisms of the SERVQAUL instrument, which involve the length of the survey questionnaire and the validity of the five service quality dimensions.

- Length of the survey

In the views of Harmse (2012), the combination of expectation and perception questions in the survey results in a lengthy and highly repetitive survey. It has been suggested that the expectations section of the survey is of no real value and that actual performance is more important and should alone be used to assess service quality.

- The validity of the five dimensions

Hoffman and Bateson (2011), the proposed five dimensions of reliability, assurance, tangibles, empathy, and responsiveness do not hold up under statistical inspection (Hoffman & Bateson, 2011; Harmse, 2012). Babakus and Mangold, (1992), Mpinganjira (2011) and Nyandoro (2012) however disagree. Even though the five dimensions represent different facets of service quality they are interrelated and overlap may occur. Studies conducted by Babakus and Mangold (1992), Mpinganjira (2011) and Nyandoro (2012) all used SERVQUAL, and their findings support the internal cohesiveness of the dimensions that make up the SERVQUAL.

In conclusion, the five dimensions of SERVQUAL, measuring both the perceptions and expectations of consumers, make it appropriate for this study. The study incorporated the SERVQUAL dimensions in a survey, which comprised several questions with possible answers structured on a four-point Likert scale (see Appendix A).

2.5.5.3 Application of the SERVQUAL MODEL in the postal sector

Several researchers (Msosa, 2015; VijayAnand & Selvaraj, 2015; Chatzoglou *et al.* 2014) used the SERVQUAL model to measure the service quality of businesses in the postal sectors and found it to be a reliable model that shows how organisations can improve the quality of their service. Msosa (2015) used this model to measure service quality in the Malawian public postal service, where customers completed a survey that measured and compared the perceived and expected service needs of the customers. The findings of this study show that customers' perception of service quality was generally good across all five of the service quality dimensions and that all the dimensions of service quality have a positive relationship with customer satisfaction. In addition, the relationship between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty was found to be positive and significant. Recommendations are made in respect of improving the

service delivery for each one of the five dimension because they have a direct impact on customer satisfaction, which in turn affects customer loyalty.

Vijayanand and Selvaraj (2015) recently conducted a study on the post office savings banking sector in South Africa with a primaeval fiscal sector, and interviewed 106 customers through a self-administered questionnaire by the convenience sampling method. The empirical results acquired through the application of tools such as factor analysis, weighing score method, and ChiSquare tests revealed that all the SERVQUAL dimentions result with a negative value, which indicate that the sector still do not meet the expectations of customers along with the minimum gap in competence dimension and huge service quality gap intangibility aspect. In addition, there is no significant association found between the demographic variables consideration. The standard deviation scores also showed that there is a moderate deviation existing between customer perception and expectation concerning service quality. Chatzoglou *et al.* (2014) recently conducted a study to measure customer satisfaction using the SERVQUAL approach: the case of the 'Hellenic post' using the SERVQUAL modified instrument. The results show that customers have a negative perception about the services offered by the Hellenic Post (in comparison with their expectations) and that there is a significant difference between the actual perceptions of customers and those of managers.

The above discussion reflects that several South African studies applied the SERVQAUL model or a modification of it in public sectors. This study is based on the same theoretical model but is different in that it looks at the strategic management of service quality in the postal sector in the type out. This approach is supported by Churchill *et al.* (1993) who suggest that the SERVQUAL model ought to be modified and adapted according to the industry, the type of service provided, and the location of the facility. Following is a deliberation of consumer satisfaction.

2.5.6 Consumer satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is a measurement that determines how satisfied customers are with an organisations products, services, and capabilities. Consumer satisfaction information, including surveys and ratings, can help a company determine how to best improve or change its products and services. Kotler (2015) confirms that consumer satisfaction has been one of the top tools for a successful business. Consumer satisfaction is defined as an overall evaluation based on the total purchase and consumption experience with goods or services over time. With marketing,

consumer satisfaction also comes along with it which means it ascertains the expectation of the consumer on how the goods and services are being facilitated by the companies. Actionable information on how to make consumers further satisfied is, therefore, a crucial outcome (Oliver, 2014; Khadka & Maharjan, 2017).

Customer satisfaction is based on disconfirmation experience. This notion looks at the overall judgment or rating of service performance compared with expectations formed before the service encounter. Consequently, a mismatch between perception and expectation will result in either dissatisfaction or satisfaction (Johnston & Michel, 2008; Dauda & Lee, 2016; Agyapong *et al.*, 2018). When customer expectation and perception meet, confirmation of initial expectation takes place whereas when the two do not meet, there is disconfirmation of expectations. Negative disconfirmation happens when perception is low compared to expectation and this scenario results in dissatisfaction and bad publicity. Positive disconfirmation takes place when perception is higher than expected and this scenario results in contentment (often referred to as delight and/or the ‘wow’ effect) and favorable publicity (Bateson & Hoffman, 2011; Basten *et al.*, 2016; Baker, 2017).

Customer satisfaction can be a transaction-specific or a cumulative experience. As such, organisations need to maintain consistency in every service encounter to ensure that customer expectations do not fall. Oliver (2014) explains that customer satisfaction is an emotional response of a disconfirmation experience relative to attitude and is consumption or transaction-specific. Also, Msosa (2015) observes that satisfaction is based on the cumulative experience of the customer's blanket experience with the service provider. The quality of service experienced today may be seen as mediocre because it is spoiled by previous service encounters which were not good (Solomon *et al.*, 2012; Pizam *et al.*, 2016). Furthermore, expectations are sometimes based on perceptions and if the previous experience of a customer with the service provider was negative or bad, this time around the customer may likely come armed with an expectation that he will be dissatisfied again (Harris, 2013; Kenyon & Sen, 2016; Kalbach, 2016).

Customer satisfaction is an after purchase phenomenon and is induced by the benefit derived from service performance. To maintain satisfaction, organisations should continuously scrutinise elements that contribute to satisfaction or dissatisfaction and work towards improving these elements so that they can address customer requirements (Dukic & Kijevcanin, 2012; Msosa & Govender, 2015; Mafini, 2017). The implication is that customers who are dissatisfied walk away to competition and when they have no choice they vent their anger or ‘throw mud’ at

employees to express their dissatisfaction (Harris, 2013; Sutton, 2017). Dissatisfied customers are bad messengers of an organisation and can affect the image of the product or services if not handled properly. The reality is that dissatisfied customers are mercenary customers and have "ripple effects" because they communicate with other customers about their poor service experience (Tim, 2011; Msosa & Govender, 2015).

Customer satisfaction can be used as a tool for competitiveness and differentiating services from competition. Service providers with high satisfaction ratings do not have competitive pressure in respect of price because customers are ready to pay more for a company that meets their needs than to defect to a company offering a lower price. After all, the risk of such action is not known (Bateson & Hoffman, 2011; Hennig-Thurau & Hansen, 2013; Pan & Nguyen, 2015). It is therefore essential for services institutions to address areas and elements that affect customer satisfaction because the business environment is increasingly becoming competitive (Fararah & Al-Swid, 2013; Msosa, 2015).

Singh and Pattanayak (2014) and Mithas *et al.* (2016) affirm that customer satisfaction is linked to an organisation's profitability. Hung *et al.* (2014) start that organisations that do not measure customer satisfaction risk losing customers who are a major source of revenue and thereby affecting profit margins. Furthermore, Msosa (2015) confirms that good performance should not lead to complacency and overlook customer satisfaction because sometimes dissatisfied customers do not quit and move to seek service from another provider immediately but they only reduce patronage of services. As such, organisations should also pay attention to the fluctuation of sales (Pedroso *et al.*, 2016).

Service provider who has not made customer satisfaction an overriding objective or focal point of the business is operating on the sympathy of customers. Thus, if businesses are to operate without a base of loyal and satisfied customers, other service providers will move in quickly to meet their needs. Consequently, the customer base will drop or shrink, and customer attrition will rise. In today's highly competitive world, offering personalised and differentiating services can be critical to the success of an organisation (Gupta & Gupta, 2012), such as the South Africa postal sector success.

2.5.6.1 Customer service as a driver of customer satisfaction

Customer service is evaluated by customer satisfaction. Witkowska (2011) and Msosa (2015) noted that if the drive to satisfy customers and create a positive image for an organisation is to be realised, customer service should be taken seriously. However, despite the importance of customer service, most organisations are not putting great effort into differentiating their services using customer service (Bolton *et al.*, 2014). Consequently, organisations that are committed to delivering superior service are rare in the lens of the customer (Timm, 2011; Msosa, 2019). Different perspectives on customer service have been presented by different scholars. One school of thought believes customer service is everything organisations do to create a remarkable customer experience when accessing products and services (Machado & Diggines, 2012). Similarly, customer service has been defined as the capacity of enlightened employees to be able to offer quality service in such a way that customers are satisfied and remain loyal (Lucas, 2012; Msosa, 2015; Naudé-Potgieter, 2016).

Customer service should be seen as a collective responsibility. Cockerell (2013) and Wirtz and Lovelock (2016) profess that customer service is not a department or a separate business unit but a collective task for the organisation, hence the responsibility to provide a good customer experience is the duty of every employee at all levels of the corporate ladder, from the chief executive to the lowest ranking officer. The task organisations have today is to convince members of staff not directly involved with customer interface to embrace customer service as a collective challenge. Furthermore, customer service excellence must be in everyone's job description. To support the notion that customer service is not a department, Harris (2013) explains that internal customers or co-workers have an important role to play with the external customer because if internal customers do not value the prompt execution of work and respect for others, then the provision of outstanding customer service becomes a challenge.

Organisations who provide good customer service are progressing whereas poor service providers fumble and collapse. Well informed organisations focus their energies on customer service and ways of improving it. The reality is that most organisations have strategies aimed at improving customer service. However, despite these strategies, customer satisfaction levels remain persistently very low and with the surge of technology, frustrated customers share their poor service experience on social media and the internet. This can have a devastating impact for any business (Tim, 2011).

Msosa and Govender (2015) explain that customer service is not practiced well and consistently by most organisations despite slogans and advertising messages indicating that customer welfare is their number one priority. One is persuaded to think that such messages are just marketing gimmicks and tactics aimed at increasing customer patronage of services at the expense of customer satisfaction as mentioned by Batra and Keller (2016). This observation cements the belief that excellent customer service is rare because both parties to a transaction are either the organisation or customers are not willing to meet their obligation such as spending money and taking action (Cofie, 2014; Kura, 2019). In addition, customer service is considered more of a lip service because people have no understanding of what constitutes outstanding customer service (Harris, 2013; Musasa, 2016; Mehran *et al.*, 2018).

To improve customer service, organisations should offer seamless services that is facilitated by an efficient system to ensure that customers are not inconvenienced in any way (Lucas, 2012; Hildebrand *et al.*, 2013). The danger of laxity in service provision is that customers can forgive service providers for poor service but they may not forget an unpleasant customer experience. Such customers are fond of mentioning such an incident and the ripple effects can be destructive to a business. Hence it is extremely important to provide excellent customer service all the time (O'Connell & O'Sullivan, 2011; Msosa, 2019).

Customer service is not only about action; it is also about employee personality. Even with the best policies, procedures, and training, organisations cannot provide great service if the people that provide the service do not have the right attitude and personality (Wang *et al.*, 2013; Cockerell, 2013). Concerning attitude and personality, Harris and Daunt (2013) explain that customer service is beyond a great attitude, and what is critical is having the right attitude. It, therefore, makes no difference to provide excellent customer service if small things that matter to the customer are overlooked. Thus, employees must be trained to anticipate changing customer needs and make the right decisions.

Similarly, Msosa (2015) stresses that the behaviour of employees can build or scatter relationships with customers, and awareness of these behaviours can help to improve customer service. It is further noted that the problem is that many employees are clueless about the impact of their behaviour. Gronroos (2007) and Msosa (2019) posit that unfriendly and negative behaviour by service-oriented employees has a negative impact on service quality. Moreover, it has the potential of affecting the company's productivity and profitability.

The real test for service providers is to know that provision of excellent customer service is a continuous struggle and never ends. Performance by employees must be frequently examined to ensure that there is consistency in practices that constitute excellent customer service, otherwise there is a danger that employees may return to old and bad practices that do not add value to service delivery. It is, therefore, the responsibility of SAPO management to frequently evaluate customer satisfaction because a good analysis of the company's performance cannot be generated from the organisation's point of view. Customers must be given a chance to point out areas that need to improve (Harris, 2013; Krut & Gleckman, 2013).

2.5.6.2 The relationship between and customer satisfaction and service quality

Compared to service quality, customer satisfaction is a broader concept (Wilson *et al.*, 2008; Dieke *et al.*, 2013; Jaag, 2014). Amponsah and Adams (2016) conducted an evaluation of the connection between service quality and customer satisfaction. The key result of the study exposed a significant relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction. Service quality focuses on the dimensions of service, namely customers' perception of tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy, and satisfaction. Satisfaction is more comprehensive as it is influenced by perceptions of service quality, product quality, price, situational factors, and also personal factors. This led Tefera and Govender (2015) to propose that in the form of a relationship, the quality of service would be in advance to customer satisfaction. The post office in South Africa is not the only provider of postal and courier services in South Africa. It has to compete with several other firms that offer similar services. Therefore, it is important that the customers of SAPO are satisfied with its service quality (Kiumarsi *et al.*, 2014) because a higher level of customer satisfaction is expected to increase customer retention and loyalty (Bansal & Taylor, 2015; Murali *et al.*, 2016; Ali & Raza, 2017). Isa and Kiumarsi (2019) assert that an organisation that provides good service also increases its ability to attract new customers and promote cross-selling. More importantly, higher levels of customer satisfaction are expected to lead customers to spend more and engage in positive word- of-mouth communications (Fatma, 2014; Rychalski & Hudson, 2017; Sukhu *et al.*, 2019).

Siddiqi (2011) examined the association between service quality dimensions, satisfaction, and loyalty in the banking industry. The study findings show that all five dimensions of quality (tangibles, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and reliability) have a positive association with satisfaction. Furthermore, the banks performed very well on empathy and performed least well on tangibles. Similarly, a study on quality and satisfaction in the banking sector in Pakistan

found a significant relationship between service quality dimensions and customer satisfaction. It was also noted that responsiveness has a stronger correlation with satisfaction. The study, however, did not measure the assurance dimension (Khalid *et al.*, 2011). To echo the sentiments, Ravichandran *et al.* (2010) researched quality and satisfaction in private banks of India and found a positive correlation of all the five service quality attributes (tangibles, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and reliability) on satisfaction. However, responsiveness had the strongest relationship with satisfaction among the dimensions.

Naik *et al.* (2010), Gupta and Dev (2012) and Piason *et al.* (2013) have also found a positive association between service quality and customer satisfaction. Siddiquei *et al.* (2012) contend that despite finding a positive association between the quality and satisfaction concept concerning services, it is a consistent execution of quality that leads to more satisfied customers. Offering quality service alone on a single encounter and failure to replicate the same in subsequent encounters is a recipe for customer dissatisfaction and business failure.

Finally, Msosa (2015) to analyse service quality in the Malawian public postal. A modified SERVPERF questionnaire was used to assess customers' perception of service quality, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty. The service quality dimensions of tangibles, reliability, empathy, assurance, and responsiveness were used to evaluate customers' perception of service quality. The findings of this study show that customers' perception of service quality was generally good across all the five service quality dimensions and that all the dimensions of service quality have a positive relationship with customer satisfaction. In addition, the relationship between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty was found to be positive and significant. Recommendations are made in respect of improving the service quality dimensions because they have a direct impact on customer satisfaction which in turn affects customer loyalty.

2.5.6.3 The customer service encounter

Service encounter is key to the customer's service experience and relationship with a service provider. The quality of the experience during a service encounter determines customer satisfaction and their view of the service provider (Wong, 2013). Service encounter is the meeting between a service provider and a customer and is sometimes referred to as the 'moment of truth'. (Solomon *et al.* 2012; Yagil & Medler-Liraz, 2013; Nasution *et al.* 2014). Furthermore, the service encounter is multidimensional and encompasses the social contact dimension and the

physical dimension. The social contact dimension is the interaction between the service provider and the customer (Neghina *et al.*, 2017; Henkel *et al.*, 2017).

Akaka and Vargo (2015) affirm that the physical dimension means that customers always consider the domain or environment in which the service will be provided. Organisations can prevent bad service encounters through disintermediation. Disintermediation is the process where the human element or contact is removed when providing a service and is replaced with technology such as machines or the internet (Solomon *et al.*, 2012; Msosa, 2019). For instance, the South Africa post offices can adopt technology whereby customers will be required to obtain and transact services through electronic cards. Msosa and Govender (2015) believe that service providers can improve service delivery to customers by using technology to meet their needs.

Wang (2016) explains that during customer service encounters the conduct of employees is very crucial for effective interaction and service delivery. Customer-facing employees are the brand of the organisation. As such, their appearance, demeanor, body language, facial expression, language, and tone have an impact on the consumer experience as mention by Albrecht *et al.* (2016). Even with well-trained employee's customer service encounters can be a nightmare if these basics services are not practiced and used correctly Msosa, 2015; Singh, 2017; Echeverri & Åkesson, 2018).

Finally, service encounters are evaluated based on several activities. Customers rate their service encounters based on emotions, trust, and control. Emotions reflect a recollection of sentiments about experiences and events whereas trust reflects the belief, faith, or conviction to stay in touch with a relationship despite having some concerns or negative feelings. Control reflects the ability to take charge of changing needs. Customers sometimes get emotional when there is a deviation in the expected end product or result. The end product or experience can either enhance the customer's condition or make it worse (Dasu & Chase, 2010; Ahmad & Laroche, 2015). In this case, the service encounter presents an opportunity for the service firm (SAPO) to satisfy the customer and to be worthy of being rewarded with outcomes such as customer loyalty or word-of-mouth recommendations.

2.5.6.4 Service failure

Service failure is a scenario where service delivery has gone bad and not been executed according to plan or standards. However, the seriousness of failure differs based on the nature of

the industry and service being offered (Palmer, 2011; Msosa, 2015). Service failure is inevitable and this view is shared by (Choi & Choi, 2014) who warn that despite every effort to provide quality service, which is crucial to competitiveness, things may go wrong resulting in service breakdown and sour relationships with customers. It is, therefore, imperative to accept the reality that service failures are bound to happen and can be experienced during service delivery or after usage (Msosa, 2015; Osarenkhoe *et al.*, 2017).

Bateson and Hoffman (2011) categorised service failures into four groups. Firstly, core service delivery system failure is related to the thrust of the system. For instance, when service is not available, service is very slow and other important aspects of service failure due to policy or regulation-related issues. The Secondly, customer needs and request failure which encompasses requests to do with special needs, customer choices, and customer induced problems, customer disturbing behavior and hinges on employee ability to respond to queries. The third is unsolicited employee actions whereby actions of employees frustrate customers and result in in- service failure. These actions and behaviors range from poor attitude, rudeness, discrimination, and boastful actions by employees. The last category is problematic customers and occurs when customer actions lead to service breakdown other than the organisation or its employees. Some of the behaviors exhibited are substance abuse, foul language, and disregarding company policies. These customers are very difficult to please (Madupalli & Poddar, 2014; Msosa, 2019).

Service failures should be seen both as a setback for the business and at the same time as an opportunity. Service failures affect customer satisfaction and draw customer emotions leading to churn bad publicity, and bitter relationships (Choi & Choi, 2014). Service failures can also affect company's reputation, image, and customer trust (Choi & La, 2013; Msosa, 2015). Some authors believe that service failures should not be a cause for alarm. Customer complaints or service failures do not imply the collapse of an organisation, but a chance to build and strengthen customer loyalty. It is only when service breakdown occurs that the organisation can review its strategies (Timm, 2011; Msosa, 2019).

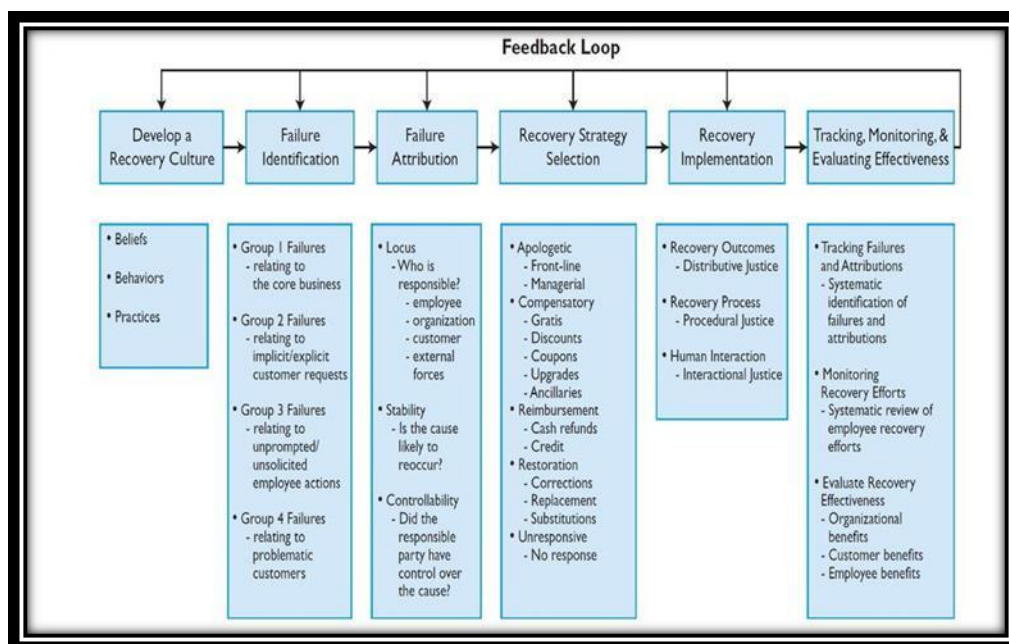
Complaining customers should not be treated with contempt or be viewed as enemies of the business. It is easy for service providers to be defensive when customers register problems or frustrations. However, service providers, such as the postal sector, should view criticisms as constructive contributions to the management of service problems (Harris, 2013). Organisations should appreciate complaining customers because they provide the business with an opportunity

to correct mistakes and they often speak for unhappy silent customers (Knox & Van Oest, 2014; Grégoire *et al.*, 2015).

2.5.6.5 Service recovery strategies

Service recovery is one way of addressing customer service failure and mitigate against the loss of customers and legal suites in extreme cases. As such, recovery management programs are very important (Pranic & Roehl, 2012; Cook, 2012). Figure 2.9 shows a recovery management program that focusses on an organisation's strategic priorities in creating customer satisfaction in an event of a service failure.

Figure 2.9: Management recovery program of service failures



Source: Bateson and Hoffman (2011)

As indicated in Figure 2.9, Bateson and Hoffman (2011) stress that developing a recovery culture is important to effectively address customer problems. The culture can be in respect of beliefs, behaviors, and practices in an organisation. To entrench culture, there must be top management commitment and willingness to provide a conducive environment and not prevent service recovery efforts.

However, it is imperative to mention that the service activities demands a lot of interaction with customers. As a consequence, service breakdowns are often experienced (Binh & Vi, 2013;

Zhou *et al.*, 2014). Furthermore, service failure is both outcome and process-related, therefore determining a correct type of failure that has occurred is crucial to the effective management of customer problems and prevention of customers switching to other service providers (Chuang *et al.*, 2012; Guchait *et al.*, 2012; Van Vaerenbergh & Orsingher, 2016).

Failure attribution is an important process towards resolving service failure because the needs of a customer and a service provider are always at a crossroad. In service recovery efforts, customers expect the organisation to be fair, be understanding, and accountable for service failure (De Keyser, 2015; Subramony *et al.*, 2017). Service failure can be attributed to employees, the organisation, and the customer. Some of the causes are rigid service policies on the part of the organisation, slow service, mistakes by employees, and also customer behaviour (Machado & Diggnies, 2012; Van de Walle, 2016).

To interpret Figure 2.9 further, concerning recovery strategy selection and recovery implementation, (Dos Santos & Basso, 2012; Matikiti *et al.* 2018; Goodman, 2019; Msosa, 2019) are all of the opinion that organisations should adopt service recovery programs that ensure fairness if they are to achieve customer satisfaction. They add that compensations to customers should be adequate to avoid future claims and efforts should be made to interact with customers to manage their expectations of claims in an event of service failure. As part of a service recovery strategy, organisations should offer gifts and reimburse costs incurred. Furthermore, responsiveness and compensations could enhance service recovery in an event of service failure (Akbar *et al.*, 2010; Timm, 2011; Karyose *et al.*, 2017; Chowdhury & Tooheen, 2019). In the same vein, employees should be trained in the resolution of customer problems and be empowered to use their discretion to offer compensation, discounts, and refunds (Huang *et al.*, 2011; Wirtz & Jerger, 2016; Stauss & Seidel, 2019).

Post recovery customer satisfaction can be attained through recovery implementation methods such as distributive justice, procedural justice, and interactional justice hence organisations must explore these dimensions of justice to ensure that customer problems are properly addressed (Nadiri 2016; Chao & Cheng, 2019). As shown in Figure 2.9, distributive justice occurs when there is a need to compensate a customer for service failure whereas procedural justice takes place when the customer has concerns with the processes to get a recovery. Interaction justice occurs when the customer has a perception about the capacity of service recovery employees such as their empathy, courtesy, and effort (Berndt & Tait, 2016; Kim & Tang, 2016; Yani-de- Soriano *et al.* 2019). In the view of Holmes (2017), distributive justice such as refunds and

discounts, are critical to achieving customer satisfaction. In addition, interactional justice in the form of apologies and empathy are encouraged as a strategy for satisfying customers and regaining their trust (Singh & Crisafulli, 2016; Cheng *et al.*, 2019; Guchait *et al.*, 2019).

Concerning tracking, monitoring, and evaluating effectiveness as reflected in Figure 2.9, the need to identify service failures systematically, review recovery attempts, and also evaluating the effectiveness of the recovery system are key to the process. Abubakar *et al.* (2013) and Msosa (2015) avow that employees are the face of an organisation and should be given some authority over customer complaints and not refer everything to superiors. Organisations should put in place procedures, systems, and policies for addressing customer problems. The organisational structure should be flexible and all obstacles removed to prevent long chains of command or authority before a customer problem is attended to or given consideration. In addition, service recovery procedures should be communicated to all workers with clear lines of responsibility (Binh & Vi, 2013; Ashkenas *et al.*, 2015; Migacz *et al.*, 2018).

The fast-moving pace of change and the ever-increasing demand for better services and quality has left organisations with no choice but to embrace systematic change in the way they manage customer needs. Organisations are like steel beams, they tend to rust with time and so too with new trends in technology; customer needs and added service features make existing processes inefficient and obsolete or irrelevant. As such, service processes should be frequently monitored and redesigned (Wirtz *et al.*, 2012; Msosa, 2015). Graban and Swartz (2018) confirm that frontline employees need to be encouraged to play a part in service quality improvement by reviewing systems, policies, and procedures and then recommend to management areas that need attention. The task to review processes and policies cannot be left to frontline employees alone, there is a need for synergistic efforts in all layers of management and processes to create a better business climate and ensure that service quality and customer satisfaction is achieved (Buttle & Maklan, 2019).

There is no substitute for rendering good quality service as the cost of managing service failure recovery may be severe. Conversely, organisations can achieve customer satisfaction if service failures are properly resolved and this situation is known as service recovery paradox (Machado & Diggines, 2012). Zeithaml, *et al.* (2013) describe the service recovery paradox is a scenario where a dissatisfied customer is given good quality service recovery and is, therefore, more contented or satisfied with the current situation than before. Further to this, they argue that companies should try to get things right the first time because some customers prefer not to

complain when they experience service problems but resort to the withdrawal of their loyalty and purchase the service elsewhere. Similarly, studies (Wirtz *et al.* 2012; Msosa, 2015) have noted that the service recovery paradox may not be applicable in all service failure situations and may be costly to a service provider hence it is essential to do things right the first time.

The importance of resolving service failures has been established. The realisation of good service quality depends on the organisation's ability to operationalise quality in all service processes and support systems and also to treat service failure as an opportunity to improve service quality and create a remarkable customer experience. In addition, quality should be managed from the source and not at the last mile where the service provider meets the customer (Msosa, 2015). From the above discussion, it is clear that service recovery is an important function for companies to maintain satisfied customers. In order to have a successful service recovery, customers' expectations should be recognized and met. Thus, it is essential for SAPO to react quickly after service failure occurs, to ensure that customers are again satisfied with the company and its services. If mistakes are handled correctly, it can even increase customer satisfaction compared to the correctly performed transaction.

2.6 Conceptual framework

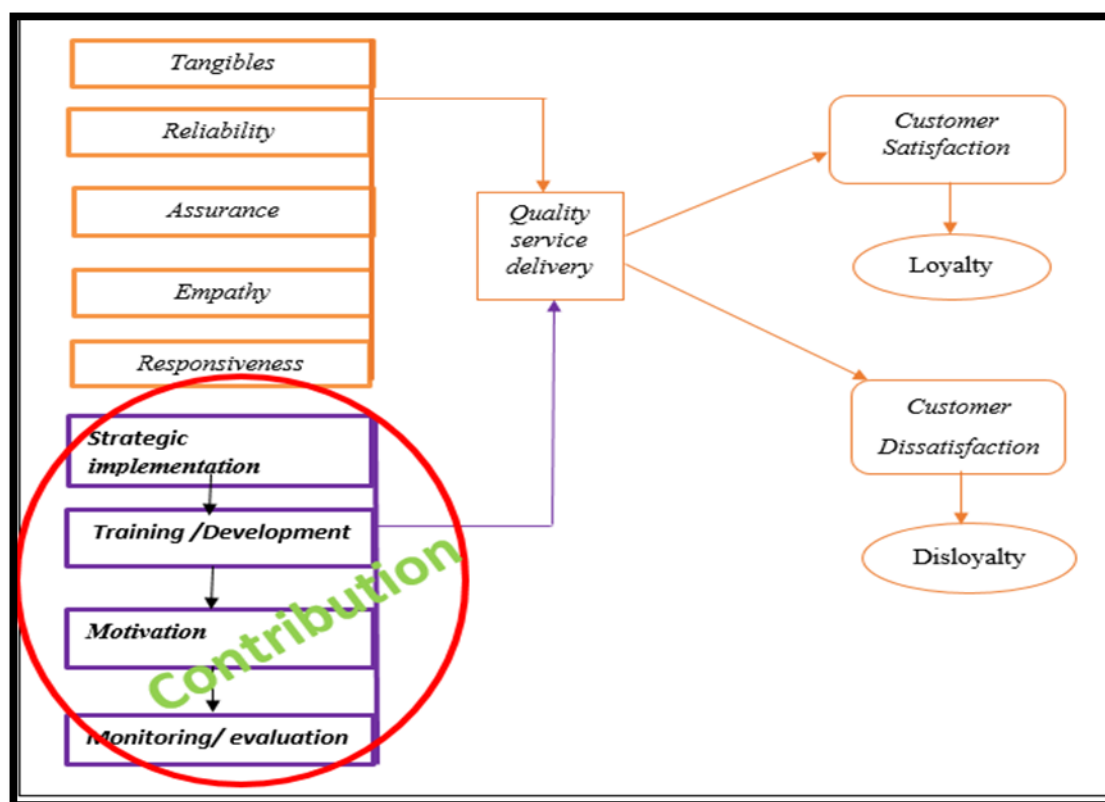
The present study's conceptual framework as presented in Figure 2.10 provides a summary of the key concepts that have been presented and discussed in the service quality literature. The framework shows how the study is structured conceptually. The framework is based on the main goal of this study which is to propose a framework for the strategic management of service quality for managers and frontline employees at the service units for them to improve their consumers' satisfaction at the branches of the SAPO in the North West province, South Africa. Information as to how the framework was developed is presented in this section. The major concepts and their relationships are illustrated also in the framework.

The exploration of the literature revealed that strategic management of service quality is a very challenging concept to understand which is influenced by various dynamics. The review of the literature showed that excellent service quality is achieved by being able to exceed consumer expectations (see Chapter 2, Section 2.5.3.4). To be able to exceed consumers' expectations, the following concepts of service quality need to be considered; service quality factors, stakeholder's expectations and perceptions of service quality, strategic positioning of the organisation, and strategies to improve service quality. The literature study indicated that assessing all the

consumers' expectations and perceptions of service quality is necessary to have a universal perspective of service quality.

The conceptual framework explains the underlying process, which is applied to guide this study. The SERVQUAL model is suitable for measuring service quality for consumer satisfaction in SAPO offering postal services using the service quality dimensions modified to fit into the postal sector. The same dimensions are used to measure both service quality in the public sector because both are related (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988) and consumer satisfaction is an antecedent of service quality (Negi, 2009). The SERVQUAL approach integrates the two constructs and suggests that perceived service quality is an antecedent to satisfaction (Negi, 2009). In this research, the SERVQUAL model was modified and additional items included to measure the service quality in the postal service sectors in the North West province.

Figure 2.10: Conceptual framework for the study



Source: Author's own illustration.

Based on the revision made by Parasuraman (2004) on the SERVQUAL model, the 5-items to this study were adopted to identify the most important dimensions that matter most to consumers

and that satisfies them. These items were outlined in the questionnaire with the addition of the strategic implementation training and development, motivation, and monitoring/evaluation dimension which are believed to affect service quality performance in the SAPO, which can be a cause of consumer dissatisfaction. This additional dimension needs to be addressed in to enable the post offices to improve their service quality and achieve service excellence. Below is an explanation of the additional dimensions.

2.6.1 Strategic implementation

Strategy implementation is the process of putting into action strategies formulated so that performance can be moved from the existing position to a future desired position (Johnson & Scholes, 2008; Ward, 2012; Alkhafaji & Nelson, 2013). According to Aladwani (2013), Mutisya (2016) and Mbithi (2016) advocate that strategy implementation means putting the results of planning into real activity. This involves operationalization of the day-to-day activities so that an organisation can achieve competitiveness. To align the operations of an organisation to the changing operating environment, the organisation must adapt according to remain competitive (Olson & Slater; Hult, 2016). Through strategic management, organisations can align their operations to push their competition above the industry peers.

The success of a strategy depends upon the efficacy of implementation and therefore a top priority of strategy implementation is building a capable organisation. It involves developing a responsive internal organisation structure, building and nurturing skills, and competencies and selecting people for key positions (Aladwani, 2017). Globalisation of the world has meant that organisations can sell to a wide market even from a local setting. Organisations need to rethink their strategies to drive the performance to a future desired position (Olson *et al.*, 2014; Mbithi, 2016; Mulaku, 2018). In this case, to increase chances of successful strategy implementation, SAPO management should bear in mind the drivers for success, namely: the involvement of key personnel in strategy formulation and implementation planning, commitment to the strategic decision at all levels of the organisation, two-way communication on the strategic decisions and implementation process, the availability of sufficient and adequate resources, and the creation of a balanced implementation plan. Effective strategy implementation only occurs if the quality of the strategy is high. Thus, SAPO should ensure the successful implementation of its business strategy to outperform other competitors within the same business environment.

2.6.2 Training and development

Training and development play an important role in the effectiveness of organisations and to the experiences of people in the workplace (Moser, 2012). To develop the desired knowledge, skills, and abilities of the employees, to perform well on the job, requires effective and compulsory training and development programs that may also effect employee motivation and commitment (Elnaga & Imran, 2013). Training can bring about positive implications for productivity, health, and safety at work and personal development (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014). However, investment in training and development entails obtaining and maintaining space and equipment. It also means that operational personnel, employed in the organisation's main business functions, such as production, maintenance, sales, marketing, and management support, must also direct their attention and effort from time to time towards supporting training development and delivery (Lovelock & Patterson, 2015). All organisations employing people need to train and develop their staff.

Most organisations are cognizant of this requirement and invest effort and other resources in training and development. Such investment can take the form of employing specialist training and development staff and paying salaries to staff undergoing training and development (Baker, 2016). However, investment in training and development is generally regarded as a good management practice to maintain appropriate expertise now and in the future as mention by (Bolden, 2016). Considering the views shared by the authors cited, it is imperative for SAPO to provide systematic training and career development programs for their employees in order to improve service quality. Training has been recognized to help employees in their current jobs and help meet current performance requirements by focusing on specific skills required for the current need. Its benefits may extend throughout a person's career and help develop that person for future responsibilities. Thus, the implementation of effective training and development systems in SAPO will help to find out the challenges facing managers and frontline employees in delivering effective services to consumers in the postal branches.

2.6.3 Motivation

Motivation plays an important part in all organisations. For instance, motivation can be a major factor in employee performance. More motivated employees tend to perform better, such as

doing more work in less time (Pinder, 2014). Employee performance is important because organisational success or failure is often dependent upon how much effort employees put forth when completing their tasks (Katzenbach & Smith, 2015). Srivastava and Banerjee (2016) define motivation as "the attribute that moves us to do or not to do something." Motivation involves a gathering of beliefs, perceptions, values, interests, and actions that are all closely related. Motivation plays an important part when it comes to employee's performance, when employees feel motivated when undertaking their duties, they in turn will provide consumers with better services. By implication, if SAPO wants to improve service quality and satisfy consumers, it is important for managers and frontline employees to be motivated. However, as much as employees can be motivated intrinsically, it is important for management to commit resources to ensure employee motivation.

2.6.4 Monitoring/evaluation

Gorgens and Kusek (2009) confirm that the monitoring and evaluation system is described as a powerful tool used by organisations in improving the result of staff performance. Meredith and Mantel (2011) refers to monitoring and evaluation as an observation system for the project managers to verify whether the project activities are happening according to planning and whether means are used correctly and efficiently. An effective monitoring and evaluation system must supply management with a continuous flow of information throughout the organisation to make it possible for management to know which product or service need adjustment (Braglia & Frosolini, 2014). Grinnell *et al.* (2015) describes monitoring and evaluation as two separate terms. Monitoring is the routine, daily assessment of ongoing activities, and progress, while evaluation is the periodic assessment of overall achievements. Abrahams (2015) confirms that the significance of monitoring and evaluation as a management tool for an efficient organisation has become an important source of learning to improve planning, service delivery, and the ideal appointment of resources. Monitoring looks at what is being done, whereas evaluation examines what has been achieved or what impact has been made. In this study, SAPO management needs to design an effective monitoring and evaluation system that will be used for the assessment of employee's daily activities, in order to offer high service quality to postal consumers.

It is envisaged that proper consideration of the concepts explained above concerning the postal service would help to improve the challenge of service quality, consequently excellent service quality will result in consumer satisfaction which in turn will result in positive word-of-mouth, repeat business, increased revenue, new business and a good image (Musikavanhu, 2017).

Hence, the proposed inclusion of strategic management into the service quality framework as in section 2.6.

2.7 Summary

The above literature review provides a different perspective of the strategic management of service quality. Central to this discussion beginning with strategic management theories, these theories of management explain how to handle the relationship of management, frontline employees, as well as consumers in order to achieve defined objectives. The theories also combine the importance of making effective decisions in a diverse context. The exploration of strategic management confirmed that strategy refers to a process by which management achieves organisational change through a planning and development process that involves the assessment of future goals and planning specific measures to realise it. Strategic management is achieved through an assessment of the internal and external environments, linking neatly with strategy formulation, implementation, evaluation, and control. It was clarified, among others, that the core competencies of a good strategic manager include consistency, openness to communication, and being a visionary in the organisation.

Furthermore, the literature of service quality explains that this is a vital tool helping any organisation to combat competition. No matter how good the marketing strategies are, if the service is not good, sales will not increase. That is why service quality has to be carefully managed all the times. The service quality analysis shows that the customer has a final say on quality: most of the key determinants of quality are under the control of the service provider and these factors help in creating customer expectations. Several studies on the association between quality and customer satisfaction in the services sector were reviewed and it was established that the dimensions of quality have a positive association with customer satisfaction. The SERVQUAL models were also discussed to provide a framework for this study. Customer satisfaction was explained with its drivers such as customer service. However, it is noted that service failure may occur during a service encounter or after usage and such situations call for service recovery to maintain customer satisfaction. Different service recovery strategies were highlighted with the view of providing the South Africa postal sector with a pool of ideas to adopt in an event of service failure. Ultimately, this chapter concluded with a discussion of the conceptual framework to improve the strategic management of service quality in the NWP post offices. The subsequent chapter presents service management in the public sector.

CHAPTER 3

SERVICE MANAGEMENT IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

3.1 Introduction

Managing services is not a one-time process. It involves making sure that all the moving parts work together as a system. Managing services involves the following processes: service strategy, service design, service transition, service operation, and continual service improvement. All the different stages in the process must work together as a system. Organisations need to establish checks and balances for customer goals, financial goals, and marketing goals. Service management is based on many dimensions, ranging from customer experience metrics, business performance indicators, and how individual components operate and interrelate.

The world of service management has two levels: the customer front desk experience and the back-desk services that support the customer. True success in service management means that customers' expectations are met or exceeded predictably. Thus, the adoption of service management by SAPO management could help in achieving consumers' expectations. The back-desk operation is a complex business process; the service requires active collaboration between the customer and the service provider. The customer is not required to understand the complexities of service management that occur behind the scenes. The consumer must perform activities according to rules and terms agreed upon as a customer, and the provider must perform activities according to the set of rules and terms as service provider. Thus, service management will help SAPO to make sure that the appropriate processes, technology, and people are put in place to make sure that the organisation can achieve its business goals.

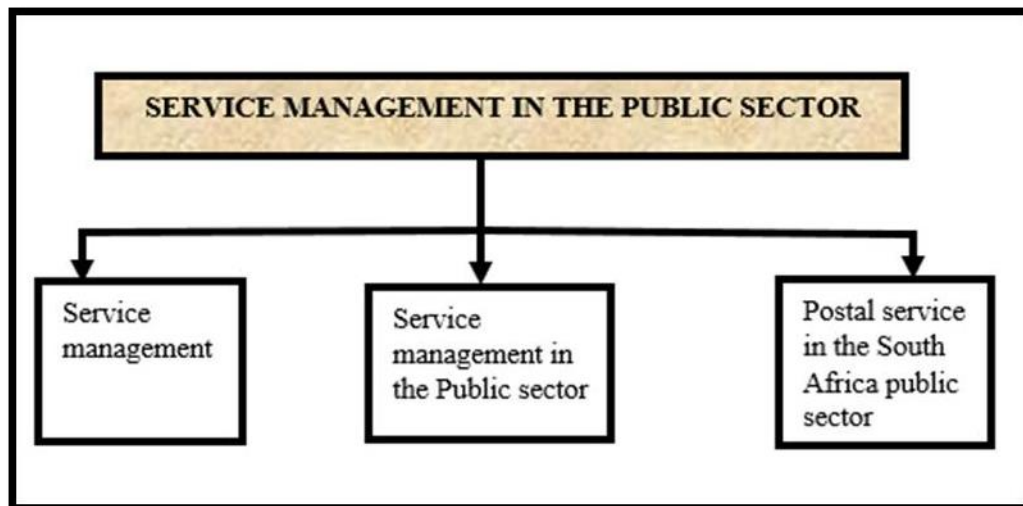
In an organisation, the more mature a service provider's capabilities are, the greater is their ability to consistently produce quality services that meet the needs of the customer in a timely and cost-effective manner. The act of transforming capabilities and resources into valuable services is at the core of service management. Without these capabilities, a service organisation is merely a bundle of resources that by itself has relatively low intrinsic value for customers.

This chapter re-examines research studies conducted on service management in the public sector. Service management in the South African public sector is a concept that has not been implemented effectively but has been a long-standing institution in organisations in the world.

Service management plays a crucial role in the local and international market's capabilities to execute their respective service delivery plans (Pollitt *et al.*, 2016).

The chapter map is reflected in Figure 3.1. Three main sections of this chapter are presented. A detailed explanation of service management in the public sector is subsequently presented.

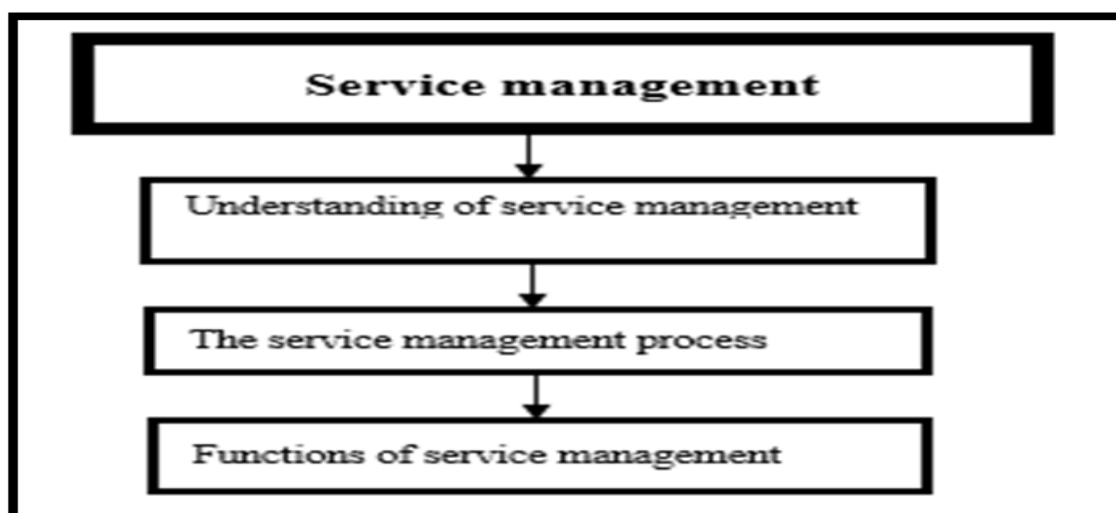
Figure 3.1: Chapter map



3.2 Service management

This section outlines service management as informed by literature on management by examining the following as indicated in Figure 3.2 below

Figure 3.2: Layout of the service management concept



3.2.1 The understanding of service management

The service management concept emerged from other disciplines such as marketing, operations management, organisational theory, human resources management, and quality management (Forsgren & Johanson, 2014; Cummings & Worley, 2014; Tzortzaki & Mihiotis, 2014). Service management is concerned with more than just delivering services (Osborne *et al.*, 2013). Each service, process, or infrastructure component has a lifecycle, and service management considers the entire lifecycle from strategy through design and transition to operation and continual improvement (Srinivasan, 2014). In the view of Brewster *et al.* (2012), the inputs to service management are the resources and capabilities that represent the assets of the service provider, while the outputs are the services that provide value to consumers. Thus, the need for SAPO to coordinate its company resources and capabilities in order to provide high-quality services to postal consumers. Effective service management is itself a strategic asset of the service provider, providing them with the ability to carry out their core business of providing services that deliver value to customers (Aarikka-Stenroos & Jaakkola 2012; Cho *et al.*, 2012). Al Ariss and Sidani (2016) confirm that adopting good practice helps a service provider to create an effective service management system. A good practice is simply doing things that have been shown to work and to be effective (West, 2012; Drucker, 2018). For SAPO as a service provider, service management could play a critical role in keeping all postal consumers informed about the services of the post offices they support. It is critical to ensure that the right information is available at the right time. In providing services to customers, the value of the services also depends on how many people are dependent on the service. After a detailed understanding of what service management is all about, the subsequent section deals with the service management functions.

3.2.2 Service management functions

Service management functions in this study could enable SAPO management to effectively deliver services required through the integration and coordination of strategies across the marketing, operations, and human resource functions. The focus here is on the views of scholars concerning the different service management functions in an organisation. In the view of Taneja *et al.* (2013, functional areas of management mean the totality of all those activities which are performed in an organisation

In order to achieve the objectives of the organisation, these functions can be of different types

but operations, marketing, and human resources activities have special importance. Pradeesh (2011) asserts that the functional area of management must consider the operational and human resource functions of an organisation. Robbins and Coulter (2009) also confirm that organisations typically begin their yearly plan with the marketing function and estimating the expected year's sales. Yarimoglu (2014) affirms that the integration of the functional area of management leads to quality service management in an organisation.

Lovelock and Patterson (2015) state that the operations, marketing, and human resources form the trinity of service management. Cabrera *et al.* (2016) also note the functional areas of service management to include operations, human resources, and finances. Figure 3.3 below is the concept-analysis conducted to aggregate the service management functions as per literature.

Table 3.1 Concept-analysis of Service management functions

Source	Operations	Marketing	Human resources
Robbins & Coulter (2012)	√	√	√
Golden & Taneja (2010)	√	√	√
Pradeesh (2011)	√		√
Yarimoglu (2014)	√	√	√
Lovelock & Patterson (2015)	√	√	√
Cabrera <i>et al.</i> (2016)	√	√	√

The following section further elaborates on the functions of service management.

1) Operations

Operations focuses on the work undertaken in managing the internal activities of an organisation to ensure that it operates as effectively and efficiently as possible. This is seminal in every organisation. Although marketing has assumed greater importance to service organisation in recent years, it is still the operations function that dominate line management. As such, the management of operation functions is quite important. Reid and Sanders (2019) assert that operations management has played a critical role in transforming high-contact services into low-contact, technology-mediated ones turning personalized interactions into impersonal service encounters (Slack & Brandon-Jones, 2018). There are two quite different spheres of activity for operations in services organisation. On the one hand, the services encounter customers and on the other hand back-desk operation of the organisation (Gupta &

Starr, 2014; Mellat-Parast *et al.*, 2015). In the case of SAPO, these activities include, for example mail, operational logistics, banking, retailing, supply chain, and also human resources to ensure smooth service delivery. These two spheres have to cooperate tightly and good operations management is the key to that. By implication, SAPO operation management needs to ensure that operations managers and frontline employers cooperate with the postal consumer in order to ensure improved and smooth service delivery. Other important tasks of operations management in services are customers and sales forecasting, capital planning, and the development of queuing models, amongst others (Heizer, 2016).

When it comes to improving service quality, the understanding of operations management goes beyond just overseeing the design of activities in an organisation. It also has a strong link to human resource systems. Hitt *et al.* (2016) confirm that operations management also influences human resource systems in services as it heightens competition, reduces costs and improves efficiencies. Historically, operations management played a limited role because of the labour-intensive nature of service work, the lack of technical solutions, and the role of the customer in the production process (Matta *et al.*, 2014; Khanna, 2015). However, this has changed. Customers introduced variability and uncertainty into the process through their heterogeneous preferences (Cusumano *et al.*, 2015; Randhawa & Scerri, 2015) and this has made the challenge of improving productivity more difficult to accomplish through interactive services. Thus, operations management has led to conceptualising customers as ‘partial employees’ (Amorim & Saghezchi 2014; Bowen, 2016). While many service activities involve high levels of customer contact that are difficult to standardize (such as hotels or hospitals), for many others, employers can choose a high- or low-contact approach as organisational design (Li *et al.*, 2017).

2) Marketing

Marketing is referred to as a means of creating superior value and delivering high levels of customer satisfaction (Baker, 2014). Pour *et al.* (2012) state that marketers should endeavour to understand customers' needs and wants, carefully study competition, make products available at places convenient to customers, communicate effectively and efficiently, and finally, offer superior value at a reasonable price. Schindler *et al.* (2012), however, states this does not mean organisations ignore making high revenue since more revenue will make available additional beneficial services. Phadtare (2014) holds that the focus of marketing is customer needs and wants. Through these, an organisation is also obliged to offer solutions to

clients, not just tangible goods and services. By implication, SAPO needs to provide a solution to its consumers, at any given point if they are dissatisfied with the service offer. In the context of a service, marketing is not only the bridge between production and consumption but rather has to manage the customer contact of the other functions of the organisation, for example, operations and human resources (Gronroos, 2001; Bettencourt *et al.*, 2014; Lovelock & Patterson, 2015). The emerging view of service marketing is increasingly customer-oriented, with a clear focus on retaining existing customers instead of winning new ones (Rust & Huang, 2014; Mfarinya, 2018). By implication, as much as SAPO may want to grow and expand its market in the face of intense/fierce competition with the hope of gaining new customers, it must prioritize the need to retain existing customers. One way of doing this is to improve the quality of service offered to existing customers. This can also be done through proper services marketing. McDonald and Wilson (2016) and Mmutle (2017) summarised the different responsibilities of service marketing in the 'services marketing triangle' which consist of:

- Internal marketing (training and enabling people to deliver).
- Interactive marketing (marketing during the service encounter).
- External marketing (setting up customers' expectations).
- Following is a synopsis of each one of these responsibilities.

1) Internal marketing

Bailey *et al.* (2016) defines internal marketing as the selling of the organisation to employees who are seen as the internal customer. This implies that higher employee satisfaction will result in and make it possible to develop a more customer-focused and marketing-oriented organisation. Mmutle (2017), encourage that internal marketing has to be managed by the company's leadership, thus the leadership of postal sector should be hands-on to ensure that promises are fulfilled within the post offices before it can be put out to customers. By implication, internal marketing takes place through the organisation promises. Promises are easy to make, but unless providers are recruited, trained, provided with tools and appropriate internal systems, and rewarded for good service, promises may not be kept (Shiferaw, 2018). From this perspective, understanding internal marketing would assist employees and management of the postal sector to recognise the importance of the products or services offered. Employees and management should be ambassadors of the brand of services rendered.

2) Interactive marketing

Interactive marketing refers to the interaction that takes place between the employee and the customer, which is a series of processes that ultimately ends in customer perceived service quality (Grönroos & Gummerus, 2014). The interactive marketing aspect which happens between employees and customers occurs at the 'moment of truth' when the customer interacts with the postal sector and the service is produced and consumed. From the customer's point of view, the most vivid impression of service occurs in the service. It is in these encounters that customers receive a snapshot of the postal service quality, and each encounter contributes to the customer's overall satisfaction and willingness to repeat use of or return to the postal sector. The result of interactive marketing is reputation. After delivering the promises as intended customers can give their impressions and perceptions of service quality which if positive could lead to a good reputation (Cele, 2018).

3) External marketing

Thirdly, external marketing is what takes place between the company's management and the consumers (Mmutle, 2017). Through its external marketing efforts, postal service providers make promises to its customers regarding what they can expect and how it can be delivered. External marketing can be a reinforcement of the postal sector's promises to the public and equally serves as a retention strategy for existing customers. Guzzoni (2005) and Mmutle (2017) further explain that the company is the management, as well as the fulltime marketers and salespeople who give promises to customers and have to enable the promises through continuous development and internal marketing with their employees. This internal marketing is a necessity for external and interactive marketing and can be reached through attractive and stimulating places of work, together with good internal communication.

The employees are those working in close contact with customers and therefore conduct interactive marketing. In this study, the five postal branches are the company that represents management along with marketing, who then give promises to the customers and enable those (promises) through internal marketing with employees. Furthermore, the employees of the five postal branches, must therefore, conduct interactive marketing since they work in close contact with customers. Therefore, service marketing and the service marketing triangle becomes imperative for any service industry striving for customer satisfaction and loyalty. It is equally through service marketing that service industries can understand and conceptualise consumer

needs through consumer insights.

4) Human resources

Human resources is a strategic approach to managing employment relations which emphasises that leveraging people's capabilities and it is critical to achieving sustainable competitive advantage (Huczynski & Buchanan, 2010). Here the concern is for SAPO integration and the behaviour of people in the workplace based on ability, motivation, role perception, and situational contingencies. Thompson (2014) uses a different angle, claiming that human resources entails adopting a longer-term perspective to the management of people in order to obtain added value from them and thus achieve a competitive advantage.

After analysing the different meanings of human resources, one of the best and most comprehensive definitions is:

"Human resource management relates to the total set of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that firms need to compete. It involves concern for and action in the management of people, including selection, training and development, employee relations, and compensation. Such actions may be bound together by the action of a human resources philosophy."
(Armstrong & Taylor, 2014)

Ceptureanu (2015) also mentions the importance of the people at work and their contribution to an organisation's overall performance. The human resource department is an important part of an organisation and performs the following functions: (1) recruitment, (2) employee relations, (3) safety, (4) training and development, and (5) compensation and benefits (Werner & DeSimone, 2011). These functions are explained as human resources for the purpose of this study, explaining that an organisation without a proper setup for human resources is bound to suffer from serious problems while managing its regular activities. For this reason, SAPO ought to put a lot of effort and energy into setting up strong and effective human resources within their business environment. The subsequent discussion presents the service management process as explained by different authors in business management.

3.2.3 Service management process

The aim of the service management processes is to transform the service provider's resources into valuable customer services (Stauss *et al.*, 2010). In a competitive business environment, management needs to implement the customer service management process to proactively

respond to situations before it exerts a negative impact on customers (Alkhafaji & Nelson, 2013). Setia *et al.* (2013) and Bhattacharjya *et al.* (2016) confirm that it is this proactive perspective that makes the customer service management process different from the customer service activity in logistics. Thus, the need for SAPO to ensure the effective flow and storage of goods, services, and related postal activities are in place to meet consumer requirements. The service management processes according to (Boniface *et al.* 2010; Axelos.com, 2011; Iqbal *et al.* 2011; Sanker, 2012; Myitstudy.com, 2013; Lloyd *et al.*, 2013; Bernard, 2014; Priyadharshini, 2018; Spencer, 2018) include service strategy, service design, service transition, service operations, and continual service improvement. Table 3.4 provides a concept-analysis of the service management process.

Table 3.1: Concept-analysis of the service management process

Source	Service strategy	Service design	Service transition	Service operation	Continual service improvement
Boniface <i>et al.</i> (2010)	√	√	√	√	√
Axelos.com (2011)	√	√	√	√	√
Iqbal <i>et al.</i> (2011)	√	√	√	√	√
Sanker (2012)	√	√	√	√	√
Myitstudy.com (2013)	√	√	√	√	√
Lloyd <i>et al.</i> , (2013)	√	√	√	√	√
Bernard (2014)	√		√	√	√
Priyadharshini, (2018)	√	√	√	√	√
Spencer (2018)	√	√	√	√	√

The subsequent sections expound on the service management process according to various authors of management as illustrated in Table 3.4.

1) Service strategy

The main goal of the service strategy (SS) phase is to develop the ability to achieve and maintain a strategic advantage, by defining the perspective, position, plans, and patterns regarding its services and the management of those services that enable an organisation to achieve its business outcomes (Richard *et al.* 2012; Al Mourad & Hussain, 2014). The adoption of service strategy would enable the SAPO to design, develop, and implement effective service management system that will help give out high service quality to its post office consumers, as well as enable SAPO to consistently outperform competitive over time, across business cycles, through industry disruptions, and changes in leadership. Murali *et al.* (2016) consider service strategy as the planning stage in which organisations strive for an effective means of delivering services.

Rajasekar (2014) explains that by implementing the service strategy phase an organisation can achieve the following: establish which services to deliver to whom, create value for customers, define the quality of the service, and more. Service strategy is aimed at both the internal and external organisation service providers.

Service strategy guides how to design, develop, and implement good management of services, making it a strategic asset and not only just an organisational capacity (Lyra & Dugue, 2012). Kangangi (2014) explain that this process ensures that all stakeholders agree on the company's objectives and the means whereby resources, capabilities, and investments are prioritized. By implication, SAPO management needs to agree on the company's overall objectives, as well as the overall resources needed for achieving the company goals. This means service strategy guidance is useful in the context of service design, service transition, service operation, and continual service improvement (Porter & Heppelmann, 2017). Service strategy defines a unique approach for delivering value. A sound service strategy is essential in the creation of high- quality postal services (Sultana, 2013). It provides a foundation upon which to build a successful service management function and ensures that the best value is delivered to customers (Sultana, 2013).

The service strategy guides how to view service management, not only as an organisational capability but as a strategic asset. It describes the principles underpinning the practice of service management and also help to improve their ability to define and deliver quality services and to build appropriate structures in managing organisational services.

2) Service design

Service design, in the views of Reason *et al.* (2015) and Bason (2016), is regarded as the stage that designs appropriate and innovative organisation services focusing on processes, policy, and documentation, and also meeting current business agreements. Service design in this study would offer SAPO a new way to understanding and approaching their development and delivery, designed to work for consumers and management, instead of seeing them as an optional step in product development. Larson and Chang (2016) ascertain that the design phase starts with a new set of changed business requirements and ends up with a solution developed to meet business needs as documented in the organisational policy. This solution is then passed to service transition to build, test, and deploy the new or changed services after implementation control is passed to service operation (Verzuh, 2015). The main goals and objectives are designing service

strategies, services, developing, maintaining and enhancing performance by taking into consideration the time and cost constraints, risk mitigation, ensuring security, and with an overall aim to meet the quality of organisational services (Kuller *et al.*, 2010; Foxit, 2011; Atkin & Brooks, 2015).

In summary, service design is a systematic way of improving a business through innovation, branding, and the relationship between customer, management, and its employees. Service design could enable SAPO to obtain improvements in its processes in order to improve service quality and offer a better service to its customers (Tuulaniemi, 2011). The ideal end-result for a business is to create and maintain a holistic service experience that gives customers a positive, valuable, and effortless experience. This would ultimately differentiate the business and bring value (Miettinen *et al.*, 2016).

3) Service transition

Service transition focuses on testing, building, and the deployment of new changed protocols as well as checking and tracking progress against requirements. It provides guidance and ensures that the newly changed services are well managed, introduced, deployed, and transferred (Kuller *et al.*, 2010).

Mesquida and Mas (2015) posits that the service transition stage gets inputs from the service design stage and provides output to the service operation stage. Service transition could help the SAPO management to plan and manage the organisational service in its lifecycle. This would enable SAPO to deliver value to itself and its customers. The main goals and objectives of this phase are helping organisations to plan and manage service changes, setting up customer expectations, reducing the gap in predicted and actual performance through minimizing errors and risks associated with changing production into services (Foxit, 2011; Lamichhane, 2019). Service transition guides the development and improvement of capabilities such as shared services, utility computing, web services, and mobile commerce to support the service operation is described.

4) Service operation

In the view of Peltier (2016), service operation deals with the management of day-to-day operations of organisation services ensuring consumers that the processes and activities are

operated well on a usual basis. Service operation key purpose is the coordination and performance of organisation services meeting the promises of service level agreements (Foxit, 2011). Service operation can be optimized into long term planning and long term improvement activities and are supported by several processes (Kuller *et al.*, 2010; Conger, 2015).

Ivanov *et al.* (2017) explain that service operation describes best practices for managing services in supported environments. It includes guidance in achieving effectiveness and efficiency in the delivery and support of services to ensure value for the consumer, and the service provider. By implication, service operation would enable SAPO to encompass the day-to-day activities, processes, and infrastructure responsible for delivering value to consumers. Therefore, no customer wants to pay for a service that does not perform as expected (Bai *et al.*, 2019). Slack and Brandon-Jones (2018) explain that strategic objectives are ultimately realized through service operation, therefore making it a critical capability. Service operation guides how to maintain stability in-service operation, allowing for changes in design, scale, scope, and service levels. Organisations are provided with detailed process guidelines, methods, and tools for use in two major control perspectives: reactive and proactive (Jäntti & Cater-Steel, 2017). Kanki *et al.* (2019) explain that managers and practitioners are provided with knowledge allowing them to make better decisions in areas such as managing the availability of services, controlling demand, optimizing capacity utilization, scheduling of operations, and avoiding or resolving service incidents and managing problems.

Service operation describes best practices for managing services in supported environments. It includes guidance on achieving effectiveness and efficiency in the delivery and support of services to ensure value for the customer as well as the service provider.

5) Continual service improvement

Continual service improvement (CSI) focuses on the processes of improving the quality of services (Lloyd 2011). It is important to note the difference between continuous and continual improvement. Continuous improvement focuses on constantly improving at the same level. Continual improvement, on the other hand, focuses on a sequence of improving quality as a succession in different time scales with progression to higher levels (TSO, 2011). Continual service improvement focuses on stages of improvement activities that enhance an organisation's service quality. Considering the current challenges in relation to service quality in SAPO, one might be tempted to think they are unintentionally operating on the continuous improvement

axis. It would require SAPO to plan and allocate resources with the vision of continual service improvement in order to enhance service quality (Slack & Brandon-Jones, 2018).

Slack and Brandon-Jones (2018) ascertain that continual service improvement is a hot issue today, many organisations talk and think about it but in reality, they do not make an effective plan, allocate resource, schedule and monitor it. It is just confined to the discussion stage and embedding with organisation culture is still lagging.

Continual service improvement (CSI) focuses on quality of service maintenance, evaluation, and improvement on a regular basis, taking care of the maturity of the overall organisational service management service lifecycle and the underlying processes. In this study, continual service improvement would enable SAPO management to identify and execute opportunities to make postal processes and services better and to objectively measure the effects of these efforts over time. CSI integrates the common principles, methods, and practices from a quality, and change management working in improving the services, processes, and service lifecycle (Cartlidge & Lillycrop, 2007; Berrahal & Marghoubi, 2016; Kaiser, 2017).

Heikkinen and Jäntti (2012) and Ebadi and Emadi (2016) states that the primary purpose of CSI is to continually align and realign the organisation's services to the changing needs by identifying and implementing improvements to organisation services that support business processes. By implication, CSI would enable SAPO to identify and execute opportunities to make postal processes and services better. Probst and Case (2013) also explained that the proactive nature of CSI as anticipating service-related issues and addressing them before they become an issue for the customer. These improvement activities support the lifecycle approach through service strategy, service design, service transition, and service operation. In effect, CSI is about looking for ways to improve process effectiveness and efficiency as well as cost- effectiveness.

In summary, the service strategy component takes customer requirements and continual service improvement requests as input and defines and delivers service level packages as output to the service design component. Through this process, the service strategy component considers factors such as strategies, policies, procedures, and resources, and constraints. The service design component in its part takes service level packages as input and works to deliver a service design package as an output. In this process, the component considers solution design, architectures, standards, and service design improvement requests from continual service

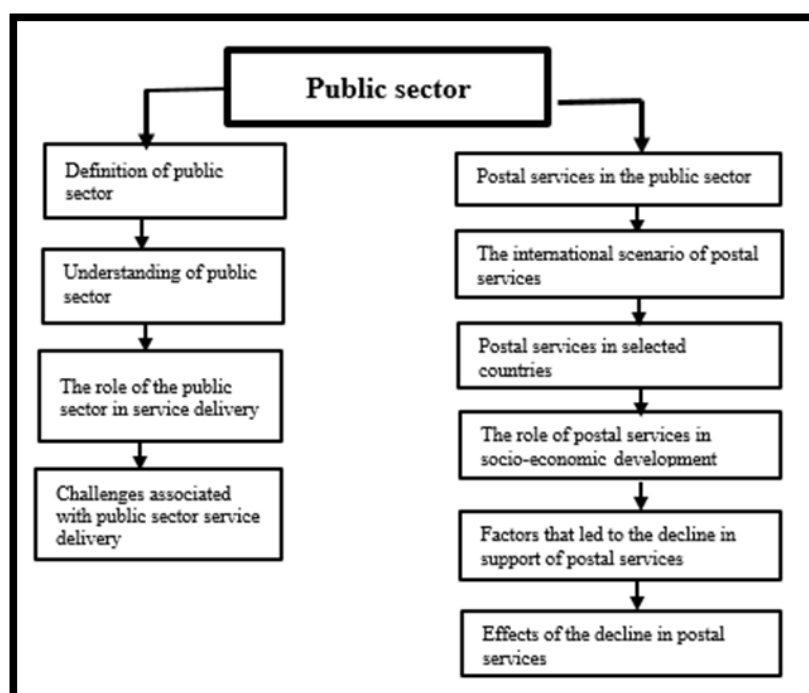
improvement component. Similarly, the service transition and service operation components create links and perform similar input-output relationships by considering relevant factors. The continual service improvement component interacts with all components and provides improvement proposals accordingly. The improvement proposals could be on strategic, design, transition, and/or operational issues.

After this examination and understanding of what the service management process is all about, the subsequent section introduces an understanding of the public sector.

3.3 Public sector

The public sector is commonly understood as that part of the economy controlled or operated by government and this includes publicly funded agencies, enterprises, and other entities that deliver public services. However, in this study and in the context of SAPO, the understanding of public service means more. It is not just limited to government ownership of the business but includes the challenges associated with the public sector services and how that affects service delivery in the sector and the maximization of service value to citizens. This section outlines the understanding of the public sector as informed by the literature on management by examining the following as indicated in Figure 3.3.

Figure 3.3: Layout of public sector concept



Following is elaborates of the various section as indicated in figure 3.3.

3.3.1 Understanding the public sector

The public sector is concerned with the distribution of public services for the maximisation of services value for citizens (Mendes *et al.*, 2012). Yescombe (2007) and Knuth (2014) explain that public infrastructure is beneficial for all citizens as a society manages its operations. As a non-profit organisation, the public sector is accountable for utilizing taxpayers' money and for ascertaining good return of value. Furthermore, citizens expect better quality services and value for money, yet citizens are indisposed to pay higher taxes (Knuth, 2014). The public sector is highly regulated by the intrinsic political dictates of the current governing political party (Lachman, 1985; Prabhu *et al.*, 2002; Radnor & McGuire, 2012). Constantinou-Miltiadou (2015) avows that publicly-owned organisations are more vigorously influenced by the regime than private ones are, because "of their dependence on convivial legitimization, the political nature of the processes of resource appropriation, and the political and public scrutiny to which they are subject". Brown *et al.* (2011) allude that such political intrigues have been perceived as constituting "one of the most significant contextual schisms" within the public sector. This is because internal organisational processes can be designed and regulated according to the governing political party and its ideology. In this context, whereas the behaviour of the private sector is highly controlled by subsisting market forces of competition and consumers, public management is more dependent on the locus of control behind its bureaucratic agencies (Mauskapf, 2012).

Consequently, it is confirmed that changes in the public sector are often dependent on politicians' decision-making processes as they are concerned about their party's elective power (Safa & DuToit, 2011). Politicians exercise influence on the public officers, offering them safe vocation guarantees in the public sector and favors in exchange for electoral support. Public officers are not involved in policy-making but merely carry out routine administrative work (Kickert, 2011). Consequently, politicians may frequently introduce initiatives without realising the consequence of their decisions on public officers.

Cordella and Tempini (2015) explains how the Weberian approach to an organisation has dominated the public sector where responsibilities should be delegated based on skill and ability. There should be no flexible roles. Rather, employees should be aware of their position's responsibilities and stick to them. Straying outside of their designated roles only disrupts the

hierarchy of authority. Therefore, collaboration, creative thinking and idea pitching are also strongly discouraged. Also, workers should respect their supervisors and not overstep boundaries. By implication, the Weberian approach allows SAPO employees to deliver high service quality to its post office consumers. Therefore, the need for authority to be given to the most competent and qualified people would make the postal services more efficient than those based on who you knew. This Weberian model has created a highly bureaucratic organisational structure that has often exhibited stagnation and rigidity, and failing to provide value to citizens (Steward & Walsh, 2010; Mongkol, 2011). The Weberian model is predicated on rules and regulations derived from public law, and the role of the bureaucrat is rigorously subordinated to the political superior (Chia, 2011). Constantinou-Miltiadou (2015) also explains that public bodies seem to be invulnerable to fears of bankruptcy which results in its employees being disinclined to take responsibility for their decisions. From the latter, civil services reforms aim to control political patronage (and concretely the 'spoils' system in the USA) by engendering a stable and permanent state workforce composing a public administration predicated on merit instead of clientelism (Fairbrother *et al.*, 2011; Müller & Jugdev, 2016).

Political debate about the public sector has been prompted by cost considerations, but have fixated on far more deep-seated debates about the nature and role of publicly-accountable bureaucracy (Starke *et al.*, 2013). This debate intensified from the mid-1970s when the economic crisis caused regimes to question (Kotz, 2015; Bresser-Pereira, 2016). Keynes' economic theory appeared unable to handle stagflation, the amalgamation of long-term unemployment and inflation. The instability triggered by elevated oil prices and subsequent currency instability caused regimes to look to older solutions from supply-side economics (Steil, 2013; Varoufakis, 2015). Laissez-faire liberalism and free trade, combined with a focus on the money supply and a presumption in favour of the private sector, informed by public choice theory, has since become economic orthodoxy (Harvey, 2005; Offer & Söderberg, 2016).

Albeit the precise definition of neo-liberalism is contested (Wolf & Amirkhanyan, 2010), one is that the private sector is simply more efficient than the public (Vries, 2010; Mazzucato, 2015). This postulation has guided central regime policy to public sector reform, but it can be argued that public organisations independently took on private sector values and commenced to adopt private sector methods (Vries, 2010; Kravchenko, 2015).

According to Constantinou-Miltiadou (2015), the form a contractual relationship takes is an important decision a public entity must make when applying the New Public Management

(Vabø, 2009). The purchaser-provider split is a prerequisite for introducing market reform to public services. To comprehend the intricate change, it has been put forward that New Public Management (NPM) reforms need to be viewed as cooperating and amalgamating with contesting drivers of change (Theobald, 2012). Consequently, institutional changes are fuelled by tensions and there may be both intended and unintended consequences (Meelen & Farla, 2013; Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2015; Dogaru, 2016). The next section elaborates on the role of the public sector in service delivery.

3.3.2 The role of the public sector in service delivery

The mandate of the public sector is to improve the general welfare of society by delivering public goods and services to individuals, and to private and other public sector organisations, playing a critical role in both the country and the global economy (Linna *et al.*, 2010). The public sector has a wide range of stakeholders, and each of these has its interests, resulting in a variety of expectations that are imposed on the public sector (Mimba *et al.*, 2007; Björk *et al.*, 2014). To address the needs and expectations of all these stakeholders, the public sector needs to be effective and efficient in fulfilling its responsibilities. Efficiency and effectiveness in a public sector are related to the maximisation of resources, relative to the outputs achieved (Mihaiu *et al.*, 2010). This implies that the public sector needs to provide public goods and services in a manner that responds adequately to the needs of its participants, within the constraints of its budget (Fourie & Poggenpoel, 2017). To be more effective and efficient in managing the interests and assets of its stakeholders in an ever-changing environment, the public sector has to reform (Gabel-Shemueli *et al.*, 2013; Drennan *et al.*, 2014; Berman *et al.*, 2019).

In the view of Lufunyo (2013), public sector institutions throughout the world have undergone various reforms since the end of World War II, to bring about positive change. The urgency of such reforms come as a result of numerous concerns around cost-effectiveness, efficiency, accountability, better performance management, and, ultimately, service delivery. Most African countries also initiated public sector reforms (Odeh & Mailafia, 2013). However, despite great effort and the number of resources assigned to such reforms, progress has remained slow (Ghobadian *et al.*, 2009; Lufunyo, 2013), primarily as a result of political interference, unaccountable civil servants, non-compliance with reforms, and the overall decline in governance. There is concern that these reforms have not had a positive impact on service delivery and that positive outcomes on the public, in general, are not forthcoming. Improved processes in the public sectors do not guarantee improved service delivery, as public sector

management tends to prioritise the interests of government, who is the main source of public sector resources, even when the government's interests are contrary to the needs of the people (Ghobadian *et al.*, 2009; Møller & Skedsmo, 2013; Bason, 2018).

Another school of thought around why reform in African countries, in particular, has progressed so slowly is the developing world's attempt to implement developed world reform models. Such approaches are difficult, according to Ohemeng (2010) and Fourie and Poggenpoel (2017), if not impossible, in the short term, because developing countries are controlled by informal markets with informal socio-economic and political environments. Van de Walle (2008) and Savitz (2013) emphasise that there is no ideal benchmark to use in changing the performance of public organizations. Bolton *et al.* (2013) explain that what may work in one country may not work in another, because the countries' social, economic, cultural, and political environments differ.

The South African government has often been accused of not delivering services to its citizens. The mass media have reported on service delivery protests that are indicative of inadequately addressed problems in the public sector (Nengwekhulu, 2009; Carrim, 2009; COGTA, 2009; Akinboade *et al.*, 2013; Wijnberg, 2013; Fakir, 2014; Beukes, 2014). These protests cannot all be blamed on municipalities' perceived dismal performance as it is evident that something more serious underlies these problems, possibly involving underperformance in all spheres of government (Carrim, 2009).

Various aspects impeding service delivery include incompetent public servants, a lack of accountability, poor human resources practices, inadequate procurement practices, and a lack of leadership (Janse van Rensburg, 2014). Key problem areas include service delivery difficulties, unskilled workers, and poor management of finances, high levels of unemployment, nepotism, and corruption (COGTA, 2009; Akinboade *et al.*, 2012).

Although these problems all contribute toward the inadequate service delivery in South African public sector, Francis (2013) suggests that ineffective leadership is the ultimate key problem. Francis (2013) adds that this situation is principally caused by appointing incompetent senior officials and the absence of accountability from public sector leaders. In this case, SAPO should appoint competent senior managers who execute the organisation vision. However, there is limited scientific evidence on what works best in improving the performance of service quality in the public sector (Blum *et al.*, 2012).

Bouckaert *et al.* (2016) confirm that the public sector usually comprises organisations that are owned and operated by the government and exist to provide services for its citizens. Through the process of outsourcing, public sector organisations often engage private enterprises to deliver goods and services to its citizens (Doherty *et al.*, 2014; Van Dooren & Van de Walle, 2016). Examples of organisations in the public sector: education (schools, libraries), Electricity, Emergency Services, Fire Service, Gas and Oil, Healthcare, Infrastructure, Law Enforcement, Police Services, Postal Service, Public Transit Social Services and Waste Management. All these services are being offered by the public sector. The next section of the discussion explains the challenges associated with public sector service delivery.

3.3.3 Challenges associated with public sector service deliver

Akinnusi (2008) states that performance of South Africa in human resources measured by the World Competitiveness Ratings is very poor, and the challenges are well known to most users of government services. The Public Service Commission (2012) (PSC) report of 2012 acknowledged that there were service delivery challenges resulting from a skills shortage in the public sector. There is also a lack of strategy to attract and retain identified labour shortages. Horn and Raga (2012) assert that all these stated challenges in the public sector are contributors to the dominance of corruption. Naidoo (2014) observes that there are also several interrelated variables, which hamper the effectiveness of the public sector to deliver services. The most important of these variables were identified as: job evaluation, human resource planning, skilled labour shortage, training and development, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms challenge, lack of leadership competencies and strengthening human resources, lack of coordination, poor communication strategy, enhancing ethics and values, poor policy implementation and the need for responsibility and accountability. Reilly (2014) also mentions the lack of leadership competencies and strengthening human resources and poor policy implementation. Public Service Commission (2014) further, identify that there is a skill challenge among senior managers, dispute the attending series training program.

Service delivery challenges continue to affect public service. Yonezawa (2014) and Tau (2015) identified the various challenges from the department of labour such as human resources, skilled shortage, lack of leadership competencies, and responsibility and accountability. Ramutsheli and Jacobus (2015) also state some of the reasons for the public sector's failure to deliver the required services, including inadequate human resources capacity, shortage of skills, unethical

organisational culture, poor policy implementation, and ineffective performance management systems.

Furthermore, Yanguas and Bukenya (2016) identified the crux of the problem in the public sector: leadership challenges, social accountability, and policy and policy implementation. Emiru (2017) identified the lack of co-ordination, skilled shortage, lack of leadership competencies, lack of responsibility and accountability, and lack of training and development on employees' performance at the Ministry of Public Service and Human Resource Development (MPSHRD). The challenges associated with public sector service delivery as identified by different scholars are dealt with in more detail in the subsequent discussion. Following is the concept-analysis conducted to aggregate the challenges in public sector service delivery as per literature. Since SAPO is a public organization, these challenges are also possibly evident in SAPO.

Table 3.2: Concept-analysis on challenges associated with public sector service delivery

Source	Job evaluation	Human resource planning	Skilled labour shortage	Training and development	Monitoring and evaluation	Lack of leadership competencies	Poor communication strategy	poor policy implementation
Akinnusi (2008)	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Horn & Raga (2012)						√		√
Public Service Commission (2012)			√				√	
Naidoo (2014)	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Public Service Commission (2014)				√		√		√
Reilly (2014)						√		
Tau (2015)		√	√			√	√	
Yonezawa (2014)		√	√			√		
Ramutsheli & Janse van Rensburg (2015)		√	√			√		√
Yanguas & Bukenya (2016)			√			√		√
Emiru (2017)			√	√		√		

Following up on this tabulation is an explanation of the challenges associated with public sector service delivery.

- Job evaluation

Noe *et al.* (2017) state that job evaluation is an important procedure used to determine the relative value of jobs in the organisation. The process helps to determine the level of compensation paid because different jobs within an organisation hold different degrees of value that determine the highest or lowest salary levels (Osibanjo & Adeniji, 2013; Hammer & Avgar, 2017). Therefore, decisions on the retention of competent staff are based on market-related compensation and internal equity or the fairness of compensation practices within the organisation (Thaba & Kanjere, 2014; Parker, 2014; Ruben, 2018). According to the Public Service Commission report (2013), the job evaluation system currently applied in South Africa is flawed and causes further delays in the filling of vacancies.

- Human resource planning

Human resource planning is a strategic policy issue for organisations to gain insight into the number and type of personnel needed in the short, medium, and long term, taking into account developments in the labour market (Hoque, 2013; Purce, 2014; Nankervis *et al.*, 2016). The human resource plan also helps to translate policy developments into Human Resource (HR) policy issues concerning the entry and exit of personnel in the organisation's growth and development (Du Toit *et al.*, 2014; Mazibuko-Madalani, 2016; Webster *et al.*, 2018). In Australia for instance, it was established that the irregular human resource planning brought about a skills shortage that significantly affected public service but the situation was remedied (Australian Public Service Commission, 2011). The crucial requirement of human capital planning, as cited above, was also undertaken by the South African Department of Public Service Administration (DPSA) in its Human Resource Planning Strategic Framework - Vision 2015 for the Public Service in 2008, to assist government departments to carry out their respective mandates efficiently (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2009).

- Skilled labour shortage

Documented reports in Maputo, the capital of Mozambique, revealed that immediately after the independence of that country in 1975, there were only 40 people with university degrees (Kayizzi-Mugerwa, 2003). The system had to transform and absorb indigenous people to serve in the public sector, as opposed to colonisers holding public office, both in politics and government administration. Skilled labour shortage became a challenge, forcing the public

sector to be staffed with unskilled people without sufficient education or relevant qualifications, which contributed to inefficient service delivery. The few available skills were headhunted by the private sector, enticing skilled labour with salaries far exceeding government pay rates. Personnel in the public sector resorted to taking bribes, outright theft of public property, and absenteeism due to freelance jobs to make up for the perceived shortfall in their monthly salaries to improve their living standards (Kayizzi-Mugerwa 2003).

In Namibia for instance, unemployed graduates are recruited to a shelter programme of skills enhancement during the graduates' "unemployment season" (Mazibuko-Madalani, 2016). England faces similar challenges of an oversupply of unemployed graduates (Kgotlhane *et al.*, 2018). Internationally, the concept of scarce skills does not hold water, "Outsourcing and global supply chains, along with the fall of communism, mean that suddenly, workers in rich countries are competing directly with workers everywhere, many of whom live in capital-poor countries. That will naturally make labour less scarce, and hence less valuable" (Smith, 2014).

Richardson (2013) describes the shortage of skills as a source of aggravation to firms and, when severe, it is likely to hamper the quality and quantity of industrial development outputs. Richardson also argues that skills shortage in South Africa comes from many origins, namely a lack of investment in skills development; education; and rapid structural change, which is combined with low levels of overall unemployment; a cyclical surge in employment in parts of the economy; and because of a weakness in the training system. For instance, during the launch of the Joint Initiative on Priority Skills Acquisition (JIPSA), it was acknowledged that one of the deepest scars of apartheid was certainly the denial of acquisition of quality education and skills for Black people (JIPSA, 2007). As a result, the skills shortage was long identified as one of the critical constraints to economic growth and employment creation by the South African government. Thus, to address the problem, government created the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETA) in 2000 intending to assist in the fight against poverty, lack of employment opportunities, and fulfilling equity employment targets (Akoojee & McGrath, 2008; Mail & Guardian, 2007; Mateus *et al.*, 2014).

- Training and development

The training and development of public service employees have established world practices for a variety of reasons, such as improved skills and opportunities for salary increases and career advancement, among others. For instance, in the United State of America (USA), training

workshops were run for employees of a Midwestern state department. The training was subsequently evaluated and there was a correlation between motivation and the degree to which employees report that the training improved their performance on specific tasks (Mulhern & Massey, 2013).

South Africa, based on international lessons, established the South African Management Development Institute (SAMDI) in 1996 followed by the Public Administration Leadership and Management Academy (PALAMA) in 2008 to provide continuous training and development of public employees through programmes that emphasise the commitment to excellence in the provision of quality services to all citizens (PALAMA, 2008-2009). PALAMA was reconfigured as the National School of Government in 2013 with emphasis on compulsory examined training for all public servants (PALAMA, 2012-2013).

Literature attests that the quality of an organisation in the public sector depends on the performance of the employees of the organisation, hence, the need to ensure that staff members do have adequate skills is crucial (Agolla & Van Lill, 2016). The skills needed may be a mixture of practical and theoretical knowledge, and the former is rarely found at universities or tertiary institutions (Quaye *et al.* 2019). Therefore, organisations employ new people on the premise of candidates' qualifications. Prerequisite forms an expectation for all incumbents to possess abilities, skills and knowledge to perform the tasks they were employed to do (Riley, 2014; Watson & Abzug, 2016). Embedded in the recruitment and selection is anticipation that some candidates may immediately succeed in the job. The majority of the new appointees will be expected to undergo an expedited training and development period to be able to do the required tasks (Atkin & Brooks, 2015). Therefore, training enhances the degree of fit between job demands and human attributes, as mentioned by Kozina *et al.* (2016). Muchinsky *et al.* (2010), Birch *et al.* (2012) and Mazibuko-Madalani (2016) are in support of the statement that training can improve the performance and productivity of the staff and ensure that they have the relevant skills.

- Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms challenge

Monitoring and evaluation is defined in many dimensions by various researchers depending on the focus (Bovens, 2014). Yet, the key elements of monitoring and evaluation are captured in a range of definitions. In simple terms, monitoring is keeping track of what is being done so that corrective action can be taken (Suit *et al.*, 2015). Evaluation, on the other hand, is about

examining whether there is any progress in what was set to be done (Hillman *et al.*, 2015). A consistent evaluation relies on good monitoring; therefore, the two concepts complement each other but have differences with regards to the objectives and method (Mtshali, 2015).

Monitoring is a continuous function that uses systematic collection of data on specified indicators to provide management and other stakeholders of an on-going development intervention with indications of the extent of progress and the achievement of objectives and progress in the use of allocated funds.” OECD (2004) and Kusek and Rist (2014) explain that monitoring is defined as a routine, ongoing, internal activity, outputs, and outcomes to track its performance, while on the other hand, evaluation as defined in the Government-wide Monitoring and Evaluation System (GWM&ES) policy framework (2007) as “a time-bound and periodic exercise that seeks to provide credible and useful information to answer specific questions to guide decision making by staff, managers, and policymakers. Evaluations may assess relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability.” This definition matches Kapp (2012) explanation of evaluation as a periodic assessment of the relevance and performance of organisational activities. Implicit in the descriptions of monitoring and evaluation is that the two though mutually exclusive can complement each other. Monitoring data are important for understanding and interpreting the programmatic implications of impact evaluation. To suit this requirement, it is descriptive provides information on the state of a policy, programme, or project at any given time relative to its targets and outcome goals. Alternatively, evaluation highlights evidence on why targets and outcomes are, or are not, being reached (Gorgens & Kusek, 2011). However, Lahey (2013) noted some challenges with the complementarity between monitoring and evaluation efforts in practical terms, a large part of it at the operational level.

After clarifying monitoring and evaluation, Cloete and Wissink (2013) remarked that the challenge of policy implementation can only be successful if effective monitoring and evolution mechanisms are provided for institutions. Effective mechanisms are essential to review and evaluate policy to ensure the achievements of service delivery outcomes. In a Budget Speech delivered, the Minister of Fincanse, in 2003, stated that there were weaknesses in the current monitoring and evaluation system in the South African public service.

- Lack of leadership competencies and strengthening human resources

The slow pace of policy implementation by some departments in the South African public service can be attributed to the deficiency in leadership competencies amongst public servants

(Ndalamba, 2018). In this respect, the former President of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki (2003) in his state of the Nation Address stated that the South African public service needs strong leadership competencies in all spheres and at all levels (Nicolaidis, 2016). The challenge for the South African public service, therefore, is to develop appropriate profiles of leadership competencies and design the necessary interventions to ensure appropriate leadership development (Cumberland *et al.*, 2016; Matjie, 2018).

Soobrayan (2014) upholds that the South African public service organisations ought to seek, train, and develop public servants to become effective leaders. In examining the specific traits required of a leader, Setsabi (2015) asserts that it is important for South African public service to deepen its understanding of the cultural, spiritual, social, and personal dimensions of leadership. South African public service should strengthen its efforts towards professionalizing the capabilities of public servants (Mokgoro, 2010; Ally & Lissoni, 2017).

- Poor communication strategy

Friedman (2003), Kuye (2003), and Soobrayan (2004) indicate that ineffective communication is a critical challenge, which negatively affects effective service delivery. Public service's vision and strategies should be continually communicated to public servants to reinforce in them the need to improve service delivery in South Africa (Naidoo, 2004). Friedman (2003) suggested that communication should be improved between the different spheres of government and with external stakeholders. Soobrayan (2004) confirm that appropriate internal and external communication is integral to promoting effective public service delivery.

- Poor policy implementation

There is growing concern about the ability of leaders to implement policy in the South African public service (Tshabala-Msimang, 2003). This was re-iterated by President Thabo Mbeki (2003), who stated that the South African public service faces a critical hindrance in its capacity to implement policy. The ability to understand the policy and translate it into an effective strategy for implementation, according to Naidoo (2010), requires a certain level of intelligence, competence, and commitment on the part of public servants. Theron (2012) opined that the implementation of policy also required enabling, coherent and integrated systems, processes, and procedures within the public service, between different spheres of government, and among various stakeholders involved in the delivery of public service. There is an urgent need to

strengthen and integrate the systems, processes, and strategies in the South Africa public service departments (Chandu, 2013). The lack of effective processes and management systems is a recipe for disaster (Gildenhuys & Knipe, 2000). More importantly, the local spheres of government could provide valuable input, about the needs and demands of the citizens (Masutha & Rogerson, 2014).

In summary, the discussion above attests that the quality of an organisation in the public sector, to a large degree, depends on the performance of the employees of the organisation, hence, the need for SAPO to ensure that staff members have adequate skills. The skills needed may be a mixture of practical and theoretical knowledge, and the former is rarely found at universities or tertiary institutions. Therefore, organisations employ new people on the premise of candidates' qualifications. That prerequisite forms an expectation for all incumbents to possess abilities, skills and knowledge to perform the tasks they were employed to do. Embedded in the recruitment and selection is anticipation that some candidates may immediately succeed in the job. The majority of the new appointees would be expected to undergo an expedited training and development period to be able to do the required tasks. Therefore, training is a process to enhance the degree of fit between job demands and human attributes. Training can improve the performance and productivity of the staff and ensure that they have the relevant skills (Slavić & Berber, 2019). By implication, if SAPO wants to improve on its strategies to improve service quality, then there is a dire need for effective human resource planning strategies, need for continues job assessment, improving on labour skills, design an effective training and development system, effective monitoring and evaluation system, competent leadership, effective communication strategy, as well as effective policy implementation. The subsequent section of discussion introduces postal service in the public sector.

3.3.4 Postal service in the public sector

Postal services have existed for over two thousand years and constitute an essential component in the global communications infrastructure (Guislain, 2014). In most countries, postal services are operated by their respective governments (Nag, 2008). Generally, post offices provide email-related services such as sales of postage stamps, delivery of letters and parcels, provision of post office boxes, and packaging. It is also common in many countries to find post offices providing additional services such as passport applications, banking and monetary transactions, and insurance services. Despite the valuable public services that it provides, the postal services in many developing and under-developed countries are a neglected part of the public sector and this

also affects the quality of service provided to customers (Isa & Kiumarsi, 2019), due to advances in communications technology, postal services are now considered to be redundant in developed countries (Kiumarsi *et al.*, 2015a). Nonetheless, the postal service remains a significant contributor to the socio-economic growth of many countries and in South Africa particularly.

The post office is a large employer in all countries and sometimes the sole presence of the state in remote areas. Politicians, employees, and the public at large know reform can lead to a reduction in present context post office jobs and the closure of some post offices. As such, a trade-off needs to be made (Chunawalla & Patel, 2010). Where the will to reform exists, government must be ready to accept postal reform. But, it should lead to improving productivity, performance, and customer and employee satisfaction in the longer term. Dieke *et al.* (2008), explain that the postal services in the world play a vital and daily role in keeping the country, the economy, and the people connected.

The postal sector used physical communication in the past for transportation of goods and services from one destination to another. Postal sectors faced many challenges in the past decade, specifically: threat from electronic communication, the competition from express and parcel carriers with the use of electronic communication (Mohan *et al.*, 2013), the rapid growth of the e-commerce, the growth of e-services, the introduction of the digital services, the change in post offices operations hours, the economic crisis during the 2010s. New postal service has substituted traditional posts.

Mukherjee (2015) indicates that the postal sector is one of the core infrastructures sectors of a country's economy. Richards (2017) on the improved efficiency and customer responsiveness in this sector, there is boundless potential to stimulate growth, to promote globalisation, and to facilitate the rise of e-commerce. Growth of quality, speed, and penetration of electronic communications systems, coupled with telecommunications is an increasingly strong substitute for physical mail, in some cases threatening traditional revenue streams (Barrett *et al.*, 2015).

The future for the postal sector is indeed more challenging than ever, hence the need for an organisation to combine their resources and skills into core competencies (Wang, 2014). Vargo and Lusch (2014) explain that the post sector potential value as a basic communications provider and its relevance as part of the growing knowledge economy are also greater than ever before. Today's advances in technology are not necessarily threats but provide the greatest opportunities for the future (Beck, 2014). Combining the traditional strengths and reach of postal services with

the flexibility and speed of electronic media, a whole new range of products can be developed to meet emerging customer needs for value-added communications products (Chesher & Kaura, 2012).

From a South African perspective, services found in the postal sector include mailing business, logistics, retailing, banking, and financial services. According to SAPO Annual Report (2019), mail business contributed 52.1% of the group's total revenue but uncertain markets influenced by increasing demands of digitalized options have resulted in a progressive decline in mail volumes as a new reality (Accenture Research, 2011). Mail business in this regard finds itself as the backbone of the postal services and needs to device newly diversified strategies for survival, sustainability, and growth (Mokoena, 2012). After having a general understanding of the postal services in the public sector, the next section of discussion is on the international scenario of postal services.

3.3.4.1 Postal services in selected countries

This section presents an overview of the postal sector in selected countries by taking a closer look at the different services offered, ownership, challenges they are experiencing, and their strategic approaches to service and business. The reason for this is to establish if there are any similarities and/or differences with SAPO in order to identify lessons that can be learnt from the postal operations in other countries.

1) United States Postal Service (USPS)

The USPS is an independent establishment of the executive branch of the US Government. According to US legislation, USPS must provide prompt, reliable, and efficient services in all the postal areas; render postal services to all communities; and serve the entire population of the United States (Finger & Bukovc, 2014; Jaag *et al.*, 2016).

The corporate vision of the USPS, outlined in its Annual Report (2016), is to improve its services, products, and capabilities to adapt to the changing needs of customers in the digital age. The USPS operates a dense network with a very limited range of products. It has a defined business model imposed by federal laws that do not allow it to utilize its existing asset base to generate additional revenue to offset the recent large mail decline (Crew & Geddes, 2014). Hence, the USPS is forced to restrict its activities to the traditional postal services, such as the

delivery of first- and second-class mail, which accounts for over two-thirds of its annual operating revenue, and shipping parcels, which accounts for the remaining operating revenue (US Postal Service, 2014).

Besides its core postal services, the USPS also offers government services in its retail network: from distributing tax forms to taking passport photos and delivering ballots overseas, the USPS moves toward government services. The USPS is the only delivery service that reaches every mailbox in the United States, including post office box addresses (US Postal Service, 2008). Citizens can apply for their passport at many post offices and the USPS will forward it. This is because the USPS holds a legal monopoly on letter conveyance (18 US Code 1696), in the State Department.

The USPS Strategic Plan 2017–2021 describes the strategies for reaching its goals for customer service, organizational efficiency and workplace enhancement, and net income growth and cost management. These strategies incorporate the following approaches. The postal service will improve services both by providing better operating performance and more effective management of customer contact operations. Employee effectiveness will be improved by focusing on new resources on training, complement deployment, and efforts to enhance the workplace. The organisation will work to aggressively control costs through a combination of productivity improvements, efforts to make the best use of key human resources, and cost management of all resources. These concepts are organized around a core vision of providing customer value. This approach seeks to develop a customer value strategy that targets growth. This strategy has as its premise the notion that growth is driven by creating value for customers. Value is created by continuous improvement of service and driving costs out of the system to achieve affordability.

In its Five-Year Strategic Plan 2017–2021 (US Postal Service, 2016), the USPS announced its intention to further develop parcel services to compensate for the strong decline in mail business, as well as, the recently initiated top-down, corporate-wide initiative called customer perfect, to improve service quality and customer satisfaction. Strategic Plan 2017 of USPS, also address the need for improving employee attitudes, morale, and teamwork are critical to better mail-delivery performance and customer satisfaction. In this respect, the USPS considers a change in the regulatory framework indispensable (US Postal Service, 2016). The USPS also aims to enhance retail and post office box services to leverage its retail stores.

2) Swiss postal service

Swiss Post is a public limited company under special law and acts as the designated Unique Selling Proposition (USP). It is fully owned by the Swiss state. Revenues from the residual monopoly on domestic letters up to 50g are one pillar for Swiss Post's financing of the universal service. In Switzerland, the postal services include the daily conveyance of addressed letters and parcels, newspapers and magazines, and outbound international letters, as well as the provision of basic financial services such as bank accounts. Moreover, Swiss Post must ensure that its retail network can be reached by 90% of the population within 20 minutes by foot or by public transport (Jaag & Maegli, 2015). The vision of the Swiss Post is to be "simple yet systematic" and connect the physical and digital worlds, setting new standards with its products and integrated solutions, as well as making it easier for its customers to operate in today's complex environment (Swiss Post, 2017). Swiss Post is focusing on maintaining and increasing the value of the company and on achieving industry-standard returns in all markets (communication, logistics, financial services, and passenger transport). It experienced a moderate decrease in income due to lower mail volumes and aims to further tailor its services to the needs of its retail customers (Swiss Post annual report, 2013).

Besides its core business, Swiss Post is a leader in the provision of secure electronic signatures, eHealth and eVoting services, and business process outsourcing, which is representative of the broad strategic orientation as a 'Hybrid Intermediary'. In 2016, the Swiss postal network consisted of approximately 3 800 access points. It intends to increase this number by up to 4 200 access points by 2020. The composition of the planned network is as follows: between 800 and 900 access points are in-house operations (regular post offices) and between 1 200 and 1 300 post agencies are run together with partners. Another 500 to 700 are complementary service points such as self-service terminals. The remaining 1 300 are areas with home delivery services (Swiss Post, 2017b). The main objective behind this network enlargement consists of personalizing and individualizing the postal services for being able to use the network optimally (Wolf *et al.*, 2018). The services offered in regular post offices include mail and parcels, cash transactions, mobile phone contracts, stationery, books, tickets, travel accessories, and gift cards.

Recently, Swiss Post started consolidating and better structuring its product range. Thanks to its diversification and a moderate decline in mail volumes, Swiss Post was able to maintain its revenues while slightly reducing the fraction of its core mail and parcel services in total revenue. However, the company's profitability has decreased by 2% percent year between 2006 and 2016.

Swiss Post focuses on cost reductions by replacing post offices with agencies or other access points. Therefore, Swiss Post follows the post office network strategy 'Network development in their framework (Swiss Post, 2017b).

3) United Kingdom postal service

The Royal Mail Group Ltd is a limited company owned by the government of the United Kingdom (30%), the company employees (minimum required by the law of 10%) and private investors (60% free float) (Royal Mail, 2015). The UK Postal Services Act of 2011 defines the Universal Service Operation (USO) requirements for Royal Mail. Letters have to be collected at every access point and must be delivered within 6 weekdays, and parcels within 5 weekdays. Public prices for a postal service must be affordable and uniform (Annual report, 2014). However, most access points are not operated by Royal Mail, but by Post Office Limited. The two former sister companies were separated when the Postal Services Act took effect in 2011. Since then, Post Office Limited is independent of Royal Mail and fully owned by the government (Annual report, 2014). The Post Office must guarantee that at least 95% of users are located within 5 km of an access point, capable of receiving the largest relevant postal packages and registered mail and fulfill other regulatory requirements (Annual report, 2015).

Daunton (2015) states that Royal Mail is bound by regulatory requirements but that it has no reserved area. The postal market has been fully opened on January 1, 2006. Royal Mail had to adapt its business strategy for being able to stay competitive. It admitted that during several decades, there had been an underinvestment (Royal Mail, 2015). The only possibility to catch up with their competitors was seen in modernizing the equipment and educating employees to allow them to work more efficiently (Royal Mail Holdings, 2007). Since 2002, Royal Mail has increased the prices of first- and second-class stamps for regular letters (up to 100 g) considerably (Royal Mail annual report, 2016).

The vision of Royal Mail is to be recognized as the best delivery company in the United Kingdom and across Europe, by sustaining the continued provision of the universal service in the United Kingdom and by generating sustainable shareholder value. In 2016, nearly 80% of all citizens are at most 1 km away from an access point (Annual report, 2016). As of 2016, the network consists of 11 700 access points, out of which 10 500 are Post Office branches and around 1 200 are Royal Mail customer service points (Royal Mail annual report, 2016). Post Office Ltd. directly manages 283 post office branches. The majority of the branches are either

run by various franchise partners or local sub-postmasters or operators, as ‘sub-post offices’. Within the whole United Kingdom, there are also 30 000 parcel drop-off and pick-up locations (Royal Mail, 2016). Even though it is strongly declining, the letter market still accounts for about 60% of all revenues (Royal Mail annual report, 2016).

The Post Office has a wide variety of services throughout the network of branches including five categories which are considered by the (EU) as SGEI, namely: (1) processing social benefit and tax credit payments to the public, (2) processing of national identity and licensing scheme applications, (3) universal payment facilities for public utility services, (4) access to postal services, and (5) universal access to basic cash and banking facilities and government savings instruments, especially for rural customers and those on social benefits (Department for Business Innovation & Skills, 2015). Products and services available vary throughout the network; main post offices generally provide the full range of services. The services offered include postal items and payment on behalf of the two collection and delivery divisions of Royal Mail Group, Royal Mail, and Parcel Force. Postage stamps are sold, while applications for redirection of mail are accepted on behalf of Royal Mail. The Post Office (acting as an appointed representative and credit broker) also provides credit cards, current accounts, insurance products, and mortgages since 2015. Personal banking services are offered on behalf of several partner banks. These include cash withdrawals, paying in cash and cheques, balance inquiries, and check encashment. Some post offices also have cash machines. The Post Office also operates as a provider of a home landline telephone service and has recently added broadband Internet to its portfolio. A passport checking and sending service is available for passport applications. Other services include lottery games and scratch cards, foreign currency exchange, and sales of gift cards (Annual report, 2016).

4) Malaysia postal services

The postal and courier service is essential to the efficient functioning of the economy and society of Malaysia. Very few sectors in Malaysia come close to the level of physical connectivity with households, businesses, and retail network across the country, like the postal and courier sector (Yussoff, 2014).

Each day postal and courier services deliver more than 3 million pieces of items in various forms, such as letters, small packages, parcels, and magazines. More than 20 000 postmen and couriers offer themselves for this cause. These items are reliable and secure, delivering to more

than 6.3 million addresses in Malaysia, both in urban and rural areas. The postal and courier sector growth is continuing. In 2009, more than 100 million transactions took place at post offices around Malaysia, valued at more than RM 15 billion. The sector in 2009 employed more than 34 000 people. The postal services of Malaysia recorded an annual average growth of 5.2 percent over that period, while the courier sector recorded an annual growth of 10 percent, per capita mail services are 44 in 2008, as per the Universal-Postal-Union (UPU) report, Malaysian post has framed out national postal strategy 2010-14 in order develop this sector (Annual report, 2014). The Malaysia postal industry is faced with the extensive use of digital technologies. The demand for traditional postal service is declining due to the digital wave, challenges of economic, social, and environmental issues, as well as the financial crisis in that country. Thus, service innovation is considered as a strategic approach by the Malaysia postal sector in order to deliver effective service quality, new ideas of services that focus on continual improvement in operational, technology, consumer experience, and employee performance. Continuous improvement of customers' experience enhances the ability to create new ways of pleasuring customers in an economically sustainable approach (Annual report, 2016).

5) China postal service

The postal services in China is known as China post-Group. It is a fully state-owned public utility enterprise. It is fulfilling a universal service obligation by providing product letters and printed matters up to 5 kg and parcels up to 10 kg (China Post Group, annual report, 2015). They also handle State specified newspapers and periodicals, and also the confidential communication of the state party. To provide any postal or express services, a license is needed from the State Post Bureau, according to the 2009 postal law (China's Postal Law, 2009). Market access and trade barriers: prevention for foreign investors to invest in domestic's expresses delivery service for correspondence. Express or other postal operators are banned to provide correspondence services or deliver official documents of state organisations.

6) India post service

Indian Department of Post is the oldest and apex government institution in the Indian service sector. It is considered the backbone of the communication sector (Birajdar & Joshi, 2016). History of the Indian post offices is traced back to the British rule. India was the most important colony for the British rulers. Once the East India Company established its rule on the entire Indian Territory the need was felt by the British rulers to have a government owned institution

for delivering the royal mails. In 19th century Lord Dalhousie played an important role in starting the postal services in India. The Post Office Act was enacted in 1854 and first post office was established in Mumbai. The department of post with 652 post offices and four postmaster's general were placed under central organisation. It was headed by Director General. Gradually the number of post offices increased to 12970 by the end of 1900. At the time of independence, the total number of post offices were 23 334. Today India is the country with maximum number of post offices all over the world. There are 1 550 335 post offices today in India. Out of which 1 35 00 post offices are in the rural area (India Post, 2014).

The Department of Posts (2013) has made conscious efforts to spread these postal services to all parts of the country. The India Post is offering variety of services to its citizens which include;

- *Mailing services:* The primary function of post offices is to collect, receive, transfer and deliver letters to the respective communication address all over the country. There are various kinds of mailing services provided by the India post such as; speed post, business post, express parcel Post, media post and e-post
- *Financial services:* It is one of the major and key functions offered to the customers as agency services for Ministry of Finance Government of India. The major source of revenue for department of post is various schemes of postal banking.
- *Postal life insurance:* The postal life insurance was launched in 1884 for the benefit of postal and telegraphs employees
- *Retail services:* These are the crucial services offered by the India post to the customers. They are the utility services offered to the common man to bring convenience and affordability to their door services. Range of services are offered under retail post like payment of electricity bills, telephone bills, e-ticketing, sale of gold coins, sale of UPSC forms and passport application forms. Thus the India Post offers variety of services in key areas of public sectors. These services have penetrated the large population of the country and they have become the part of their lives. The department of post has to manage these services through its huge infrastructure. Every day department of post has to deal with large number of customers. Hence it is a customer centric business. Due the evolution in telecommunication business as well as globalization of business many new players have entered globally (The Department of Posts, 2013).

Today India Post faces acute competition from technologically advanced competitors. The big challenge today for India Post is to sustain in this market and retain the existing customers by delivering high level of satisfaction through its services. In this modern era the customer expectations as well as their preferences have changed. The customers have plenty of other alternatives on the click of the mouse. So the India Post has to adopt the necessary changes to become a leader in the current market.

7) Botswana post

Botswana Post is a parastatal organisation responsible for postal services in the country. It is wholly owned by the government of Botswana, under the Ministry of Communications, Science, and Technology. The organisation was tasked with implementing a home delivery service by the year 2017. It was anticipated that this service would improve efficiency in postal deliveries and further introduce the country to online purchasing, and other home delivery business avenues currently unavailable in the country. Even though physical mail is declining and being replaced by the electronic, the pace at which this happens differs from place to place (Botswana Post Annual report, 2017).

Botswana for one still lags behind in such technologies. That being mentioned, registered mail still exists as well as direct mail in the form of advertising and marketing materials in many countries around the world. Businesses stand to gain more when they reach potential customers directly. Government Accountability Office (GIS) can help Botswana Post and other companies to target customers according to demographics and other proximity measure applications. Botswana Post provides subscription services such as weekly newspapers and the effectiveness of GIS in establishing an optimum parcel delivery routing system. The Globe information system will incorporate, Globe Postal Service (GPS) and Global System for Management (GSM) systems to monitor and control mainland parcel delivery operations in the postal area (Rossouw, 2015).

The last ten years have seen an emergence and influx of private courier services in Botswana, which aim to take advantage of the shortfalls of Botswana Post. This has the potential of reducing the revenue sources of the organisation. To address this challenge, and for a competitive advantage, the organisation needs to invest in network consolidation systems and GIS technologies. Transport costs are one of the significant expenditures for distribution

companies. Usually, transport consumes a large portion of a company's expenses, and a proper distribution channel could result in inconsiderable savings (Rossouw, 2015).

8) Poste Italiane

Poste Italiane is a limited public company divided into four operating segments that is, postal and business services, financial services, insurance services, and other services as indicated by the Poste Italiane (2014). Until 2015, it was a fully state-owned company. At the end of 2015, 35% of the assets were sold to private investors (Poste Italiane, 2015). Poste Italiane is still Italy's designated Unique Selling Proposition (USP). It must ensure that 92.5% of the population has an access point at a distance of less than 5 km from their residence. It is obligated to deliver within a five-days-a-week frequency (with some exemptions for barely inhabited areas).

The mission of Poste Italiane is to consolidate its role as a global operator; drive the development of communications, payment, and logistics solutions; improve the different services provided, and create opportunities for Italy (Italiane, 2015). One of the strategic objectives of Poste Italiane in the "Postal and Business Services" market is to position itself as a provider of high-quality business mail services, providing new shipping and delivery solutions. For letters, however, Poste Italiane tries to achieve relaxations regarding the number of delivery days (Italiane, 2015).

Between 2006 and 2016, the number of both post offices and branch offices (agencies) was reduced only slightly. Poste Italiane was able to strongly increase its revenue through diversification: while the fraction of its core letter and parcel business accounted for one-third of its total revenue in 2006, this fraction declined to one-tenth in 2016. As a result of the strong decline in mail volumes, the company's profit margin decreased from 9% in 2006 to only 3% in 2016. Compared to other countries, there is a very strict mandate to operate a dense postal network. The postal network currently includes 12 845 post offices and 141 246 employees (Poste Italiane, 2016a).

Following its business strategy, Poste Italiane undertook investments of €3 billion in 2016. The investment is targeted to enforce infrastructure and digital platforms as well as training hours, the aim being to foster the convergence among mail, financial, and logistical platforms (Jaag & Finger, 2017). There was a further investment in the development of advanced solutions relating to the public system for digital identity management and in implementing the full acquiring

service for all the main debit and credit cards. However, the actual company profile states clearly that mail, parcel, logistics, and courier services are important parts of Poste Italiane's identity. Therefore, Poste Italiane strives for optimizing core services by complementing them and offering them on both physical and electronic platforms (Poste Italiane, 2016a).

The eight international postal sectors that have been discussed above emplace the incumbent post office covered in this study within the comparative realm. Items of the services offered share similarities, with the key service being mail that is a core undertaking to SAPO. The various post office items have their strategic approaches, similarities and differences. Similarly, SAPO aims to provide the postal consumer with excellent service quality, and in return maximize profit. Because of their differences, they also face different challenges such as decline in mail volumes, financial crisis, and employers' issues like the case in Malaysia. India Post not only faces the challenges from private courier services in urban regions in the delivery of letters and parcels services but also financial institutions such as private or public banks and insurances companies, and SAPO share in most and all of the challenges.

As a result of this, SAPO can draw from the strategic approach to improve on the service quality of these different countries which include; the USPS strategies to reach its goals for customer service, organisational efficiency and workplace enhancement, and net income growth and cost management. Further, the strategy explains that growth is driven by creating value for customers. Value is created by continuous improvement of service and driving costs out of the system to achieve affordability. Swiss Post focuses on cost reductions by replacing post offices with agencies or other access points, as well as Swiss Post ensuring that its retail network can be reached by 90% of the population within 20 minutes by foot or by public transport. Another approach can be drawn by the UK Post Office which guarantees that at least 95% of users are located within 5 km of an access point, capable of receiving the largest relevant postal packages and registered mail and fulfill other regulatory requirements. The postal services across the world are struggling for its survival, especially under the combined impact of technology and market savvy private courier service players. Thus, the Malaysia post office has carried out re-branding exercises to transform its services to emerge in a new avatar by enriching it with functioning through IT support and internet-based operations. The Botswana post organisation intendeds to implement a home delivery service, online purchasing, and other home delivery business avenues currently unavailable in the country. Finally, the Poste Italiane approach indicates for a competitive advantage, the organization needs to invest in network consolidation

systems and GIS technologies. Transport costs are one of the significant expenditures to distribution companies, as well as ensuring that 92.5% of the population has an access point at a distance of less than 5 km from their residence.

3.3.5 The role of postal services in socio-economic development

The role that the postal sector plays and will continue to play in the socio-economic development of nations cannot be over-emphasized (Baba, 2012). Even with the emergence of new information and communication technologies, postal service has continued to serve as a critical infrastructure and a trusted provider of secure communication, payment, and delivery services between identified senders and receivers. Postal services do not operate in a vacuum; they are services that influence and are in return influenced by a series of social and economic factors (Águila-Obra *et al.*, 2013). Over the last few years, the globalization of exchanges of goods and services has shown dramatic acceleration. This includes the service industry, of which postal services are a part. As trade barriers have fallen, large and sophisticated multinational companies, which until now specialized in the expressed market, are looking more and more to take larger shares of the other international physical mail products (Almousa, 2013). Below are some of the important factors of postal services to the socio-economic development of societies.

The role of postal services in socio-economic development, according to the (World Bank, 2006; Pindus, 2010; Águila-Obra *et al.*, 2013; Naidoo, 2014; Public Service Commission, 2014; Reilly, 2014; Tau, 2015; Dipa & Mtshali, 2015; Ramutsheli & Jacobus, 2015; Clifton, 2016; Yanguas & Bukenya, 2016; Emiru, 2017) include an opportunity for employment, the instrument of trade and commerce, promoter of national cohesion and remittances. Following is the concept-analysis conducted to aggregate the importance of postal services to the socio-economic development of societies as per literature.

Table 3.3: Concept-analysis on the importance of the postal services to the socio-economic development to societies.

Source	Opportunity for employment	The instrument of trade and commerce	Promotes national cohesion	Remittances
World Bank (2006)	√	√	√	√
Pindus (2010)	√	√	√	√
Águila-Obra <i>et al.</i> (2013)	√	√	√	√
Naidoo (2014)	√	√	√	√
Public Service Commission (2014)	√	√	√	
Reilly (2014)	√	√	√	
Tau (2015)		√	√	
Dipa & Mtshali (2015)		√	√	
Ramutsheli & Janse van Rensburg (2015)		√	√	
Clifton (2016)	√	√	√	
Yanguas & Bukenya (2016)	√		√	
Emiru (2017)			√	√

Table 3.2 provides the concept-analysis concerning the role which the postal sector plays and will continue to play in the socio-economic development of nations in order to enhance postal services. These factors are explained in the following elaboration.

1) Opportunity for employment

Postal services over the world, especially in developing countries, open up opportunities for employment (Brix *et al.*, 2012). When its operation is properly developed, the post office may also become one of the principal employers in a country. The employment potential of a postal system is evident from the fact that the percentage of the working population engaged in providing postal services is generally several times higher in developed than in developing countries. Brix *et al.* (2012) implies that the postal system serves as an avenue for people to earn a regular source of income by offering their services in exchange for wages or salaries. For instance, in the United States of America, postal services have created avenues for 522 144 people to gain employment in the postal sector (Postal Facts, 2013). This statistic presents the annual number of employees of Post Office Ltd at the end of the period from 2012 to 2019. In

the years recorded, the United Kingdom-based retail post office company was employed with over 4,391 people employed in the 2019 fiscal year (Annual report, 2015). According to the SAPO annual report (2018), this sector has new job employment opportunities for 18,119 (FY2018). Due to employment opportunities provided by the postal sector, the sector needs to improve the service quality to remain relevant and withstand the competition in the market. By so doing, save the jobs of millions of people depending on it for livelihoods.

2) The instrument of trade and commerce

The postal sector is a highly essential ingredient for international and domestic trade and commerce (Campbell, 2012). In South Sudan, it is recognized as a vital part of their information infrastructure. In the case of South Africa, it is recognized as an important component of the economic sector contributing approximately 3.16% to GDP. International studies have shown that a good quality postal service acts as a driver, as opposed to merely a facilitator, of economic development (Kumar *et al.* 2010). Far from being obsolete, the postal system is in many countries a growing, vibrant profitable and innovative industry. This, therefore, highlights the need for governments of most developing countries to recognize the basic right of all its citizens to access adequate postal services. Paraphrasing the words of the managing director of Ghana Post, the postal service is the most basic and most common means by which messages can be communicated and goods delivered (Arrow & Kruz, 2013). This implies that postal service is a basic link serving the entire population. It also provides the essential infrastructure for the expansion of industry and commerce. Postal money transfers and savings services are particularly valuable in developing economies, where banking facilities are limited. They may generate large resources that can be used for public investment (Brix, 2012). Considering that the SAPO is supposed to be the driver of economic development and the link serving the entire population, the need for quality in the service delivery is quite important as the economic development of South Africa depends on it. As such, it is important to always reflect on the approaches to improve service quality in SAPO, a key driver for this study.

3) Promotes national cohesion

Various literature reviews indicate that postal services have the potential of promoting national cohesion. Even in an increasingly digital world, the postal services remain part of the bedrock infrastructure of many nation's economies, serving its people and businesses and binding the nation together (Postal Facts, 2013). Postal services historically played a very important role in

strengthening national cohesion (International Labour Organisation, 2002). In the view of Huynh (2013), the post office could serve as the main connector between cities and villages, moving letters and money to every corner of the country, and contributing towards the territorial consolidation of states under construction. It is therefore evident from the literature reviewed that in the past as well as the modern era, post offices have a huge role to play in enhancing national cohesion. By implication, if the social cohesion of the people of SA is also dependent on SAPO, it means SAPO has a strong role to play in the psychological wellbeing of South Africans. As such, the quality of the services of SAPO is very important in the wellbeing of South Africans.

4) Remittances

Yang (2011) defines remittance as the transmission of currency by an overseas worker to his or her home country. Historically post offices have played a role in the provision of remittances and basic financial services to low-income populations (Clotteau *et al.*, 2011). Worldwide, posts have been active in the field of financial services since the 19th century. The first postal savings bank was created in 1861 in the United Kingdom. Also, Clotteau and Anson (2011) indicates that when it comes to remittances, post offices have the potential to act as a commanding substitute to money transfer operators, on the international and local front. Besides, money sent home by migrants constitutes the second largest financial inflow in many developing countries, exceeding international aid (Yang (2011). Estimates of remittances to developing countries vary from International Fund for Agricultural Development's US\$301 billion (including informal flows) to the World Bank's US\$250 billion for 2006 (excluding informal flows). In several economically unstable States, remittances are estimated to surpass 50 percent of GDP (Carrasco & Ro, 2007). In an article contained on Ghana web, total remittances to Ghana between the periods of January 2010 to May 2010 stood at \$4.2 billion (Ghana web, 2010). It can be therefore being deduced that remittances through postal services as well as other financial institutions, significantly contribute to the livelihood of a lot of citizens. Factors that led to the decline in support of postal services are discussed below. The importance of postal services to the growth, development, and wellbeing of SA cannot be overemphasized. However, the simple existence of the postal sector alone in the country cannot guarantee that. The postal sector contribution to the economy of SA depends strongly on the quality of the service provided by SAPO. Given the challenges highlighted that affect SAPO from providing quality service, this

study intended to develop a framework to improve service quality at SAPO becomes very important for SA to realise the promises of the postal sector mentioned above.

3.3.5.1 Factors that led to the decline of postal services quality

Factors that led to the decline of postal services, according to Sund (2008), includes poor leadership and poor management, and the inadequacy of resources is a major limitation to realizing. South Africa Post Annual Report (2011) confirms that lack of management, lack of resources, high competition in electronic media, loss of trust, and well as speedy service delivery, has led to a decline in postal services. Morris (2013) explains that postal service is on its high-risk list because of concerns about its economic future has given the poor management, loss of trust, labour relations, and increased competition from electronic mail services. Chong *et al.* (2014) estimated that the delivery of a first-class letter costs more than twice what consumers pay, this might led to post offices look for alternative means of sending letter. Ghimire (2013) explains that the loss of trust and inadequacy of funds in the public post had led to the high competition in private postal and express mail service providers. Curwen and Whalley (2016) identified that the mobile phone industry in Africa has boomed over the past five years with a high growth rate, thus limiting the activities of the postal service of sending and receiving messages. Indicated in Table 3.5 are the factors that led to a decline in the support of postal services in a significant number of countries in the world.

Table 3.4: Concept-analysis on the factors that led to the decline in support of postal services

Source	Poor management practices	Loss of trust in the postal services	Inadequacy of funds	The emergence of mobile phones and internet services	Speedy service delivery
Sund (2008)	√	√	√		
South Africa Post (2011)	√	√	√	√	√
Morris (2013)	√	√	√	√	
Herbold (2013)					√
Ghimire (2013)		√	√		
Curwen & Whalley (2016)	√	√	√	√	

Table 3.6 provides the concept-analysis concerning the factors that led to the decline in support of postal services. These factors include poor management practices, loss of trust in the postal services, inadequacy of funds, the emergence of mobile phones and internet services, and speedy service delivery. These factors are explained in the following segments.

1) Poor management practices

There has been a long history of labour disputes in the postal industry in many countries. In recent years, there have been difficulties in reconciling public service obligations with greater market orientation in postal services (Giga *et al.*, 2013). Outdated monopolistic attitudes by certain parties are blamed for some labour-management problems, while it is argued that a lack of effective communication by management when implementing change programs has had a negative effect on industrial relations between employees, managers, and unions (Gill & Meyer, 2013). The conflict has often arisen as a result of new management initiatives to change work practices that staff see as a threat to their future. This tension in industrial relations continues to block future progress and hinders aspirations for the postal service to compete effectively in the marketplace, due to poor management. By implication, SAPO management needs to design an effective strategic plan that is flexible and can adapt to new changes that cannot lead to conflict between employees, managers, and stakeholders. Morris (2013) affirms that the postal service has been in a decline for years due to poor management. It was all too evident that the Internet, Fed Ex, and United States Postal Service (UPS) were going to take away their customers because the post office has not changed with the times (Birla, 2012). Decades ago, the United States Postal Service decided to build its future on a lucrative 1st class letter business and to deliver junk mail and magazines well below cost (Chong *et al.*, 2014).

2) Loss of trust in the postal services

In a social context, trust has several connotations (Zhang *et al.*, 2009). Definitions of trust typically refer to a situation characterized by the following aspects: one party (trustor) is willing to rely on the actions of another party (trustee); the situation is directed to the future. Besides, the trustor (voluntarily or forcedly) abandons control over the actions performed by the trustee (Zhong *et al.*, 2014). As a consequence, the trustor is uncertain about the outcome of the other's actions; he can only develop and evaluate expectations. The uncertainty involves the risk of failure or harm to the trustor if the trustee will not behave as desired. Looking at the Posts and Telecommunication Corporation (PTC) in Ghana, this was a very useful state-owned enterprise (Hatsu *et al.*, 2016). It provided services such as stamp sales, allocating post boxes, receiving savings; passport forms sales, receiving payments on utility bills, and many others. These services have been reduced to just selling stamps, receiving mails, bank statements, and forwarding of emails or parcels. There is a total absence of postal vans and motorbikes such that mails are even transported by any bus plying the length and breadth of the country. Essentially,

incoming mails were not received and outgoing ones abroad sometimes did not reach the intended destination (Doe, 2009). The fortunes of the organization began to dwindle and were lost from the radar when the postal service was decoupled from the telecommunications and in the process, two separate entities were formed as the South Africa Post and the Telecom companies (Doe, 2009). All these conditions conspired to make postal services in South Africa to lose credibility in the eyes of customers. Additionally, Ghimire (2013) noted that with the government's failure to keep up with changes, the state-owned Nepal Postal Service (NPS) is lagging far behind private postal and express mail service (EMS) providers.

3) Inadequacy of funds

A business without a funding source flounders under the weight of its debt (Trevino & Nelson, 2016). According to (Nagari, 2016), funding is the fuel on which a business runs. Tapscott and Tapscott (2016) confirm that a business can take different avenues to attain funding, and more than one option can be used. The chosen funding will depend on the business 'desire to be in debt, how solvent the business owners are at the time the business is founded and the amount of money a business will need to launch and maintain itself through a variety of events. The same goes for postal services if such a venture is to survive (Forroohar, 2016).

The U.S. Postal Service (2011) receives no tax dollars for operating expenses and relies on the sale of postage, products, and services to fund its operations. CNN Money reported in August 2011 that the US Postal Service supports itself on sales of postage and mail services, and gets no taxpayer funding. With fewer people using mail services, revenue is free-falling. In the last quarter of 2011, the U.S. Postal Service posted a loss of \$2.2 billion (Howard & Shipps, 2013). Until the adoption of the Postal Reorganisation Act of 1970, the U.S. Postal Service functioned as a regular, tax-supported, agency of the federal government. According to the laws under which it now operates, the U.S. Postal Service is a semi-independent federal agency, mandated to be revenue-neutral. That is, it is supposed to break even, not make a profit. In 1982, U.S. postage stamps became postal products, rather than a form of taxation. Since then, the bulk of the cost of operating the postal system has been paid for by customers through the sale of postal products and services rather than taxes. Each class of mail is also expected to cover its share of the costs, a requirement that causes the percentage rate adjustments to vary in different classes of mail, according to the costs associated with the processing and delivery characteristics of each class. Between 2007 and 2008, Post Services in the UK received £358m for providing mail services to the post services consumers in the UK postal sectors (Forrester, 2016). In this case,

the South Africa government needs to allocate more funds in other for SAPO to get the necessary resources needed in other to provide excellent service to postal consumers and to remind relevant in the competitive market.

4) The emergence of mobile phones and internet services

In the early years of 1990, the fast and unrelenting growth rate was supplemented by profound changes in the telecommunications markets. That is, what once was the traditional way to call someone changed from using the telephone booth or a fixed telephone line to using a personal phone kept in the pocket or the hand-bag? The mobile phone industry in Africa has boomed over the past five years with a high growth rate (Smith *et al.*, 2011). In the words of Aker and Mbiti (2012), the African market does not merely offer hope in the form of investment opportunities but has indeed transformed how mobile phones have traditionally been used. The story emanating from Africa shows that this industry has allowed for significant gains in socio- economic development, on a continent where development indicators are painfully low—a predicament that a litany of actors has long been trying to address. For many, the mobile revolution in Africa constitutes a far-reaching remedy, which, if exploited correctly, can continue to improve the quality of life of some of the world's poorest people by providing a platform for innovative solutions to local problems.

The debut of the Internet (with its e-mail) and cell phones into the South Africa society has literally killed the importance of the postal services (Adu-Gyamfi, 2007). In the recent past, sending letters by mail was pretty much the most efficient way to communicate in writing. In the view of Weissmann (2012), this was the general practice until the internet emerged unto the scene. Although total mail volume stayed relatively steady until 2006, it has dropped an astonishing 20 percent in the past five years (*ibid*). More importantly, in the USA, first-class mail, the Postal Service's biggest money-maker, has fallen 25 percent during the past decade. In an article published on a 2011 weekly edition of the BusinessWeek website, it takes three pieces of junk to equal the earnings from a single stamped first-class envelope. The emergence of the internet as a faster medium of sending and receiving information practically led to the decline in patronage of postal services in the United States of America. With the rise of e-mail and the decline of letters, mail volume is falling at a staggering rate, and the postal service's survival plan isn't reassuring (Leonard, 2011). The fall in the patronage of postal services in many societies across the world could, therefore, be attributed to the emergence of the internet as a strong competitive force on the global and South Africa postal sector.

5) Speedy service delivery

With the emergence of quicker media of transmitting information, postal services continue to suffer due to the now slow-paced delivery of mail (Adu-Gyamfi, 2007). The growing competition with contemporary means of communication such as internet mail and mobile phones led to the emergence of Emergency medical services (EMS) at the South Africa Postal sector (South Africa Post, 2011). EMS is an International Express Mail service offered by the Postal Administration of the Universal Postal Union (UPU) (Universal Postal Union, 2013). It is an international courier network which provides the fastest physical door-to-door service. It specializes in the delivery of urgent business documents and parcels such as business agreements, bills of lading, and samples among others (ibid). In South Africa, Emergency medical services (EMS) was launched in 2004. It is evident from the literature reviewed that paper mail delivery systems in contemporary times face competition due to its comparative slow pace of service delivery. This could be a contributing factor to the decline in support of postal services. Following is a deliberation of the effects of the decline in postal services.

3.3.5.2 Effects of the decline in postal services

Postal services across the world are facing a major financial crisis (Crew & Geddes, 2013). That crisis is driven by declining demand for the Postal Service score activity; the delivery of first-class mail, combined with the cost of maintaining the extensive delivery network required to provide universal delivery service. This decline in patronage of postal services has created a ripple effect, affecting other vital institutions and agencies of society. The study of SAPO Annual Report (2014) affirms that the postal service of South Africa dismissed 583 of its workers that led to the loss of jobs and revenue. Universal-Postal-Union (2013) affirm a high decline in global domestic mail volumes and high revenue loss. In the views of Jaag (2014), services have seen a continuous decline for many postal sectors that have led to the loss of revenue, loss of jobs, and decline in mail and parcels, due to the high demand in digital services. Ankrah (2015) explains that the continuous decline in job loss, loss of revenue, and decline in postal services, has led the postal market over this period is unprecedented and represents a fundamental change in the postal sector. SAPO Corporate plan (2018), despite the improvement in operation and cost management, SAPO is still faced with a lack of revenue growth, loss of jobs, and decline in high mail volume as well as lack of investment in infrastructure over the past 10 years. The discussion that follows reviews relevant literature which elaborates on the views

of various scholars and researchers on the effects of the decline in postal services, as explained below.

Table 3.5: Concept-analysis on the effects of the decline in postal services

Source	Loss of job	Loss of revenue	Dwindling volumes of mails and parcels delivered
UPU (2013)		√	√
SAPO Annual Report (2014)			
Crew & Geddes (2014)	√	√	√
Jaag (2014)	√	√	√
Ankrah (2015)	√	√	√
SAPO Corporate plan (2018)	√	√	√

Table 3.7 provides the concept-analysis concerning the effects of the decline in postal services. These factors are explained in the following segments.

1) Loss of jobs

Job loss is one of the most significant stresses that a person can face Success (Hawk, 2009). Upon learning about a layoff, almost every area of your life can be affected. While a layoff uniquely affects each person, certain areas of life are almost always impacted to some degree or another. Termination from a job affects a person economically, emotionally, existentially, socially, and within families. Labour turnover refers to the movement of employees in and out of a business (Riley, 2016).

However, the term is commonly used to refer only to wastage or the number of employees leaving. High labour turnover causes problems for the business. It is costly, lowers productivity and morale, and tends to get worse if not addressed. Today, the postal sector suffers the same fate. In the Western world, while some other sectors of the economy are seeing recovery, the biggest problems may be just beginning for the Post Office. Postal services in the United States of America constitute the nation's second-largest civilian employer after Wal-Mart with about 536 000 career workers (Shaik, 2013).

The cash-strapped U.S. Postal Service has eliminated 168 000 jobs since 2006. It is estimated that more cuts could result as it struggles to avoid its own "fiscal cliff". In another instance, the National Postal Service of South Africa dismissed 583 of its workers (Moeti, 2013). The Post Office terminated a collective agreement in September 2012 it had with the Communications Workers Union, unilaterally stopped substantive negotiations, and changed policies without consulting the union. This growing body of knowledge on the loss of jobs, as a primary consequence of the decline in postal services over the world, has varying degrees of effect on the individual and society.

2) Loss of revenue

The importance of revenue generation to a business cannot be overemphasized. For a company, this is the total amount of money received by the company for goods sold or services rendered during a certain period. It also includes all net sales, exchange of assets; interest, and another increase in owner's equity and are calculated before any expenses are subtracted.

However, revenue growth remains a major stumbling block for most Postal agencies or services. As indicated by CE Chris Hlekan, Head of South Africa's Postal Services, the Post Office was not meeting most of its targets. Further, revenue by the third quarter of 2012 was R196m below budget (Dickinson, 2017). With fewer people using traditional mail service, Canada Post is facing a downward spiral in revenues and it is headed to an annual operating loss of \$1 billion by 2020, according to a Conference Board of Canada report (De Donder, 2016). In the USA, the financial losses for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2013, were more than triple the \$5.1 billion loss in the previous year (Thompson, 2013). Having reached its borrowing limit, the mail agency is operating with little cash on hand, putting it at risk in the event of an unexpectedly large downturn in the economy. In South Africa, during the 2014 national strike, the South Africa post office lost R1billion of its revenue due to consumers switching to other competitors. In Ghana, very few communities have access to postal services. Specifically, in the Central Region of the country, few communities have post offices. There are only 30 post offices and 54 postal agencies in the region. Most communities in the districts (90-99%) do not have post offices within the locality. Cape Coast has 10.1 percent of communities with post offices within the localities (Isa & Kiumarsi, 2019). This represents an unexplored avenue of revenue generation.

3) Dwindling volumes of mails and parcels delivered

The recent decline in mail volume has given rise to concerns about the Postal Service's long-term financial sustainability. According to SAPO annual report (2019), mail revenue is still a major source of income for the post office, but the contribution of this revenue stream has been declining. The report shows that mail revenue declined 8% to R2.8bn as a result of the decline in mail volumes. In 2011, the decline of global domestic mail volumes has accelerated. In 2011, the contraction was around 3.7% and thereby higher than the annual average decreases of minus 1.5 % from 2000 to 2010 (UPU, 2013). By contrast, the decline in the international letter post service has slowed in 2011 and amounted to minus 2.2%, compared to an annual average of minus 4.1% from 2000 to 2010. Mail volume peaked in 2006 at 213 billion pieces and then fell to 177 billion pieces over the next three years. The Postal Service's latest volume estimate for 2010 is 170 billion pieces (Postal Facts, 2012). Thus, if mail volume were to drop much further, the Postal Service could enter a graveyard spiral of continuous price increases and volume declines. When the Postal Service's volume declines it can be expected that its variable costs and the total cost will decline. Notwithstanding this decrease in total cost, the average cost per piece (average unit cost) will increase because the fixed costs will be spread over fewer pieces. To a larger extent, it could be concluded that the decline in postal services has significantly impacted on the volume of mails delivered in the contemporary era (Postal Facts, 2012).

In summary, postal service is declining both in terms of volume as well as a percentage of total revenue generated in the sector. This trend in letter mail volumes is ascribed to the global recession and electronic substitution effects. This decline in patronage of postal services has created a ripple effect, affecting other vital institutions and agencies of society as well as citizens losing jobs. The SAPO management needs to consider the above factors in order to reduce the decline in postal services and to improve on effective service quality. The subsequent section elaborates in detail on the postal services in the South African public sector.

3.4 Postal service in the South Africa public sector

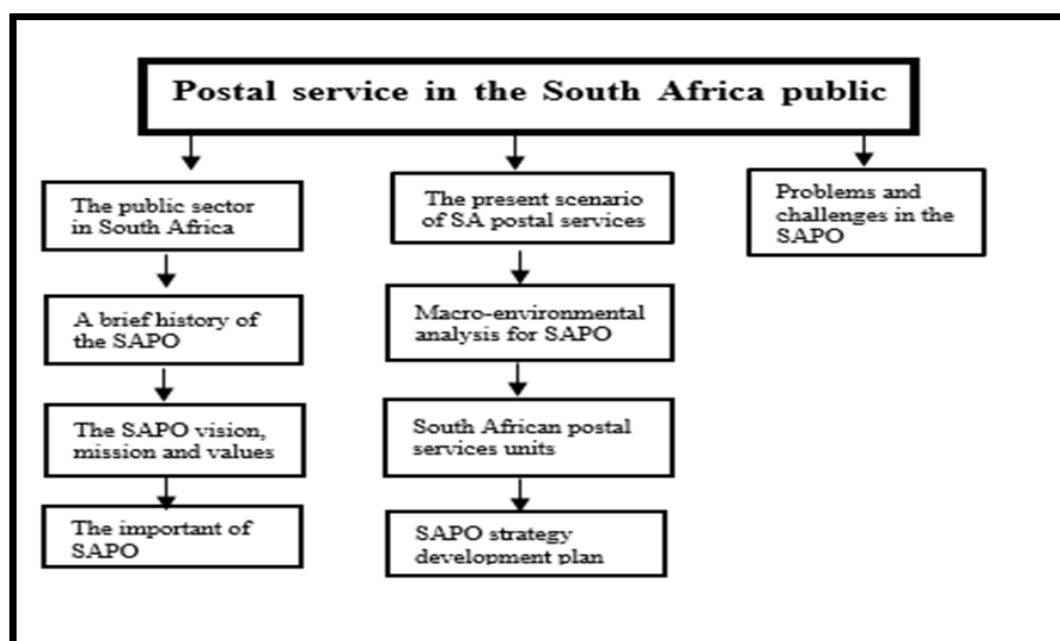
The South Africa post office, delivery services to its citizens such as documents and parcels provided by public undertakings continue to have a central role in the development of an effective and dynamic single market. However, the role of postal services is changing fundamentally. Demand for the distribution of letters, newspapers, magazines, advertisements, and other documents is declining due to the rise of advanced electronic communications. At the same time, demand for parcel delivery services is increasing due to the development of e-

commerce, just-in-time manufacturing, and other business trends driven by the new electronic technologies.

Providing services with good quality and reasonable prices at an advanced level will lead the organisations and businesses to competitive advantages continually, which producing and providing distinctive services, increasing customer loyalty, marketing costs reduction, determining higher prices, are among these advantages. As far as, organisation survival and profitability depend on the customer's satisfaction increase, service quality must continually be evaluated from the consumer's point of view.

The purpose of this section is to analyse postal services within the South Africa context and its effect on service quality to its consumers. Figure 3.8 gives a layout of the South Africa postal services and what will be discussed.

Figure 3.3: Layout of the South African postal service



3.4.1 The public sector in South Africa

The public sector in South Africa consists of three levels: National, Provincial and Local government, all constitutionally composed of specialised ministries with delegated authority to manage public services based on democratic values and principles (Act 108 of 1996). The public sector is defined by Dippelsman *et al.* (2017) as the national, regional, and local governments

plus, institutional units controlled by government units. A government-controlled entity might be an entity that can be a source of financial gain to the government that controls it because it produces goods and services and sells them at market prices or it might be an entity that cannot be a source of financial gain to the government regardless of the prices for which it sells the goods and services it produces (van de Ven, 2014; Tebrake & O'Hagan, 2017). Fisher (2018) and Suleiman and Waterbury (2019) assert that, the public sector of an economy is the sector that provides a range of governmental services. The public sector of South Africa provides a range of governmental services which include; infrastructure, education (schools, libraries), electricity, emergency services, fire service, gas and oil, healthcare, infrastructure, law enforcement, police services, postal service, public transit, social services, and waste management and transportation. From the public services listed above, thus, this study focuses on the postal services in the SAPO in the North-West province of South Africa.

After having a brief explanation of the public sector in South Africa, the subsequent section elaborates in detail on a brief history of the SAPO.

3.4.2 Brief history of the SAPO

The history of postal business in South Africa can be traced back up to 1501 when Captain Pedro D'Ataide of Portugal placed a letter in a milk-wood tree at Mossel Bay, Western Cape with intentions to inform the other sailors both from Portugal and those that returned from India about the disaster of heavy storms that had struck his fleet of three ships on the Atlantic Ocean leaving no survivors (SAPO Integrated Annual Report, 2012). The fleet that was returning from India found the letter three months later and delivered it to Portugal. The crew of ships used the postal practice throughout the period 1500 to 1800 through placing letters under postal stones being found and delivered by other ships; the necessary information such as the name of the ship, the captain, and the dates would be made available on the letters. During 1781, mail workers handled mail articles in Saldanha Bay, Simons Town, and Robben Island while also keeping an eye for the hostile ship as stated (SAPO Integrated Annual Report, 2012). In 1792 March 2nd, Johan Isaac Rhenius the Acting governor proclaimed to establish a post office in the Castle in Cape Town. Adriaan Vincent Bergh was appointed postmaster and Aegidius Benedictus Ziervogel the first postman. Letters were accepted every morning between 09:00 and 10:00 at a cost of six stuiwers (half pennies). The services of postal business continued from then throughout the years up to today offering a variety of distribution and delivery services to the public having had achieved many highlights (SAPO, 2016).

South Africa has rank of 21 and a PES index of 1.26. This is the second-highest (behind Tunisia) of African countries in the Universal Postal Union (UPU) study (Abdallah & Shakurova 2012). To extend its online presence, the South African Post Office (SAPO) recently announced the development of the Trust Centre, a highly secure environment that holds the public key infrastructure (PKI) and Certificate Authorities (CAs) which provide user authentication and ensures trust and legal status in electronic transactions through the use of Trust Centre Digital Certificates (TCDC) (SAPO, 2013).

The SAPO has a network of 2 600 outlets. The SAPO is the most active postal service in southern Africa. The SAPO delivers mail items each workday to almost ten million addresses (Integrated Annual Report, 2014). With more than 2 400 outlets and 5 500 service points, the SAPO has the largest reach of any organisation in South Africa (Trimble *et al.*, 2015). This is similar to the Royal Mail of 2016, the network consists of 11 700 access points, out of which 10,500 are Post Office branches and around 1 200 are Royal Mail customer service points (Royal Mail annual report, 2016). In 2016, the Swiss postal network consisted of approximately 3800 access points. It intends to increase this number by up to 4 200 access points by 2020 (Swiss Post, 2017b). Mail business boasts 25 mail sorting centres for domestic mail and parcels including 3 international sorting centres for international mail and parcels. Between these centres, approximately 6 million mail items are handled daily and 50 tons of parcels are processed per annum (SAPO, 2012).

The SAPO is the most developed postal operation in Africa due to its reliability, reach, relevance, and resilience and should serve as an example to other countries in Africa. When a moratorium on hiring new workers was put in place in 2000, the SAPO resorted to hiring casual workers through labour brokers. This is similar in the case of Malaysia post were in 2009 employed more than 34,000 people. A permanent postal employee in 2011 earned R8 000 a month, while a labour broker would be paid R4 000 a month to supply a worker, and the worker would be paid R2000 a month (Trimble *et al.*, 2015). This unequal pay and broker situation may affect employee's motivation and subsequently the quality of service provided. As such, this inequality led to a very disruptive strike that damaged the public image of South African postal services. Corrective measures led to an end in labour brokering, paving the way for improved worker community management relationships, which are key to improving postal services (SAPO, 2016).

Post the strike in 2016, the South Africa post office has developed a number of good strategies to turn the situation around. However, execution and implementation have failed to generate the desired result despite the turnaround proposals and recommendations (SA annual report 2018). SAOP is extensively considered to have failed in executing its strategic management initiative (SAPO Financial Management, 2015). The SAPO operates in a dynamic environment that is imported by technology and its revenue has declined in the past eight years, and this is considered to be due to the failure in executing SAPO strategies (SAPO Turnaround strategy, 2018). It is common knowledge that organisations that are unable to execute their strategic plan effectively, are unable to improve service operation as well as financial performance. There is therefore no doubt why the SAPO is reporting a financial decline over the past few years. Perhaps, the sector faced challenges because it lacked a concise framework to guide the implementation of the recommendations or strategic plan. As such, it becomes imperative for management and researchers to continue to explore approaches to ensure the effective implementation of the strategic plan of the sector.

In an attempt to play a role in improving the sector, this study set to address the following research questions; how can the strategic management of service quality in the SAPO be improved in order to deliver quality services to postal consumers? This study will look at all the operational unit in the SAPO and main infancy will be on the mail business and the retail unit, which deals with consumers directly and domestic mail and parcels in the SAPO will be studied to a point where improvements are going to be made (Dobrodolac *et al.*, 2016). The system that is being investigated in this research is the strategic management of service quality at SAPO. Data was collected using interviews, questionnaires, document review, and historical data review, to ensure that the system is properly investigated. The next section of the discussion is the importance of SAPO.

3.4.3 The important of SAPO

Traditionally, communication in society and business has been conducted through various means including telephone, fax, and letters. The 1998 White Paper on Postal Policy identified postal services as the most basic and common means by which messages can be communicated and goods delivered. It stated that postal services form a basic link serving the entire population and also serve as an important medium of communications for business (Department of communication, 2011). As such, the government committed to facilitating the growth and development of the sector and to ensure the provision of universal and affordable postal services

to all South Africans irrespective of race, gender, class, age, or geographic location. The overarching goal of the policy framework was to ensure accessible, equitable, efficient, effective, and affordable postal services (SAPO, 2013).

The postal services sector is an important component of the economic sector in South Africa contributing approximately 3, 16% to GDP. This includes courier and expresses the parcel market. The sector enables individuals and businesses economically and plays an important role in the development of the SAPO Annual Report (2012/13). Besides, almost every business relies on the postal, courier, and express parcel market for daily operations. This includes services such as sending out bulk mail (which would typically comprise account statements) from large retail and banking organisations amongst others as well as using the postal network as a marketing and advertising medium (Pilinkienė *et al.*, 2017; Hillebrand, 2018). From a commercial perspective, the sector is required to be one of high quality and efficiency so that economic activity in the country is supported by a strong postal, courier and express parcel service (Esubalew, 2019).

From a social perspective, a basic postal service is the right of all citizens and is essential to the social and economic development of South Africa. Almost every individual is dependent on postal services and almost every business's value chain intersects with the postal services value chain. There is, therefore, a need to fulfill the social obligations of the sector while still ensuring that it remains commercially viable (SAPO annual report, 2014). The social objective is characterised by universal service obligations and is driven by affordability, equity, and keeping costs down, while the commercial objective is driven by profit maximisation, efficiency, and quality of service imperatives. The SA postal services remain important for people and communities who do not have ready access to e-mail or the Internet, for example, when applying for jobs or keeping in touch with family. The postal network also serves as a conduit for the government to communicate with communities in the most rural parts of the country, as well as communities without access to electronic media.

Considering the degree of importance of SAPO as highlighted above, it is fundamental to ensure that the sector is resourced, supported, and managed effectively to ensure that it meets its mandate and the needs of its customers. Reflecting on the importance of SAPO, it is disturbing to think of the consequences on the social and economic front when SAPO is unable to provide quality service to its customers. As such, it remains a priority to ensure that SAPO remains relevant and provide quality service. One way of doing this is to propose a framework for the strategic management of service quality for managers and frontline employees at the service

units for them to improve their consumers' satisfaction at the branches of the SAPO in the North West province, South Africa, which is the focus of this study.

After getting a clear understanding of the importance of SAPO, the next section of the discussion is the SAPO and the market environment. The macro-environmental analysis presented in this section is useful to both the sales and marketing managers of SAPO to continuously research the shifting macro environment and become excited about the idea of implementing alternative strategies should the business environment be affected by external factors. If this is not managed or done at all, we see most businesses fail or go under in most circumstances.

3.4.4 The present scenario of SA postal services

The local trends impacting the postal industry replicate that of global postal administrations which dictate that the SAPO responds by adapting to the fast-changing landscape (SAPO, 2015). As part of the turnaround to move the organisation to a financially sound and sustainable entity offering quality services, the SAPO implemented a new business model (Strategic Corporate Plan, 2016–2018). This model is aligned with the vision and goals of the government under the National Development Plan (NDP). The South African Government adopted the NDP, which aims to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality, as the guiding roadmap for our country's future development path Strategic Corporate Plan (SCP) (2016–2018).

The new business model is intended to reposition the SAPO to meet its customer demands in a rapidly changing and technologically driven market. To reposition SAPO, it is imperative to restructure the business into a path that focuses on delivering on the public service mandate and other parts that focus on pursuing commercial ventures, entering into partnerships, and thus attracting investors (SAPO annual report, 2016). SAPO will partner with organisations that can complement it where it lacks capacity or capability (Jan *et al.*, 2015). A major focus, whilst repositioning SAPO, will be improving the experience of customers across the different companies in the SAPO group, through warehouse management and fleet management systems (SAPO, 2014). A more responsive SAPO will enhance the customer experience and improve relationships with customers SAPO annual report, 2017). The evolution of the SAPO culture to operate in a high-performance environment has become a key ingredient for future success (SAPO, 2018). A greater emphasis will be placed on change and performance management, culture, ethics, agility, and development needs by management. Furthermore, we will continue with investment into our human capital through various internal and external training and

development programs aimed to improve the skill and competency levels of all employees and management (SAPO Corporate Plan 2018/19–2020/21).

The National Integrated ICT Policy describes the SAPO and Postbank as critical components to the successful implementation of policy objectives. It further highlights the urgent need for SAPO and Postbank to ramp up their digital capabilities as a means of stimulating the economy (SAPO annual report, 2018). SAPO's extensive branch network and presence in underserved communities can reduce the gap of those who are excluded from SA's growing digital economy whilst increasing access to banking and financial services (SAPO annual report, 2018). The Postbank Corporatisation has progressed with the Postbank SOC Ltd now registered as a company and the appointment of the Postbank Board. The section 16 application to register a bank was submitted to the SARB. The National Treasury is in the process of tabling the critical legislative changes in the Banks Act to Cabinet, which will allow Postbank to register and trade as other banks (SAPO Corporate Plan 2018/19–2020/21).

During the year 2018, SAPO submitted the section 43 application for the Bank Controlling Company to the SARB. The engagements with SASSA have been positive and culminated in the approval of a hybrid model for the payment of social grants. A contract between SAPO and SASSA has been signed and the integrated project teams are fully operational to deliver on the short timelines (SAPO annual report, 2018).

National Treasury permission will be sought where relevant in terms of the Frameworks for Open SAPO initiatives, this will be to ensure that the roll-out of the initiative should not be delayed by non-compliance to Treasury guidelines. Contracts for the services will also need to be developed, along with the integration of SAPO systems with the companies utilising the Open SAPO infrastructure

The SAPO has been working with the Department of Communications and other stakeholders to ensure that set-top boxes are efficiently delivered to the nation. The funding requirement for the post office public service mandate has been recognised by the government which is looking at the option of setting up a fund for universal services that will be contributed to by all role players in the postal sector (SAPO annual report, 2018). During the 2017 Mid-Term Budget Policy Statement, the Minister of Finance allocated funding of R3.7bn as a recapitalisation for SAPO. Although the amount was used to repay the term loans of R3.7bn, investment in systems and infrastructure, as well as critical working capital, remain fundamental to support the turnaround

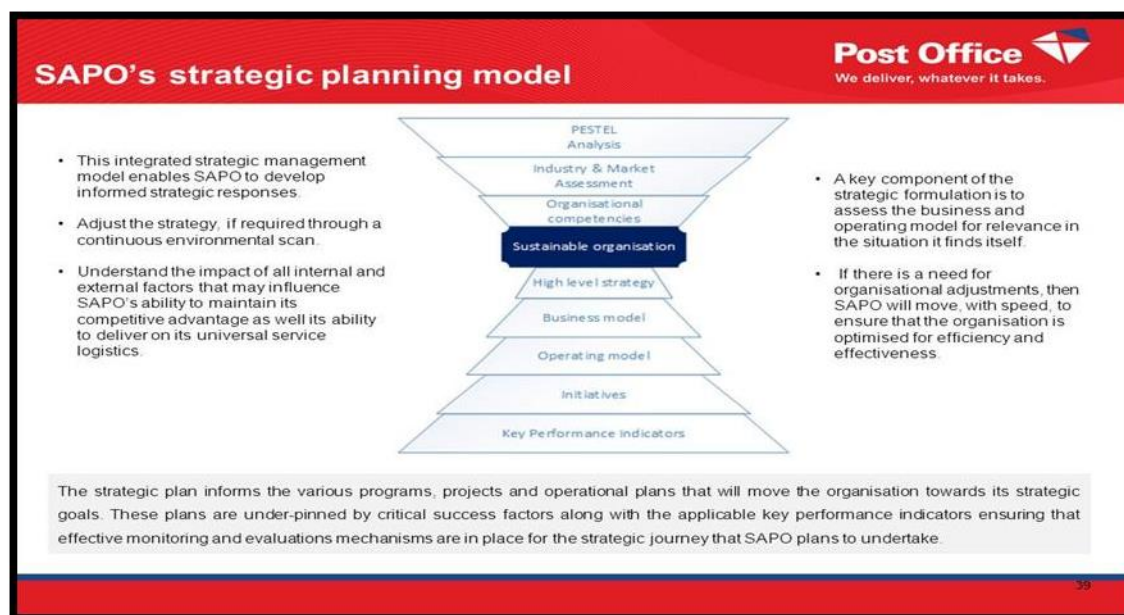
of the post office. The term loan repayment has resulted in a stronger balance sheet for SAPO. With the government actively trying to stimulate small businesses, the SAPO will play its part in providing key communication services for small businesses and entrepreneurs (SAPO annual report, 2018). Compliance remains a key focus area and requires agility as well as the ability to adapt to the existing governance framework. The year ahead will be very challenging, especially with the Corporatisation of Postbank in full swing, the payment of social grants and the commences of the planned business restructuring (SAPO, 2016). This Corporate Plan of SAPO will guide us as we strive towards the realisation of our goal of creating a better life for all our people. The SAPO commit in working with all stakeholders to ensure that they achieve the key objectives outlined in this plan, thus the objectives include, efficient systems and processes, asset and infrastructure optimisation, diversify funding and revenue, future products and services, customers and communities first and, the culture of excellence (Strategic Corporate Plan of the SAPO, 2014/16–2017/18). By implication, SAPO management needs to work following the strategic planning objective in order to reach its overall objectives. The next section of the discussion is on the SAPO strategic planning model.

3.4.5 SAPO strategic planning model

The SA Post Office utilises an integrated strategic management model which is based on Figure 3.3. This model enables SAPO to develop informed strategic responses and adjust the strategy, if required, through a continuous environment to understand the impact of all internal and external factors that may influence SAPO's ability to maintain its competitive advantage as well its ability to deliver on its universal service logistics.

A key component of the strategy formulation is to assess the business and operating model for relevance in the situation it finds itself in. If there is a need for organisational adjustments, then SAPO will move, with speed, to ensure that the organisation is optimised for efficiency and effectiveness. The strategic plan informs the various programs, projects, and operational plans that will move the organisation towards its strategic goals. These plans are under-pinned by critical success factors along with the applicable key performance indicators ensuring that effective monitoring and evaluations mechanisms are in place for the strategic journey that SAPO plans to undertake

Figure 3.4: SAPO Integrated strategic management model



Source: SAPO strategic plan 2019/20–2021/22

In setting strategic objectives, the Post Office has considered the National Treasury strategic planning framework and the setting of strategic objectives. The Post Office views a strategic objective as the main, high-level business strategy with a clearly defined outcome as articulated in the Vision and Mission statements.

The Post Office uses this concept to provide structure, support, and clarity on the chosen direction/s for the organisation for the duration of a strategic cycle and provides a base for the setting of Annual Performance Plans and related targets. The Post Office has started working towards achieving the envisaged strategic intention as described and has initiated a series of transformational actions across the organisation. The Strategic Plan comprises six strategic objectives, designed to transition the Post Office from its current traditional business and operating model to one that is relevant for the new digital economy. In establishing the strategic objectives of the Post Office, the principles of Relevance, Reliability, Resilience, and Reach as identified by the UPU Integrated Index for Postal Development have been used as guiding principles. The six strategic objectives for the strategic plan include efficient systems and processes, asset and infrastructure optimisation, diversify funding and revenue, future products and services, customers and communities first and, the culture of excellence. The SAPO

strategic plan 2019/20–2021/22 suggests six strategic objectives which are discussed in more detail below.

1) Efficient systems and processes

This strategic objective focuses on improving the effectiveness of the Post Office's business processes and operational environment supported by the required enabling IT systems. Process improvement initiatives to identify and eliminate process duplications and redundancies have commenced and will be completed. Where feasible, manual processes will be automated and IT systems applied to repetitive tasks (Strategic Corporate Plan of the SAPO, 2019/20–2021/22).

Productivity improvements and adherence to high service standards will be prioritised across business functions throughout the organisation. The modernisation of operating procedures is an important outcome of this objective. Another key element of this strategic objective is the implementation of an integrated, real-time management reporting tool. This tool will enable management to become more proactive in the monitoring of productivity levels (Strategic Corporate Plan of the SAPO, 2019/20–2021/22).

2) Asset and infrastructure optimisation

To achieve these goals, a Post Office Properties company will be established in due course. The property company will leverage its asset base to provide sustainable returns and ensure that compliance in the workplace environment is improved. This will be achieved through ongoing maintenance programs. Modern workplace trends will also be introduced into the Post Office where feasible. An operationally efficient Distribution Network is critical in controlling operating expenditure whilst ensuring operational efficiency. The SA Post Office has already commenced with an assessment of the optimisation and consolidation of its Distribution Network (Strategic Corporate Plan of the SAPO, 2019/20–2021/22).

3) Diversify funding and revenue

The Post Office is an entity that can increase government access to its citizens. The Post Office has commenced working towards becoming the "face of Government". The Post Office's infrastructure will be modernised to include digital services that complement its physical products and services. The Post Office will focus on establishing its e-commerce capabilities, enabling and developing the South African small and medium business sector (SMMEs) by

providing national access to an online marketplace, warehousing, and distribution networks. The Post Office will be required to strengthen its market intelligence and data analytics competencies to further enhance its product/services portfolio, collaborate with customers to develop customised service offerings ensuring that the Post Office evolves in line with market trends. The possibility of securing Investment Partners via Public-Private Partnerships either on an organisational level will be investigated to ensure the financial sustainability of the Post Office (Strategic Corporate Plan of the SAPO, 2019/20–2021/22).

4) Future products and services

The Post Office is to encourage a culture of innovation throughout the organisation, supported by a Research and Development policy and framework to be implemented. In driving the organisation to attain the "South African Post Office 2030 Vision", partnerships will be identified, culminating in relevant products and services that enable the Post Office to regain, retain and grow its customer base. Core to this is a proactive market intelligence, ensuring agility in a changing operating environment. A greater emphasis and focus on new product and service development is required and is to be accommodated in the organisational structure. The Post Office will develop an integrated service delivery platform, accessible to all (Strategic Corporate Plan of the SAPO, 2019/20–2021/22).

5) Customers and community's first

The Post Office will remain, at its core, a government entity that primarily exists to serve the citizens of South Africa. The Post Office has been tasked with a social mandate and will remain committed to delivering much needed services to customers and communities throughout South Africa. Training of staff to support this strategic objective will be required, together with the introduction of a Customer Relationship Management System, agile and responsive to customer requirements. During the strategic cycle, the Post Office will work on improving the quality of its data, particularly within the Postal and Logistics areas of its business. This will enable the Post Office to strategically deploy social mandate services to areas where it is needed the most. A strategic deliverable for the Post Office will be the introduction of digital services to outlying communities. As part of the strategic objective, the Post Office will make available its physical infrastructure to potential broadband partners with the view of increasing access to SA's growing digital economy to communities (Strategic Corporate Plan of the SAPO, 2019/20– 2021/22).

6) Culture of excellence

The Post Office will develop an organisational culture that strives for excellence in all we do, where each employee is a brand ambassador who will attract and retain customers. Key elements that will impact this will be; a decent and conducive working environment; ensuring the right person, with the right skills, in the right position, at the right time, and cost. Growing capability and skills that will ensure an effective succession planning process to attract, retain, and grow talent, which will be recognised and rewarded appropriately. As the most important leverage element; leadership behavior will be developed and aligned to build organisation resilience and embed the Post Office culture (Strategic Corporate Plan of the SAPO, 2019/20–2021/22).

Consider the above discussion, it is clear that the SAPO has a nice strategic planning model, which takes into consideration the key challenges the post office is facing, its, therefore, means that there is a need to relook at the implementation of the model. As easily mention, SAPO experience financial crisis, lack of resources, infrastructure issue which can as well impede the implementation of a well though model as such it is important to consider the resign of an implementation framework taken into consideration available financial resources as well as infrastructure with the hope of improving service quality in SAPO. SAPO and the market environment will be the next section of the discussion.

3.4.6 SAPO and the market environment

The marketing environment consists of the actors and forces outside marketing that affect marketing management's ability to develop and maintain successful relationships with its target customers (Sharp, 2017). Thus the market environment of a business consists of an internal and an external environment. The internal factors (employees, competitors, customers, publics, marketing intermediaries, suppliers) and the external factors (political, legal, social, technological, economic) that surround the business and influence its marketing operations (Tambovceva, 2016; Aithal, 2017). In the market place, SAPO comes in contact with customers. These are organisations and people that have developed a relationship with mail business and have gained trust that their requirements will be met satisfactorily. Customer needs and demands change with time and it is upon SAPO to continually determine and identify changing needs and to seek new customers in the market while striving to retain existing customers. This means SAPO must keep a competitive advantage in the market environment. Fleisher and Bensoussan (2003) suggest that competitive advantage is when the organisation has successfully managed to

position itself in such a way that it gains an advantage over its competitors in the market (external environment). As a logistics and distribution business, SAPO needs to have a strong marketing function to source and retain business, and operationally it is important to operate on a Just in Time strategy as key to meeting customer expectations.

Although SAPO is a sole entity in the South African postal industry, there are several related business competitors in the logistics and distribution industry (SAPO, 2014). These competitors are exploiting every opportunity available including technology to acquire new business; Post office, therefore, finds itself in a position that it has to strive for opportunities to retain current clients while bringing new clients into the business through ensuring on-time delivery and collection of parcels and secured and reliable services (Strategic Corporate Plan 2019/20–2021/22).

3.4.6.1 The micro-and macro-environment

The market environment is made up of the micro-and macro-environments. The micro-environment refers to forces surrounding and within the company that affects its ability to serve its customers. These factors include marketing intermediaries, customers, shareholders, the media and social media, and employees. The expounded as:

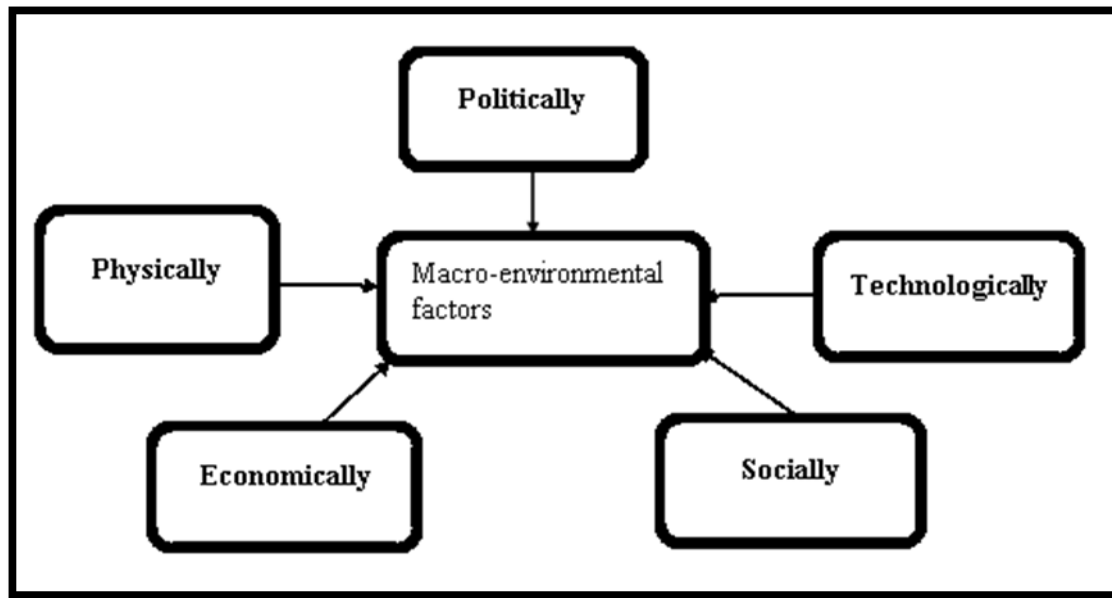
- Marketing intermediaries: marketing intermediaries support/enable SAPO to promote, sell, and distribute its goods to final buyers.
- Customers: the central part of any business as they are to attract and retain most of the customers to generate revenue. Therefore, SAPO must adopt a marketing strategy that attracts potential customers and retain existing customers by taking into consideration the wants and needs of customers and by providing after-sales services and value-added services.
- Competitors: The competitors of an organisation have a direct impact on business strategies. SAPO ought to know how to do a competitive analysis to be able to aim for a competitive advantage. SAPO must understand what value-added services their competitor are providing, as well as the unique selling proposition of their competitors.
- Shareholders: Shareholders of an organisation ensure that the company is well run and well managed. They do this by monitoring the performance of the company and raising their objections or giving their approval to the actions of the management of the company.

- Media and social media: The way media acts can make or break an organisation. Therefore, SAOP should manage to keep a good relationship with media as whatever it shows will directly influence the organisation business. If the media has a good image on an organisation product and service, this will increase the business of organisation and vice- versa. To maintain good relations with media, SAPO needs to maintain a public relation department who manage events and deal with media on behalf of SAPO.
- Employees: Skilled employees can help SAPO to achieve organisational goals and objectives. As skilled and experienced employees have the expertise to support organization to get success. This begins with the hiring process and continues through regular and timely training and development sessions. The training and development process helps the employees to work effectively and efficiently to achieve the organizational goals.

Macro-environmental factors are external factors which affect the development of most enterprises and are beyond their control (Mahadea & Pillay, 2008). The macro-environment factors include the economy, technology, society, government, and the competitive environmental factors that can influence an organisation but are outside of the organisation's domain of control (Campbell & Craig, 2012). These factors will affect the decisions made by the management of any organisation. Management can categorize these factors by using the PESTEL model. The PESTEL model focused on potential opportunities and threats out there that could positively or negatively affect the way SAPO does business.

In the view of Rugman *et al.* (2011), the external environment for an organisation will mainly focus on the macro-environmental factors that may influence the organisation development in the real business world. These factors should include political, economic, social, technological, environmental, and legal factors. These macro-environment variables influence the way SAPO conducts business politically, technologically, socially, economically, and physically. The SAPO covers more than 1.2 million square kilometers of area nationwide in terms of distributions and deliveries. It consists of more than 2 400 outlets excluding retail agencies. Figure 3.9 shows the South African Post Office macro environment.

Figure 3.5: South African Post Office macro-environment



Source: South African Post Office Annual report. (2010)

1) Political variables

The political environment defines the monetary and legislative policies of the country in which an organization operates. It includes policies, laws, and regulations of the government that influence the business activities (including marketing activities) of the organization (Lamprecht, 2009; De Beer, 2012). The political environment refers to the laws and regulations passed by governments that can affect the viability of multinational company operations in the host country (Griffin & Pustay 2010; Luo & Zhao, 2013). International evidence suggests that the regulatory environment can be a major hurdle to the survival and growth of the small and new business (Mahadea & Pillay, 2008; De Clercq *et al.*, 2010). Kakazoukis (2011) confirms that political inputs are most likely to happen in branches that, affect certain political goals, such as native access to national resources, defense, and employment. Government actions are together with suppliers and customers part of the business process (Cheverton, 2011). Some kind of legislation can also belong under either political or legal forces depending on its nature and local circumstances. According to Maina (2017), the legislation is used to restrict for example marketing activities, particularly in industrialized countries.

However, the SAPO's political variable has a strong influence from the Department of Communication (DoC) and Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (CASA).

These bodies as shareholders are the ones setting performance achievement targets for SAPO as per license agreement. The organisation strives to optimize all its functions to reach the targets. Furthermore, the DoC also controls and provides the budget annually and has a strong voice to the priorities, expenditures, and strategies made by the organization. The organization must comply with the regulations of the government such as the code of practice, health, and safety, equity, and equality. By implication, the DoC through the starting of the performance achievement targets and annual budget allocation of SAPO has a strong influence on the success of SAPO to achieve its target of providing quality service to all customers. Firstly, the need to provide quality service has to be prioritized by DoC and secondly, the DoC needs to allocate sufficient funds to support the plans to provide quality service to customers. With this understanding, the development of any framework for the strategic management of service quality of SAPO with the hope of improving service quality must take into consideration the annual achievement targets and annual budget allocation to ensure that the framework is designed for possible implementation within the available budget or envisaged budget.

2) Technological variables

More companies are using technology to handle customer service efficiently and cost- effectively. The increased use of computer programs, technological trends, and innovations increasing speeds in producing units, smart systems, improvements in artificial intelligence, and diversification are examples of technological forces (Stokes, 2011). In the production field, the infrastructure is more important compared to new technological trends. The attractiveness in a potential new market to enter some important factors should be taken into consideration, such as electricity, telecommunications, railroads, water supply, and natural gas (Johnson & Brierley, 2007; Neirotti *et al.*, 2014). High transportation cost makes it hard for external parties to compete with local products, especially when there is a large distance between the two countries (Leamer & Storper, 2014). In developed countries like the United States, Germany, and Sweden the infrastructure is generally better compared to developing countries (Dang & Pheng, 2015).

McMichael (2012) states that South Africa is a developing country and is one of the most economically expanding in the African continent; the use of advanced technology has been rapidly growing to compete globally. This is evident from the implementation of large projects such as the Gautrain, the Bus Rapid Transportation system, and world-class built stadia that technological advantages have been adopted in the SA government. SAPO has to align itself and exploit opportunities in the technological environment by identifying areas that can enhance

logistics and communications in its industry, a benchmark from players like Telkom expanding with communications networks by introducing "Eita" as a new competitive brand should be considered (Mokoena, 2012).

It is upon SAPO to adapt to e-commerce concepts and recognize investment opportunities, Postbank should be one of priority business areas where advanced technology can be invested so that it is transformed and corporatized to merge with players like Absa, Standard Bank, First National Bank and other banks in the land. Good business opportunities have emerged on the current sustainability phenomena, opportunities can be adapted to the transport and logistics side of SAPO such as implementing and using a fleet that utilizes Euro V emission technology standards and green logistics as a marketing brand to acquire more business since it is currently important to clients for a firm to be sustainable and eco-friendly. By implication, there are a few major areas in which technology now can help SAPO provide key advantages in engendering customer loyalty by improving customer service. This includes websites and emails. SAPO may provide a tool or platform on its website where customers can make inquiries and get immediate responses. SAPO may use emails to enhance communication with customers. They may provide a platform for consumers to communicate with them through email and get feedback.

3) Social Variables

The social environment includes the values, beliefs, attitudes, opinions, and lifestyles of stakeholders outside the organisation (Bosdriesz *et al.*, 2012). When analyzing the social environment, a marketer of SAPO needs to consider the factors associated with demographic and cultural forces concerning the impact these factors may have on an organization's marketing strategy. The analysis of demographic factors includes the study of the human population regarding size, geographic distribution, age, education levels, and income distribution (Bosdriesz *et al.*, 2012). The social environment influences customers' buying behavior and product selections, and therefore, also the marketing strategy the organisation should develop. Lamprecht (2009) points out that there are differences in literacy and consumer skills. As a result, a country's educational system influence what kinds of adaptation in products and marketing communications are necessary. Therefore, marketers must consider social factors that may impact the marketing communication strategies of organisations.

As a developing economy, South Africa is faced with issues related to balancing the current population with the industry. There is a strong need for the creation of jobs for the people;

among other factors are skills shortages and the ratio of industry size versus the percentage of unemployed individuals. According to Stats SA (2012), the level of unemployment as of January 2012 was 23.9% while the total population is estimated at 50.59 million. There must be balanced compliance with the labour legislation and Employment Equity act within the SAPO environment and it should be part of its social responsibility program to identify ways for creating more decent employment. In terms of understanding the demographics of the human population and how it influences the quality of the service required, SAPO needs to pay attention to the demographics of the existing customers and new customers. To give out quality service to customers, SAPO needs proper knowledge of the customers. As such, a possible framework for the improvement of service quality in SAPO must consider the demographics of the populations of SA to understand geographic locations, age, education levels, and income distribution of the customers. Quality means different things to these different customers and as such, a one size fits all approach to quality service is challenging.

4) Economic Variables

The economic environment includes external variables such as interest rates, inflation rates, level of economic growth, currency exchange rates, and fiscal and monetary policies (Bosdriesz *et al.*, 2012). Rollins *et al.* (2014) indicate that an economic recession can severely affect the marketing performance and survival of organisations. The authors mentioned above highlight that during an economic recession, organisations alter their marketing strategies by either cutting marketing budgets, or investing in more marketing. This argument is also backed by Cheong *et al.* (2013) emphasising that during an economic recession, retail sales are slow, and advertising budgets (which is part of the marketing communications budget) are often reduced, as organizations face severe pressure to cut back on marketing investments. This implies that organisations, such as dealerships should analyze the economic situation in the business environment, where they operate to understand if the current economic environment presents opportunities or may pose threats.

According to Minister Gordhan's 2012 Budget Speech in South African government, special emphasis was given to improving competitiveness in the industry, investment in technology, encouragement of enterprise development, and support for agriculture. The South African government as the industry mother body has a direct influence on economic measures such as interest rates, consumer income tax, inflation, and exchange rates. SA Post Office receives an annual budget from the Department of Communication and the returns and growth of the

business can, therefore, be determined by the government. SA's economy has an average growth rate of 3% a year since 2009, some of the key factors may have been the recession period that resulted from such a slowdown; economic trends have an impact on consumer expenditure and as a result, any organisation becomes sensitive to negative flows of the inflation rates. In this case, inflation occurs when the average prices of goods and services rise. The purchasing power of consumers is weakened as wages and salaries fall in relation to the cost of goods; people spend less and the economy suffers. Thus this may affect the purchases of postal services as well as poor service quality by SAPO.

5) Physical variables

The physical environment consists of the environment, from which the organisations access raw materials and other natural resources. A country's natural resources are one indicator of its economic potential and raw material availability, while its topography helps determine the physical distribution and market accessibility (Lamprecht, 2009). These natural resources include the land and physical space on which organisations, such as dealerships, premises are built. The availability or the shortage of raw materials influence the marketing activities of an organization, for example, a shortage of available space on which to build a post office may affect the marketing activities of the organisation, as the post office might not have sufficient space to accommodate its marketing staff and its stock.

Concerning the physical environment of the SAPO, it comprises of the resources organisations need to function, these involve assets fixed or variable and how they are organised to optimize profits. SAPO and every organisation rely on sufficient and healthy supply of resources such as water for people. It is the government's responsibility to enhance decent sanitation, electricity and to enforce protection of the environment including forests and oceans for a sustainable economy. By implication, the physical environment of SAPO is as important as the product itself in decision making. Customers sense the physical surroundings of the SAPO such as décor, waiting areas, equipment, staff appearance, layout, images, this may determine their behaviour and level of satisfaction.

In conclusion, the five macro-environment elements as explained above indicate that companies should adapt to ongoing trends and developments in their macro and microenvironments. Therefore, it is in the interest of the SAPO to scan its marketing environment to deal with any possible threats from the market and to capitalise on any available opportunities. It is clear that

the SAPO marketing environment is made up of several unpredictable forces that surround the company. The SAPO has to closely monitor the changing environment, the businesses could be in a position to anticipate certain threats and may capitalise on any available opportunities in the market. They may only do this if they are consistently scanning and analysing their marketing environment. Environmental scanning involves the collection, observation, and examination of information relating to the various forces in the macro (external) and micro (internal) environments. SAPO management must be aware of the latest trends and developments. They should continuously monitor their competitors, as may take different forms. They may be suppliers of substitute products. They can be new entrants. Alternatively, competition may even come from customers and suppliers. Equally, marketers should be knowledgeable of different business models, as competition is coming from differentiated and low-cost service providers, among others. Following is a deliberation of the South African postal services units. The next section is a deliberation of South African postal service units.

3.4.7 South African postal service units

The South Africa post office is divided into four operational departments which are referred to as business units. Service quality can be understood differently across the different units and as such, different approaches are applicable to improve service quality. Each business unit has its specific capabilities which contribute to the overall revenue of the post office (SAPO, 2016). These units are retail, mail, Postbank, and logistics. The mail and retail units are considered to be offering the services with the largest consumer base and are the highest income generating units for SAPO. However, they are the most affected by the macro-environment dynamics and are the hardest hit by changes and competition in the market environment. Thus, a decline in revenue and service quality. On a general scale, the postal service around the world has seen a decline in revenue due to a decrease in mail volumes. This has been the direct result of the numerous electronic media communication choices available to customers (SAPO, 2014).

This study focuses on two of the SAPO business units being the retail and mail units. Since the aim of this study was to design a framework for the strategic management of service quality, the retail unit of SAPO is the primary contact for customers to access the various products and services they need. As such, this unit needs to be at the forefront of rebuilding and instilling confidence in SAPO once again by providing an exceptional customer experience. The SAPO mail unit on the other hand help in the delivery of the SAPO mail, special promotion letters, parcels, cards, documents. At the end, SAPO still delivers around 8 million letters daily, and the

Mail operation is still SAPO's core business operation. As already mentioned, the two units are considered to be offering the services with the largest consumer's base and are the highest income generating units for SAPO and highly affected by the macro-environmental dynamics. As such, a spin in the service quality of the two units exerts a direct impact on the entire SAPO. Since the study strives to improve the service quality in the SAPO, these two business units assisted in achieving the study objectives. Below is the explanation of the different business units in South Africa post offices.

1) Retail unit

Trimble *et al.* (2015) explain that the retail operations are the channel for several services to handle bill payment through the post offices as well as new electronic commerce operations. The retail service is the primary channel of the South African post office through which customers can access the products and services offered by the company. The South African post office branch network consists of 2,486 access points, which makes it the largest footprint in the country (SAPO audit report, 2014).

In 2014, a total number of 50 million customers were served at various Post Office outlets. The service offering varies from company-owned products and services to other services that the company is rendering on behalf of other entities, including government and private companies. In some provinces such as the Eastern Cape, Gauteng, Limpopo, and KwaZulu-Natal. Motor vehicle licenses can be renewed at most of the post office outlets. A total of 3.4 million motor vehicle licenses were renewed at Post Office branches in the financial year under review.

Residents are also able to pay their water and electricity bills at many of the branches where agreements were reached with the local municipalities to accept payments on their behalf. The Post Office also facilitates the payment of monthly short-term insurance premiums for several insurance companies at its branches. As part of the operating license condition, the SA Post Office is required to establish 50 new access points annually. The exorbitant costs of putting up brick-and-mortar structures have prompted the company to explore more cost-effective means of providing access to communities in certain areas. One route is mobile post office units that enable the company to reach communities in remote rural areas. In the year under review, 50 new access points were established, comprising 17 fully-fledged branches, 3 mobile post offices, and 30 retail postal agencies. A total of 21 post office buildings were renovated to improve the trading environment. The retail division has initiated several projects to improve customer

service. The recognition and reward program acknowledges individual employees and branches that excel in customer service. The division has also introduced customer service excellence roadshows focusing on branch managers. Besides, a new point-of-sale system is being rolled out to enhance customer services (SAOP audit report 2017). In this case, the retail unit helps SAPO consumers to access the products and services offered by the company in an effective manner that will lead to consumer's satisfaction and loyalty.

2) Mail unit

Finally, the mail business unit which is also the centre of discussion of this study refers to the traditional post office operation and involves individual letters, bulk mail, and the emerging hybrid mail operations (Bogers *et al.*, 2014). The mail business unit continues to be the key revenue generator for the SA post office contributing 67%. The SA post office experienced a decline of around 4.3% in mail volumes, with revenue below budget by 0.3% down to the prior year. The effect of the strikes during the year was felt on most products with bulk mail heavily affected. The impact of the four strikes in 12 months played a very big role in missing the revenue budget and service delivery to customers (SAPO, 2014).

A total of 1 197 254 addresses were rolled out, exceeding the annual address expansion target of 1 195 680 as one of the key deliverables within the business unit. A total of 37,7% addresses were expanded in rural areas, and 62,3% in urban areas. The strategic planning for mail business resolved to embark on a systematic approach that will immediately seek to grow the business, improve on innovation, and embark on an exercise to deliver value to our clients. In the year under review, the Post Office established 50 additional points of access and re-established 11 Retail Post Office Agencies. The additional points of access were made up of five fully-fledged branches and 45 Retail Post Office Agencies. A total of 43 Post Office buildings were renovated to improve the trading environment (SAPO, 2016).

The South African Post Office (SAPO) is the main mail service provider in South Africa. Its mission is to enable the nation to connect efficiently with the world by distributing information, goods, as well as financial and governmental services. SAPO plays an important role in the country's economy and the efficient running of the state. It facilitates communication for business and government and has various products and services to ensure that South Africa's economy runs as efficiently as possible (Manyatshe, 2003). By implication, the mail unit in this study will enable SAPO to send and received individual letters, bulk mail, and the emerging

hybrid mail to its postal consumers and to ensure that the mails arrive at its destination at the right time with the correct postal address. The problems and challenges faced by the SAPO are elucidated in the subsequent discussion.

3.5 Problems and challenges of the SAPO

The voice of customers in a service organisation is universal and commonly applicable to any kind of business; whether the largest or smallest mailers, customers always want services and products that are innovative, affordable, and reliable and of the highest quality with the ability to satisfy their individually changing needs (Chesbrough, 2011). The South African postal services are faced with several challenges posing a threat to the survival and growth of the business; these challenges range from the external competition in the market to internal operational challenges that hamper the progress of the organisation drastically. In the view of Mburu (2016), postal organisations are faced with multiple numbers of strains that demand a rather aggressive and immediate response in the industry to ensure customer needs are met. In the views of Botha and King (2010), Hlekane, (2013), SAPO annual report (2015) and SAPO annual report (2018), some of the problems and challenges facing the SAPO in accomplishing its overall objective are explained below.

- Lack of basic infrastructure

Infrastructure is the basic physical and organisational structures needed for the operation of a society such as; industries, buildings, roads, bridges, health services, governance, and so on. It is the enterprise or the products, services, and facilities necessary for an economy to function (Sullivan & Sheffrin, 2003; Rogers *et al.*, 2015). Demchenko *et al.* (2014) explain that infrastructure can be described generally as the set of interconnected structural elements that provide a framework supporting an entire structure of development. Infrastructure facilitates the production of goods and services, and also the distribution of finished products to end-users (markets), as well as basic social services such as schools and hospitals; for example, roads enable the transport of raw materials to a factory (Scott, 2009; Shehu, 2018). The term typically refers to the technical structures that support a society, such as roads, water supply, sewers, electrical national grids, telecommunications, and so forth, and can be defined as "the physical components of interrelated systems providing commodities and services essential to enable, sustain, or enhance societal living conditions" (Fulmer, 2009; Jensen *et al.*, 2014; AbdulAzeez *et al.*, 2015).

Kiprono and Matsumoto (2014) and Edriss and Chiunda (2017) assert that the majority of poor people in the world live in rural areas where the level of public infrastructure especially roads seems low. The inadequate roads and poor road access put high cost of transportation; reduce the ability to access high-quality inputs; limit the uses of local markets to the sales of their products, the purchase of consumer goods, and opportunities for off-farm employment. Poor road access has nevertheless put constraints on rural poor people in terms of access to other social infrastructures such as access post office and for post office services to reach them as well as education and health facilities. Therefore, improvement of the rural road seems to be a clear means by which large numbers of people might acquire the opportunity to participate in the market economy and thereby raise themselves out of poverty (Warr, 2010; Gaal *et al.*, 2017). The post offices in South Africa, especially post offices in rural areas that play an important role in providing financial services in rural areas are not equipped with basic infrastructures such as road networks, telecommunication, and the electricity grid. In most of the post offices even proper sitting arrangement for staff is not available, thus will lead to poor service quality to postal consumers.

- Lack of effectiveness of employee coordination

Employee coordination describes the degree to which employees work successfully together to achieve mutually agreed goals (Ellinger *et al.*, 2011). The effective coordination (or cooperation) of employees has always a beneficial influence on a company's organizational function (Gittel & Weiss, 2004; Lodorfos *et al.*, 2015). Undoubtedly, it can be said that coordination is the process of integration of individual parts of the organisation's activity to achieve common goals (Saari *et al.*, 2015). Everyone needs to realize that while coordinating, it is necessary to align all company's operations so that the company would gain success as soon as possible, proportionally reconcile certain things and activities and to adopt certain measures to achieve the objectives. Vanagas and Stankevič (2014) identified a coordination mechanism as an organisation and synchronizing of all members' actions of the networks in all processes between these organisations.

Service providers in particular, always aim to improve the communication between employees and to optimise the way they work together in teams and departments. This is because better coordination among individual employees, apart from improving the company's overall organizational function, also enables organisations to generate value for their customers

(Demirbag *et al.*, 2012; Porter *et al.*, 2013). The SAPO has low morale amongst workers that led to the ineffectiveness of employee coordination (SAPO, 2014). The great importance in the SAPO is the optimisation of the coordination between the front line employers and the management since this is a necessary factor for the success of the service delivery (Zeithaml & Gittel, 2000; Zomerdijk & Vries, 2007; Mwikya, 2013).

- Staff shortages

Previous research has identified staff shortage as a significant predictor of organisational performance (Meier & Hicklin, 2008; Lepak & Shaw, 2008; Ton & Huckman, 2008; Mohr *et al.*, 2012; Hur, 2013; Cheema & Asrar-ul-Haq, 2017). When there is a shortage of staff, the responsibilities and workloads of existing staff member's increase, which leads to mistakes and other inefficiencies, and negatively affects individual performance, client care, and ultimately organisational performance. Hence, there is a crunch of manpower in the post offices Malakar (2013). It is observed that most of the post offices are run by one or two persons and need to do all sorts of work which has a very adverse effect on performance and output. The shortage of staff members sometimes puts pressure on the existing staff members. Such issues need to be taken into account immediately (India Post, 2016).

- Operational challenges

Operational challenges also impact the organisation significantly resulting in loss of clients, business, and employees (Schaupp & Bélanger, 2014). SAPO is faced with resource challenges lately where there are always massive shortages of containers leading to delays of work that need to be processed SAPO (2016). There are also structural dynamics that have led to poor interaction between business units where every business unit take care only of its operations; a typical example is observed when mail processing overloads containers and pallets without care to standard weight requirements when its volume peak periods and therefore shifting the work to the next function which is transport. These problems affect the total organisation and cause delays and poor quality to the service delivered to the customer. These kinds of problems affect the total organisation and cause delays and poor quality to the service delivered to the customer.

- Employee morale

Employee morale within an organisation has a direct impact on the satisfaction level of its customers and the company's ultimate success. When relationship-based leaders promote core competency development of its workforce throughout the organisation, an opportunity exists for ensuring high employee morale and customer satisfaction and increase in employee and customer retention rates, and a positive long-term outlook for the company's successful performance (Subramony & Holtom, 2012; Tiwari, 2014). Employee morale is generally low in SAPO, due to poor wellbeing programs and downward coercive communication structures in the organisation. Such factors lead to employees with don't care attitude and consequently cause high levels of non-conformances such as mis-sorts, misrouting, delays, late deliveries, incorrect deliveries, dumping of mail, incorrect labeling of products and many others related to processes. There is also a huge impact on demoralized employees through strikes, go-slows, and labour turnover that affect the organisation's quality and overall performance.

- The slow progress of innovation

The main image is that most innovations, and certainly in the domain of complex or major societal innovation, fail (Keller & Aiken, 2009). This not only has to do with the uncertain nature of the innovations themselves, but also with the way we have organized the innovation process itself. The main goal of innovation management is to speed up the innovation process. We forget that speed is the least important element of the innovation process (Loch & Terwiesch, 2005). If we stress speed as the most critical performance element of innovation, then we transform the innovation process into a technocratic approach with the wrong elements at the core (Dawson & Andriopoulos, 2014).

Hence, to cope with the fast-changing environment South Africa posts also need to be catching the new invention and technology timely. The South Africa post still following the age-old practices of working, though it bringing some innovation recently at a very slow speed (SAPO Press Releases, 2015).

- Lack of skill

A skill shortage is a source of aggravation to firms and, when severe, is likely to affect the quality and quantity related to the output of the organisation (Richardson, 2007; Mateus *et al.*,

2014; Allen-ILE & Iwu, 2014). Skill shortages are associated with the shortages of skilled people available in the job market, relative to the jobs that employers are providing (Hogarth & Gambin, 2014; Cappelli, 2015; Paul, 2018). Ngonyama (2016) confirms that skill shortage is due to the unavailability of sufficient people with a specific skill to compensate for the particular demand. Skill shortage is a crucial term used to elaborate a category of circumstances where it is difficult for an employer to detect a worker with potential skills (Healy *et al.*, 2015; Cappelli, 2015). The criteria for skill shortages differ greatly regarding cause and nature (Careersnz, 2015). Obtaining sufficiently skilled employees for a sophisticated organisational economy is acquainted with the attention of vast concern innumerable countries (Paul, 2018).

In the view of Windapo (2016), skill shortage can also mean a shortage with the recent demand of the employees in an organisation. Apart from that, a shortage can also be related to some appropriate stated optimal of skills, which presumably may be more distinctly termed skill deficiency (Green & Ashton, 2016). The impact of skill shortages in any organisation is extensively high and crucial and so it is an issue of great concern. The matter of skill shortages in any organisation is a concern for all the leading organisations around the world. If it becomes difficult to have access future requirements, significant gaps in the workforce can seriously affect the efficiency and quality of the working environment in any organisation (Fournier, 2017). Access to labour markets is a key factor of production crucial for Small and Medium Enterprises (Shane & Venkatarman, 2010; Thornhill & Amit, 2013), as it allows for appropriate expertise that enables ventures to explore identified opportunities (Irene, 2016; Okerue, 2018).

- Lack of clear goals and objectives

Ngcamu (2013) contends that failure to align job descriptions to departmental strategic objectives and that of the organisation has the potential to lead to under-performance. This is because job descriptions explain clearly what is expected of employees and the accepted performance thereof. Sebola and Manyaka (2012) point to the fact the organisations with employees who clearly understand their mission, strategies, and objectives tend to be high- performing organisations. They further add that unclear organisational goals and objectives indicate a lack of commitment by management to cascade organisational goals. Hence, the South Africa postal sector need to have a clear organisational goals that is effectively communicated to all employees involved in the day-to-day running of the postal services.

- Lack of proper implementation of plans

The postal managers were expected to state clearly the vision, mission, and value statements which should be supported by reasonable action to achieve the stated objectives of an organisation (Olson, 2017). The implementation of strategic plans needs to be clear while managers are required to communicate the reviews and agreements on contingencies with employees (Kaplan & Norton, 2008). However, the inability to implement plans as agreed on by top management can frustrate the efficient implementation of strategies. The following process, as recommended by Olson (2008) and Brinkschroder (2014) should be used to guide strategy implementation:

- Management should decide on a strategic plan after agreeing with all stakeholders involved in the strategy implementation process.
- Organisational budgets should be well-aligned to annual goals which ought to be based on specific financial estimates.
- Management should assign responsibilities to different groups of stakeholders.
- There should be a scorecard available for tracking and monitoring all plans.
- Management should establish a performance management system to measure the performance of employees and all stakeholders involved.
- The totality of plans should be communicated to stakeholders.
- There should be weekly or monthly meetings based on strategy implementation reporting and monitoring.
- Management should set up review dates at which time the line strategic plans should be reported, deliberated, as well as reviewed.

- Lack of performance feedback

It is important to provide feedback when employees have not adequately performed or even in cases of outstanding performance (Gaba & Joseph, 2013). Manyaka and Sebola (2012) concur with the importance of providing timeous and continuous feedback to employees on how they perform throughout the year rather than yearly performance reviews as this will help identify

employees whose performance is below the expected standards early. Ngcamu (2013) also agrees that performance management success increases when there is ongoing communication between employee and employer on the performance result. Not only should there be communication but that communication should be effective which means that it must encourage feedback, dialogue, and participation.

The manager and employee of the postal sector thus have the responsibility to have a two- way communication process for the feedback process to work. Over and above providing feedback when outstanding or ineffectual performance is identified, giving periodic feedback daily on accomplishments and contributions is essential for performance management to be effective (SAPO Annual Report, 2012).

- Operational challenges

Operational challenges also exert an impact on the organisation significantly resulting in loss of clients, business, and employees. SAPO is faced with resource challenges lately where there are always massive shortages of containers leading to delays of work that need to be processed (SAPO, 2016). There are also structural dynamics that have led to poor interaction between business units where every business unit take care only of its operations; a typical example is observed when mail processing overloads containers and pallets without care to standard weight requirements when its volume peak periods and therefore shifting the work to the next function which is transport (Richards, 2017). These problems affect the total organisation and cause delays and poor quality to the service delivered to the customer.

- Technological challenges of SAPO

SAPO IT systems are unstable, in an unsafe environment, without adequate connectivity, weak redundancy, without an independent testing environment; without disaster recovery and certain to collapse in the immediate future if no drastic and urgent intervention is taken. Mission-critical IT systems failure introduces excessive inefficiencies, losses, and waste. The following challenges are highlighted as:

- E-mails: e-mail use is on the rise and is becoming increasingly the medium of choice for sending letters, cards, and documents (Hlekane, 2013).

- Internet: e-commerce is also on the rise, universities, government departments, Cipro have e-books, e application forms where one does not have to send a letter to apply for course or forms for (Hlekane, 2013).
- Lack of revenue growth

Sales growth targets play a major role in the perceptions of top managers. Using surveys, Hill *et al.* (2014) explain that sales are the most common objective mentioned by senior managers. Kansal and Bansal, (2018) report that planning systems generally begin with sales targets. While Ingram *et al.* (2015) emphasis on sales growth also provides a useful and visible benchmark to motivate managers. The South Africa post office management needs to focus on high product quality in other to influence both profitability and market share growth.

- High level of competition

Increased competition from DHL Express, Post net, Knock and Drop and other competitors have entered the business space and are very competitive and are easily accessible at large shopping centres and residential areas as (Manyatshe, 2003). Hence, the increasing volumes of different postal services have affected the SA postal services. The SA postal sectors need to entrench their customer base and market position in an attempt to keep customers using the effective strategy of reaching customers' demand.

- Poor leadership

According to Rajasekar (2014), poor leadership among the factors that cause the failure of strategy implementation. SAPO leadership has been unstable for the past 5 years, and presently, the leadership vacancy rate is sitting at 49% - successful implementation of a turnaround program is impossible without a stable leadership team, internally the organisation lacks a high- performance culture and accountability for performance SAPO Corporate Strategic Plan (2015). There is a need for SAPO managers to guide and control the nature of activities in the organisation. The affirmation of Girma (2016) indicates that logical action and good decisions by top management in the process of strategy implementation enable an organisation to achieve its objectives. It requires that top management should keep to the norms, policies, and rules of the organisation while they constantly communicate with employees, to keep them on the right track (Eustace & Martins, 2014). Organisational leaders should learn how to appreciate and

nurture talent, build trust, develop close ties between employees, confront challenges, and communicate satisfactorily with employees (Mitchell, 2015). Leaders are expected to develop managerial competence in an organisation by developing employee skills, time management skills, decision-making capabilities, and accuracy in goal attainment. The greatest tasks of leaders are to motivate employees during the work process, to manage stakeholders in the business environment, to set attainable goals, to clarify tasks, and to delegate authority to ensure that strategy implementation will be successful (Mitchell, 2015).

- Declining mail volumes

The continuing decline in mail volumes provided one major reason for reform. Due to the recent growth in electronic communication services, which compete with traditional postal services, the volumes in letter mail have been declining and the SAPO had lost significant market share in the highly competitive express and parcel markets. The decline of volumes had also been caused by the increase of tariffs year after year (SAPO, 2014).

New postal products and services are making their appearance. Hybrid electronic mail has enormous potential to replace anticipated losses of traditional mail volumes in future years. The postal service has seen an influx of competition on all fronts, from overnight delivery firms such as DHL and parcel providers to new alternate forms of communication such as e-mail and facsimile technologies. Most recently, the postal service has seen the arrival of various forms of electronic commerce (such as electronic bill payment), which may erode the postal service's competitive position.

The current statistics concerning the threat of electronic diversion are staggering. Almost 100 percent of all businesses with over 100 employees and over 80 percent of businesses with between 5 and 100 employees use facsimile machines (Report on Market Based Assessment of the Demand for Correspondence and Transactions, Postal Services Market Research, April 1999). Approximately, 43 percent of the 11-billion fax messages in 1998 represented a diversion from the mail. Eighty percent of home computers have the software, with on-line access capabilities (State of Industry Report, Electronic Access, 1999). Banks are aggressively promoting electronic banking, even going as far as offering a free service and/or incentivise customers to switch to the service ("Current Developments in Electronic Diversion", McKenna (2006). Approximately 40 percent of households say that they pay one or more of their bills each month through some electronic service rather than the mail ("Impact of Communication

Technology on Consumer Behaviour",) (Analysis Publications. 1999. "Provisions of Quantitative Data as Background Material for the Bangemann Group (Analysis Final Report. 1999). UPU Report, (2013) affirms that the letter-post remains the largest revenue source for postal services globally, although this trend is in decline. The decline is mainly due to the recession but is also attributable to electronic substitution effects (Email or SMS) than competition from other market players. This declining poster volumes have numerous and severe implications on SAPO. In the long run, the viability of a national postal network to fulfill the universal service obligation seriously jeopardised as indicated by the Department of Telecommunications and Postal Services (2017).

- Under serviced markets

There is a wide disparity in postal network coverage, resulting in limit outlet coverage, and in some cases unacceptable, level of access to network among a historically disadvantaged segment of the population and geographical areas SAPO annual report (2014). Moreover, partly, due to limited outlet coverage in these areas (resulting in poor service, and thus limited demand), there is no address delivery. The presence of several under-serviced markets presented a reason to reform SAPO, while the governments' Universal Service Obligations required provision of postal services to all citizens.

In summary, the above challenges indicate that the South African Post Office has been very poor in delivering services to its society as a whole, and is continuing to deteriorate-coverage is uneven, service quality is mediocre, theft and losses are high, and consumer confidence is very low. As a result, sales volumes for postal services have decreased significantly, as customers have turned to competitors or substitute products. Moreover, due to historical reasons, and following the Government's urgent goal to build equitable infrastructure across all geographical areas and communities, a plan necessary need to be devised to extend the postal network to a large segment of the population. After having a detailed understanding of the challenges faced by the SAPO, the subsequent section discusses the summary of the chapter.

3.6 Summary

This chapter provided an overview of service management by reviewing literature and understanding of service management, the importance of service management to an organisation, service management functions, as well as service management processes. Service management is an important aspect of all service business, as it helps in the gain high customer market, high service quality, stay in the line of business, high-quality strategic plan, and repetition to its company products.

The chapter also addressed understanding of a public sector, the postal sector in the public sector, the international scenario of postal service, postal services in selected countries, the role of postal services in socio-economic development, factors that led to the decline in support of postal services and finally took a closer look at the effects of the decline in postal services. This chapter gave a basic understanding of South African postal service, a brief history of SAPO, the SAPO vision, mission and values, the important of SAPO, macro-environmental analysis for SAPO, South African postal services units, and the SAPO strategy development plan and problems and challenges in the SAPO.

The study concluded from the literature that the postal services face endless challenges as witnessed in the North West province and these could be improved if strategy management of service quality components is initiated and implemented effectively by the managers and frontline employees in the SAPO. The concentration in the subsequent chapter is on the research methods used to achieve the purpose of this study.

CHAPTER 4

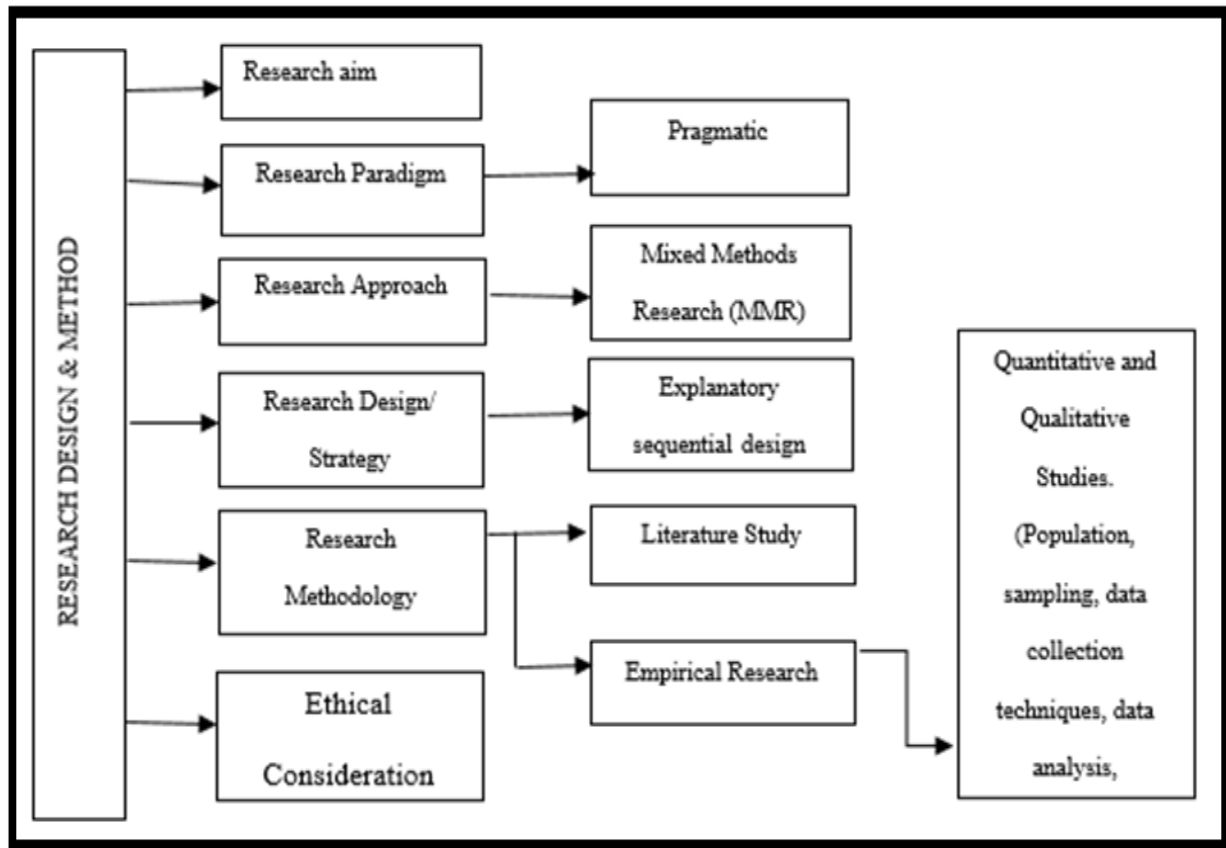
RESEARCH METHOD

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the research methodology used to conduct this research and the techniques employed in reaching the outcomes and findings of the study. The research design, sampling, data collection, and the statistical methods used to analyse the results are presented. This study aimed to investigate the strategic management of service quality in the SAPO in the North West province and to propose a framework for the strategic management of service quality by managers and frontline employees to improve consumer satisfaction at the postal branches of the SAPO in the North West province, South Africa.

The overall strategy chosen to incorporate the diverse components of this study was carefully crafted to ensure that the research problem is properly addressed. The core research function or purpose is applied research with a mixed-method approach and exploratory sequential design which entails a qualitative result to a quantitative component (instrument/questionnaire) using a building approach within an exploratory sequential design (Guetterman *et al.*, 2015). The figure below (Figure 4.1) is a graphical depiction of the structure of this chapter.

Figure 4.1: Chapter structure research method



4.2 Research aim

The research aim of this study was designed to explore the problem of poor service quality in the postal sectors of South Africa and to propose a framework for the strategic management of service quality by managers and frontline employees at the service unit to improve consumer satisfaction at the branches of the SAPO in the North West province, South Africa. Overall, service delivery and the level of current consumer service are examined to make recommendations for the strategic management of service quality to post office management. To address this research problem, a pragmatic approach was used, involving the use of a mixed methods research design. The objectives of this study are designed to:

- Identify the challenges of the strategic management of service quality at post offices in the North West by means of an empirical study.
- Evaluate the expectations and perceptions of managers with regards to service quality at SAPO in the North West by means of an empirical study.

- Assess the expectations and perceptions of frontline employees with regards to service quality at SAPO in the North West by means of an empirical study.
- Measure the expectations and perceptions of consumers with regards to service quality at the SAPO in the North West by means of an empirical study.
- Draw conclusions and recommendations concerning the improvement of the service quality rendered by means of a proposed framework.

The qualitative secondary objectives were set to:

- Identify the challenges of strategic implementation of service quality with managers, frontline employees and consumers in the SAPO in the North West by means of an empirical study.
- Establish how training and development can be used to enhance service quality with managers and frontline employees in the SAPO in the North West by means of an empirical study.
- Assess how motivation can be used to enhance service quality with managers and frontline employees in the SAPO in the North West by means of an empirical study.
- Explore how monitoring and evaluation can be used to enhance service quality with managers and frontline employees in the SAPO in the North West by means of an empirical study.

The next section provides an overview and justification of the research paradigm used in the study.

4.3 Research paradigm

The term research paradigm incorporates a set of philosophies and practices that lead researchers to understand and address a qualified problem (Pollock, 2012). Antwi and Hamza (2015) agree that research paradigms can be characterised through their ontology (what is reality?), epistemology (how do you know something?) and the methodology (how do you go about finding out?). A research paradigm is defined as a lens through which the researcher sees the world (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). It can also be the common beliefs and agreements shared between researchers regarding how problems could be addressed (Patel, 2016). Chilisa and Kawulich (2017) concur by stating that a paradigm is either a particular way of thinking shared by a community of researchers, or the beliefs, values, and methods, shared across a discipline.

Paradigms viewed through six characteristics, namely, ontology, epistemology, theoretical perspectives, methodology, methods, and sources (Patel, 2016). In summary, the ontology is the important nature of a study's reality and the epistemology deals with ways of knowing and learning about the world and focuses on issues such as how reality and what forms the basis of knowledge (Al-Saadi, 2014). Rahi (2017) adds that disciplines have own methods and regulations that constitute methodologies when conducting research and gaining knowledge. The two areas of paradigms that are often applied in contemporary social, organisational and management research are positivism/deductive research and interpretivism/constructivism which focuses on the assumptions and nature of the world and the nature of knowledge which is produced within each paradigm (Antwi & Hamza, 2015; Rahi, 2017).

4.3.1 Positivism/deductive approach

The positivist paradigm is based on an exploration of social reality that may be applied to the social world based on the assumption that the social world can be studied in the same way as the natural world, that there is a method for studying the social world that is value-free, and that explanations of a causal nature can be provided (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). Post-positivism, on the other hand, suggests that an understanding is not always gained from a quantitative assessment. Thus, this theory makes provision for the fact that people differ and that there are multiple perspectives and disciplines which can be used to explain behaviours (Creswell, 2009; Gratton & Jones, 2010). Moreover, this theory is tested through observation and measurement and thus systematises the knowledge generation process through quantification, essentially enhancing the description of parameters and the relationship amongst them. Foster *et al.* (2015) contends that science has been the dominant research methodology in service delivery studies. However, Babbie (2010) acknowledges that this methodology has been criticised due to its lack of regard for subjective states of individuals; the objectivity needs should, therefore, be replaced with subjectivity. This gave rise to the anti-positivism/interpretivism paradigm. It should, however, be noted that positivism is not universally supported because it has reflected some questionable assumptions (Babbie, 2010). In summary, the limitations of positivism have resulted in a different approach, interpretivism. The examples of a positivist paradigm and a quantitative approach.

4.3.2 Interpretivism approach/ Inductive approach

Interpretivism, usually a qualitative approach, arises from the understanding that the study of humans is different to that of natural sciences and focuses on knowledge and views of the situation being studied (Goldkhul, 2012). Concurring with Neumann (2014), argues that the interpretivism paradigm maintains that the subject matter examined by the natural sciences is different from that of the social sciences. Moreover, all participants have their distinctive interpretations of reality and the research can develop and enquire about their attitudes, beliefs and values and focus on bringing about meaning and knowledge (Rahi, 2017). These principles are particularly important in ethnographic methodology and lean towards a social constructivist approach generating meaning and knowledge (Neumann, 2014). Interpretivist research methods include focus groups, interviews and research that makes provision for variables to be documented. One of the remaining criticisms of interpretivism is that it does not make provision for generalisations, but could provide a more realistic reflection of social phenomena than that which obtained from scientific data. Furthermore, interpretivism is also criticised for lack of reliability due to the focus on subjectivity (Nudzor, 2009; Creswell, 2014). Examples of the interpretivism paradigm approach are presented in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: The interconnections of worldviews, designs and methods

Orientation	Positivism paradigm (Quantitative approach)	Interpretive paradigm (Qualitative approach)
Ontology (nature of reality)	• Naïve positivism and realism • External, objective and independent social actors	• Relativism • No single reality or truth • Socially constructed, subjective, may change
Epistemology (theory of knowledge)	• Dualist • Objectivist • Reality can be measured • Provide reliable data	• Reality needs to be interpreted • Subjectivist • Researcher linked to study
Methodology	• Experimental/survey • Manipulative	• Dialectical • Hermeneutical • Ethnography grounded theory

Research method	• Empirical examination • Measurement • Hypothesis testing • Randomisation • Questionnaires	• Ethnographies • Case studies • Narrative research • Interview • Focus groups
Scientific method	• Deductive approach	• Inductive approach
Nature of instruments	• Variables • Structured and validated	• Words • Images • In-depth interviews • Observations/field notes
Data analysis	• Statistical relationship amongst variables	• Using descriptive data, identify patterns, themes

Source: Caruth (2013), Creswell (2014) and Antwi Hamza (2015)

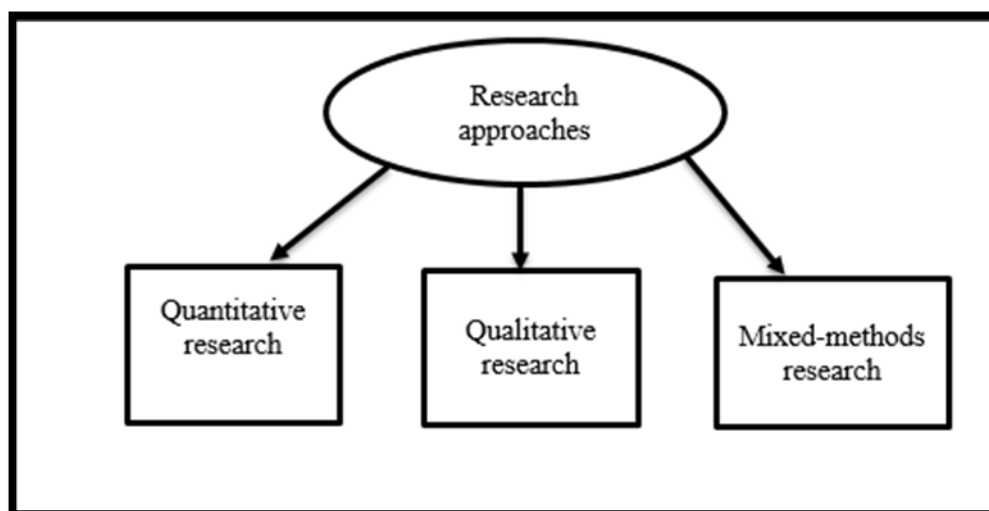
In the case of this study, both the positivism and interpretive paradigm were applied. The research method employed for quantitative research involved a deductive approach of the survey instrument used in this study that enabled data analysis to show the statistical relationship amongst variables. The qualitative research involved an inductive approach: interviews were conducted to develop and identify patterns and themes.

4.4 Research approach

Creswell (2014) avers that the researcher's philosophical assumption, design and methods, all contribute to a research approach that could be quantitative, qualitative or the mixed methods. It is evident from the discussion that the philosophy determines either ways knowledge is constructed in the research project that can be reviewing of relevant literature, developing a theory then hypothesis or the opposite. Such a process is referred to as a deduction (done in the positivist approach) or induction (done in the interpretive approach; Altinay *et al.*, 2016). Åsvoll (2014) and Kaur (2016) describe deduction as “the human process of moving from the known to the unknown.” A deductive approach involves having drawn the conclusion first and then conducting the research to prove that the conclusion drawn is incorrect (Rahi, 2017). Saunders *et*

al. (2016) explain induction “as a process whereby from sensible singulars, perceived by the senses one arrives at universal concepts and principles held by the intellect.” The deduction helps to explain causal relationships between variables, for example establishing reason for poor strategic management of service quality, and how it relates to management obligation and frontline employee skills. As such, deduction requires the operationalisation of concepts and the use of larger samples to enable the measurement of facts quantitatively. Also, induction requires the researcher to understand and feel what is going on which therefore requires alternative explanations of findings necessitating the researcher to be part of the research process (Downward & Mearman 2004; Altinay *et al.*, 2016). A deductive approach is faster than the inductive approach but may suffer from the problem of questionnaire administration not returned whereas inductive approach might result in data that are not useful (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). To curb the advantages and disadvantages of either method, mixed methods approaches was adopted for this research study. For the sake of clarity, the three approaches as presented in Figure 4.2.

Figure 4.2: Research approach



Source: Creswell and Creswell (2017)

4.4.1 Quantitative research

Bryman (2012) defines quantitative research as, “A research strategy that emphasises quantification in the collection and analysis of data.” It means quantitative research attempts to investigate the answers to the questions starting with how many, how much, to what extent

(Rasinger, 2013). Edmonds and Kennedy (2016) view quantitative research as the systematic steps of utilising quantitative principles. Yilmaz (2013) avers that quantitative research enables the researcher to test theories by examining the relationship among variables, measured using detailed instruments and analysing the data using statistical procedures. This method assists the researcher in making statistical inferences on the data captured from the postal service consumers regarding their perceptions and expectation on the strategic management of service quality in SAPO breaches in the NWP. The advantages of using a quantitative approach are:

- 1) Quantitative findings are likely to be generalised to a whole population or a sub-population because it involves the larger sample that is randomly selected (Carr, 2012). Besides sampling, data analysis is less time consuming as it uses statistical software such as SPSS (Connolly, 2007).
- 2) Then, quantitative research is based on the positivist paradigm of measuring variables (Kauber, 2008).
- 3) The quantitative approach enables a researcher to find relationships existing among interacting variables (Creswell, 2014; Kumar, 2014; & DeCuir-Gunby & Schutz, 2017).
- 4) It encourages the presentation of findings or information using graphs, charts and tables variables Creswell (2014) and Kumar (2014).
- 5) Data can be collected using questionnaires, which enhances the collection of facts, opinions and feelings of respondents (McGuirk & O'Neill, 2016).
- 6) Quantitative research saves costs Creswell (2014), Kumar (2014) and DeCuir-Gunby and Schutz (2017).
- 7) In quantitative research, wide coverage and responses can be collected within a short time frame due to the use of questionnaires Creswell (2014), Kumar (2014) and DeCuir-Gunby and Schutz (2017).

Conflicting to the afore-stated advantages of a quantitative study, Edmond and Kennedy (2012) stress that quantitative research gathers information from a wide range of respondents but cannot make in-depth analysis while Kumar (2014) warns that a quantitative study cannot offer in-depth descriptions and elaborations due to the incapability to establish engaged relationships with respondents.

Haing discussed the advantages of quantitative approach of research, the subsequent discussion explains the limitations of quantitative research. Quantitative research displays the following limitations:

- Expensive and time-consuming: Quantitative research is difficult, expensive and requires a lot of time to perform the analysis. This type of research is planned carefully in order to ensure complete randomization and correct designation of control groups (Guest *et al.*, 2013).
- Quantitative research fails to take into consideration people's unique ability to interpret their experiences, hence the qualitative approach combination of this study. Quantitative research focuses on gathering numerical data and generalising it across groups of people or to explain a particular phenomenon (Leavy, 2017).

4.4.2 Qualitative research

Bryman and Bell (2015) state that qualitative research is the collection of non-numerical data using designs such as participant observation, phenomenology, or case study to interpret results in narrative or descriptive accounts. Brynard *et al.* (2014) and Korstjens and Moser (2018) state that a qualitative study provides descriptive data obtained from interviewees' written or spoken thoughts. The choice of this approach assisted the researcher to acquire a thorough understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. It also enabled the researcher to interact with the frontline employees and managers through interviews, thereby gaining extensive information regarding the method in the management of the strategic management of service quality in the post office. Following is a compendium of the advantages of using a qualitative approach as observed in literature:

- Firstly, a qualitative research approach produces the thick (detailed) description of participants' feelings, opinions, and experiences; and interprets the meanings of their actions (Denzin, 2013; Rahman, 2017).
- Secondly, qualitative research approach (interpretivism) holistically understands the human experience in specific settings. Denzin and Lincoln (2012), Lindlof and Taylor (2017), for example, mentioned that qualitative research is an interdisciplinary field, which encompasses a wider range of epistemological viewpoints, research methods, and interpretive techniques of understanding human experiences.

- Thirdly, the qualitative research allows the researchers to discover the participants' inner experience, and to figure out how meanings are being shaped through and in culture (Corbin & Strauss, 2012). Beyond the above advantages, some limitations are observable. Silverman (2010) argues that qualitative research approaches elides contextual sensitivities, and focuses more on meanings and experiences. The phenomenological approach, for instance, attempts to uncover, interpret and understand the participants' experience (Tuohy *et al.*, 2013; Wilson, 2014). The disadvantages of qualitative research are explained below.

The disadvantage of qualitative approaches to corpus analysis is that their findings cannot be extended to wider populations with the same degree of certainty that quantitative analyses can. This is because the findings of the research are not tested to discover whether they are statistically significant or due to chance (Silverman, 2015).

Qualitative research approaches sometimes leave out contextual sensitivities, and focus more on meanings and experiences. Phenomenological approach, for instance, attempts to uncover, interpret and understand the participants' experiences (Wilson, 2014; Tuohy *et al.*, 2013).

Having discussed the quantitative approach of research, the subsequent discussion elaborates on the practice of the mixed-methods approach.

4.4.3 Mixed methods research

Mixed methods research comprises the collecting, analysing and integrating of both qualitative and quantitative research in the same study to provide a better understanding of the research problem and integrate the findings, drawing inferences that are best suited for the study. Rittichainuwat and Rattanaphinanchai (2015) add that mixed methods involve bringing various data components together, but ultimately may vary depending on the purpose of the study, the timing of the collection and the sequence of the methodology employed. In contrast, Najmaei (2016); Ramezanali (2017) and Sanscartier (2020) highlight seven advantages of mixed methods research, which includes complementarity (gathering of similar experiences and ideas), completeness (acquiring the representation of experiences), developmental (building one method to another), expansion (to extend the knowledge gained from a prior method) and confirmation (evaluation and trustworthiness gained from one method). Rahi (2017) adds that an important process of mixed methods is the technique used to combine quantitative and qualitative data. This is referred to as “integration” and takes place at various levels of the study. The integration

processes focus on connecting, building, merging or embedding. The integration for this specific study took place at the "building" stage, which is discussed later in the chapter (Cameron, 2009; Cameron & Price, 2009; Bazeley, 2016; Berman, 2017). Table 4.2 reflects the levels of integration of mixed methodology.

Table 4.2: Levels of integration in mixed methods research

Integration level	Approaches
Design	3 core designs • Exploratory sequential • Explanatory sequential • Convergent parallel • Advanced frameworks • Multistage • Intervention • Case study • Participatory • Transformative • Instrument development
Methods	• Connecting • Building • Merging • Embedding
Interpretation/reporting	• Narrative – weaving • Data transformation • Joint Display

Source: Adapted from Fetters *et al.* (2013)

The levels of integration applicable to this study are an exploratory sequential design with a building method approach for which the qualitative data is transformed into quantitative data through the instrumental design of the questionnaire using a joint display approach. In the view of Yvonne-Feilzer (2010) and Cameron (2011), some disadvantages of the mixed presented are the following:

- The research design can be very complex.
- It takes much more time and resources to plan and implement this type of research.

- It may be difficult to plan and implement one method by drawing on the findings of another.
- It may be unclear how to resolve discrepancies that arise in the interpretation of the findings.

The following explains the challenges encountered in using the mixed methods approach in this study:

- It is more time-consuming to collect both quantitative and qualitative data.
- The study may require more resources to collect both types of data.
- The research procedures are more complicated and may be out of the comfort zone of the researcher. Investigators are often trained in quantitative or qualitative methods and may need assistance crossing over.
- The methodology requires clear presentation when published or presented so that the audience can accurately understand the procedures and the findings.

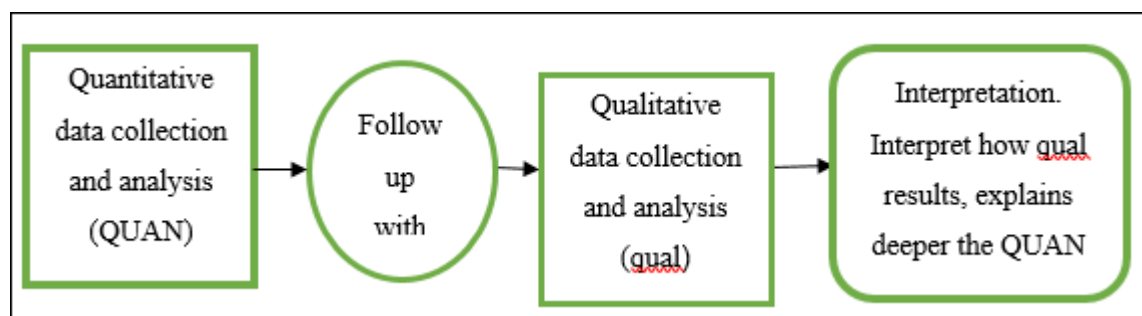
The previous discussion expanded on the various research approaches and explained why the mixed-methods research was adopted, since the study sought the opinions of various categories of individuals from the population (managers, frontline employees and consumers), also using various research instruments. The focus of the subsequent discussion is on the research design of the study.

4.5 Research design

Research design is a general plan or strategy for conducting a research study to examine specific testable research questions of interest (Lavrakas, 2008). A research design is a method of collecting data in the process of conducting research (Creswell, 2014). Kumar (2011), Bhattacharjee (2012) and Gray (2014) states that design in research involves the process of collecting data, instrument developing, and sample selection and data analysis so that the answers to the research questions are answered. Creswell (2014) posits research design as plans and procedures of research that help in making decisions from wide assumptions to detailed methods of data collection and analysis while Punch (2014) expresses research design situates the researcher in the empirical world and links the research questions to data. In the view of Coolican (2014), a research design is bases of conducting research, which focuses on formulating a research problem. Gorard (2013) supports this statement and refers to research design as the overall strategy selected to address the research problem coherently and logically.

The explanatory sequential mixed methods research design was chosen for this study. An exploratory sequential design, according to Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) collects quantitative data and then qualitative data. This indicates a sequential form of data collection in which one phase (e.g. quantitative data) connects with the other (e.g. qualitative data). It is been represented by the notation “QUAN–qual” (Morse, as cited in Creswell, 2014). This indicates a sequential form of data collection in which one phase (e.g. quantitative data) connects with the other (e.g. qualitative data). This design involved two separate phases. Data were collected for the purpose of this study by using surveys in the first phase and then proceeded with the second phase using interviews to explain and clarify the results of the first phase (Creswell, 2014). Figure 4.3 presents the pictorial view of the explanatory sequential design adopted for this study.

Figure 4.3: Explanatory sequential design



Source: Creswell (2014)

An explanatory sequential design, according to Plano Clark (2011), consists of first collecting quantitative data and then collecting qualitative data to help explain or elaborate on the quantitative results. The rationale for this approach is that the quantitative data and results provide a general picture of the research problem; more analysis, specifically through qualitative data collection is been needed to refine, extend or explain the general picture. The design is explained further under the following subheadings.

4.5.1 Rationale for using an explanatory sequential design

As previously noted, this research design was selected because it uses qualitative data to explain in more detail the quantitative results (Creswell, 2014). This enabled a more in-depth understanding of the research questions. This design also helped achieve triangulation by

adopting a pluralistic approach in which one method compensates for the weaknesses of the other and operates side by side or sequentially (Gray, 2014).

It is important to note that using qualitative and quantitative methods does not necessarily constitute a mixed methodology. Mixed methodology, according to Jennings (2010), involves collecting, analysing and integration of both methods in a single or longitudinal study. The mixed methodology was used for this particular study as a combination of the approaches (quantitative and qualitative) was adopted to address the issues concerning the strategic management of service quality and obtain a better understanding of the research problem.

4.5.2 Challenges of using an explanatory sequential design

The challenges encountered using this design were as follows:

- Very time-consuming.
- Required expertise in both qualitative and quantitative research.
- Expensive as data collection was sequential.
- Difficult to not merge data during interpretation and decisions about who to sample and what criteria used for sample selection for a qualitative study.

4.5.3 Addressing the challenges incurred using a sequential design

In order to handle the challenges using this design, the following points are noted:

- It was necessary to interview personnel in charge of management in postal sectors and those responsible for service delivery (frontline employees) in the selected postal services branches. This allowed for a clearer understanding of the study problem in one-on-one interviews.
- As data collection and analysis were very time-consuming, the researcher designed a timetable for the distribution of questionnaires that enabled her to cover a considerable sample. Ethical matters were duly considered during this process. All respondents were informed through their managers before the visits took place.
- The researcher is experienced in mixed-method research, as she used the mixed methods approach for her Master's degree and has published one article in an international journal and one conference paper using mixed-method research in 2017.

- It was convenient to analyse each phase separately in order not to merge data as in a convergent mixed methods design.

After discussing the challenges encountered in using an explanatory sequential design mixed-methods design, the subsequent discussion expounds on the alignment of the research objectives and research instruments.

4.5.4 Alignment of research objectives and instruments

The following table places side by side the research sub-aims and the questions that were used to achieve the objectives of this study plus the instruments that was suitable for collecting data. Table 4.3 below shows the alignment. Only instruments suitable for achieving the research objectives were used for data collection and the presentation and analysis of results (Chapter 5) were done according to the instruments used.

Table 4.3: The alignment of research questions and objectives, data collection instruments

Questions	Research objective	Instruments
• What are the challenges of strategic management of service quality at SAPO in North West province?	• To identify the challenges of the strategic management of service quality at post offices in the North West by means of an empirical study.	Literature review, and questionnaire, interview.
• What are the expectations and perceptions of management with regards to service quality?	• To evaluate the expectations and perceptions of managers with regards to service quality at SAPO in the North West by means of an empirical study.	Literature review and questionnaire.
• What are the expectations and perceptions of frontline employees with regards to service quality?	• To evaluate the expectations and perceptions of frontline employees with regards to service quality at SAPO in the North West by means of an empirical study.	Literature review and questionnaire.
• What are the expectations and perceptions of consumers with regards to service quality at SAPO outlet in the North West province?	• To evaluate the expectations and perceptions of consumers with regards to service quality at the SAPO in the North West by means of an empirical study.	Literature review and questionnaire.
• What conclusions and recommendations can be made to SAPO's management concerning the strategic management of their	• To draw conclusions and recommendations concerning the improvement of the service quality rendered by means of a proposed	Literature review, questionnaire and interview.

service quality in the North West province concerning the strategic management of their service quality?	framework.	
What are the challenges of strategic implementation of service quality with managers, frontline employees and consumers in the SAPO outlet in the North West province?	To explore the challenges of strategic implementation of service quality with managers, frontline employees and consumers in the SAPO in the North West by means of an empirical study.	Literature review and interview.
How can training and development be used to enhance service quality with managers and frontline employees in the SAPO outlet in the NWP?	To establish how training and development can be used to enhance service quality with managers and frontline employees in the SAPO in the North West by means of an empirical study.	Literature review and interview.
How can motivation be used to enhance service quality with managers and frontline employees in the SAPO outlet in the North West province?	Assess how motivation can be used to enhance service quality with managers and frontline employees in the SAPO in the North West by means of an empirical study.	Literature review and interview.
How can monitoring and evaluation be used to enhance service quality with managers and frontline employees in the SAPO outlet in the North West province?	To explore how monitoring and evaluation can be used to enhance service quality with managers and frontline employees in the SAPO in the North West by means of an empirical study.	Literature review and interview.

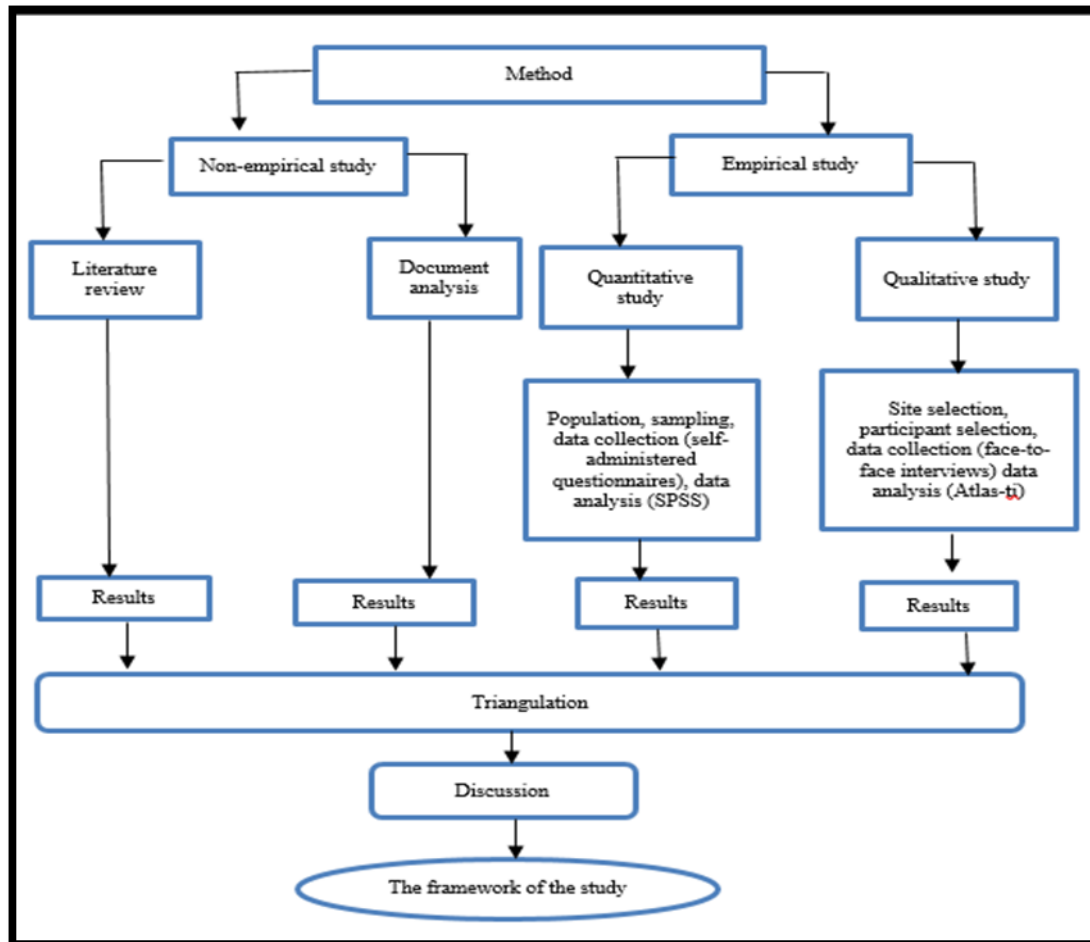
This discussion expands the alignment of the research questions, objectives and the data collecting instruments, and the subsequent discussion explains the research method of this study.

4.6 Research method of the study

Creswell and Poth (2016) and Creswell and Creswell (2017) describes research methodology as a theory of how an inquiry should proceed. It involves the analysis of the assumptions, principles and procedures in a particular approach to inquiry. According to Walliman (2017); Riffe *et al.* (2019) and Ghauri *et al.* (2020), methodologies explicate the kinds of problems that are worth investigating; what constitutes a researchable problem; testable hypotheses; how to frame a problem in such a way that it can be investigated using particular designs and procedures; and how to select and develop appropriate means of collecting data. Rahi (2017) and Tracy (2019) notes that, in practice, both quantitative and qualitative approaches are often employed within a single investigation, which will allow a clear understanding of the research topic to emerge. Both

qualitative and quantitative methods, as discussed below, make it possible to gather the required data to address the research problem and ensure that the objectives of the study are been met. Figure 4.4 is a graphic representation of the research method of this study.

Figure 4.4: Research method of the study



4.6.1 Non-empirical research

Non-empirical research refers to the review component of this study. A non-empirical study is described by Leedy and Omrod (2014), as a comprehensive review of related studies to solve a problem under investigation. The literature review provided this opportunity in the study.

4.6.1.1 Literature study

The literature chapters reviewed the studies and research articles on the strategic management of service quality and consumer's satisfaction in the SAPO. A literature reviews as described by Leedy and Omrod (2014) is an assessment of what other researchers have investigated relating to

one's topic of study. The reasons for conducting a literature search for this study are to improve the focus of the research questions, to identify the factors that contribute to the development of the problem over time, to help discover the path that the researcher approached the problem in question "strategic management of service quality with managers, frontline employees, and clients", and to identify the defining elements. Phenomena, paradigms, concepts, theories and methods that were identified in responding to this research problem (O'Leary, 2010; Repko, 2012).

This literature was aimed at determining the strategic management of service quality and consumer's satisfaction in the SAPO using the theoretical and conceptual framework. To reach this aim, primary and secondary sources were consulted to obtain recent and relevant information concerning the questions derived from the problem statement. An appropriate theoretical framework which included the SERVQUAL model was consulted and this facilitated the development of a refined one as submitted in this study.

This chapter reviewed the strategic management of service quality in SAPO. A clear definition of service quality was discussed in terms of what it means to all South Africans, its characteristics and the background to the post office. This chapter also offered a brief review of the North West post office (NWPO) as the study is based on the strategic management of service quality in the NWPO.

The strategic management of service quality created a platform for correlation between previous knowledge and empirical findings of this study. In turn, logical conclusions were drawn from this rigorous consultation of literature.

Journals from applicable computer database searches were consulted using North-West University online library relating to the research theme. The databases used were Google Scholar, Emerald, SAePublications, and National ETD Portal which includes South African theses and dissertations, and EBSCOhost. Relevant textbooks were used from the North-West University library, Mafikeng Campus.

4.6.1.2 Document analysis

The document analysis conducted for this study was obtained from both primary and secondary sources (Hewson & Stewart, 2014; Van den Berg *et al.*, 2017; Bell *et al.*, 2018). A document

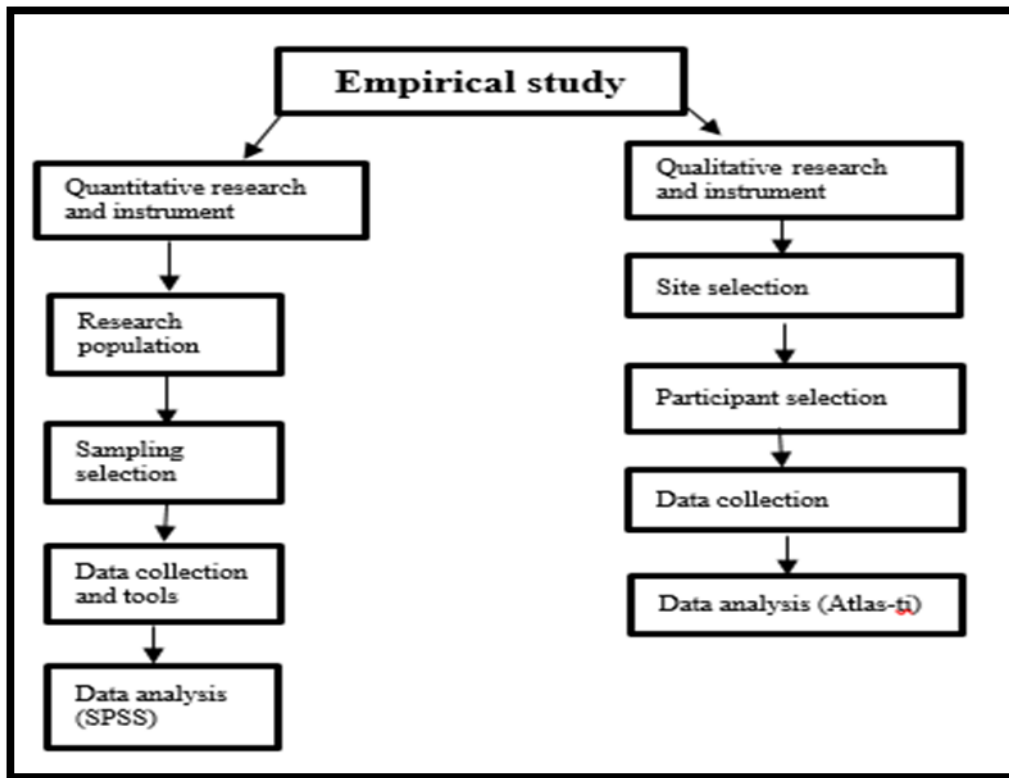
analysis was used to collect various records in respect of the strategy management of service quality in the five postal branches of the Ngaka Modiri Molema District and Dr Kenneth Kaunda District of the North West. Documents were collected from each of the five postal branches containing information on the strategic management of service quality as implemented in each post office. Circulars, minutes of meetings, policy documents and any other documents that could shed light on the strategic management of service quality in the post offices were incorporated together with governmental sources and analysed.

The above discussion elaborated on the non-empirical in assisting to find answers to the research problem under investigation. Empirical research is the examined in this segment of the discussion.

4.7 Empirical research

In this study, empirical research was qualitative and quantitative. Empirical research, according to Creswell (2014), refers to first-hand research and Kumar (2014) assumes that empirical research deals with the findings of a solution of a research problem through observation, interviews or surveys. This study incorporated empirical research in order to find solutions to the problems of this study by surveying the opinions of postal service users (consumers) (quantitative research), as well as the views of managers and frontline employees in an endeavour to enhance the strategic management of service quality to consumers (qualitative research). The steps followed to obtain a comprehensive result to unravel the problem under investigation are explained in details in the subsequent sections. The empirical study discusses both the quantitative and qualitative studies to find answers to the research questions.

Figure 4.5: Representation of the layout of the empirical section



4.7.1 Quantitative/instruments

A quantitative research approach is reinforced by the positivist social sciences paradigm and adopts a deductive approach in management research (De Vos & Strydom, 2011). The quantitative research approach is used to quantify data and generalise results from a sample to the population of interest and to measure the regularity of various views and opinions in a chosen sample (Creswell, 2013). Leavy (2017) defines a quantitative research approach as a research method that highlights the objective measurements and the statistical, mathematical or numerical analysis of data collected through polls, questionnaires and surveys.

4.7.2 Research population

Coale (2015) and Moser and Kalton (2017) states that a population refers to the total number of elements that are subject to an investigation. Akhtar and D'Abundo (2017) refer to the population as the large group to which the sample result is to be generated. It is further noted that researchers should be clear when defining a population (Salkind & Frey, 2019), hence the inclusion of demographics so that the characteristics of the population can be known. In other

words, it is the total group from whom more is to be learned. From a general dimension, the population for this study include all postal services consumers in the North West provinces. The participants in the quantitative-phase are the postal service consumers who deal with the services at the SAPO. The role of the post office customers in the research is to know their perception and expectation toward service quality by the post office that causes dissatisfaction in the service they received and what is the reasons why sometimes the consumers use the post office service and some time they do not the move to alternative services.

4.7.3 Sampling selection

A sample as explain by Rea and Parker (2014) is a subset of the whole population, actually investigated by a researcher whose characteristics is generalised to the entire population. To this effect and according to these researchers, sampling refers to the process of drawing a sample from a population. Researchers sample to study the characteristics of the larger group and to understand the characteristics of the larger group. Researchers must carry out a sampling process because factors such as expense, time and accessibility frequently prevent researchers from gaining information from the whole population.

Coolican (2014) and Creswell (2014) state that sample selection saves time as well as financial resources. For the purpose of this study, postal consumers who reside in the Ngaka Modiri Molema District and Dr Kenneth Kaunda District and who made use the postal services were included in this study. Sample selection was done based on the Ngaka Modiri Molema District and Dr Kenneth Kaunda District post office population compositions of the study (postal consumers).

4.7.3.1 Sampling selection for the postal branches

In the view of O'Leary (2010), sampling is the process of selecting elements of a population for inclusion in a research study. For this study, Ngaka Modiri Molema District and Dr Kenneth Kaunda District the target were Mahikeng, Zeerust and Lichtenburg post offices. Under Dr Kenneth Kaunda District, the target areas will be Klerksdorp and Potchefstroom post offices, were selected using non-probability convenience sampling. Bhattacharjee (2012) alludes that non-probability sampling involves a method where the opportunities of selecting respondents cannot be adequately determined because of the non-randomness or convenience in selection while Gray (2014) upholds that a non-probability sampling method relies on the personal

judgment of a researcher. A non-probability sampling method, according to Maree (2015), focuses on cases that are ready, easily accessible and available to provide responses. However, Creswell (2014) pinpoints that not all cases in a non-probability sample strategy are the best for all studies.

This sampling method enabled the researcher to obtain a truly representative sample (Relmer & Van Ryzin, 2011). This means that each member of the entire population in the post offices had an equal chance of being selected. From five areas selected from the two districts, one area post office was selected from the five areas which include Mafikeng (Molopo post office), Zeerust (Zeerust post office), Lichtenburg (Itsoseng post office), Klerksdorp (Freemanville post office) and Potchefstroom (Noordbrug post office). It will be impossible to include all the existing four districts in the study. Just as businesses, it was not possible to conduct empirical research on all post offices managers, frontline employees and customers from the four districts in the NWP. However, two districts from the provinces were sampled to provide a reliable outcome for generalisation.

Convenience sampling was decided upon for the purpose of this study because convenience enhances readiness or access to respondents who are available and enables the collecting of data within the quickest possible time. Ivankova (2015) indicates that a convenience sampling method has the following advantages:

- Selecting respondents based on their accessibility and proximity.
- Selecting respondents who are willing to participate in a study.
- Saving costs and time instead of scheduling appointments with respondents who are unavailable.

4.7.3.2 Sample size

In the view of Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006), the sample size is dependent on the variation within the population, the analysis and the conclusion required. Similar studies which focus on competitiveness using the analytic hierarchy process (AHP) were used as a guideline for sample size (Crouch, 2007), with a sample size varying from 12 to 98 respondents. Sampling size depends on the research questions and objectives (Saunders *et al.* 2009). The additional, researcher has to consider time, money and other factors when choosing the sample size. The sample sizes for the postal consumers were further compounded using Research Advisor's (2006) sample size calculator by following a 95% confidence interval and a 5% degree of

accuracy/margin of error. According to the sample size calculator, the sample size for the postal service consumers is 384. The sample frame is further computed by using proportional sampling strategy based on the sample fraction. Williams (2015) asserts that a proportional sampling method ensures that the size of each stratum is proportionate to its size in the population. A proportional sampling strategy was used to determine the total number of samples to be drawn from each area. Table 4.4 presents the sample size for the total population in the two districts that is Ngaka Modiri Molema and Dr Kenneth Kaunda in the North West province.

Table 4.4: Areas and population size

Areas	Population size
Mahikeng	307,520
Zeerust	157,699
Lichtenburg	26,338
Klerksdorp	420,732
Potchefstroom	162,765
Total	1,075,054

$$\text{Sampling fraction} = \frac{n}{N} = \frac{384}{1,075,054} = 0.0003571914$$

$$\text{Mahikeng} = 0.0003571914 * 307520 = 110$$

$$\text{Zeerust} = 0.0003571914 * 157,699 = 56$$

$$\text{Lichtenburg} = 0.0003571914 * 26,338 = 10$$

$$\text{Klerksdorp} = 0.0003571914 * 420,732 = 150$$

$$\text{Potchefstroom} = 0.0003571914 * 162,765 = 58$$

Table 4.5 presents the sample fraction of the population in the various areas in the two districts of the North West Province using proportional stratified sampling fractioning.

Table 4.5: Sample fraction for postal consumers receiving postal services

Areas	Population size	Sample fraction
Mahikeng	307520	110
Zeerust	157,699	56
Lichtenberg	26,338	10
Klerksdorp	420,732	150
Potchefstroom	162,765	58
Total SAPO stats	1,075,054	384

Note: the section sampled 384 members from two districts as mention above from the five postal branches. A total of 384 post office consumers formed the quantitative sample. The subsequent section describes the data collection method.

4.7.3.3 Variables

Relmer and van Ryzin (2011) and Fayers and Machin (2013) define a variable as something that assumes different characteristics at a particular time and is often used to check variations between two components. These are referred to as the dependent and independent variables of a research study. At this stage, the researcher identified the dependent variables and the independent variables to maintain consistency throughout the study (Greenfield, 2012; Jackson, 2015).

The independent variables for this study are consumer-related: consumer's biographical information (age, gender, level of qualification and postal branch). These were all found in the background information of Section A of the questionnaire. The dependent variables are various aspects of customers' expectation such as customer's satisfaction, customer's perceptions, and service quality experiences, the dependent variables are measured while the independent variables are manipulated.

4.7.4 Data collection and tools

Creswell (2014) contends that "data collection is a process by which respondents' feelings and opinions about a subject matter are collected using specified techniques." A research instrument is a tool used for data collection from the respondents (Trochim, 2005; Lapan & Quartaroli, 2009; Adams & Lawrence, 2015). They include questionnaire, interview, observation, reading,

and many more. The validity and reliability of any research project, as explained by Adams and Lawrence (2015) depends to a large extent on the appropriateness of the instruments. Wilkinson and Birmingham (2013) point out that research instruments are simply devices for obtaining information relevant to a specific research project, and there are many alternatives from which to choose, in particular in the mixed-method approach. It is further explained that there is no single research instrument par excellence no single research instrument is inherently superior to any others and each has its strengths and weaknesses.

The research instruments used to collect the data required for this study, were a self- administered questionnaire and an interview guide. This section will elaborate on the data collecting procedures involved in obtaining the data required.

4.7.4.1 Self-administered questionnaires

For the quantitative method, a self-administered questionnaire was been used as a data collecting instrument for obtaining quantitative data. The researcher used a closed-ended questionnaire for data collection. The questionnaire will be exclusively designed to obtain facts and opinions about the phenomenon under study: the strategic management of service quality with consumers. Structured questions were used for different sections. What made this kind of instrument particularly appropriate is that it suspends personal prejudices, biases, and ensures the objectivity of the researcher. Data collection and. according to Maree (2010) and Bastic and Matalon (2011), questionnaires have the following advantages:

- They are easy to administer.
- They are suitable to administer, thereby saving time and other arrangements involved in other methods of data collection.
- Questionnaires are easy to answer.
- Questionnaires are easy to code and to analyse.
- It provides greater anonymity needed in the study because there was no face-to-face interaction.
- Questionnaires save cost.

However, the study of Bastic and Matalon (2011) and Maree (2010), pinpoints that questionnaires are very relevant in collecting the responses and feelings of respondents in a

particular study, but Van-Vuuren and Maree, (2011) notifies that the following disadvantages of using self-administered questionnaires in a study should be kept in mind:

- Since questionnaires are filled in individually and in absentia of the researcher, respondents might face the difficulty of not understanding fully what the questions require. In situations like these, respondents do not have any clarification from anyone since the researcher is not present.
- Instruments that are too long: The length of a questionnaire usually has a directly negative impact on the respondents and subsequent quality of the responses.
- Questionnaires with sensitive and threatening questions including those about private behaviour and income may lead to non-refusal to participate.
- With questionnaires, there is usually a sizeable number of participants that do not respond or return questionnaires. This reduces the sample.

With regards to the disadvantages of using questionnaires as identified Creswell (2014), this study maintained the following:

- The questionnaire was formulated in simple English language to accommodate the semi-learned, learned and the elite group.
- A high response rate was maintained by informing respondents on the merits of the study and by asking if they will be able to be involved in the study rather than issuing questionnaires indiscriminately.
- Questionnaire administrators interacted with respondents thereby encouraging them to participate actively in the study.
- Questionnaire administrators ensured that potential respondents reside in the North West province and also receive postal services to attain direct information about their services experiences on postal services.

4.7.4.2 Development of data collection instrument

Zohrabi (2013) and Belisario *et al.* (2015) explain that questionnaires can be used to collect data for different training fields. It is relevant to design a questionnaire in such a way that it collects the desired facts from respondents to address the research problems competently (Gray, 2014). With regards to this, a questionnaire designed for this study was constructed in a simple English

language and distributed to the consumers of the five selected postal branches in each district. Closed-ended questions were chosen as a procedure to collect data which was designed to obtain facts, opinions and feelings from consumers on their perception and expectation on service quality in the SAPO in the North West province. The researcher introduced herself and the academic details, which includes the department and the Faculty. More so, the title of the study introduced as well as citing the relevant research ethics needed to attain respondents' confidence regarding their participation. The questionnaires used were divided into two sections. Section 1 and 2. Section 1 focused on biographical and demographic information of respondents thereby helping the researcher identify the independent variables for the study. Section 2 utilised the method by focusing on the research questions of this study, thereby addressing the dependent variables through the control variables identified. Section A required the biographical information of the respondents while Section B, C D E consists of the other sections which assumed the following order.

- Section A demographical information

The section consists of the following demographic variable as explain below:

- 1) Location: Information about the physical location of SAPO is vital in determining if postal consumers' needs and expectations differ with respect to their location. The location can be justified by the study of Berenguer *et al.* (2005) who believed that location has no impact on consumer choice of green energy.
- 2) Gender: Gender is an important variable in a given South Africa social situation which is variably affected by any social or economic phenomenon and globalization is not an exception to it. Hence the variable gender was investigated for this study. The gender can be justified from previous studies of Parker *et al.* (2003), Diamantopoulos *et al.* (2003), Jain & Kaur (2006) and Mainieri *et al.* (2010), who mention that gender has a direct impact on consumers' choice of green products and this can be used as a variable to target Swedish consumers for the marketing of green electricity.
- 3) Age: Age of the respondents is one of the most important characteristics in understanding their views about the particular problems; age indicates the level of maturity of individuals in that sense age becomes more important to examine the response. Age is an important demographic variable that has been in the studies of Jain & Kaur (2006), testify the consumers belong to age 18 to 35 are more enthusiastic for environmental protection. Consumers age play an important role in organisational product and services (Feldt *et al.*, 2011; Hochwlder & Forsell, 2011).

- 4) Highest educational qualification: highest qualification of respondents. This question facilitates determining if the success of a SAPO is dependent on the educational level of a respondent. Similarly, the research of Ivanova (2013) shows that people having a higher level of education are more willing to pay for green energy as compare to a lower level of education.
 - 5) Occupation: Person's occupations do have a bearing on his or her personality and so also the ways of looking at the problem before him. The quality of life is also determined by an individual's occupation and the incomes he derives from it. Occupations in this study are justified by Furnham (2015) that, person's response to a problem is possible determined by the type of occupation he is engaged in.
 - 6) Household monthly income: Income of a person plays an important role in shaping the economic conditions of an individual which in turn is likely to have bearing on the responses about a problem posed to him. The researcher, therefore in this study attempted to investigate the income as variable and the data related to the income of the respondents. House home income is justified with the study of Parker *et al.* (2003) and Jain and Kaur (2006) that higher income groups have a more positive response towards green energy and higher-income groups also willing to pay more for green energy.
- **Section B** to find out information on the overall quality of service rendered to consumers in the North West post offices. The aim of the research question is to investigate the overall quality of service rendered to consumers in the SAPO by its management. Similar studies conducted on overall service quality in hospital by Akinyele (2010) and Oletewo (2017), established that high service quality has been found to increase repurchases and decrease a customer's tendency to switch to other brands (Oletewo, 2017).
 - **Section C** to evaluate the overall satisfaction of service quality in the North West post offices. The aim of this research question was for consumers to rate their overall service quality and customer satisfaction in the SAOP. A study conducted by Ibrahim (2016) verified that in order to achieve excellent service quality, management needs to pay attention to the calibre of front desk employees dealing with customers because significant variations in service quality depend on staff commitment and their demographic profile. In the study of Bhat and Khan (2014), discuss that understanding how different service quality dimensions affect overall service quality is crucial to developing an effective service quality strategy and also help service providers to enhance service quality and customer satisfaction.

Section D evaluate the expectations and perceptions of consumers, frontline employees and managers on the service quality in the North West post offices. Section D is divided into D1, D2 and D3 as explain below.

- **Section D1** measure the expectations and perceptions of consumers on the service quality in the North West post offices. The aim of this research question is to investigate consumer's expectations and perception of services quality in the SAPO. A similar study conducted by (Msosa, 2015) on assessing customer service in the postal industry case study of Malawian public postal service, confirmed that customer expectation is beliefs and sensitivities that each customer has about service derived from what they require from it and supposes it to do. A study conducted by Amissah (2013) in the academic study on tourist satisfaction with hotel services in Cape Coast and Elmina, Ghana, find out that expectations of consumers are desires or wants and are in most cases different from what the customer gets.
- **Section D2** assess the expectations and perceptions of employees on the service quality in the North West post offices. The aim of this research question was to investigate the employer's expectations and perceptions of service quality in the SAPO. A similar study conducted by Msosa (2015) stresses that the behaviour of employees can build or scatter relationships with customers and awareness of these behaviours can help to improve customer service. It is further noted that the problem is that many employees are clueless about the impact of their behaviour. Msosa (2019), further mention that unfriendly and negative behaviour by service-oriented employees has a negative impact on service quality. Moreover, it has the potential of affecting the company's productivity and profitability.
- **Section D3** to evaluate the expectations and perceptions of managers on the service quality in the North West post offices. The aim of this research question was to investigate the manager's expectations and perceptions of service quality in the SAPO. A similar study conducted by Musikavanhu (2017) on service quality in Botswana hospitality sector, results revealed a lack of commitment by these managers and employees to this effect, cause customers dissatisfaction. A similar study conducted in India's post office revealed that India post office had disintegrated methods to service quality such that a customary approach was required which might involve empowering employees and management and committing to providing resources that enable the provision of excellent service quality (VijayAnand & Selvaraj, 2015). Another study conducted by Narula and Arora (2019) on service quality of Post Office Saving Bank, the study revealed significant differences between perceptions and

expectations of customers thereby implying negative service quality gap for most of the items seeking the attention of top management.

A Likert-type scale was implemented for the questionnaire designed for this study because it allowed for obtaining respondents' responses. In the views of Astbury and Gallagher (2017) and Martín *et al.* (2018), a Likert-type scale questionnaire assesses the negative and positive feelings of respondents in a study. A four (4) point response scale format was adopted for formulating the structured questions. Mix continuous ranges (agree, strongly agree, disagree, and strongly disagree) was used to get negative and positive responses from respondents. Respondents were provided with the option to indicate their answer with an 'X' in the opposite block. A total of 384 questionnaires were distributed over one month to postal service consumers receiving postal services in the five selected postal branches. This was possible through the help of two assistances, friends, and paid questionnaire administrators.

4.7.4.3 Alignment of research objectives and variables measures in quantitative data collecting instrument

An alignment of the research objectives and the variables measured is presented in Table 4.6. This was done to ensure that the quantitative research instrument was designed to measure so that it aligns with the research objectives of this study.

Table 4. 6: Research questions and variables measured in the consumers' questionnaire

Research questions/factors	Variables measured
Views on service quality	Tangible, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy.
Views on overall satisfaction	Level of services, the capability of staff, trustworthy, service excellent, loyalty and recommend to others.
Expectations and perceptions of customers	Behaviour, appearance, service accurately, expectations, time management, services duration, postal safety, postal service knowledge, complaints and operational hours.
Expectations and perceptions of employees	Service knowledge/awareness, behaviour, service satisfaction, personal attention, job interest, transparency, customer need, training and motivation.
Expectations and perceptions of managers	Visibility, accessibility, behaviour, customers as a king, time management, support, manage, time to explain, positive and negative feedback, listen, understand and resolve problems, trust, confidentiality, lead, approachability, have competencies, advice, be interested.

The succeeding discussion expatiates the processes involved in the recruitment of respondents.

4.7.4.4 Recruitment of respondents

The selection of respective respondents is described by Maree (2015) as tedious in a data collecting process. The recruitment of respondents, according to Creswell (2014), refers to the number of activities involved in the selection of respondents that are actively included in a study. It also involves the capacity to explain the relevance of the study to obtain informed consent to participate in a study. The researcher, the academic details, the main aim and objectives of the study, and the contribution of the study towards economic development in South Africa were provided to respondents in the introductory part of the instrument (see annexure A), it furthermore assured participants of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. Also, it was highlighted that respondents' responses are voluntary and that they can quit at will at any time. During the period of questionnaire collection, the questionnaire administrators were requested to thank all respondents for their cooperation and contributions.

4.7.4.5 Pretesting the questionnaires

In sustaining internal reliability, each question in the questionnaire was measured using Cronbach's alpha to test the degree of reliability of data. The values of Cronbach's alpha ranges from 0 to +1 and Pallant (2011) maintain that values above 0.8 are preferred while values above 0.7 are acceptable.

4.7.4.6 Data collection procedures (Quantitative)

This section discusses the procedures used in distributing and collecting questionnaires. The data collected in this phase involved two stages, the pilot study stage, also known as pretesting the questionnaire (Babbie, 2007) and the main study stage. According to Creswell (2014), a pilot study can be defined as the means of administering sets of questionnaires to establish the content validity of the instrument to improve questions, formats, and scales. No matter how carefully a researcher designs a questionnaire, there are bound to be errors such as unclear questions and questions that cannot be answered (Babbie, 2007). The pre-test of the questionnaire was conducted in the North West province, by distributing questionnaires to only 20 postal service consumers in the province. A preliminary test (or trial run) the results of the pilot study was then used to test the reliability of the research instrument designed for this study before it is

distributed on a large scale. In maintaining internal reliability, the questionnaire was measured using Cronbach's alpha to test the degree of reliability of data. The values of Cronbach's alpha ranges from 0 to +1 and Pallant (2011) maintain that values above 0.8 are preferred while values above 0.7 are acceptable. The values and goals of a pilot study are to detect possible flaws in measurement procedures (including instructions and time limits) and to identify unclear or ambiguous items in the questionnaire. Based on the new inputs that were made after the pretesting stage, the researcher adjusts the coding of the questionnaire. A section is dedicated to the coding process of the questionnaire in Chapter 5 of this thesis. The questionnaire was then finalised and used for the entire study sample of the quantitative phase (384 participants).

The importance and relevance of this research was explained to consumers in an endeavour to increase the response rate. However, response rates are very important for analysis. To ensure high response rates, a follow-up on respondents who had not returned their questionnaires was conducted. And the two assistants personally visited consumers to collect completed questionnaires. In the view of Babbie (2007), a review of published works on social literature suggests that a 50% return rate is suitable for analysis, while 60% and 70% are said to be "good" and "very good" return rates.

4.7.5 Data analysis and statistical techniques

Data analysis is the process of explaining datasets by computing a small number of statistics that are associated with certain aspects of the data. Besides, data analysis helps researchers to extract information that is meaningful and properly describes inherent characteristics of the phenomena (Burns & Bush, 2014). Furthermore, data analysis is important because unprocessed data provides little explanation and meaning to researchers. Quantitative data analysis techniques were used clarify and interpret the relationships between variables (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). Data entry was done through Excel and then imported into SPSS version 24 where data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. A professional statistician was engaged to analyse data. For this study, data analysis in a quantitative study is explained below.

4.7.5.1 Quantitative data analysis

In the quantitative data analysis, various tests that were obtained for descriptive and inferential statistics.

1) Descriptive Statistics

In descriptive statistics, tabular, graphical and statistical are three ways of conducting descriptive statistics analysis. This entails that the outcome of the analysis are respectively highlighted in tables, graphs and a single number that has no other information attached to it but able to provide meaning (De Vaus & de Vaus, 2013). Descriptive statistics explain the pattern of responses on a variable, including measures of central tendency such as mean, median, mode and standard deviation. Other measures of the shape of distribution such as skewness and kurtosis are also described using descriptive statistics (Doane & Seward, 2011). Also, frequency and percentage distributions can be used to summarise and describe data (Quinlan *et al.*, 2015).

2) Inferential analysis

Inferential statistics are two-fold, interval estimates and tests of statistical significance and help to conclude a sample to the entire population. Interval estimates help to draw a margin of error concerning the sample figures on the likely position of the true population enabling one to make inference or conclusions of regarding the entire population from a given sample. Test of a statistical significance measure the likelihood of the existence of sample findings in the population (De Vaus & de Vaus, 2013). Inferential statistics are predictive based on inferences made from analysed data. The predictive element is made on the basis that certain traits prevalent in a sample are manifest in the entire population (Walliman, 2011). For this study, the following inferential statistics were included: reliability analysis, correlation analysis, analysis of variance, chi-square test of independence, and also the factor analysis. Following is a synopsis of these statistical analyses.

- Reliability analysis of the data obtained through the questionnaire distribution to postal service consumers was assessed through Cronbach's alpha coefficients. According to Watkins (2012), this technique provides a reliability testing that requires a single test administration to be obtained in an event. Cronbach's alpha provides an average value for the reliability coefficients that one would have obtained for all probabilities. The reliability of the Cronbach's alpha coefficient generally ranges between 0 and 1, where there exists no lower limit of the coefficient. Therefore, the internal consistencies of the items in the scale are determined by how close the Cronbach's alpha coefficient is to 1.0.
- Pearson's correlation analysis was done for the management expectation and perception aspects, frontline employee expectation and perception aspects and customer expectation and

perception aspects. According to Pallant (2007) and Altinay *et al.* (2016) correlation analysis is used to measure the extent to which two variables are related, “the strength of their relationship and the direction” of their relationship. Altinay *et al.* (2016). Variables can be related negatively or positively. On the other hand, variables might not have a relationship at all meaning that despite the change/s on one variable the other variable is not affected at all. Pearson correlation coefficients are represented by ‘r’ and they range from -1 to +1. Therefore, Pearson’s correlation test helps to see the relationship between variables. That is how much change in one variable affects the other (Altinay *et al.*, 2011). Hence, in this study, the correlation matrix demonstrates the strengths of the relationships between the service quality aspects against each other.

- Chi-square test of independence compares categories within a group. It was applied to test the independence of the association between specific categorical variables. It measures the extent to which observed frequencies differ from the expected. There is a significant relationship between two categories if the probability value (p-value) is less than or equal to a 0.05 level of significance. If the difference is small, the null hypothesis (Ho) is accepted and the alternative hypothesis (Ha) is rejected.
- Analysis of variance (ANOVA). The purpose of the ANOVA test is to test the equality of means across multiple groups. Sekron (cited by Altinay *et al.*, 2011) explains ANOVA as a test that is used to test whether there are any “significant mean differences in variables between more than two groups”. ANOVA requires that the same participant should not be tested twice or more and that n should be greater than or equal to 30 (Saunders *et al.*, 2016). In other words, the test does a comparison of any “variabilities in scores between groups and variability within groups” (Pallant *et al.*, 2007). For that reason, the ANOVA test checked for differences in the aspects of service quality as a result of the demographics discussed for each of the samples in this study.
- Factor analysis in this study measures the items that fit together, which are responded similarly. It establishes the relationships among sets of interrelated variables and the importance of one variable over another.

In the final stage of the statistical analysis of the quantitative study, a discussion of the findings is made and connected to the results of the qualitative study to achieve triangulation.

4.8. Qualitative research and instruments

Babbie (2014) and Flick (2015), see a qualitative approach as one that is supported in the interpretive paradigm of social science. This debate subscribes to the discovery and description of deeper meanings and the exploration of why or how a phenomenon occurs to develop a theory or describe an experience (Berman, 2017). Yates and Leggett (2016) posit that the process of research involves emerging questions and procedures. Hammersley (2017) affirms that the qualitative approach represents social reality and attributes of the inductive phenomenon. Flick (2015) explains that qualitative research is based on data collection methods, which include participant observation, in-depth interviews and focus groups. The same researchers appraise qualitative research as adopting a more descriptive, narrative style of research. The limitation to qualitative research is often the time required for data collection, analysis and interpretation. The methodology used for the qualitative phase is discussed in terms of site selection, participant selection, data collection strategy, data analysis and the researcher's role.

4.8.1 Site selection

The sites selected for this study are two district municipalities of the North West province. According to Trainor and Graue (2013) and as validated by Maree (2015), a research site should be suitable and enabling to conduct a study while Creswell (2014) pinpoints that a study site must be feasible. These sites were selected because of the perceived poor strategic management of service quality for postal services. The researcher resides in one of these areas and this enabled undertaking this study.

4.8.2 Participant selection

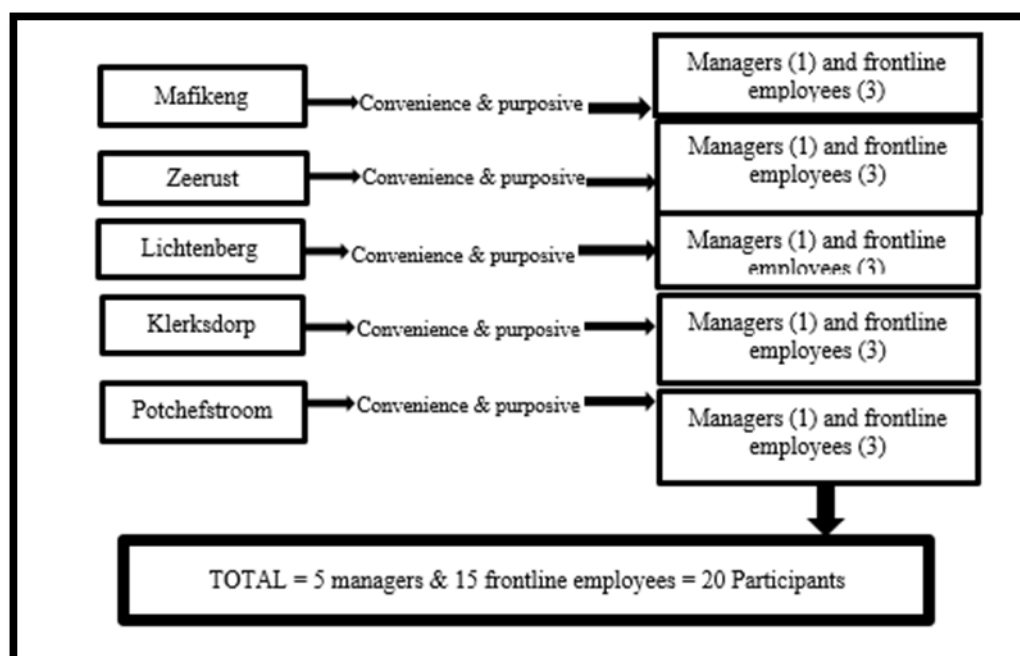
Following the qualitative method, used purposive sampling, sometimes called judgmental sampling (Babbie, 2007) purposeful sampling enabled selecting participants based on specific criteria. The choice of the post office managers and frontline employees ensured obtaining reliable data because of their experience in handling the strategic management of service quality matters. Semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions were used in conjunction with follow-up questions.

The study was done in the Ngaka Modiri Molema District and the Dr Kenneth Kaunda District. Under Ngaka Modiri Molema District the target were Mahikeng, Zeerust and Lichtenburg post

offices. Under Dr Kenneth Kaunda District, the target areas were Klerksdorp and Potchefstroom post offices were selected for this study. Twenty (20) participants were selected in this qualitative phases and a one-on-one interview was conducted in all 5 selected postal service branches. The total participants selected were N=5 managers and N=15 frontline employees. Purposeful sampling does not only consider the selection of participants but also involves the settings, incidents, events and activities for data collection (Maree, 2010). It involves the hand- picking of participants with particular characteristics and purposeful sampling was based on the following criteria:

- Participants in the selected post offices in the North West region, as the research was conducted in this area. The interview will be carried out in post offices located in the Ngaka Modiri Molema and Dr Kenneth Kaunda in the North West province
- Participants were selected purposefully for the qualitative phase, but only those with specific characteristics such as managers and frontline employees with long-term experience on strategic management of service quality in the postal service was interviewed. The sampling procedure used is presented below.

Figure 4.6: Sampling procedure



These participants were selected using a purposive sampling method. Relmer and Ryzin (2011) and Ivankova (2015) sustain that a typical case sampling is a method of sampling by which

respondents in a group are typically selected based on exposure, experience, nature of roles and duties. Ivanova (2015) identified the following advantages of purposive sample selection:

- It able to draw upon a wide range of qualitative research designs when their focus is on purposive sampling.
- The flexibility of purposive sampling allows researchers to save time and money while they are collecting data.
- The best respondents needed to contribute to the study are selected for data collection.
- It is still possible to achieve a maximum level of variation in the purposive sample. By taking a mixed approach to this research option, it is possible to select individuals from a diverse range of cases that are relevant to the issue being studied.
- There is an assurance of originality of data collection which enhances the validity of data collection and ensures that data collected is a true representation of the population.
- The information collected in purposive sampling has a low margin of error. Researchers achieve a lower margin of error using the purposive sampling approach because the information they collect comes straight from the source.

The following discussion explains the data collection instruments employed to collect data from the participants for the purpose of this study.

4.8.3 Data collection instruments (Interview)

Interviews have particular benefits (Ivankova, 2015). Basically, an interview yields data efficiently as immediate follow-up and clarification are possible. Combined with observation (looking, hearing, smelling, or touching), interviews allow the researcher to understand the meanings that everyday activities hold for people (Yeh & Inman, 2007; Ivankova, 2015; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). In this study, a semi-structured interview was adopted to gather inputs from the participants. In the semi-structured interviewing process, the interviewer uses an interview guide as a research instrument to determine the flow of the interview and getting new ideas and in-depth findings to the phenomenon under study (Leedy & Omrod, 2010). Consistent with this, Trainor and Graue (2013) state that a semi-structured interview is an exchange of ideas based on the researcher's open-ended questions, based on specific areas of interest. As indicated in the preceding section.

4.8.3.1 Development of data collection tool

In this qualitative phase, conducted face-to-face interviews using semi-structured interviews with the selected participants elaborated on the qualitative data on views and thoughts regarding the strategic management of service quality in the SAPO branches in the North West Province. The importance of face-to-face interviews is that it enables cooperation of participants and in turns gives high response rates (Maree, 2010). These relationships help generate more meaningful data than the qualitative phase. The audiotape was used during all interviews, as this facilitated the transcribing and coding of data for this component of the study also including the use of field notes and diaries where necessary and applicable to record observations, moments of confusion, new ideas. The interviews were conducted by the researcher and two assistants. The assistants helped taking down of notes during the interviews too. The interviews took 15 to 20 minutes each. The individual interviews were conducted during the times that the participants were available, either before service or after service times. The frontline employee interviews took place in the office of the post offices while consultation with managers took place in their offices. For consistency purposes, the asking of questions was done in the same manner and same order. The consultation lasted for 15 to 20 minutes each. The research design directs that data collection starts with rigorous quantitative research in the first phase and is followed by purposive sampling in this phase which utilises the qualitative approach (Creswell, 2014).

The advantages of using used interview include:

- The researcher could observe the selected participants.
- Participants were able to provide direct information needed for the study on open-ended questions asked on the strategic management of service quality in working conditions of managers and frontline employees in the country.
- Interviews allowed the researcher control over the line of questioning.
- The limitations experienced in using interviews in this study were the following:
- Unnecessary information from the participants affected the focus of the study. The researcher tried to guide participants towards the study objectives. Transcribed data were cleaned for focus.
- All participants were not equally coherent or insightful.
- The researcher employed the services of another coder to assist with the coding of the vast amount of data obtained.

Before the interviews with selected participants, permission was obtained to use the audiotape recorder. However, written notes were also used to supplement recordings. Clearance and consent were obtained from participants before audiotaping them. The interview protocol outlined by Creswell (2014) was applied as followed:

- A short consent form explaining the study objectives and why participants should get involved in the study.
- Ethical considerations followed by the researcher.
- Details of the date, place, interviewer and the interviewee.
- Basic instructions for the researcher which gave consistency to all interviews conducted.
- Questions designed according to the research questions and some probing questions were added.
- A final acknowledgement and thank you statement appreciating the time the interviewee spent in being part of the study.

Following are the several interview guidelines used to collect data from the respondents in this qualitative phase.

1) Interview guidelines for the post office managers

The interview guidelines for this section consist of Section A biographical information, while section B, C, D and E. which comprised of four (4) sub-sections, focused on the research questions of this study which are as follows:

- **Section A:** Demographical information

The two questions on demographical details read as follows: Average years of experience and position at work. The aimed of investigating this variable was to find out if average years of experience and position at work help to enhance high service quality in the SAPO. This can be justified by the study of Gilkar and Darzi (2012) who found that job satisfaction is strongly associated with job experience of the employees. Results of Bukers and Dolu (2014) on the effects of individual and occupational factors on job satisfaction, findings revealed that job title and work experience had positive effects on organisational performance. This section also applies to the demographical information of frontline employees.

Section B: To identify the challenges to the strategic implementation of service quality with managers, frontline employees and consumers in the SAOP in the NWP.

This research question aimed to investigate the challenges encounter by managers, frontline employees on strategic implementation of service quality in the SAPO. To justified this research question, similar study was conducted by Nutt (2014) on strategic decision in organisations located in USA and Canada and concluded that half of the strategic decisions fail to attain their initial objectives mainly because of the problems during strategy implementation process. Similar study by Katamei *et al.* (2015) identified some of the main problems for effectively implementing strategies as: ineffective senior management team, unclear strategies and conflicting priorities, poor coordination across functions, poor vertical communication and inadequate down-the-line leadership skills and development.

Section C: Establish how training and development enhance service quality with the managers in SAOP in the NWP.

This research question aimed to investigate the effectiveness of training and development with managers in the SAPO. The justification of this research question, is similar to the study on training and development by Hlatywayo and Mpofu (2015); Kum (2014) found out that training and development program for employees is highly affected with the lack of financial resources and working conditions.

Section D: Assess how motivation enhances service quality with managers in the SAOP in the NWP.

This research question aimed to investigate those factors that motivate managers in the SAPO. Previous researches showed that employee motivation was one of the key factors which influences employee productivity (Zameer *et al.*, 2014; Osabiya, 2015; Singh, 2016).

Section E: Explore how monitoring and evaluation enhance service quality with managers in the SAOP in the NWP.

This research question aimed to investigate how best monitoring and evaluation enhance service quality by manager in the SAPO. Several scholars (see Kessler & Tanburn 2014; Metzger & Guenther 2015; Kabonga 2016) reported that development should be assessed on four significant fronts that is effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability. Thus, the article situates

monitoring and evaluation as a tool to achieve efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability.

Table 4.7: research questions and variables measured-managers

Research questions/factors	Variables measured
Views on strategic implementation	Approaches to formulating strategic implementation, relevant factors to consider, challenges experienced and techniques used to overcome the challenges.
Views on training and development	Frequencies of training and development, views on the training and development, the proportion of trained employees, problems of training and development and ways to improve training and development.
Views on motivation	Concept 'motivation, 3 motivators at work, perception of unmotivated at work and events that trigger demotivation at work.
Views on monitoring and evaluation	Involvement in monitoring and evaluation, the commencement of monitoring and evaluation, design and implementation of a monitoring and evaluation system, challenges encountered and overcoming the challenges.

2) Interview guide for the post office frontline employees

The interview guides for this section consist of Section A and Section B, C, D and E. Section A focused on obtaining the biographical information of respondents and Section B, C, D and E which comprised of four sub-sections, focused on the research questions of this study which are as follows:

Section A: Demographic information of post office frontline employees

Section B: To identify the challenges to the strategic implementation of service quality with managers, frontline employees and consumers in the SAOP in the North West province. This research question aimed to investigate the challenges to the strategic implementation of service quality with frontline employers with managers and consumers in the SAPO. Pervious study of challenges on strategic implementation indicated that frontline employees with better understanding of strategic plan and implement it correctly, tend to have a good understanding of customer needs and wants, and can adapt the service delivery accordingly, and thereby frequently help to establish personalized relationships with customers and build loyalty (Bove & Johnson, 2011; Söderlund & Rosengren, 2014; Wirtz & Jerger, 2016).

Section C: To establish how training and development can be used to enhance service quality with managers and frontline employees in the SAPO in the NWP. This research question aimed to investigate the effectiveness of training and development with frontline employers in the SAPO. A study by Quartey (2012) revealed that majority of employees were aware and involved in various training programs though training program are not frequently implemented in the organization. In the other study Boadu et al. (2014) study found that there is direct relationship between training and development and employee performance and indicated that significant relationship exists between training and development and job satisfaction and also revealed the complaints of employees concerning inadequate time allotted for various training and development programs, but also inadequate funds availability for training and development were complained by the management.

Section D: To assess how motivation can be used to enhance service quality with managers and frontline employees in the SAPO in the NWP. This research question aimed to investigate those factors that motivate frontline employers in the SAPO. A study conducted in Norway showed that motivation is significantly related to employee's performance (Kuvaas *et al.*, 2017). It is evidenced from a study Waiyaki (2017) that employees need motivation based on reward and recognition and their performance is hindered in absence of motivation.

Section E: To explore how monitoring and evaluation can be used to enhance service quality with managers and frontline employees in the SAPO in the NWP. This research question aimed to investigate how best monitoring and evaluation enhance service quality by frontline employers in the SAPO. A study conducted my (Rist *et al.*, 2011), it is evidenced that monitoring and evaluation (M&E) are essential components of results based management.

Table 4.8, presents the research questions and variables measured in the research instrument used to collect data from frontline employees.

Table 4. 8: Research questions and variables measured – frontline staff

Research questions/factors	Variables measured
Views on strategic implementation	Approaches to formulating strategic implementation, relevant factors to consider, challenges experienced and techniques used to overcome the challenges.
Views on training and development	Frequencies of training and development, views on the training and development, the proportion of trained employees, problems of training and development and ways to improve training and development.

Views on motivation	Concept 'motivation, 3 motivators at work, perception of unmotivated at work and events that trigger demotivation at work.
Views on monitoring and evaluation	Involvement in monitoring and evaluation, the commencement of monitoring and evaluation, design and implementation of a monitoring and evaluation system, challenges encountered and overcoming the challenges.

4.8.3.2 Interview content

The interview utilised questions from different studies and adapted them to achieve the goal set out by this study. To obtain the necessary data, four sections were used in the interview guides. The interview guides were also accompanied by a cover page to explain the study and introduce the researcher.

The interview guides consisted of questions from the strategy management of services quality. Similar studies such as (Douglas & Connor, 2003), hotel employees rated service quality brand activities. (Manwa, 2011) focuses on customer expectations. Madikwe's (2015) study on customer perceptions. Rauniar *et al.* (2014), management service quality expectations. (Tsimonis & Dimitriadis, 2013), employee's development strategy. (Laroche *et al.*, 2017), strategic implementation intention (Sahin *et al.*, 2011), employee's satisfaction and (Badrinarayanan & Laverie, 2013), employee's motivation. The subsequent section describes the researcher's role in the process of data collection.

4.8.3.3 Role during data collection

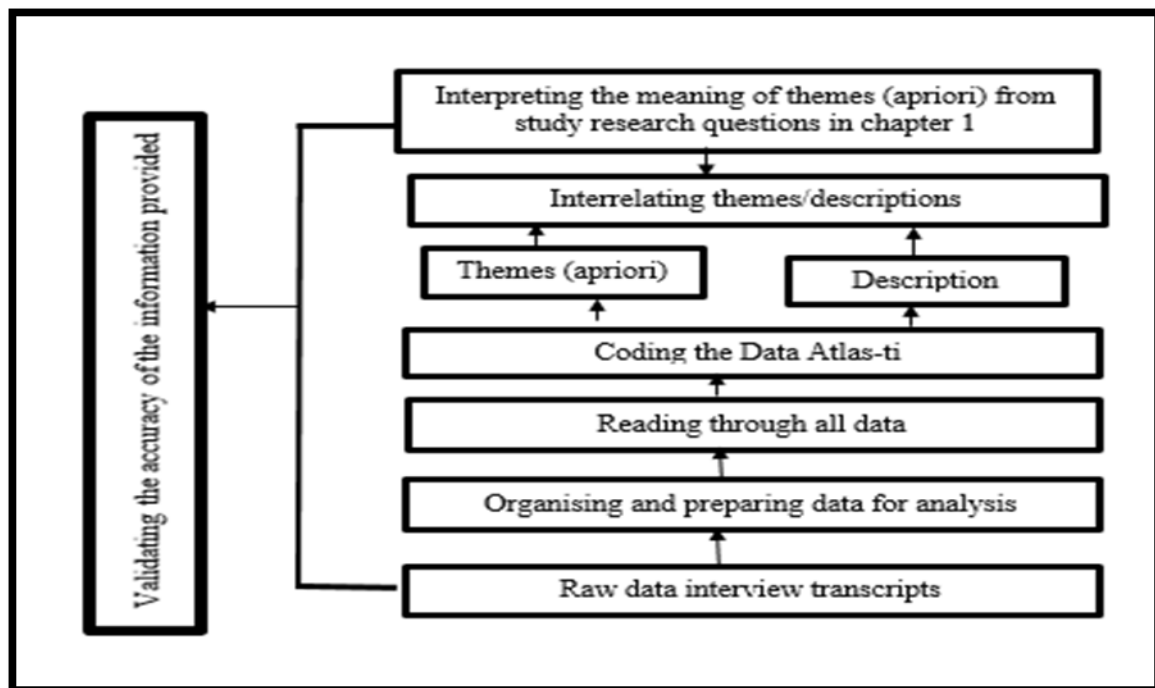
During the data collection stage, the observed and listened carefully by creating a form of connection and collaborative partnership with the participants (Maree, 2010). During the data collection stage, the study carefully and continually abided by all ethical guidelines. The researcher shouldered the responsibility of designing (interview questions) and analyzing the themes and categories generated during the second phase. The researcher also decided on the time allocation for the execution of the various stages.

4.8.4 Qualitative data analysis

The qualitative data analysis was facilitated using Atlas-ti version 8.1. Creswell (2014) notes that qualitative data analysis should follow a definite step to ensure reliable and credible results. Relatedly, Ivankova (2015) pinpoints that data analysis in a qualitative study starts with studying the transcripts and ends in discussing themes and categories. The researcher followed an

analytical process suggested by Creswell (2014) involving six steps. The figure below shows the analysis process followed.

Figure 4.7: Analysis process for interviews



Source: Creswell (2014), Creswell and Clark (2017) and Pluye *et al.* (2018)

Figure 4.8 explains the procedures adopted to analyse data collected in the qualitative phase through the semi-structured interviews.

Step 1: Organising and preparing data for analysis

Interviews with managers and frontline employees gathered information on the subject of investigation. The researcher transcribed audio information by typing word for word from the audio file into a word document format. These transcripts were then sorted per postal service branches.

Step 2: Reading through all transcripts

The researcher read through all interview transcripts as many times as possible for a better understanding.

Step

3: The coding process

This stage is defined as the process of separating texts into meaningful segments to represent a category of meaning. According to Rossman and Rallis (as cited in Creswell, 2014), it involves taking text data or pictures gathered during data collection, segmenting sentences into categories, and labelling those categories with a term, often a term based in the actual language of the participant.

The researcher followed the steps described by Tesch (as cited in Creswell and Clark (2017) in coding the transcripts for this study. Codes were assigned to categories of text that seemed similar in meaning to each other. These codes will be labelled and segmented text will be arranged according to their codes.

Step 4: Generate themes and description

According to Pluye *et al.* (2018) and Creswell (2014), about six to seven themes might be used in a research study. This study used a priori method to arrive at the themes of the study. The themes established the relationship between methods and research objections and questions. This description allowed detailed rendering of information about people, places, or events in a setting (Marshall & Rossman, 2014).

Step 5: Presentation pattern of the description

The researcher will record the results of the quantitative and the findings obtained from the interviews. This will be done in narrative and an exact description of the events in the transcripts will be given (see Chapter 5).

Step 6: Data interpretation or making meaning of the data

This is the final step in the analysis of data. At this stage, from the results and findings obtained from both phases, the researcher inferred the “lessons learned” with a focus on the study’s main aim which was to undertake to propose a framework for the strategic management of service quality by managers, frontline employees at the service unit in other to improve consumer’s satisfaction at the postal service branches in the NWP. For this study, the researcher will

interpret per theme or research question posed earlier in the study. The lessons learned resulted in the study's framework, which will be presented in the last chapter of this thesis. The subsequent discussion is triangulation.

4.9 Triangulation

Triangulation, according to Creswell (2014), Maree (2015) and DeCuir-Gunby and Schutz (2017), refers to an approach where the researcher combines the findings from the quantitative study, qualitative study and literature reviews to give a comprehensive view of the study in an endeavour to find solutions to the problem of the study. In this study, the responses from the questionnaires administered to the consumers, the responses of the interviews with the managers and frontline employees, also the literature review were brought together to seek solutions to the problems stated in the research problem of this study. The product of triangulation in this study enabled the researcher to propose strategic management of service quality framework for the SAPO in the North West province.

The subsequent section of discussion forces on trustworthiness, validity and reliability of data collecting instruments.

4.10 Trustworthiness, validity and reliability

This section describes the methods used to ensure the trustworthiness of both empirical phases. Establishing trustworthiness is essential in the science of instrumentation. Trustworthiness in quantitative research is realised through internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity of the research (Susanne, 2012). Precision and accuracy are also important criteria to measure the quality of research (Babbie, 2007).

4.10.1 Quantitative Phase

The following section clarifies the validity and reliability of the qualitative data collected for this study.

4.10.1.1 Validity

Saunders *et al.* (2009) state that validity is concerned with making sure the findings reflect a true picture of what they seek to measure. Amaratunga *et al.* (2002) describe validity as "the ability

to describe reality with a good fit". The methods used to establish trustworthiness in quantitative research includes internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity of the research (Susanne, 2012).

Quantitative researchers need to remember possible threats to internal validity from instrumentation and statistical regression. The researcher evaluated trustworthiness by how well the threats to internal validity had been controlled, and the validity of the instruments and measurements used in a study through statistical tests.

External validity is used to generalise from the research sample to the larger population (Susanne, 2012). In this study, the researcher identified the sampling techniques (stratified, simple random and convenience sampling) most suitable in establishing trustworthiness for this study (stratified sampling). The study considered factors such as subjects, situation, time, intervention, and measures that could affect external validity and generalizability. The researcher contacted respondents through appropriate means before visiting their various houses and offices to ensure a comfortable time for the distribution of questionnaires.

4.10.1.2 Reliability

Reliability is internal consistency and it examines the consistency of the measuring instrument (questionnaires) used in this study. The researcher in this study ensured reliability by employing a pilot test as a source of pre-test (also known as stability) by administering questionnaires to individuals, after which the same instrument was administered to the entire sample. Reliability is the basis for validity, and measures whether or not a study obtains the same results each time (Susanne, 2012).

4.10.1.3 Objectivity

Objectivity emerges from the methodology of measurements, data collection, and data analysis through which reliability and validity are established (Susanne, 2012). Objectivity was attained by creating an appropriate distance between the researcher and respondents to reduce bias.

4.10.1.4 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is a set of criteria devised for judging the quality of research (Bryman, 2012), trustworthiness entails how qualitative researchers guarantee that transferability, credibility,

dependability, and confirmability are evident in their research (Susanne, 2012). Without trustworthiness, a researcher has no acid test for the findings and conclusions reached in a study.

4.10.1.4.1 Measures to ensure the trustworthiness of data

For qualitative methods, the aspect of validity resides in the term trustworthiness (Morrow, 2005). Guba (cited by Shenton, 2004) proposed four aspects to ensure trustworthiness in qualitative research: "credibility, transferability, dependable and confirmability". Shenton (2004) suggests the following criteria (Table. 4.9) in explaining these aspects of trustworthiness. Shenton's (2004) suggestions were applied in the qualitative aspect of this research. The researcher used manually recorded verbatim data and one electronically with the permission of the participants. Data collection was done using consistent settings which included frontline employees and managers, using different interview questions, same timings for the interviews with frontline employees and consultations with managers. Peer inspection and face validity (by the researcher and research assistants) ensured the trustworthiness of the research before the data analysis. The researcher and assistants compared the results of their findings to clarify any misunderstandings and reduce any bias. The data was triangulated during the process of analysis.

Table 4.9: Provisions addressing Guba's four criteria

Quality Criterion	A possible provision that will be made by the researcher
Credibility	Use of appropriate research methods, understanding the culture of participating organisations, random sampling, ensuring honesty, peer inspection of the project, use of reflective commentary, the examination of previous research to frame the findings.
Dependability	Engagement of overlapping methods, an in-depth methodological description which will allow for repetition of the study.
Transferability	Providing background data to establish study context, has detailed descriptions of the phenomenon.
Confirmability	Use of triangulation, admission of researcher's beliefs and assumptions, recognition of limitations, use of diagrams.

Source: Shenton (2004)

In terms of credibility, meetings were held with the management of the participating post offices before the actual interviews and consultations. These meetings enabled the understanding of the culture of the participating organisations before conducting the interviews. The project was peer scrutinised by management and feedback used to improve the questions. In terms of

transferability, background reading was done to establish the study context and the findings used to inform the study context. The study triangulated the findings from the interviews and also recognised the limitations of the interviews. The next section, therefore, discusses the ethical considerations of the study.

4.11 Ethical considerations

In the views of O’Leary (2010) ethics refers to rules of behaviour that help to dictate what is acceptable within a profession. Ethics in conducting research, however, varies across different professional codes or disciplines and/or institutions but there are generally accepted guidelines. Ethics, as mentioned by Cooper and Schindler (2011), are regarded as norms and standards of behaviours that guide moral choices about behaviours and relationships with others. Leedy and Ormrod (2010) and Macrina (2014) and Ulman *et al.* (2015) comment that ethical issues in research fall into four categories namely:

- **Protection from harm:** The researcher assured the respondents and participants that there was no danger or harm for taking part in the study.
- **Informed consent:** The researcher informed the respondents and participants of the purpose, the objectives and nature of the study verbally for clarification.
- **Right of privacy, confidentiality and anonymity:** The researcher ensured the respondents and participants of confidentiality and anonymity throughout the process of data collection and that no name was used for any other purpose other than what the study is meant for.
- **Honesty and trust:** The researcher followed all the standards about being truthful and honest throughout the process of data collection and analysis.
- **Voluntary participation:** The researcher told the respondents and participants that the study is purely for academic purpose and that their contribution is optional since no one is force to participate.

Ethics refers to rules of behaviour dictating what is acceptable within a profession. Ethics in conducting research, however, varies across different professional codes or disciplines and/or institutions but there are generally accepted guidelines (O’Leary, 2010). An application for ethical clearance was submitted to the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Economics and Management Sciences and this was issued. Respondents and participants were given the right to participate voluntarily in this research and to withdraw at any time. It was guaranteed that the participants were protected against harm whilst the confidentiality of the respondents and

participants' responses was assured. Furthermore, the true findings of this study were presented in this report and no findings are purposefully concealed or misrepresented.

To get access to the post offices, a government research permit was obtained from Head Office in Pretoria by post office managers. The research was cleared by the North-West University Ethics Committee (Ethics NWU-00380-19-A4). (see Annexure H). Permission was also obtained from the various post offices managers through letters (see Annexure I and J). The researcher communicated with managers through emails, personal presentations and telephone calls. However, the researcher faced challenges of non-cooperation by some managers and frontline employees. The next section provides a summary of this chapter.

4.12 Summary

This chapter focused on the research design and methodology used to successfully answer the questions of this study. The chapter began with paradigm research foundations of the study. This was followed by the research approach and design. Based on the establishment of the paradigm, the mixed-method research design was then explained in detail. The methodology for this study was an empirical investigation which took two phases - qualitative and quantitative, to find solutions to the research problem. An explanatory sequential design mixed method design was adopted which enhanced the collection of data from the consumer through questionnaires and from managers and frontline employees through semi-structured interviews. This chapter further explained the site selection, participant selection, data collection strategy, data analysis and the researcher's role was discussed. Clarification was also made on the data analysis which was done using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for the quantitative component and coding data into themes, categories using Atlas-ti version 8.1 and discussing it thereafter for the qualitative phase. Finally, trustworthiness, validity and reliability of the study, as well as the ethical considerations, were explored. This chapter conclude with the evaluation principles to be used in measuring the quality of the overall thesis. The subsequent chapter deals with empirical results/findings, which will, in turn, be used, in the interpretation and discussion of results/findings.

CHAPTER FIVE

RESEARCH RESULTS AND FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter described the research methodology used in this study. The study adopted a mixed methods research approach. In the quantitative phase, data were collected from the post office consumers using questionnaires, while the qualitative phase data was collected using face-to-face interviews with post office managers and frontline employees.

This chapter presents the empirical results obtained from the quantitative and the qualitative research findings. This study aimed to investigate the strategic management of services quality in the post offices of the Ngaka Modiri Molema and Dr Kenneth Kaunda District Municipality of the North West province with the aim of proposing a framework that could enhance service quality with postal managers, frontline employees in order to reach high satisfaction among consumers. The findings obtained are presented in two sections because this study was based on an explanatory sequential design, first collecting quantitative data and then subsequently qualitative data to elaborate on the quantitative results. The first section, which is quantitative, outlines the outcomes of services quality, expectation and perception as seen by postal consumers. The second section, the qualitative findings, outline and summarise viewpoints of managers and frontline employees concerning their expectations and perceptions on the strategic management of services quality in the post offices.

5.2 Presentation of quantitative data

The discussion of the quantitative study begins with the demographic information of the postal consumers, and this is followed by the constructs in the quantitative data as per the research questions that generated the quantitative inferential statistics. Later, the qualitative component begins by presenting the demographic information of the respondents and finally their responses with regard to the interviews questions.

A total of 384 questionnaires were delivered to postal consumers in selected postal branches and a total of 345 completed questionnaires were received, with 39 postal consumers who did not participate, achieving a 90% response rate which makes these results and findings valid. This survey collected a large quantity of numeric evidence that was then converted to numbers (Levy

& Lemeshow, 2013). From the total population, sampling was used to obtain the target group. Convenience sampling, which involved the selection of respondents based on convenience and accessibility (Maree, 2010), was used to select respondents. Convenience sampling selection saves time and reduces cost. The following section presents and interprets the empirical outcomes from the analysis of the quantitative data.

5.2.1 Sampling of postal consumers

Postal consumers of the five postal branches were selected using a convenience sampling as noted in Section 4.7.3.1.

5.2.2 Self-administered questionnaire

Drawing from the views of Fellows and Liu (2015) who aver that a valid and reliable conclusion can be drawn if a 70% response rate is obtained from a questionnaire, it can thus be said that with a response rate of 90% this study collected sufficient data to arrive at valid and reliable conclusions.

5.2.3 Quantitative data collection

The researcher and the two assistants distributed the questionnaires to selected postal consumers: Mahikeng, Zeerust, Lichtenburg, Klerksdorp and Potchefstroom. Some consumers completed the questionnaires on the spot while others made appointments for collection and retrieval. All the distributed questionnaires were recorded in order to determine the response rate. The reason for selecting this target group is that they could provide an overall view of the service experience in their respective postal branches. Participants who took part were drawn from all five postal branches within the Ngaka Modiri Molema and Dr Kenneth Kaunda District Municipality of the North West province. Details on how the questionnaires were captured have been explained in Chapter Four.

5.2.4 Quantitative data processing

The entire process of the study, from identifying the research objectives to the collection and presentation of the research findings was aimed at obtaining a deeper understanding of the research topic. Permission for access to postal consumers was secured from the North-West

University Ethics Committee. Questionnaires was distributed to the five postal branches in person and two assistants and the same procedure was used to retrieve them from respondents.

During the quantitative analysis, all the variables were assigned codes for entry. Secondly, all the responses were coded to facilitate computer data input. Thirdly, once the data entry was completed, the negatively worded scale items were coded into numeric values using Microsoft Excel and were imported into SPSS for further statistical analysis and assigned new values. Fourthly, in order to obtain composite scores for items on a scale, target variables were computed. Fifthly, data files were carefully screened in order to eliminate entry errors by checking frequencies for each variable and detecting any out-of-range values, and values entered that were greater than the maximum frequency per question were rectified after reconciling them with the questionnaires. The subsequent section presents the quantitative data analysis. Data cleaning requires the researcher to prepare the raw data for analysis; reading the data, and checking for incomplete, inaccurate, inconsistent or irrelevant statistics.

5.2.5 Quantitative data analysis

The numerical data from the postal consumers who live in the two district municipal areas were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 24). The statistical analyses include descriptive and inferential statistics, such as correlation analysis, Chi-square test of independence, as well as analysis of variance. Descriptive statistics enabled identifying trends and patterns revealing the relationships in the sample of the study; reliability analysis measured the reliability of the responses obtained for every construct of the questionnaire; the correlation analysis explains if there is a relationship between two or more variables; the Chi-square test of independence compares categories within a particular group; and finally, the reliability test confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used to confirm the validity of the questionnaire. The quantitative results are presented in four phases following the sections of the questionnaire (see Annexure H). Section A deals with the biographic information of the respondents while section B, C and D deal with the specific research questions of the study.

5.3 Presentation of quantitative results

The quantitative results are presented using graphs, charts, tables, frequencies and percentages. These statistical analyses were undertaken to find answers to the research questions.

5.3.1 Demographic characteristics

The demographic variables were included in the questionnaire to obtain an impression of the demographic characteristics of the respondents, specifically particulars in terms of six descriptors: location, gender, age, highest educational qualification, occupation, and monthly household income.

5.3.1.1 Location

Respondents were asked to indicate the location of postal consumers and their responses are captured in Figure 5.1. This item was deemed necessary to identify the location characteristics of the respondents who participated in the study, and then make conclusions on the spread of postal services consumers.

Figure 5.1: Location

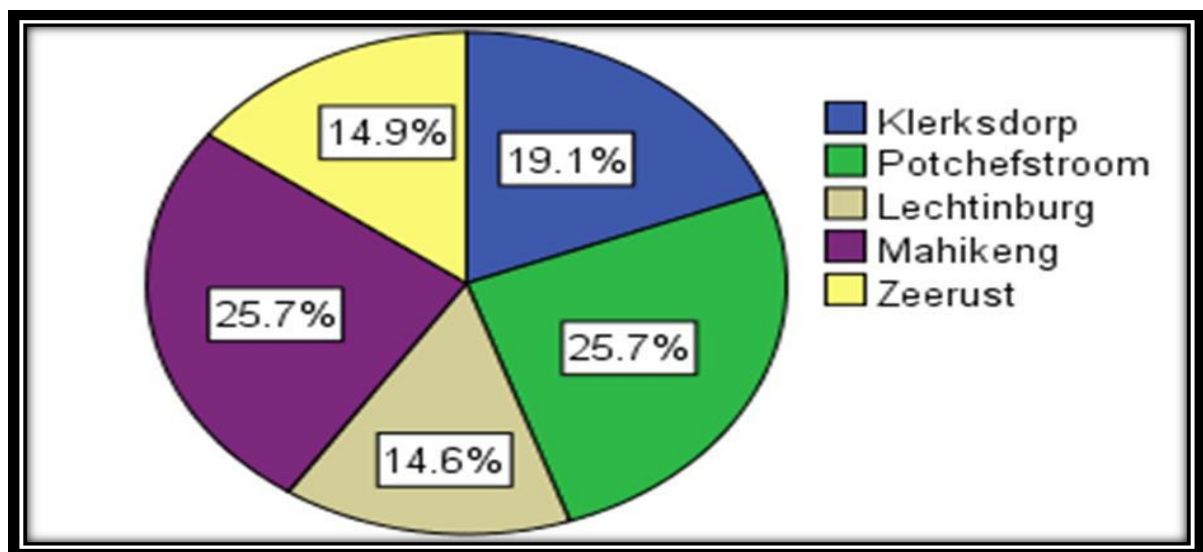


Figure 5.1 indicate that more of the respondents live in the Potchefstroom (25.7%) and also in Mafikeng (25.7%). This was followed by Klerksdorp 19.1%, Zeerust 14.9% and Lichtenburg 14.7% respectively. The results show that majority of the postal consumers are from Potchefstroom post office, while minority of the postal consumers are from Lichtenburg post office. Mbonyane (2013) states that the choice of a business location is determined by the proximity of the business to its customers and the type of the business operation because most customers move toward the business while some business owners move their businesses closer

to their customers. The reason for the concentration of consumers in Potchefstroom is that this service is dominated by those with white collar jobs.

5.3.1.2 Gender

Respondents were asked to indicate their gender and their responses are presented in Figure 5.2. This item was thought necessary to identify the gender characteristics of the respondents who participated in this study.

Figure 5.2: Gender

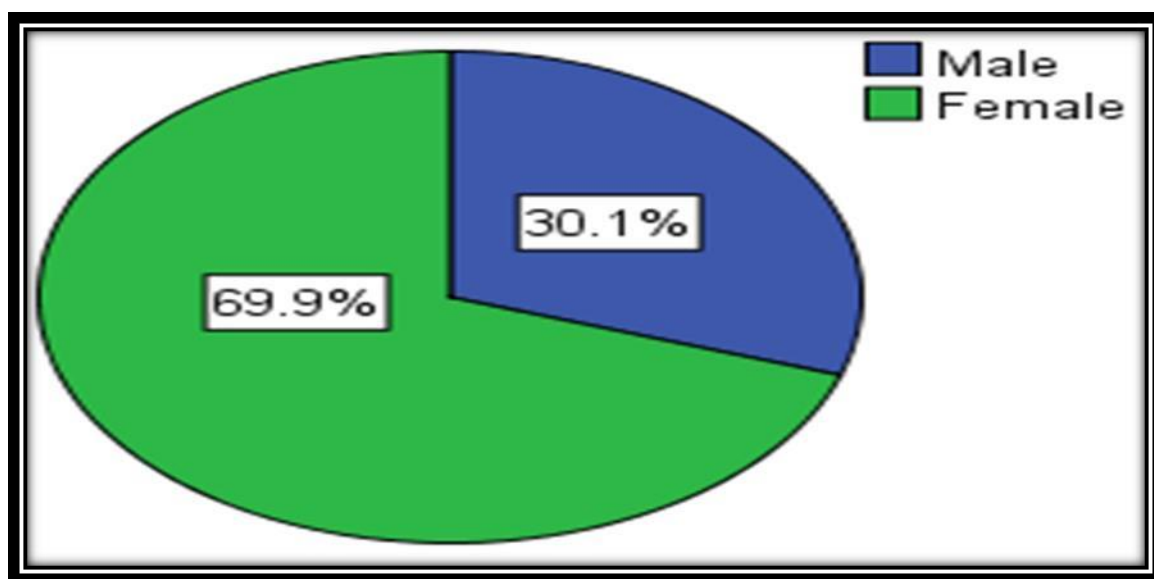
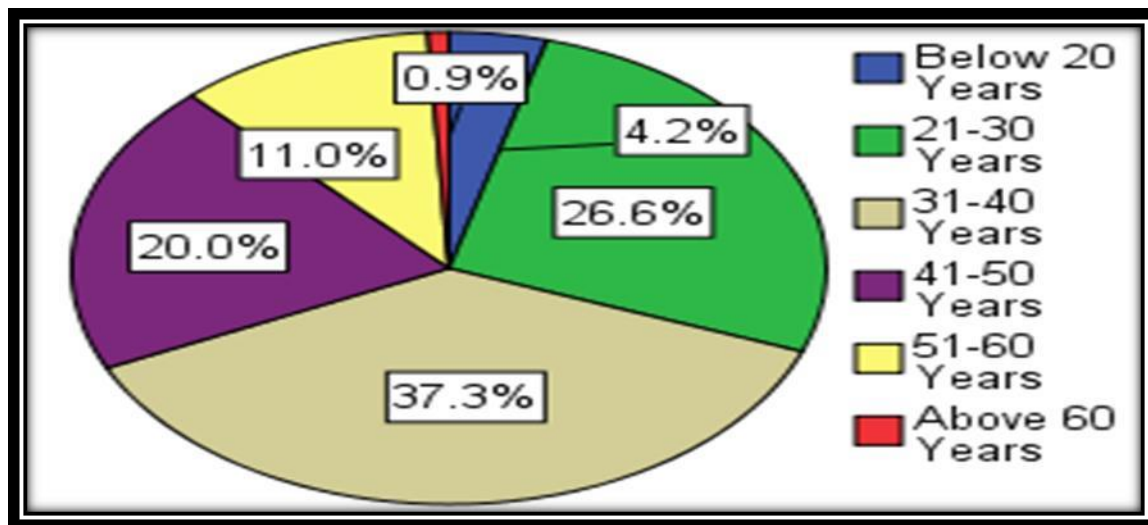


Figure 5.2 shows that more respondents were female than male. The females were 70% and the males accounted for 30%. This indicate that they are more female consumers them male consumers who make use of the SAPO services. Chapelle (2012) argues that females are a source of reserve growth and development in some developing countries (such as South Africa) and they constitute a minority group in terms of self-employment in advanced economies. Therefore, it can be concluded from the data collected that more females make use of the post office services as compare to males.

5.3.1.3 Age

This item was intended to find out the age of the respondents who took part in the study. Figure 5.3 shows the responses.

Figure 5.3: Age category



As reflected in Figure 5.3, the largest proportion of respondents, (37.3%) who participated in this study are between 31 and 40 years. This was followed by respondents within the age range of 21-30 (26.6), 41-50 (20.0%), 51-60 (11%) years. Respondents within the age limit of 20 or less 4.2% and 60 and above 0.9% were the minority in this study. Of interest to note is that those who participated in this survey are between 21 to 50 represent economic active consumers and they constituted 83.9% of the participant's. Yazdanfar *et al.* (2015) assert that age is an important consideration for predicting the survival and sustainability of services business.

5.3.1.4 Highest educational qualification

This question required identifying the academic status of respondents as this could have an impact on their level of knowledge about post offices services. The responses received are summarized in Figure 5.4.

Figure 5.4: Educational level

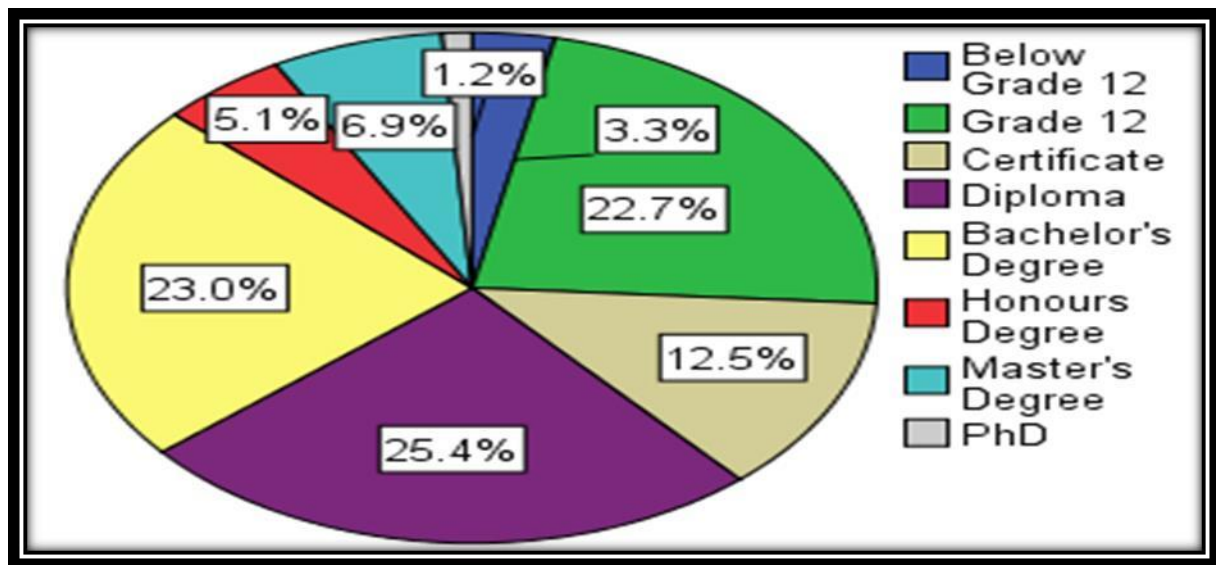


Figure 5.4 indicates that a high member (83.6%) respondents who make use of the post office services have a Grade 12 certificate to a bachelor degree. The result further indicates that only 16.4% of the respondents who have below Grade 12 and PhD degree who make use of the post office services. The majority of customers are educated. This is also a confirmation from the National Development Plan (2015) (NDP) of the South African government for higher education sector where entrepreneurship is mainly encouraged amongst graduates.

5.3.1.5 Occupation

The item was intended to identify the occupational level of the respondents who patronise the services in the post offices. Figure 5.5 shows the responses on the qualifications.

Figure 5.5: Occupation

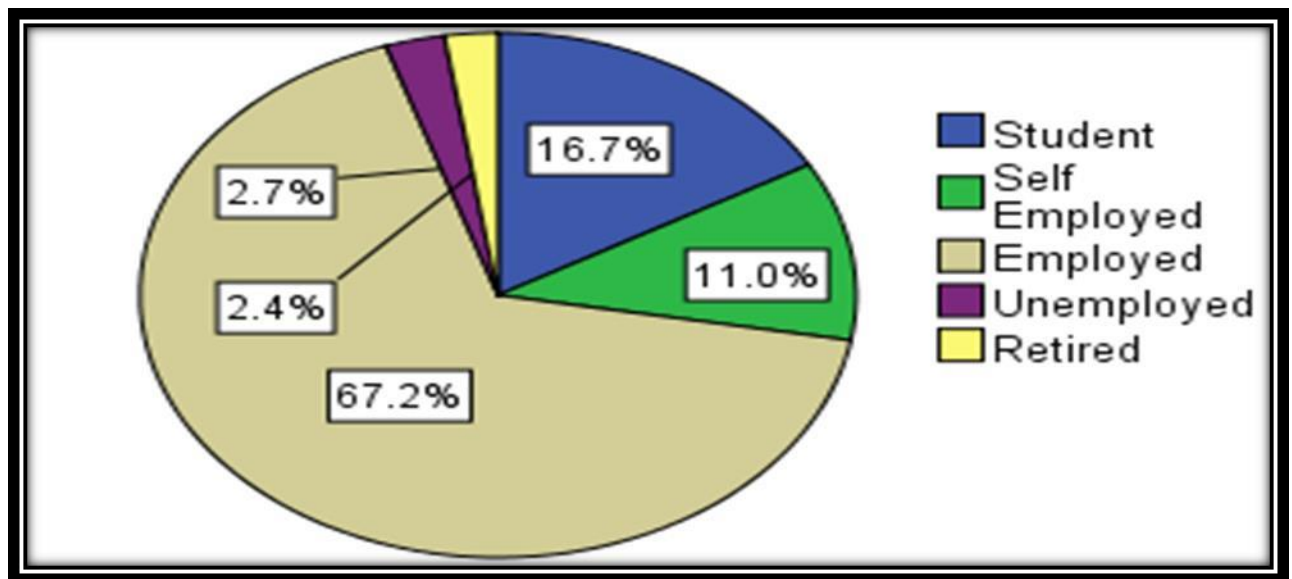


Figure 5.5 indicates that 94.9% of respondents have an occupation associated with an income. The results further indicate that only 5.1% of the post office consumers do not have earnings from any occupation. Furnham (2015), explains that person's response to a problem is possibly determined by the type of occupation in which they are engaged. The results here indicate that more respondents do have something linking them to the use of the post office services in their daily activities.

5.3.1.6 Household monthly income

The study further sought to understand the household income of the respondents as this could have a direct impact on their ability to pay for postal services. Their responses are captured in Figure 5.6.

Figure 5.6: Respondents household monthly income

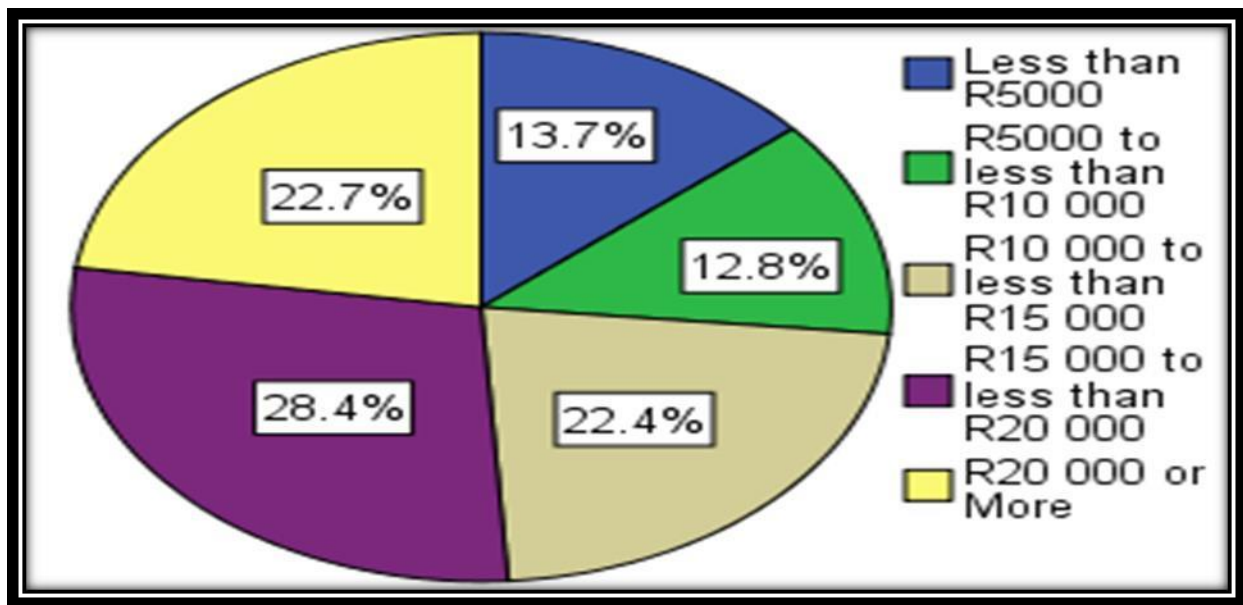


Figure 5.6 indicates that 73.5% of respondents earn from R10 000 to R20 000. The results further indicate that 26% of the post office consumers earn below R5 000. This indicates that more respondents are capable of paying for their post office services. Mahapatra (2013) confirms that higher income groups have a more positive response towards an organisation product and services and higher-income groups pay more for such organisation services. Therefore, it can be concluded from the data collected that majority of consumers earn from R10 000 to R20 000, suggesting in all ways that they can afford SAPO services.

However, the demographic information of the respondents collected in the quantitative component indicate that the responses from the postal consumers shows that they are knowledgeable about the postal services offered in their various postal branches, since they are regular consumers and could give reliable responses.

5.4 Views on research questions in quantitative research

Section B of the questionnaire (see Annexure D) deals with service quality experience of post office consumers in the five branches. The responses obtained from postal consumers in the five postal branches concerning their level of agreement/disagreements with the various constructs of service quality components are seen in Table 5.1 below. Five components of service quality were measured: Tangibility, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance and Empathy.

5.4.1 Service quality reliability test

The reliability of a measure indicates the stability and consistency of an instrument (Field, 2012) and reliability testing was conducted to ensure consistent measurement across the various items in the questionnaire designed for the purpose of this study. This method, consequently, determines reliability through examining the internal consistency of the research questionnaire presented in the form a scale (Nor, 2009). The most widely used method of testing the reliability of an instrument is through Cronbach's Alpha, where the value can range from 0.0 to 1.0 (Altinay *et al.*, 2011; Field, 2013). A value closer to 1.0 indicates strong reliability of the instrument, eventually suggesting the consistency and stability of the questionnaire. Table 5.1 indicates the reliability test obtained for service quality in this study.

Table 5.1: Reliability Test: Service Quality

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Tangibility	.600	7
Reliability	.669	5
Responsiveness	.611	5
Assurance	.760	5
Empathy	.401	2 ¹

Note: 1B5.2 and B5.3 excluded from the analysis due to negative corrected-item total correlation Interpretation

Table 5.1 shows that the Cronbach's Alpha for the items under each of the constructs of the service quality scale was at least 0.6. The “acceptable values of 0.7 or 0.6” (Ursachi *et al.*, 2015; Jain & Angural, 2017) except for the Empathy Construct. This implies that all the constructs are reliable except for the Empathy construct. The Empathy construct was thus excluded from further analysis due to poor reliability.

The subsequent section presents the construct validity analysis using confirmatory factor analysis.

5.4.2 Construct validity analysis using confirmatory factor analysis

¹ B5.2 and B5.3 excluded from the analysis due to negative corrected-item total correlation

Construct validity confirms the reliability of all the variables measured in a particular construct. In this study, a construct validity analysis test was applied to all the sections of the questionnaire and the results are presented in Table 5.2 and it should be noted that Empathy is excluded from the results.

Table 5.2: Validity Test Statistics: Service Quality

Tangibility	Estimate	Std.Err	z-value	P-Value
B1.1	0.463	0.056	8.260	0.000
B1.2	0.480	0.058	8.269	0.000
B1.3	0.378	0.059	6.417	0.000
B1.4	0.326	0.056	5.784	0.000
B1.5	0.120	0.036	3.328	0.001
B1.6	0.145	0.038	3.809	0.000
B1.7	0.258	0.057	4.523	0.000
Reliability	Estimate	Std.Err	z-value	P-Value
B2.1	0.381	0.058	6.525	0.000
B2.2	0.359	0.047	7.684	0.000
B2.3	0.517	0.052	10.022	0.000
B2.4	0.289	0.047	6.153	0.000
B2.5	0.608	0.048	12.691	0.000
Responsiveness	Estimate	Std.Err	z-value	P-Value
B3.1	0.614	0.051	12.011	0.000
B3.2	0.582	0.046	12.552	0.000
B3.3	0.257	0.048	5.310	0.000
B3.4	0.454	0.052	8.744	0.000
B3.5	0.449	0.088	5.133	0.000
Assurance	Estimate	Std.Err	z-value	P-Value
B4.1	0.335	0.046	7.226	0.000
B4.2	0.524	0.043	12.224	0.000
B4.3	0.526	0.040	13.168	0.000
B4.4	0.516	0.043	11.886	0.000
B4.5	0.481	0.038	12.707	0.000

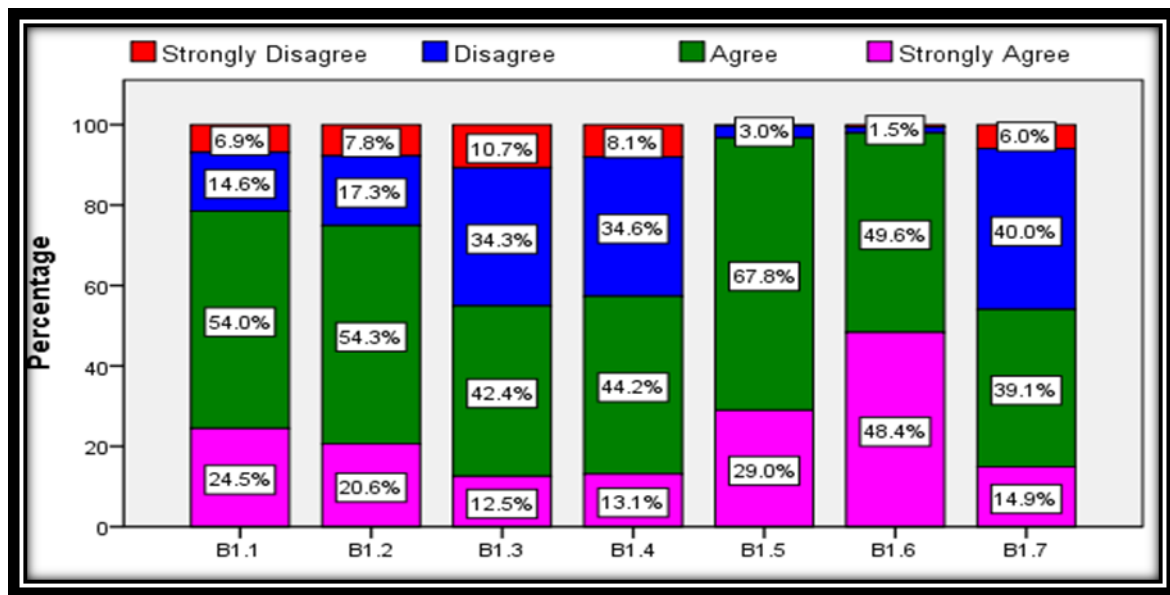
Interpretation

The confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) results in Table 5.2 show that each construct of perceptions of consumers on the service quality is valid since the items significantly (p -values < 0.05) loaded on all respective constructs. The responses to these constructs are explicated in the ensuing presentation.

5.4.2.1 Views on tangibility

The respondents in this study were asked to express their experience with the SAPO in terms of the appearance of the physical facilities, equipment, personnel, and communication materials at the local post office and if the postal branches made their consumers understand the tangible aspect of their services. The measurements used to capture the responses ranged from strongly agree (SA) to strongly disagree (SD).

Figure 5.7: Perceptions of tangibility



Variables:

B1.1 The waiting area is clean.

B1.2 The waiting area is well lit and ventilated.

B1.3 The atmosphere and décor appearance of the waiting room is attractive.

B1.4 The equipment is functional.

B1.5 The post office staff are neat in appearance.

B1.6 The staff working at the post office are easily identified by their uniform

B1.7 The post office provides detailed information packs about the services provided

In this section, Figure 5.7 shows that in statements B1 to B7, the respondents were asked if the waiting area is clean, well-lit and ventilated and the atmosphere and décor appearance attractive. (B1.1) 78.5%, (B1.2) 74.9% and (B1.3) 54.9% support the statement that waiting area is clean, well-lit and ventilated and the atmosphere and décor appearance attractive. On the other end, 21.5%, 25.1 and 45.1% respectively do not support the statements. The majority of respondents are satisfied with the physical facilities. The physical environment is a visual impetus for service quality despite not being directly related to the provision of financial services.

In statements B1.5 and B1.6, the respondents were asked if post office staff are neat in appearance and can easily be identified by their uniform. (B1.5) 96.8% and (B1.6) 98% respondents agree/strongly agree that post office staff are neat and can easily be identified by their uniform. The other extreme shows that 3.2% and 2% respectively do not support the statements. The majority of respondents are satisfied with the appearance of postal services staff.

Finally, (B1.4), 57.3% and (B1.7), 54% support the statement that equipment is functional and that the post office provides detailed information packs about the services provided. This stands against 42% and 46% respectively does not support the statements. The respondents are largely satisfied with the equipment and service information in the Post Office. Equipment and machinery are very important components of the service environment. As such, it is the responsibility of managers to ensure that the equipment is working with minimal interruptions due to breakdowns or defects. Generally, equipment has an impact on service quality evaluation.

Figure 5.8: Aggregate responses on tangibility

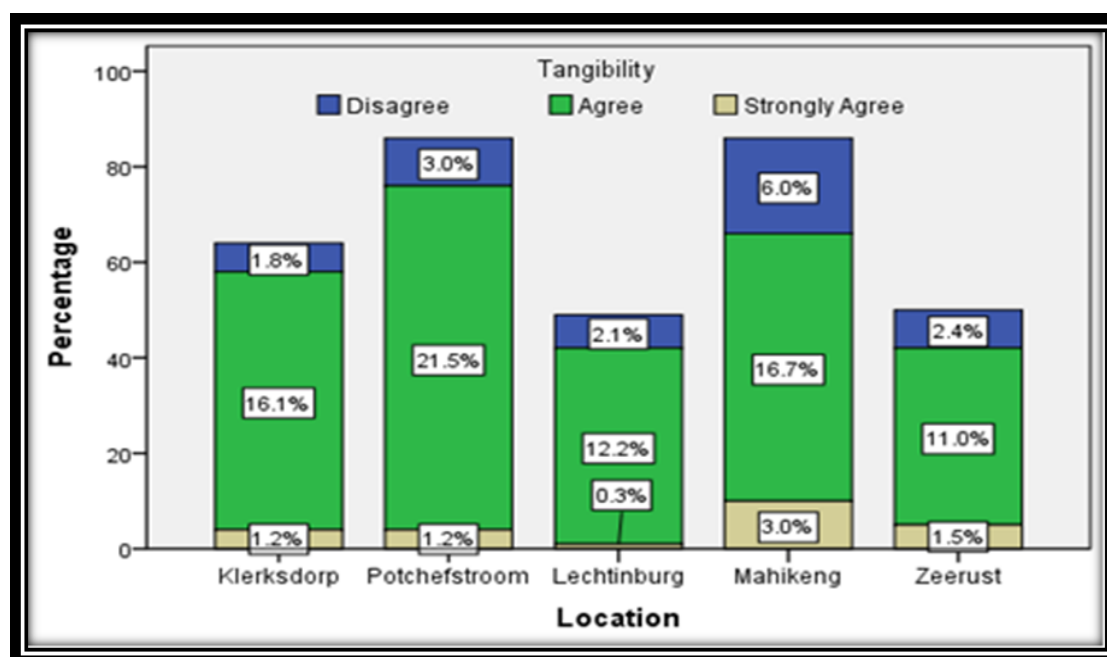


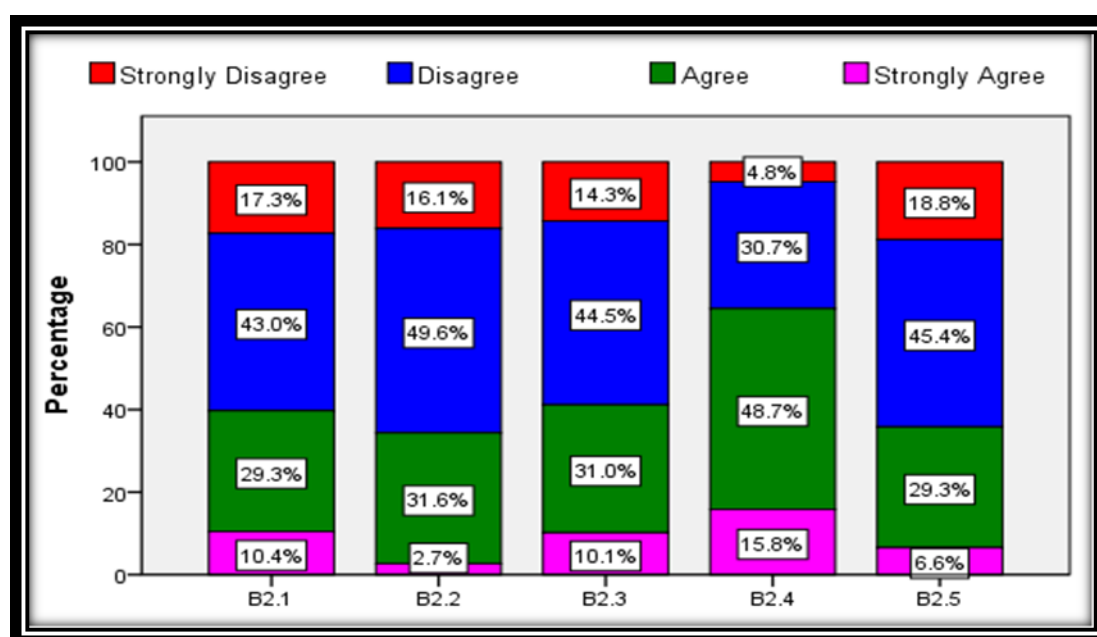
Figure 5.8 portrays that 84.7% of the respondents from Klerksdorp, Potchefstroom, Lichtenburg, Mafikeng and Zeerust post office disagree with all the variables used for measuring tangibility and only 15.3% of the respondents agreed. Findings from the tangibility aspect of service quality at the five postal branches, indicate that customers at the post offices are satisfied with this tangibility aspect.

Now that frequencies have been presented, the advanced statistics are explained further in the forthcoming sections.

5.4.2.2 Perceptions of reliability

The responses were obtained from the respondents on the understanding of reliability aspects on service quality in the five postal branches. A four (4) point Likert scale measurement with strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree was used to obtain the views of the respondents. For the statement below the respondents were asked their perceptions on the service reliability of the postal branches. The responses from this category are captured in Table 5.9.

Figure 5.9: Responses to reliability



Variables:

B2 Reliability

B2.1 Services are provided at the promised times

B2.2 Services are provided in a dependable and accurate manner

B2.3 The post office staff are competent in providing efficient services

B2.4 The staff kept my records up-to-date

B2.5 Staff schedule my appointments in such a way that I do not have to wait an unreasonable time to receive attention

In this section, Figure 5.9 shows the reliability promises with regard to customer expectations and delivery time. It also means postal service provided assistance in resolving problems and performing transactions correctly. In statements (B2.1) the respondents were asked if postal services are provided at the promised times, and 65.7% of the respondents are not in support of the statement, while 39.7%, are in support. The respondents were asked if services are provided in a dependable and accurate manner, and (B2.2) 60.3% of the respondents disagree with the statement, while 34.3% respondents concur with the statement. In statement (B2.3) the

respondents were asked if staff are competent in providing efficient service as well as keeping consumer's records up-to-date and in this regard 58.9% are not in support with the statement, while 41.1% are in support with the statement. It can be confirmed that most of the respondents see the post office as not delivering on time and accurately what it promises to offer.

In statements B2.4, respondents were asked if staff keep consumer's records up-to-date, majority 64.5% of the respondents are in support of the statement while 35.5% are not. Finally, (B2.5) 64.2% disagree that staff schedule appointments in such a way that consumers do not have to wait an unreasonable time to receive attention, while 35.8% support this statement. Most of the respondents are satisfied with the Post Office's ability of staff in keeping their records up-to date, while on the other hand, customers do not see staff competent in providing efficient services. In this case, more assurances need to be given on the reliability aspect in order to improve postal services in the five postal branches.

Figure 5.10: Aggregate responses on reliability

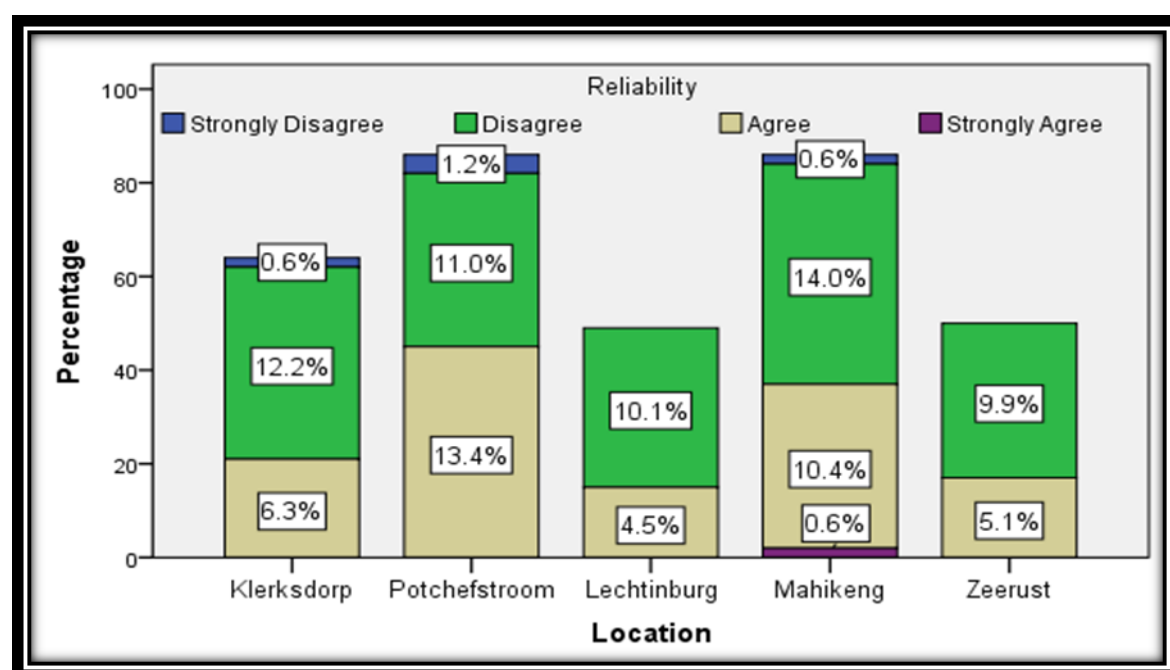
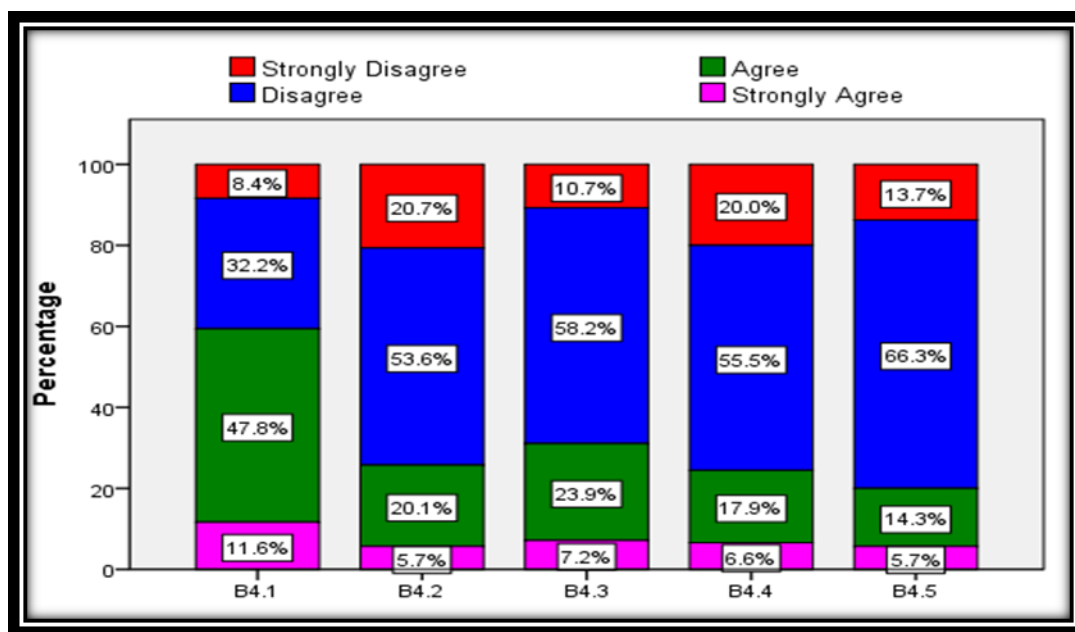


Figure 5.10 portrays that 40.3% of the respondents from Klerksdorp, Potchefstroom, Lichtenburg, Mafikeng and Zeerust post office disagree with all the variables used for measuring reliability and only 59.9% of the respondents agreed. Findings from the tangibility aspect of service quality at the five postal branches indicate that customers at the post offices are not satisfied with tangibility aspect.

5.4.2.3 Perceptions of responsiveness

Responsiveness involves convenience of operating hours, personalised service, having customer welfare at heart and employee's ability to understand customer specific needs. A four (4) point Likert scale measurement ranging from strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree was used to obtain the views of the respondents. In statements B3:1 to B: 3:5, the respondents were asked about the various experiences on the responsiveness aspect in their postal branches. Figure 5.11 reflects the responses to the questions relating to the responsiveness dimension.

Figure 5.11: Responses on responsiveness



Variables:

B3 Responsiveness

B3.1 The staff are always willing to help me when I need their assistance

B3.2 The staff respond quickly to my queries

B3.3 The staff provide me with detailed information on the process that I need to follow when I enter the post office

B3.4 The staff are never too busy to assist me

B3.5 The staff always set up follow-up appointments quickly and professionally

In this section, Figure 5.11, according to the positive findings, responses from items B3.1 (59.4%), support that post office staff are always willing to help me when clients need their assistance. These findings show that post office staff are willing to help postal consumer on the services been provided by the postal branches. In the negative findings, the responses from items B3.2 (74.3%), B3.3 (68.9%), B3.4 (75.5%) and B3.5 (80%) indicate that respondents disagreed that staff respond quickly to queries, staff provided them with detailed information on the process, staff are never too busy to assist clients and that staff always set up follow-up appointments quickly and professionally. The majority of the respondents are not satisfied with the Post Office employees' ability to provide personalised service or attention to postal consumers. This indicates that management needs to improve on the responsiveness aspect of service quality.

Figure 5.12: Aggregate responses on responsiveness

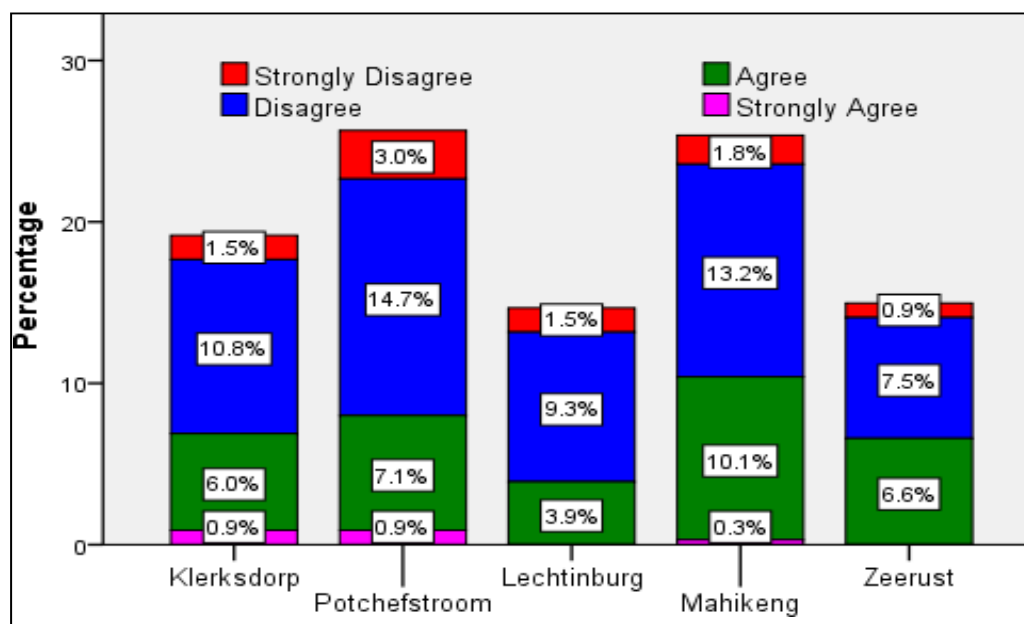
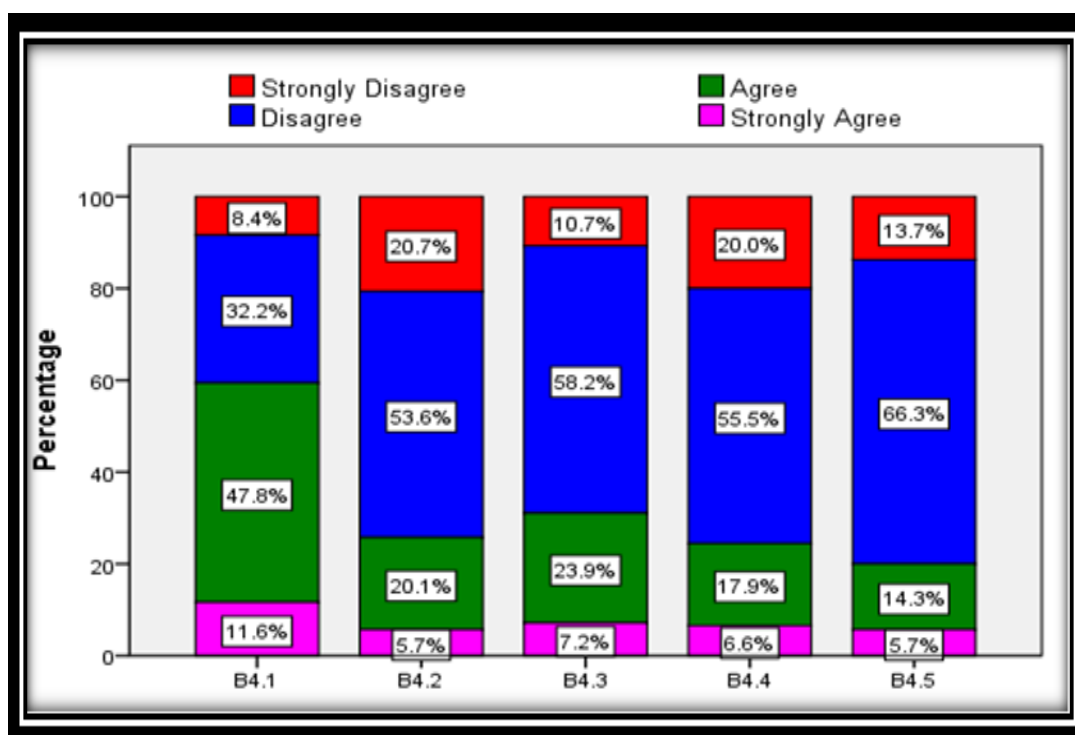


Figure 5.12 portrays that 35.8.4% of the respondents from Klerksdorp, Potchefstroom, Lichtenburg, Mafikeng and Zeerust post office disagree with all the variables used for measuring responsiveness, while on the order hand, 64.2% of the respondents agreed. From this evidence, it is perceived that the postal branches are slow in responding to service delivery needs to its consumers.

5.4.2.4 Perceptions of assurance

Assurance encompasses the feeling of safety, courteousness by employees, sufficient knowledge to respond to customer queries and providing individual attention to customers. Respondents were asked about employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence to consumers with regarding to service delivery. Figure 5.13 shows the responses to questions relating to the assurance dimension. A four (4) point Likert scale measurement with strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree was used to obtain the views of the respondents.

Figure 5.13: Responses to assurance



Variables:

B4 Assurance

B4.1 Staff are knowledgeable about the services the post office offers

B4.2 I feel secure when receiving services from the staff at this post office

B4.3 The staff are consistently courteous when they dealt with me

B4.4 I trust the staff as I feel they have my best interests at heart

B4.5 The behaviour of the staff instils confidence in me

Following Figure 5.13, the statements B4.1 to B4.5, the results in (B4.1) suggest that 59.4% of the respondents agree/strongly agree that the Post Office employees are knowledgeable about the services followed by 40.6% who disagree/strongly disagree with the variable. The majority of respondents are satisfied with the Post Office employee's knowledge to respond to customers. For statement (B4.2), the findings show that 25.8% of the respondents agree/strongly agree that they feel safe to transact or receiving services through the Post Office followed by 74.2% who disagree/strongly with this variable. The majority of respondents do not feel safe to transact with the Post Office.

The results from statements (B4.3) reveal that 31.1% of the respondents agree/strongly agree that the Post Office employees are courteous with customers followed by 68.9% who disagree/strongly disagree with the statement. A large proportion of respondents are not satisfied with the courtesy of Post Office employees; however, there is room for improvement.

Finally, for statement (B4.4) 24.5% and (B4.5) 20% are in support that staff have their best interests at heart, as well as behaviour of the staff instils confidence in consumers followed by 75.5% and 80% who disagree/strongly disagree with the variables. The majority of respondents do not have confidence in the conduct of Post Office employees. They also perceive the employees as not having customer welfare at heart. This implication is that consumers do not take the post offices at its word. There is no assurance that service needed by consumers is available at all times. Figure 5.14 below shows the aggregate responses on assurance.

Figure 5.14: Aggregate responses on assurance

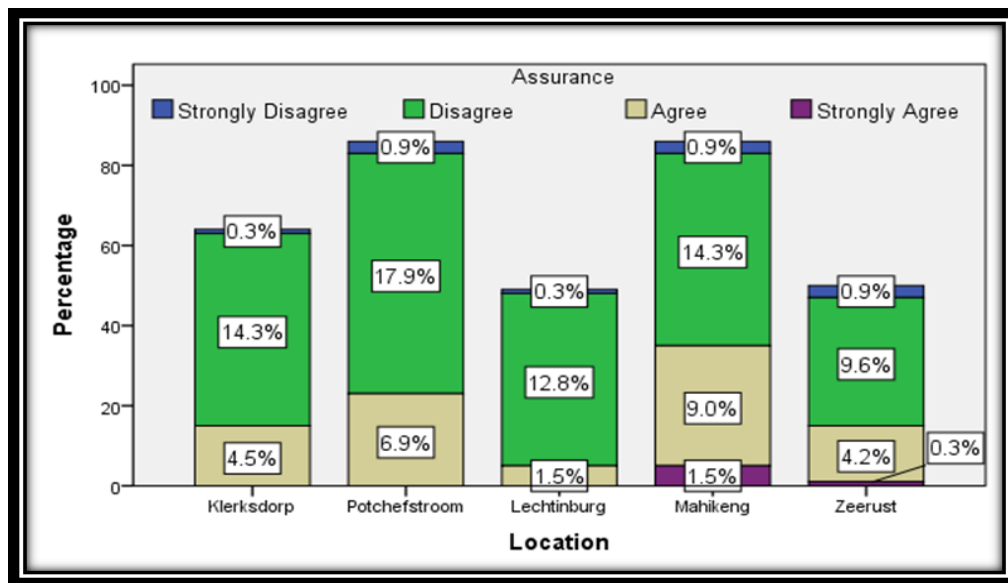


Figure 5.14 portrays that 72.2% of the respondents from Klerksdorp, Potchefstroom, Lichtenburg, Mafikeng and Zeerust post office disagree with all the variables used for measuring assurance, while only 21.8% of the respondents agreed. From the above responses, it is perceived that the postal consumers do not have assurance the service delivery by the five postal branches.

5.4.5 Overall perceptions on tangibility, reliability, responsiveness and assurance

The section illustrates the overall perceptions on tangibility, reliability, responsiveness and assurance with postal consumers in the various post offices as shown in Figure 5.15.

Figure 5.15: Aggregate responses on tangibility, reliability, responsiveness and assurance

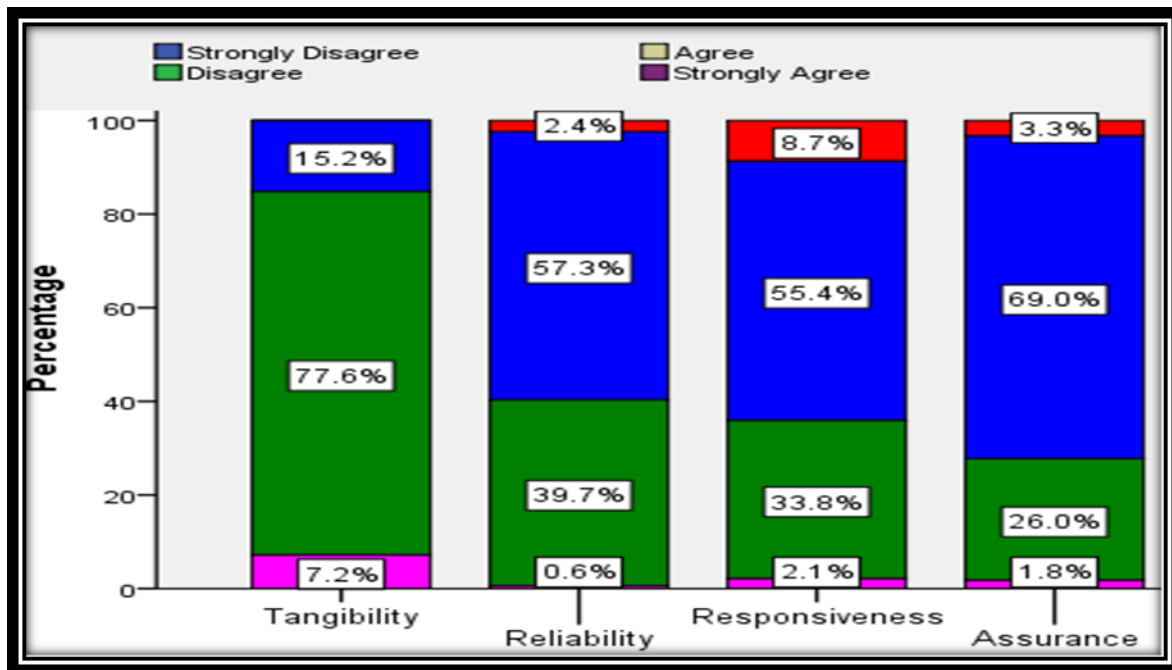


Figure 5.15 represents the component of service quality that was measured in this study, showing that 92.8% of the respondents are in disagreement with the appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel, and communication materials in their postal branches, while 7.2% of the respondents are satisfied with the tangibility aspect. From the reliability components of service quality, there is an indication that 97% of the respondents are not in support of the service reliability of the postal branches, while on the other hand, just 3% of respondents are satisfied with the service reliability of the postal branches. Concerning responsiveness on service quality, 89% of the respondents indicated that postal services are not rendered on time and in an accurate manner, while 10.8% are in support that they received services on time and in an accurate manner. Finally, 95% of the respondents are not satisfied with the service quality assurance in the postal branches, while 5% of the respondents are satisfied with the service quality assurance of the postal branches.

5.5 Findings on overall satisfaction

The postal branches should at all times be cognizant of the importance of customer satisfaction. There are some factors that contribute to the success or failure of an organisation, and customer satisfaction is one of them. Organisation need to tackle those important factors and work on

them in order to improve customers' trust and eventually turn them into brand ambassadors. Table 5.3 shows the reliability test of overall satisfaction.

Table 5.3: Reliability Test: Overall Satisfaction

	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Overall Satisfaction	.727	8

The reliability of the measuring instrument is the capacity of the instrument to measure what it is supposed to measure each time it is used (Pallant, 2011). Reliability in this study used Cronbach's alpha (α) reliability coefficient to measure the reliability of the questionnaire and the results obtained are outlined in Table 5.4.

Table 5.4 shows that the Cronbach's Alpha for the items under the overall satisfaction construct scale is greater than 0.6 as indicated by Dasgupta *et al.*, (2017). This implies that this construct is reliable.

Table 5.4: Validity Test: Overall Satisfaction.

Overall satisfaction	Estimate	Std.Err	z-value	P-Value
C1	0.336	0.083	4.062	0.000
C2	0.463	0.044	10.551	0.000
C3	0.445	0.045	9.945	0.000
C4	0.306	0.048	6.415	0.000
C5	0.440	0.048	9.132	0.000
C6	0.413	0.036	11.376	0.000
C7	0.593	0.051	11.741	0.000
C8	0.650	0.044	14.669	0.000

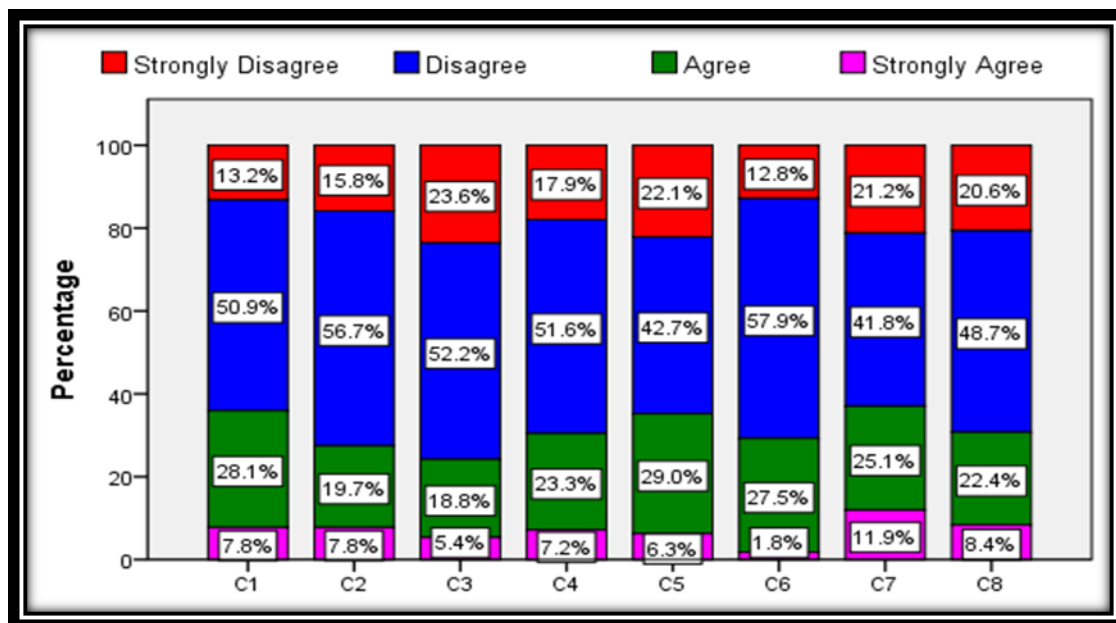
The CFA results in Table 5.4 shows that the construct on the overall satisfaction of customers about the service quality is valid since the items are significantly (p-values < 0.05) loading on this construct. The responses to these constructs are presented in the following table.

5.5.1 Perceptions to overall satisfaction

The aim at looking at the overall satisfaction in the postal branches concerning the quality of service plays an important role in keeping the company on track and directing it towards success. The measurements used to record the responses of the respondents range from strongly agree

(SA), to strongly disagree (SA) are grouped as Agree, and disagree (D) and strongly disagree (SD) are grouped as disagree.

Figure 5.16: Itemised responses to overall satisfaction



Variables:

- C1.1 By the level of service I have enjoyed, it is evident that staff are well trained
- C2.2 By the level of service, I experienced staff seem capable of providing the services I need from them
- C3.3 The post office never fails to meet my expectations
- C3.4 My assumed expectation of the level of service was fulfilled at the time of the delivery of the service.
- C3.5 The post office over-promises in their external communication with consumers and the general public
- C3.6 Overall I am happy with the quality of service provided in the post office
- C3.7 I will continue to come back to this post office
- C3.8 I will recommend this post office to other people

In this section, the statements C3.1 to C3.8, reflect that the respondents were asked on the overall satisfaction in the postal services. For statements C3.1, C3.2 and C3.3 the respondents were asked if the level of services they receive from staff are evidence that postal services staff are well trained, have experience as well as meet their expectations. For statement (C3.1) 64.1%, (C3.2) 2.5% and (C3.3) 75.8% do not support the above statement, while on the other hand, the 35.7%, 2.27% and 21.2% are in support with the above variables. The majority of respondents are not satisfied with the services rendered by the post office staff.

For statements C3.4 and C3.5, the respondents were asked to respond based on the service expectation as promised by the post offices. (C3.4) 69.5% and (C3.5) 64.8% portray respondents' in the post office fails to meet their expectations and also over-promise its consumer without meeting their expectations, while 30.5% and 35.2% support the statement the above statements.

According to the responses gathered in statement C3.6 (70.7%), it could be observed that the respondents are not happy with the overall service quality in the various postal branches. Finally, the responses in C3.7 (63%) and C3.8 (69.3%) depict that there will not come back to the post office for any services and will not recommend the post to other people. However, it is also important to note that some of the respondents have indicated that despite receiving services from the post office, they are not satisfied with the overall services in the post offices. For this reason, management needs to take into account problems hindering its overall services satisfaction in order to improve its consumer's service excellently. Figure 5.17 summarizes the views on overall satisfaction.

Figure 5.17: Summary of views on overall satisfaction

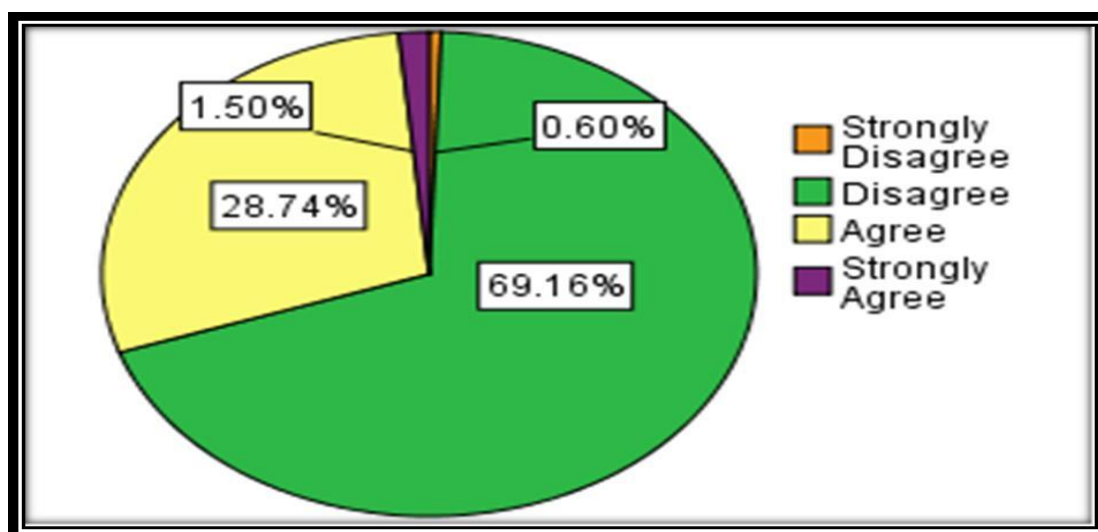


Figure 5.17, shows that most respondents disagreed with a 69.76% on all the variables used to measure overall satisfaction. Only 30.24% of the respondents agreed with the above variables.

Figure 5.18 below present the overall satisfaction of the postal service in the selected branches as indicated in the figure below.

Figure 5.18: Responses to overall satisfaction

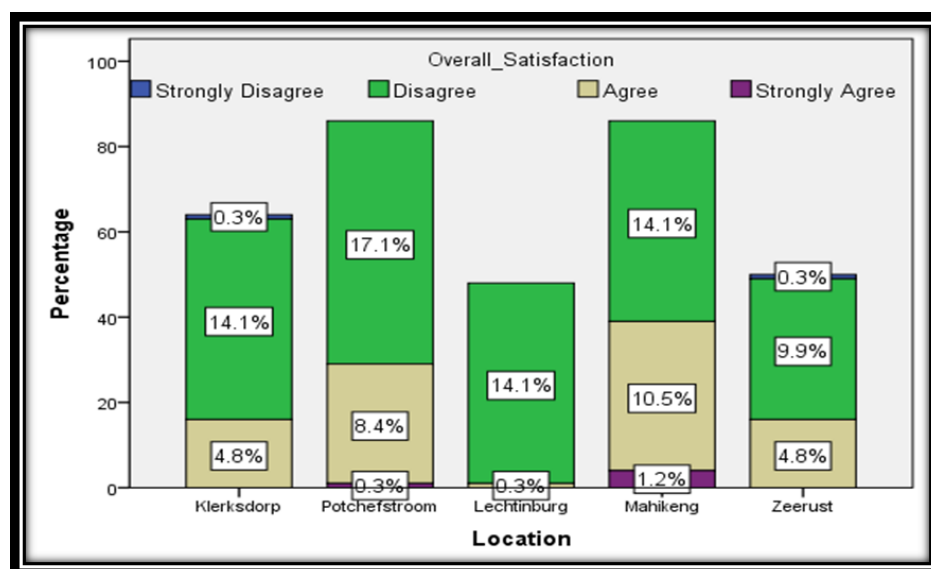


Figure 5.18 portrays that only 30.3% of the respondents from Klerksdorp, Potchefstroom, Lichtenburg, Mafikeng and Zeerust post office agreed with all the variables used for measuring assurance, while 69.7% of the respondents disagree. It is clear that the majority of the postal service consumers are not satisfied with the overall services in the five postal branches. The subsequent section presents the expectations and perceptions of consumers on service quality.

5.6 Expectations and perceptions of consumers on the service quality

The purpose of this section was to obtain data regarding postal service customers' expectations and perceptions of the level of service quality offered in their various postal branches.

5.6.1 Quantitative of inferential statistics

In computing inferential statistics, a prediction is made about a population based on a sample. Inferential statistics establish associations between or among variables. This section presents the results obtained in the inferential statistics of this study. The correlation analysis, chi-square test of independence and the structural equation model are presented in this section.

5.6.1.1 Reliability of the measuring instrument

The reliability of research measuring instrument is the capacity of the instrument to measure what it is supposed to measure each time it is used (Pallant, 2011). Reliability in this study used Cronbach's Alpha (α) reliability coefficient to measure the reliability of the questionnaire and the results obtained are outlined in Table 5.5.

Table 5.5: Reliability Test: Expectations and Perceptions of Consumers on the Service Quality

Statistic	Expectation		Current Status	
	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Service Centre	.686	10	.600	6
Frontline Employees	.857	14	.723	14
Postal Service Managers	.901	11	.884	11

Table 5.5 shows that the Cronbach's Alpha for the items under each of the constructs on expectations and current status of service quality is at least 0.6 as advised by Dasgupta *et al.* (2017). This implies that all these constructs are reliable. The expectations of service quality for managers had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.901, frontline employees: 0.857 and service centre: 0.686. The current status on perceptions of service quality for managers had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.884, frontline employees: 0.723 and service centre: 0.906. For all the actual surveys, the Cronbach's alphas were above 0.70 which shows high consistency therefore, high reliability. These results are comparable to similar studies, for example, Cronbach's alpha of 0.74 (Saleh & Ryan, 1991); 0.76 to 0.96 (Blessic *et al.*, 2011) and 0.96 and 0.93 respectively (Manwa, 2011). The subsequent section presents the construct validity analysis using confirmatory factor analysis.

5.6.1.2 Construct validity analysis using confirmatory factor analysis

Construct validity confirms the reliability of all the variables measured in a particular construct. In this study, a construct validity analysis test was applied to all the sections of the questionnaire and the results are presented in Table 5.6.

Table 5.6: Validity Test: Expectations of Consumers on the Service Quality

Service centre expectation	Estimate	Std.Err	z-value	P-Value
D1 E1.1	0.116	0.038	3.046	0.002
D1 E1.3	0.443	0.044	10.134	0.000
D1 E1.4	0.496	0.050	9.941	0.000
D1 E1.5	0.536	0.047	11.344	0.000
D1 E1.6	0.536	0.051	10.474	0.000
D1 E1.7	0.580	0.044	13.101	0.000
D1 E1.8	0.124	0.043	2.907	0.004
D1 E1.9	0.339	0.038	9.003	0.000
Frontline Employees Expectation	Estimate	Std.Err	z-value	P-Value
D2 E1.1	0.465	0.057	8.191	0.000
D2 E1.2	0.078	0.032	2.403	0.016
D2 E1.3	0.501	0.043	11.575	0.000
D2 E1.4	0.574	0.047	12.270	0.000
D2 E1.5	0.296	0.042	7.066	0.000
D2 E1.6	0.235	0.039	5.943	0.000
D2 E1.7	0.453	0.045	9.964	0.000
D2 E1.8	0.543	0.042	12.944	0.000
D2 E1.9	0.509	0.049	10.296	0.000
D2 E1.10	0.377	0.042	9.048	0.000
D2 E1.11	0.585	0.033	17.610	0.000
D2 E1.12	0.469	0.045	10.359	0.000
D2 E1.13	0.643	0.041	15.633	0.000
D2 E1.14	0.656	0.043	15.185	0.000
Postal Service Managers Expectation	Estimate	Std.Err	z-value	P-Value
D3 E1.1	0.516	0.043	11.910	0.000
D3 E1.2	0.632	0.038	16.608	0.000
D3 E1.3	0.737	0.042	17.529	0.000
D3 E1.4	0.620	0.036	17.349	0.000
D3 E1.5	0.731	0.042	17.328	0.000
D3 E1.6	0.697	0.038	18.259	0.000
D3 E1.7	0.570	0.031	18.548	0.000
D3 E1.8	0.364	0.037	9.852	0.000
D3 E1.9	0.188	0.036	5.276	0.000
D3 E1.10	0.401	0.040	9.964	0.000
D3 E1.11	0.380	0.039	9.725	0.000

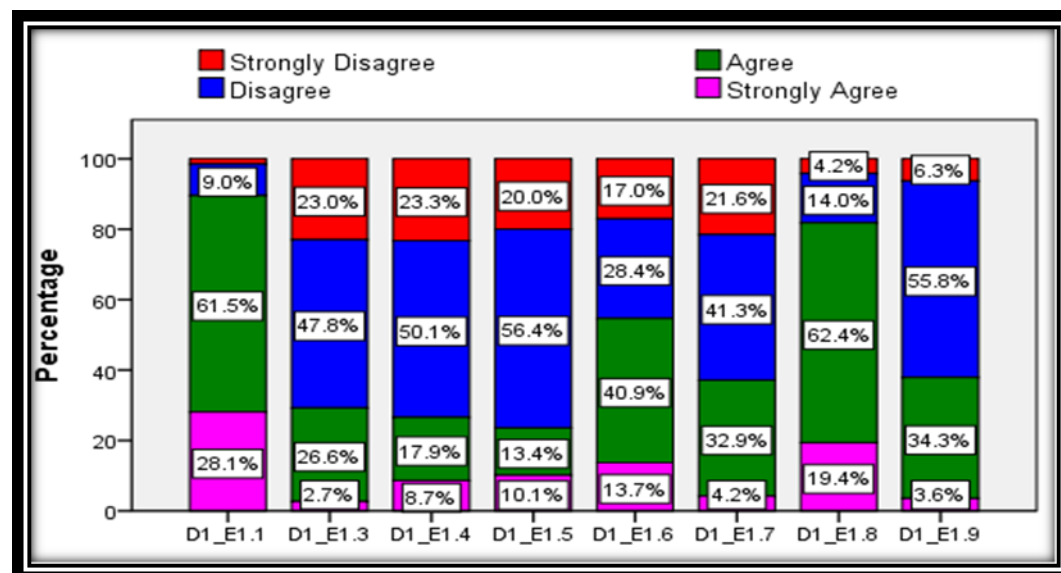
The confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) results in Table 5.6 show that the items in each of the constructs on the customers' expectations of the service quality are valid since the items are

significantly (p -values < 0.05) loading on the respective constructs. It is worth noting that the items (D1 E1.2) and (D1 E1.10) were excluded from their construct since they were insignificant (p -values > 0.05). The responses to these constructs are presented in the following clustered bar charts.

5.6.3.1 Views on expectations of consumers on the service centre

A service centre is an organisational unit which provides a specific service or product. This service centre provides services to postal consumers. Consumers were asked on their expectations on the services provided by their postal branches. Figure 5.19 presents views of consumers in the service centre in the five postal branches.

Figure 5.19: Responses service centre



Variables:

D1.1 Situated in a convenient location.

D1.3 Equipped with comfortable facilities and equipment.

D1.4 Visually presented brochures and directories.

D1.5 Equipped with a mentoring service system.

D1.6 Equipped with security systems.

D1.7 Guarantees to send or receive mails and parcels.

D1.8 Offering affordable postal services.

D1.9 Operating during convenient hours.

The responses gathered in the negative responses, statement (D1.1) 89.6%, are not in support that the post office situated in a convenient location, while on the other hand, 10.4% are supported. (D1.3) show that 29.3% disagree their post offices are not equipped with comfortable facilities and equipment, while 70.7% are in support. Responses in (D1.4) 26.6%, disagree there are visually presented brochures and directories in their post offices, while on the other hand, 73.4 % agree with the above statement. (D1.5) 76.4% and (D1.6) 62.9% of the respondents are not in support that the post office is equipped with a mentoring service system that assesses performance and also equipped with security systems, while 23.6% and 37.1% of the respondents support this statement.

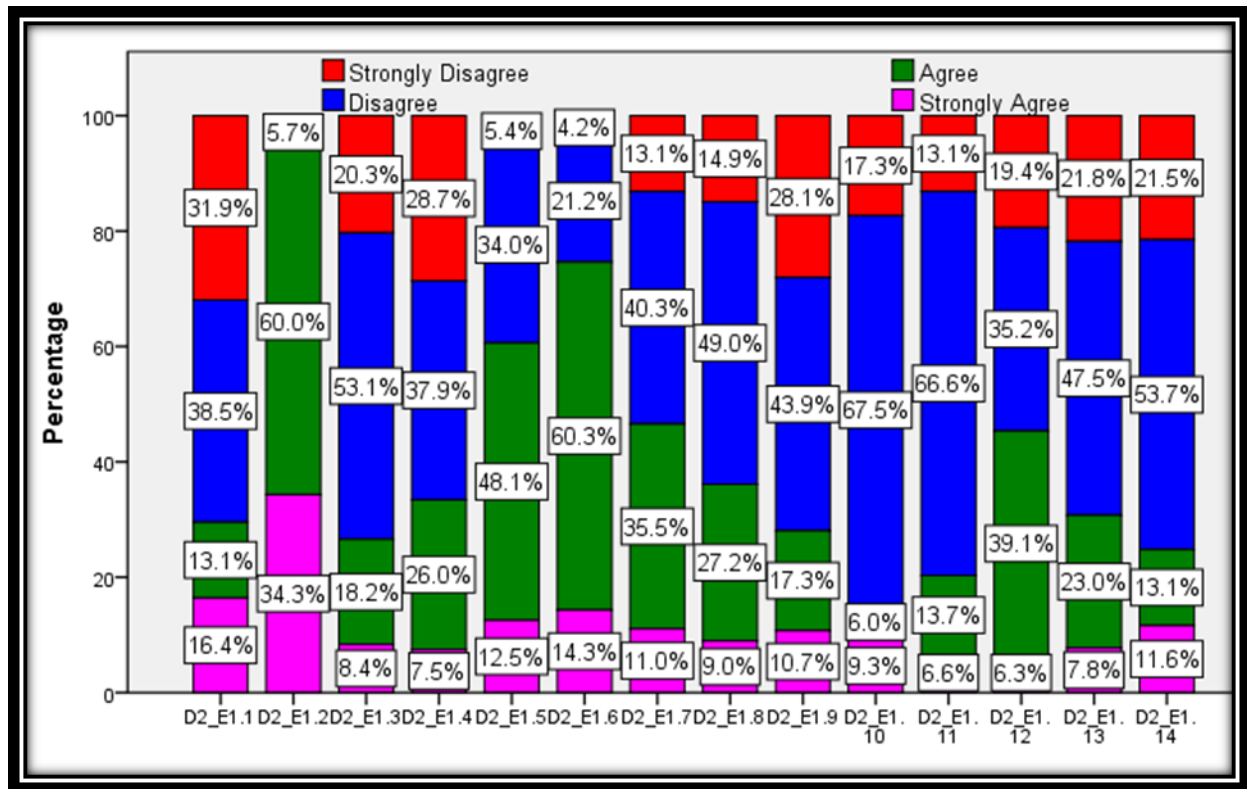
Concerning statement (D1.7), 62.9% respondents disagree that the post office guarantees to send or receive mails and parcels are reliable, while on the other hand, 37.1% support the above statement. (D1.8) 14.2% are not in support with the statement that the post office offers affordable postal services, while 81.8% of the postal consumers are in support that the post office offers affordable postal services.

Finally, for statement (D1.9) 62.1% disagree that the operating hours are convenient to consumers, while on the other hand, 37.9% of the postal consumers accept the operating hours at the post office. From the results obtained in this section, it is clear that the service centre has not effectively adopted operational service mechanisms and infrastructure to reach customers.

5.6.3.2 Expectations on service quality - Frontline employees

Frontline employees are the people who answer the phone or help clients in person in spaces like the post office, shops, banks and hospitals. Because they are the first port of call for many clients, they have a strong impact on user experience and influence the public's perception of the brand they represent. The respondents were provided with a set of statements related to expectations with frontline employees on service quality their offer to postal consumers. Figure 5.20 below shows that responses to frontline employee's expectations.

Figure 5.20: Responses to frontline employee's expectation



Variables:

- D2.1 Are friendly and polite.
- D2.2 Are neat in appearance.
- D2.3 Perform services accurately.
- D2.4 Provide services on time.
- D2.5 Solve problems with honesty.
- D2.6 Keep records confidential.
- D2.7 Are willing to serve clients.
- D2.8 Are available to respond to clients' requests.
- D2.9 Are flexible in addressing clients' demands.

D2.10 Always deliver mails and parcels to the correct address at all times.

D2.11 Are quick to resolve mail and parcel problems.

D2.12 Are knowledgeable about postal services.

D2.13 Are never too busy to respond to my requests.

D2.14 Take opinions or complaints into consideration.

This section covers all the responses obtained in Figure 5.20. With regard to the negative findings, most respondents affirmed in statement D2.1 (70.4%), that staff are polite. Also statement D2.2 (65.7%), D2.3 (73.4%) portray respondents are in disagreement with the statement that staff are neat in appearance and perform services accurately. D2.4 (66.6%) and D2.7 (53.4%) portray negative findings, majority of the respondents affirmed staff do not provide services on time, and are not willing to serve clients effectively at all times. Statement D2.8 (63.9) and D2.9 (72%), portray respondents' disagreement that staff are not available to respond to clients as well as not flexible in addressing clients at all times. Statement D2.10 (84.8%) affirmed that staff do not deliver mails and parcels to the correct address at all time.

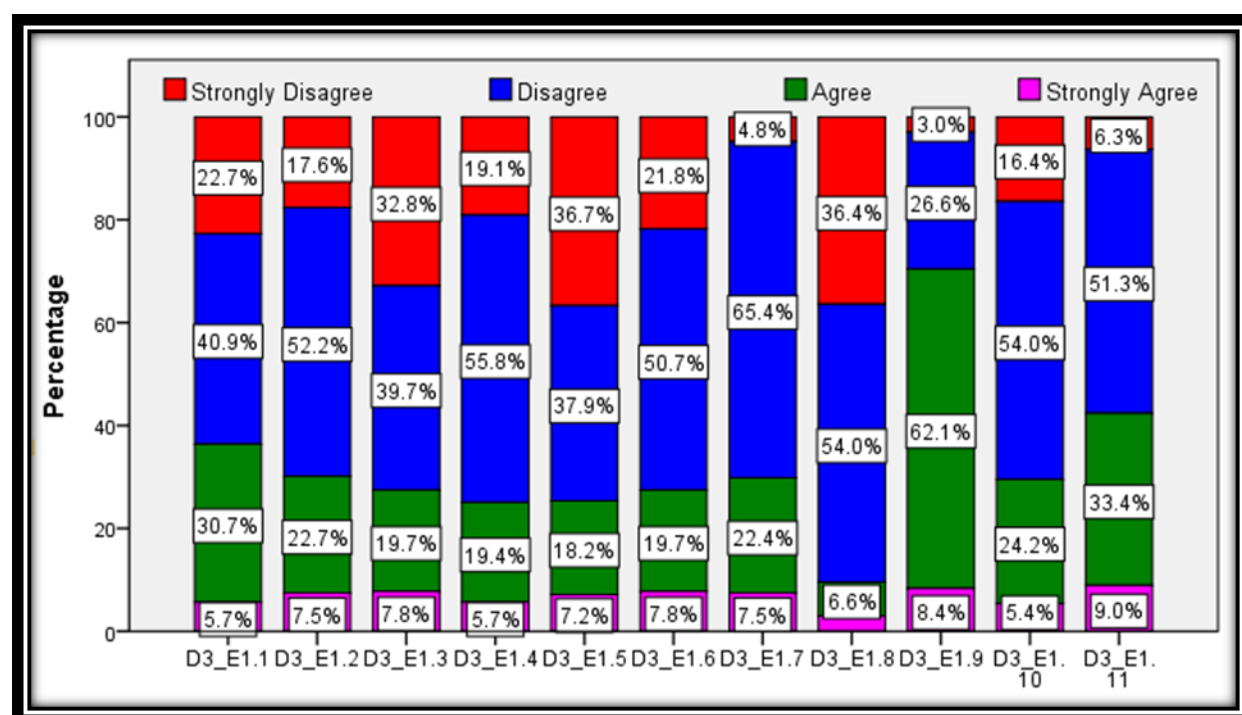
The findings further portray respondents' disagreement with the statement D2.11 (79.7%), that the staff are quick in resolve mail and parcel problems at the various post offices. Also the findings in statement D2.12 (54.6%) portray respondents' disagreement staff are been knowledgeable about postal service, reason by low quality service it been delivered. This could be observed in statement D2.13 (69.3%) where the findings indicate respondents disagree staff respond to their requests on time. Finally, in the negative responses, statement D2.14 (75.2) shows that postal consumers disagree that staff take into account consumers' opinions or complaints into consideration. The negative findings in this statement portray that respondents are not satisfied with the services been rendered by frontline employers in the various postal branches.

With regard to the positive findings, most respondents affirmed in statement D2.5 (60.6%) that the staff solve problems with honesty. Findings in D2.6 (47.6%) indicate respondents' agreement that staff keep records confidential.

5.6.3.3 Expectations service quality-postal service managers

Managers are responsible for coordinating and integrating activities of other people in the organisation. Managers are leaders and they work to achieve the organisation goals by using limited resources such as people and money in an efficient and effective way. The responses on the understanding of expectations of consumers with regard to service quality offered by managers in the postal branches are captured in Figure 5.21.

Figure 5.21: Responses to Postal Service Managers Expectation



Variables

D3.1 Are visible.

D3.2 Are accessible.

D3.3 Are approachable.

D3.4 Follow up on complaints and report to clients.

D3.5 Provide services on time.

D3.6 Are friendly and polite.

D3.7 Treat a customer as a king.

D3.8 Often conduct surveys on the service quality of the branch.

D3.9 Ensure that a visible suggestion/complaint box is available and encourage clients to use it.

D3.10 Speak to clients and find out about their needs.

D3.11 Managers as problem solvers

In this section, the statements (D3.1) 63.6%, (D3.2) 69.8%, (D3.3) 72.5% suggest that the managers of the postal branches are not visible, accessible and are not approachable to its consumers, while only 36.4%, 30.2% and 27.5% support that managers are problem-solvers.

Responses in (D3.4) 74.9%, disagree managers follow up on complaints and report to clients, while only 25.1% agreed. Statement (D3.5) 74.6% and (D3.6) 72.5% disagree managers provide services on time and are friendly and polite to consumers, while only 25.4% and 27.5% agreed that they are indeed friendly and polite.

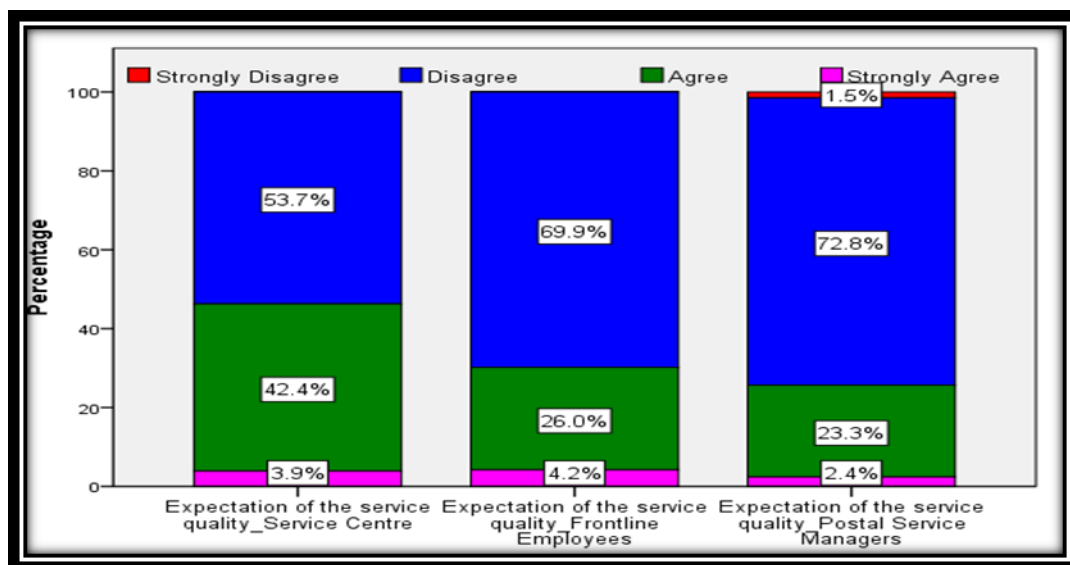
For statements (D3.7), (D3.8), (D3.10) and (D3.11) the respondents were asked to respond based on the statement that managers treat a customer as a king, often conduct surveys, speak to clients and find out about their needs as well as been a problem solver to consumers. D3.7, 70.2%, do not support the statement that managers treat a customer as a king. D3 8, 90.4%, also do not support the statement that managers often conduct surveys. Statement D3.10, 70.4% respondents do not agree managers speak to clients and find out about their needs and D3.11, 57.6% also do not support the statement that managers been a problem solver to consumer's dissatisfaction for postal services.

Finally, statement D3.9 (70.4%) respondents are convinced that the post offices has visible suggestion/complaint box and encourage clients to use it, while only 29.6% deny this availability. From the findings, it is clear that postal managers do not take into account the well- being of customers to ensure they are properly served and satisfied with the postal services.

5.6.3.4 An overall view on the expectations of consumers on the service quality at post offices

This section presents the results of the overall views on the expectations of consumers on the service centre, expectations of service quality from frontline employees and postal service managers' expectation.

Figure 5.22: Summarises the responses



The responses obtained in Figure 5.22 depict that 53.7% respondents disagreed that the service centre service quality does not meet their expectations, while on the other hand, 46.3% of the respondents agreed with the statement. The findings further indicate that, 69.9% portray respondents' are not in support of the statement that frontline employee's meet their expectations with regard to service delivery, while only 30.2% of the respondents' are not in support with the statement. Finally, 74.3% of the respondents are not in support that postal service managers meet their expectations, while only 25.7% of the respondents concur with the statement.

5.6.3.5 Overall expectations of consumers in the service centre

Figure 5.23 below indicates the responses of the various postal service centre, depicting how the postal services consumers in the five postal branches feel toward the postal services offered to them.

Figure 5.23: Expectations of consumers in the service centre

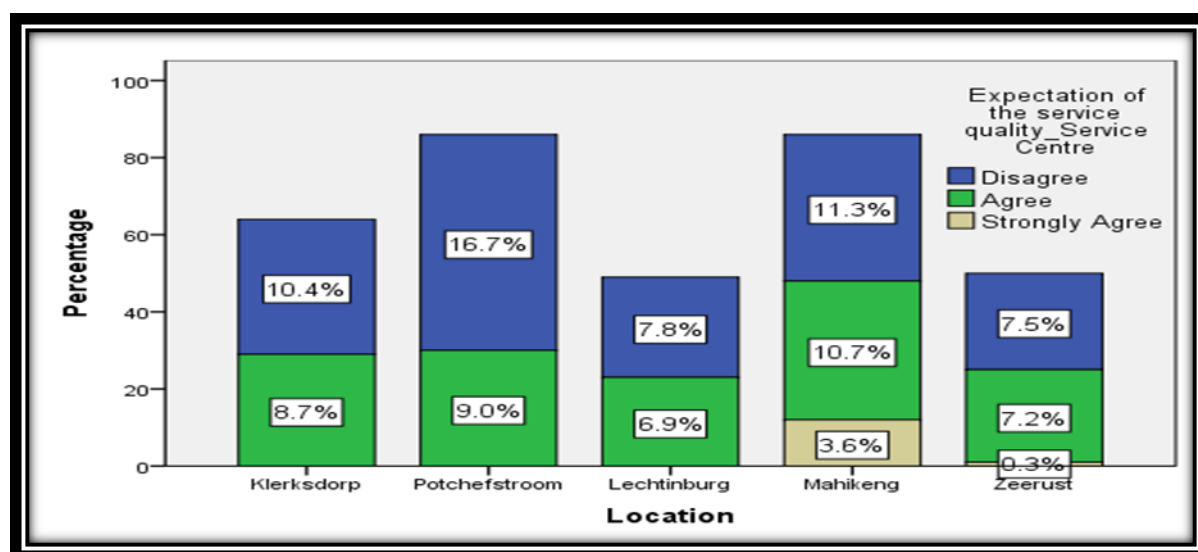


Figure 5.23 portrays that only 53.7% of the respondents from Klerksdorp, Potchefstroom, Lichtenburg, Mafikeng and Zeerust post office disagree with the statement that service centre provides better service quality to its consumers, while 46.3% of the respondents agreed with the statement. The majority of the postal service consumers are not satisfied with the overall services in the post offices service centre. The subsequent section presents overall views on the expectations of consumers with frontline employees.

5.6.3.6 Overall expectations of consumers with frontline employees

This section presents the responses of the five postal branches with regards services offered to consumers through the post office frontline employees. Figure 5.24 gives details of the results.

Figure 5.24: Expectations of consumers with frontline employees



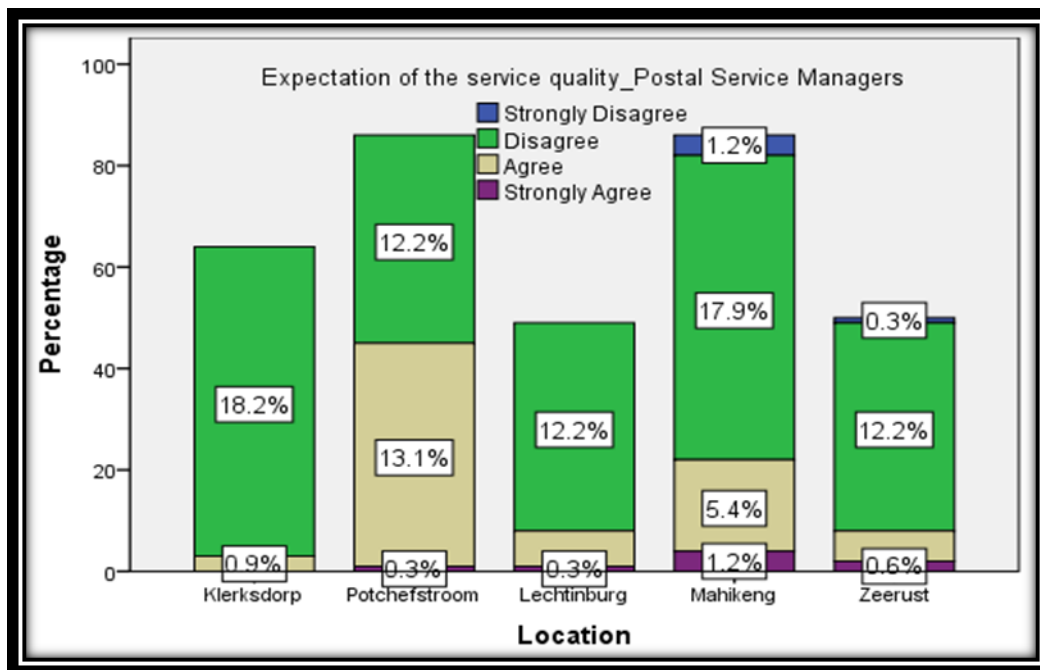
Responses from Klerksdorp post office, from statements (D2.1) to (D2.14) show 4.5% respectively support the statement above, while 14.6% disagree with the above statement notes. Potchefstroom post office has a response rate of 20.3% not in support with the above statement, while 5.4% are in support of the above statements.

The responses as obtained in Lichtenburg post office indicate that 11.3% are in disagreement with the above statement, whereas 3.3% are in support of D2.1 to D2.14. For the Mafikeng post office, a record 14.3% disagree with the above statement, while 11.4% are in support of the above statement. Finally, responses from the Zeerust post office show that 9.3% do not support the above statement, while 5.7% are in support of the above statement.

5.6.3.7 Overall expectations of consumers with managers

This concept was included to know the overall responses of the targeted post offices on the expectations of consumers with regard to postal services offer by managers. The response are captured in Figure 5.25.

Figure 5. 25: Expectations of consumers with managers



The responses in Figure 5.25 indicate that from Klerksdorp post office, statements D2.1 to D2.11 show 0.9% respectively support the statement note above, while 18.2% disagree with the above statement. Potchefstroom post office has a response rate of 12.2% not in support with the above statement, while 13.4% are in support.

The responses as obtained in Lichtenburg post office indicate that 12.2% are in disagreement with the above statement, whereas 0.3% are in support. For the Mafikeng post office, record 19.1% disagree with the above statement, while 6.6% are in support. Finally, responses from the Zeerust post office show that 12.5% do not support the above statement, while 0.6% support this statement. The next section discusses the current status of consumers on the service quality.

5.7 Consumers on the service quality (Current status)

This construct discusses the current status of consumers on the service quality at that moment the services were delivered. Table 5.7 summarises the validity test on the current status of consumers on the service quality.

Table 5.7: Validity Test: Current Status of Consumers on the Service Quality

Service center Current Status	Estimate	Std.Err	z-value	P-Value
D1 CS1.3	0.409	0.054	7.511	0.000
D1 CS1.4	0.491	0.051	9.698	0.000
D1 CS1.5	0.479	0.053	9.058	0.000
D1 CS1.6	0.295	0.061	4.851	0.000
D1 CS1.7	0.445	0.075	5.954	0.000
D1 CS1.9	0.267	0.055	4.890	0.000
Frontline Employees Current Status	Estimate	Std.Err	z-value	P-Value
D2 CS1.1	0.361	0.059	6.127	0.000
D2 CS1.3	0.377	0.044	8.475	0.000
D2 CS1.4	0.512	0.047	10.961	0.000
D2 CS1.5	0.173	0.044	3.932	0.000
D2 CS1.6	0.399	0.134	2.971	0.003
D2 CS1.7	0.355	0.046	7.800	0.000
D2 CS1.8	0.527	0.042	12.584	0.000
D2 CS1.9	0.411	0.049	8.469	0.000
D2 CS1.10	0.231	0.039	5.913	0.000
D2 CS1.11	0.465	0.032	14.358	0.000
D2 CS1.12	0.441	0.047	9.450	0.000
D2 CS1.13	0.608	0.040	15.274	0.000
D2 CS1.14	0.613	0.044	14.055	0.000
Postal Service Managers Current Status	Estimate	Std.Err	z-value	P-Value
D3 CS1.1	0.620	0.046	13.515	0.000
D3 CS1.2	0.619	0.041	15.147	0.000
D3 CS1.3	0.747	0.043	17.308	0.000
D3 CS1.4	0.626	0.037	16.969	0.000
D3 CS1.5	0.644	0.042	15.329	0.000
D3 CS1.6	0.681	0.038	17.793	0.000
D3 CS1.7	0.555	0.032	17.232	0.000
D3 CS1.8	0.275	0.036	7.711	0.000
D3 CS1.9	0.128	0.036	3.586	0.000
D3 CS1.10	0.422	0.040	10.571	0.000
D3 CS1.11	0.352	0.045	7.877	0.000

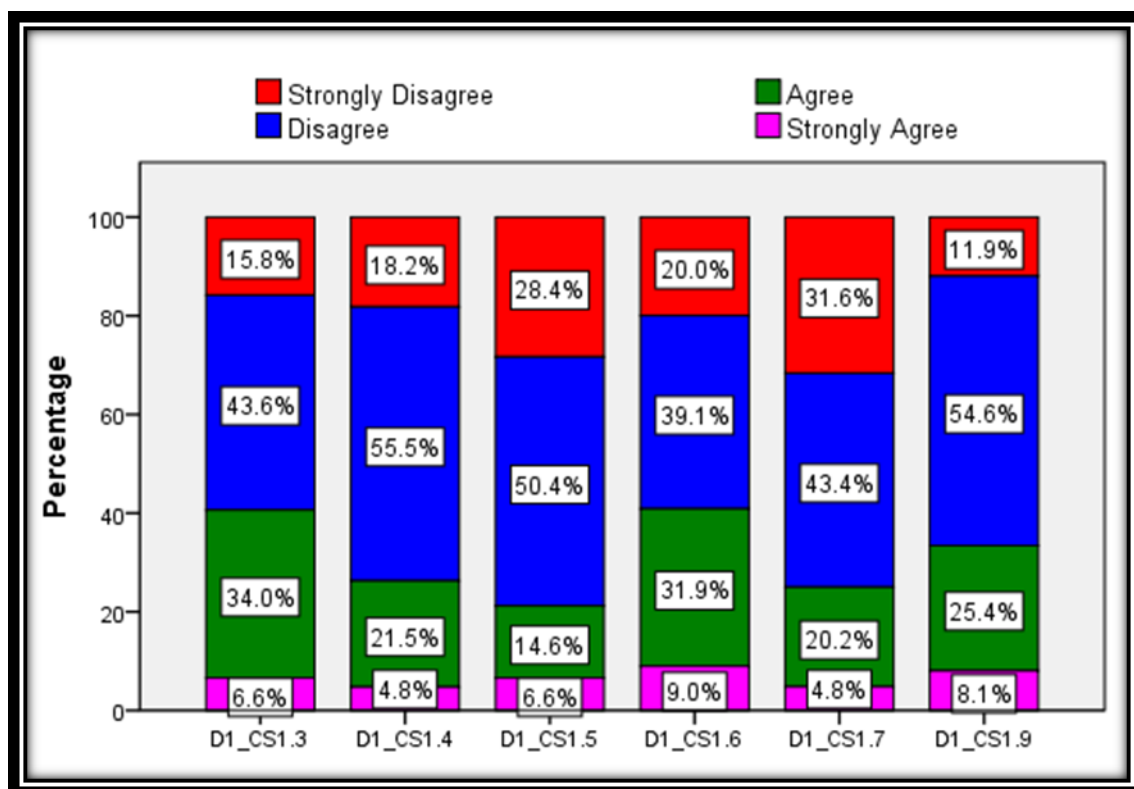
The confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) results in Table 5.7 shows that the items in each of the constructs on the customers' perceptions of the current status of the service quality are valid since the items are significantly ($p\text{-values} < 0.05$) loading on their respective constructs. It is worth noting that the item (D2) and (CS1.2) was excluded from its construct since it was

insignificant (p -values > 0.05). The responses to these constructs are presented in the following clustered bar charts.

5.7.1 Views on service centre current status

This construct was added to investigate the service centre current status of consumers at the time the services was offered at the five postal branches. Figure 5.26 presents the respondents' views on the current status of consumers at the service centre of the post offices.

Figure 5.26: Responses to service centre current status



Variables:

D1.3 Equipped with comfortable facilities and equipment.

D1.4 Visually presented brochures and directories.

D1.5 Equipped with a mentoring service system.

D1.6 Equipped with security systems.

D1.7 Guarantees to send or receive mails and parcels.

D1.9 Operating during convenient hours.

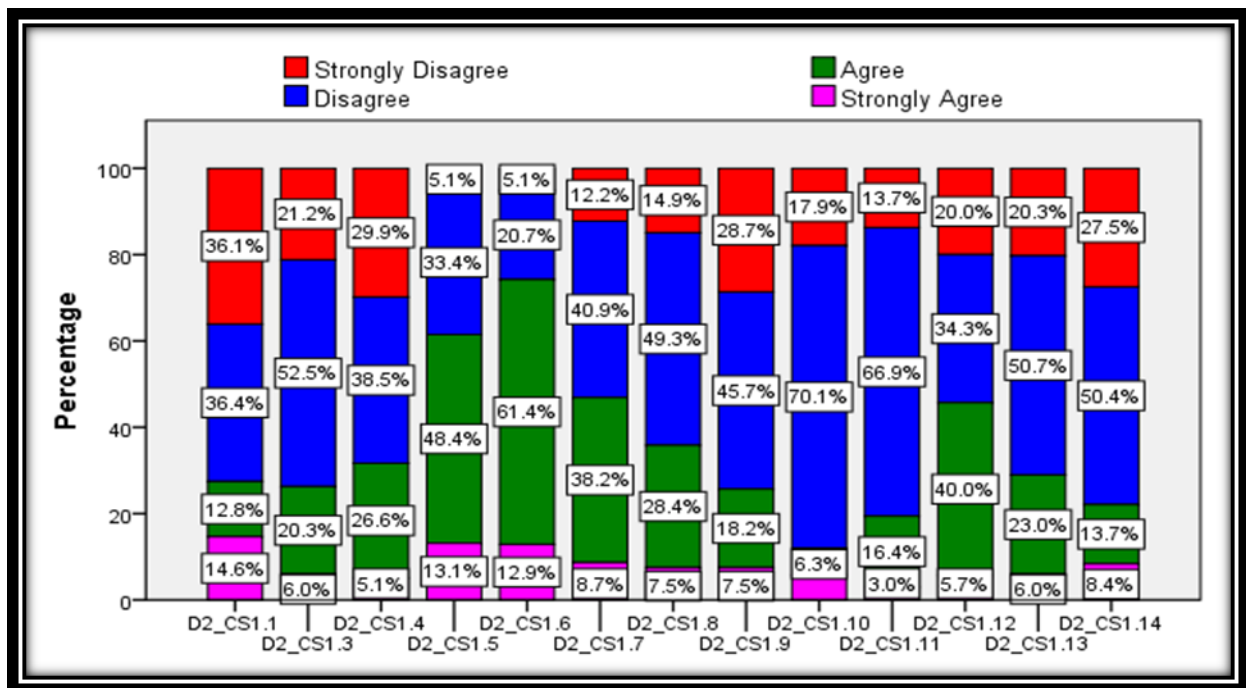
According to the responses in item (D1.3), 59.4% disagree with the statement that the post office is equipped with comfortable facilities and equipment, while 40.6% concur with the statement. (D1.4) 75.5% of the respondents are not in support of the statement that the post office gives visually presented brochures and directories to in consumers, while only 24.5% are in support. In (D1.5), 78.8% of the respondents disagree the post office is equipped with a mentoring service system to improve work performance, while only 21.2% of the respondents do support the above statement.

From the above figure, (D1.6) 59.1% of the postal consumers support that the post office is equipped with security systems, while 40.9% of the consumers do not. In statement (D1.7), 70% of the respondents are not in support of the statement that guarantees to send or receive mails and parcels through the post office is trustworthy, while only 25% are in support. Finally, (D1.9) 66.5% of the respondents are not in support with the operating hours perceived as convenient to them, while on the order hand, 33.5% of the respondents support the statement.

5.7.2 Views on frontline employee's current status

In this section, the respondents were provided with a set of statements related to frontline employee's current status in post offices on service quality offered to postal consumers. The key measurements in this category were mixed continuous responses such as strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree. Figure 5.27 below shows the reactions to frontline employees on current status.

Figure 5.27: Responses to frontline employee's current status



Variables:

D2.1 Are friendly and polite.

D2.2 Are neat in appearance.

D2.3 Perform services accurately.

D2.4 Provide services on time.

D2.5 Solve problems with honesty.

D2.6 Keep records confidential.

D2.7 Are willing to serve clients.

D2.8 Are available to respond to clients' requests.

D2.9 Are flexible in addressing clients' demands.

D2.10 Always deliver mails and parcels to the correct address at all times.

D2.11 Are quick to resolve mail and parcel problems.

D2.12 Are knowledgeable about postal services.

D2.13 Are never too busy to respond to my requests.

D2.14 Take opinions or complaints into consideration.

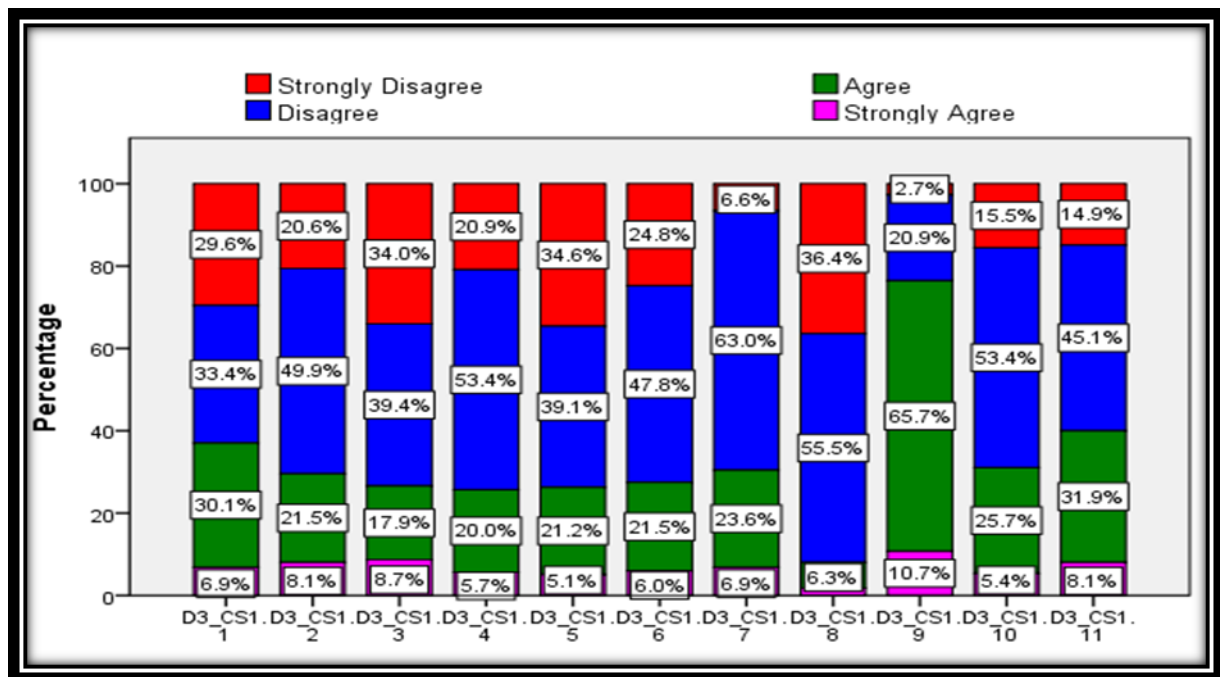
This section covers all the responses obtained in Figure 5.27. From statement (D2.1) 70.4%, (D2.2) 65.7%, (D2.3) 73.4%, (D2.4) 66.6%, (D2.7) 53.4% and (D2.8) 63.9% show respondents are not in support with the statement that staff are polite, neat in appearance, perform services accurately, provide services on time, are willing to serve clients and are available to respond to clients' requests, while only 29.6%, 34.3%, 26.6%, 33.4%, 46.6% and 36.1% are in support.

The findings from Figure 5.27 also show that (D2.9) 72%, (D2.10) 84.8%, (D2.11) 79.7%, (D2.12) 45.6%, (D2.13) 69.3% and (D2.14) 75.2% are not in support of the statement that staff are flexible in addressing clients' demands, deliver mails and parcels to the correct address, quick in resolve mail and parcel problems, having sufficient knowledge on postal services, not busy to respond consumers requests as well as taking into account consumers complaints into consideration, while on the other hand, 28%, 15.2%, 20.3%, 54.4%, 30.7% and 24.8% are in support with those statement. The above findings portray that respondents are not satisfied with the current services rendered by frontline employers in the various post offices.

5.7.3. Views on postal service managers' current status

The respondents were asked questions related to the current status services experience from managers. The essence of asking these questions was to determine how much they agree or disagree with factors related to postal service manager's current status which would help the researcher to gather information that clarifies the challenges on service quality at the postal branches. The responses from this category are captured in Figure 5.28.

Figure 5.28: Responses to postal service manager's current status



Variables

D3.1 Are visible.

D3.2 Are accessible.

D3.3 Are approachable.

D3.4 Follow up on complaints and report to clients.

D3.5 Provide services on time.

D3.6 Are friendly and polite.

D3.7 Treat a customer as a king.

D3.8 Often conduct surveys on the service quality of the branch.

D3.9 Ensure that a visible suggestion/complaint box is available and encourage clients to use it.

D3.10 Speak to clients and find out about their needs.

D3.11 Are problem solvers

According to the responses gathered in item D3.1 (63.6%), D3.2 (69.8), D3.3 (72.5%), the managers of the postal branches are not visible, accessible and are not approachable to its consumers. Responses in D3.4 (74.9%), disagree managers follow up on complaints and report to clients. D3.5 (74.6%) and D3.6 (72.5%) disagree managers provide services on time and are friendly and polite to consumers. Statement D3.7 (74.6%), D3.8 (74.6%), D3.10 (74.6%) D3.11 (74.6%) are also not in support that managers treat the customer as a king, often conduct surveys on the service quality of the branch, speak to clients and find out about their needs as well as been a problem solver to consumers. According to the negative responses, statement D3.9 (70.4%) respondents are in support that the postal branches have visible suggestion/complaint box available and encourage clients to use it.

5.7.4. Overall current status of consumers on the service quality

This section of the discussion, illustrate the responses of the five postal branches with regards to the current status of consumers on the service quality render to them by the post office. Figure 5.29 reflects a general overview of the current status of the services centre, the current status of the frontline employees and the current status of the postal services managers at the five postal branches. Figure 5.29 shows the result obtained.

Figure 5.29: Current status of consumers on the service quality

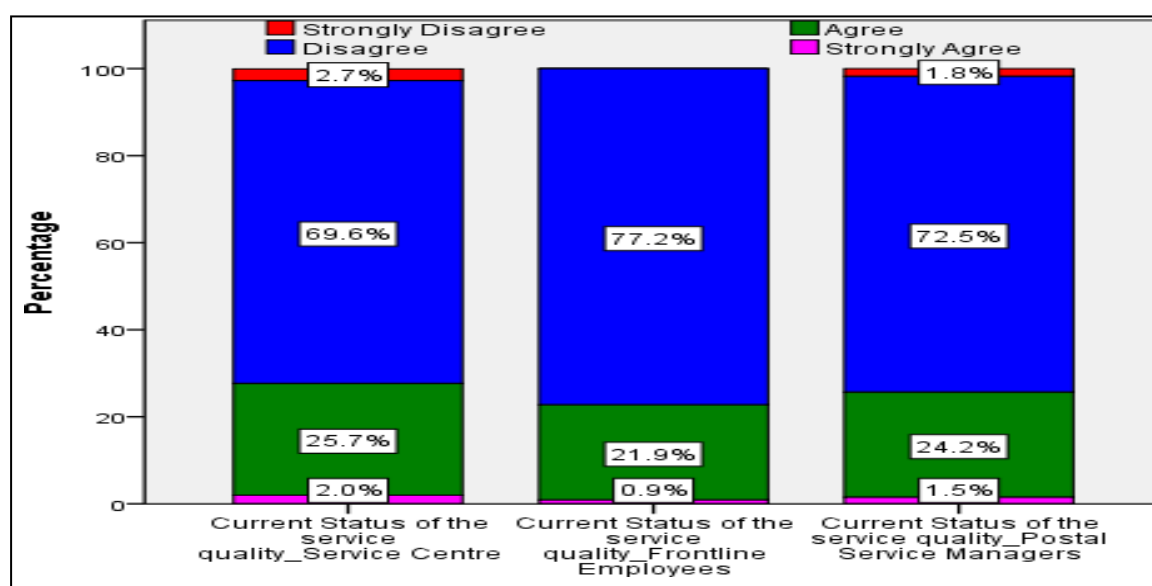
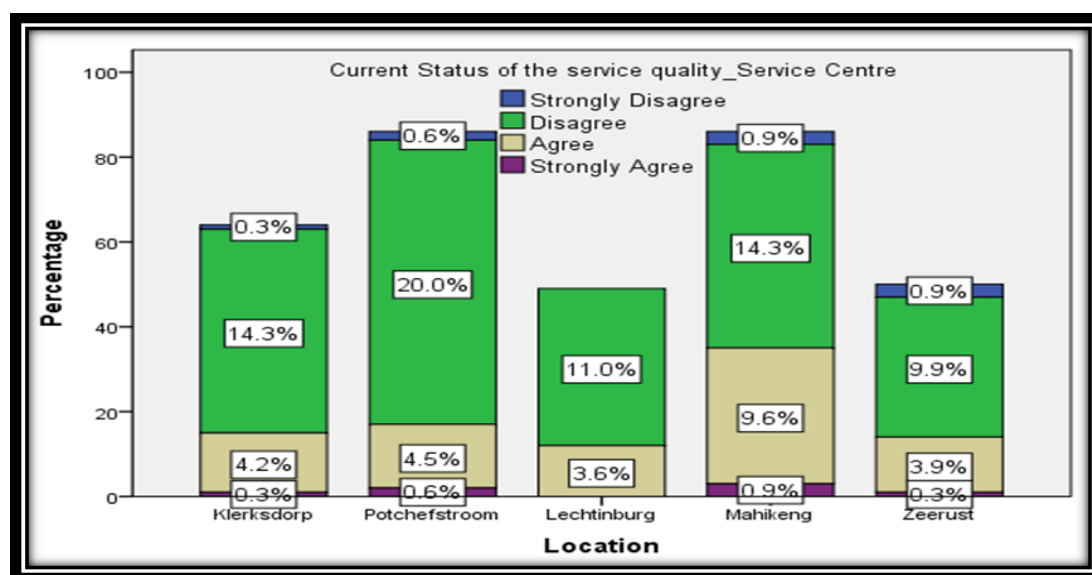


Figure 5.29 illustrates that most respondents disagreed (77.6%) to all the variables used to measure the current status of the service centre. Only (22.3%) of the respondents agreed. On the frontline employee's current status, (77.2%) are in disagreement with the variables while (22.8%) are in agreement with the variables. Finally, postal service manager's current status shows that 74.3% of the respondents are not in support of the variables, while on the other hand, 25.7% are in support of the variables measured.

5.7.5 Current status of consumers on the service quality of the service centre

Figure 5.30, 5.31 and 5.32, below is the analysis of the current status of consumers on the service quality of the service centre, current status of service quality frontline employees, as well as current status of service quality with service manages. The Figures below give details results.

Figure 5.30: Current status of consumers on the service quality of the service centre



Most respondents from Klerksdorp 14.6% disagreed with the variables used to measure current status service centre while 4.5% agree with the variables. In Potchefstroom, 20.6% disagree while 5.1% agree with the service centre variable. In Lichtenburg 11.0% are in disagreement with the variable while 3.6% are in support. 15.2% of respondents from Mafikeng are in agreement with the variable of the service centre, while 10.5% of respondent agree with the variables. Finally, 10.8% of the respondents from Zeerust disagree with the variable while 4.2% agree with the variables. Details on current status of service quality with frontline employees Figure 5.31 below.

Figure 5.31: Current status of service quality frontline employees

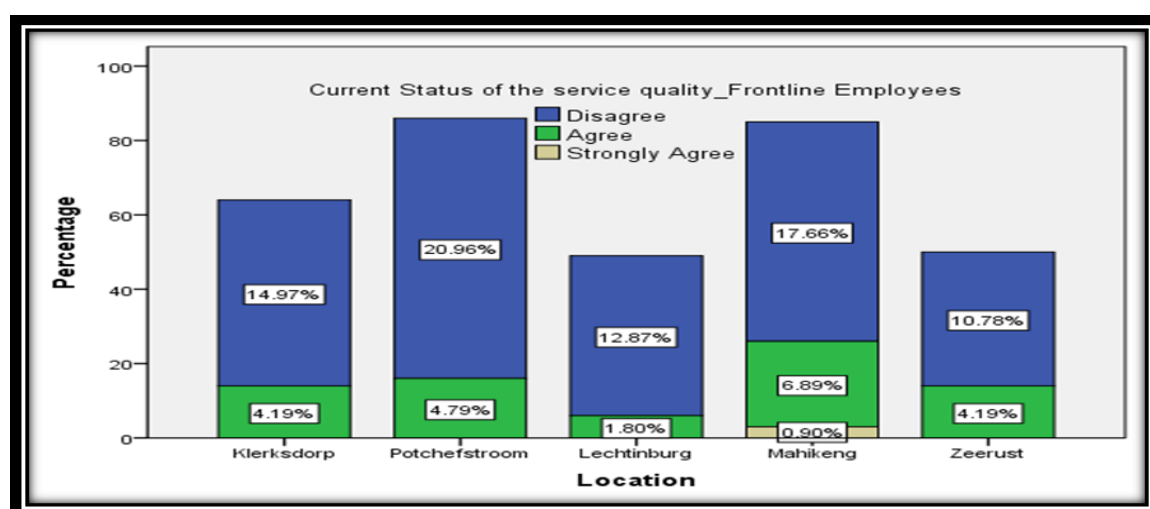
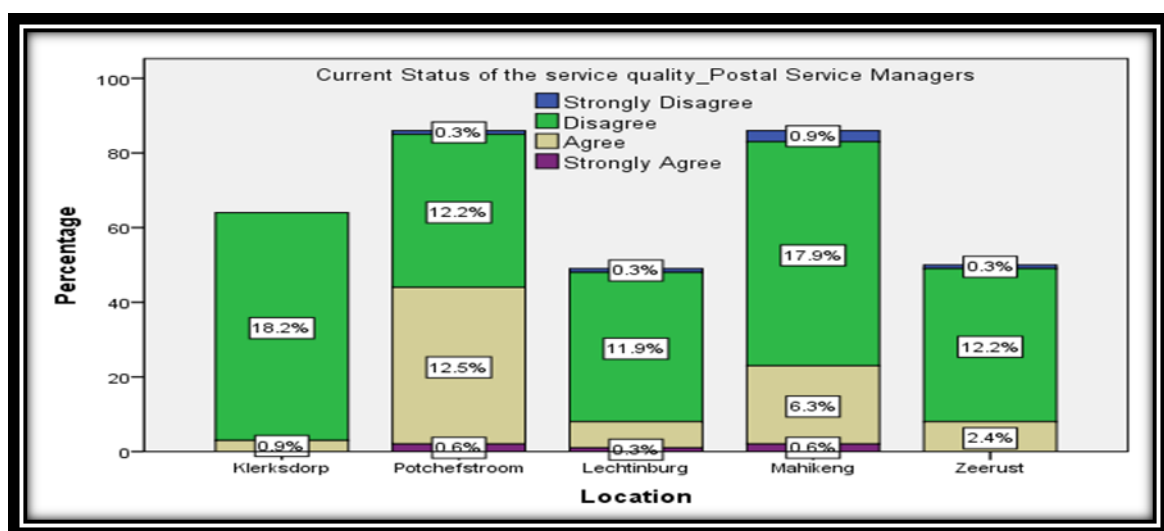


Figure 5.31 indicates that most respondents from Klerksdorp 14.9% disagreed with the variables used to measure current status service centre while 4.19% agree with the variables. In Potchefstroom, 20.96% disagree while 4.79% agree with the service centre variable. Looking at Lichtenburg 12.87% are in disagreement with the variable while 1.8% are in support. 17.66% of respondents from Mafikeng are in disagreement with the variable of the service centre, while 7.79.5% of respondent agree with the variables. Finally, 10.78% of the respondents from Zeerust disagree with the variable while 4.19% agree with the variables. Details current status of service quality with service manages Figure 5.32 below.

Figure 5.32: Current Status of Service Quality with service manages



Most respondents from Klerksdorp 18.2% disagreed with the variables used to measure, while 0.9% agree with the variables. In Potchefstroom, 12.5% disagree while 13.1% agree with the service centre variable. Looking at Lichtenburg 12.2% are in disagreement with the variable while 0.3% are in support. 18.8% respondents from Mafikeng are in agreement with the variable of the service centre, while 6.9% of the respondent agrees with the variables. Finally, 12.5% of the respondents from Zeerust disagree with the variable while 2.4% agree.

5.8 Difference between expectation and the current status of service quality

This section explains the difference between expectation and the current status of service quality in the five postal branches. Table 5.8 shows the different test statistics performed in order to measure consumer's expectation and the current status of service quality.

Table 5.8: Difference between expectation and current status of service quality

Test Statistics	Current Status of the service quality Service Centre - Expectation of the service quality Service Centre	Current Status of the service quality Frontline Employees - Expectation of the service quality Frontline Employees	Current Status of the service quality Postal Service Managers - Expectation of the service quality Postal Service Managers
Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test (Z)	-6.870	-5.203	-.784
p-value	.000	.000	.433

The table shows the outcomes from the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test, the expectation and the current status of the service centre as well as of the frontline employees differ significantly (p-values < 0.05). The expectations and current status of the postal service managers do not differ significantly (p-values < 0.05). These significant differences are presented in the next table.

Table 5.9: Significant differences

Ranks				
		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Current Status of the service quality Service Centre - Expectation of the service quality Service Centre	Negative Ranks	93	54.77	5094.00
	Positive Ranks	17	59.47	1011.00
	Ties	225		
	Total	335		
Current Status of the service quality Frontline Employees - Expectation of the service quality Frontline Employees	Negative Ranks	34 ^d	18.59	632.00
	Positive Ranks	2 ^e	17.00	34.00
	Ties	298 ^f		
	Total	334		

The table shows that there were 93 counts wherein the current status of the service quality, service centre is less than the expectation of the service quality service centre. There were 17 counts of when the current status of the service quality service centre was more than the expectation of the service quality service centre, and there were 225 counts of when the current status of the service quality service centre was exactly equal to the expectation of the service quality service centre. The 93 occurrences are a cause of concern since the current status failed to meet the consumers' expectations.

The table also shows that there were 34 occurrences of the current status of the service quality frontline employees being less than the expectation of the service quality frontline employees. There were 2 counts of when the current status of the service quality frontline employees was greater than the expectation of the service quality frontline employees, and there were 298 occasions of when the current status of the service quality frontline employees was exactly the

same as the expectation of the service quality frontline employees. The 34 occurrences raise serious questions since the current status failed to meet the consumers' expectations.

5.8.1 Difference in the service quality by location

The way in which services quality is offered by the five targeted postal branches is illustrated in Table 5.10 below.

Table 5.10: The difference in the service quality by location

Test Statistics^b				
	Tangibility	Reliability	Responsiveness	Assurance
Chi-Square	1.926	7.294	5.106	13.255
df	4	4	4	4
p-value	.749	.121	.277	.010
a. Kruskal Wallis Test				
b. Grouping Variable: Location				

Based on the Kruskal Wallis test, only assurance differed significantly across the locations (p-value < 0.05). Tangibility, Reliability and Responsiveness were statistically the same (p-values > 0.05) across the locations. The significant differences in Assurance are presented in the next table.

Table 5.11: Significant differences

Ranks			
	Location	N	Mean Rank
Assurance	Klerksdorp	64	162.38
	Potchefstroom	86	165.30
	Lichtenburg	49	140.76
	Mafikeng	86	190.19
	Zeerust	50	168.37
	Total	335	

The tables show that the mean rank of the customers' perceptions of the aspect of assurance is highest for Mafikeng, followed by Zeerust, followed by Potchefstroom, followed by Klerksdorp and the lowest mean rank is observed for Lichtenburg. Since the scale ranges from 1: Strongly Disagree to 5: Strongly Agree, the higher the mean the rank the more positive (towards

agreement side) the responses. That is, the consumers from Mafikeng are more in agreement that the post office centre grants them a feeling of assurance.

5.8.2 Difference in the overall satisfaction by location

This section indicates the overall satisfaction by location, table 5.12 give a summary of the result that was obtained.

Table 5.12: Difference in the overall satisfaction by location

Test Statistics	Overall Satisfaction
Chi-Square	29.074
Df	4
p-value	.000
a. Kruskal Wallis Test	
b. Grouping Variable: Location	

Again, based on the Kruskal Wallis test, overall satisfaction differed significantly across the locations ($p\text{-value} < 0.05$). Tangibility, Reliability and Responsiveness were statistically the same ($p\text{-values} > 0.05$) across the locations. The significant differences in overall satisfaction by location are presented in the next table.

Table 5.13: Significant differences

Ranks			
	Location	N	Mean Rank
Overall Satisfaction	Klerksdorp	64	157.05
	Potchefstroom	86	173.72
	Lichtenburg	48	121.41
	Mafikeng	86	194.49
	Zeerust	50	167.99
	Total	334	

The tables show that the mean rank of the customers' perceptions of overall satisfaction is highest for Mafikeng, followed by Potchefstroom, followed by Zeerust, followed by Klerksdorp and the lowest mean rank is observed for Lichtenburg. Since the scale ranges from 1: Strongly Disagree to 5: Strongly Agree, the higher the mean rank the more positive (towards agreement

side) the responses. That is, the customers from Mafikeng agree more that the post office centre offers them overall satisfaction.

5.8.3 Difference in the expectations of customers on the service quality by location

This section also shows the result that was obtained on the difference in the expectations of customers on the service quality by location.

Table 5.14: Difference in the expectations of customers on the service quality by location

Test Statistics^b			
	The expectation of the service quality Service Centre	The expectation of the service quality Frontline Employees	The expectation of the service quality Postal Service Managers
Chi-Square	12.189	19.634	46.020
Df	4	4	4
p-value	.016	.001	.000
a. Kruskal Wallis Test			
b. Grouping Variable: Location			

Extrapolating from the Kruskal Wallis test, expectations of customers on the service quality by Location differed significantly across the locations ($p\text{-value} < 0.05$). Tangibility, Reliability and Responsiveness were statistically the same ($p\text{-values} > 0.05$) across the locations. The significant differences in expectations of customers on the service quality by location are presented in the next table.

Table 5.15: Significant differences

Ranks			
	Location	N	Mean Rank
The expectation of the service quality Service Centre	Klerksdorp	64	163.45
	Potchefstroom	86	146.66
	Lichtenburg	49	166.07
	Mafikeng	86	191.17
	Zeerust	50	172.55
	Total	335	
The expectation of the service quality Frontline Employees	Klerksdorp	64	155.12
	Potchefstroom	86	151.09

	Lichtenburg	49	153.53
	Mafikeng	86	195.47
	Zeerust	50	180.51
	Total	335	
The expectation of the service quality Postal Service Managers	Klerksdorp	64	135.05
	Potchefstroom	86	212.24
	Lichtenburg	49	154.66
	Mafikeng	86	164.90
	Zeerust	50	152.49
	Total	335	

The tables show that the mean rank of the customers' perceptions of the aspect of expectation of the service quality service centre is highest for Mafikeng and Potchefstroom, followed by Klerksdorp, followed by Zeerust and the lowest mean rank is observed for Lichtenburg. Since the scale ranges from 1: Strongly Disagree to 4: Strongly Agree, the higher the mean the rank the more positive (towards agreement side) the responses. That is, the customers from Mafikeng are more in agreement that the post office centre grants them a feeling of assurance.

5.8.4 Difference in the current status of customers on the service quality by location

Table 5.16 shows the difference in the current status of customers on the service quality by location.

Table 5.16: Difference in the current status of customers on the service quality by location

Test Statistics^b			
	Current Status of the service quality Service Centre	Current Status of the service quality Frontline Employees	Current Status of the service quality Postal Service Managers
Chi-Square	8.496	8.144	43.610
Df	4	4	4
p-value	.075	.086	.000
a. Kruskal Wallis Test			
b. Grouping Variable: Location			
Ranks			
	Location	N	Mean Rank
Current Status of the service quality Postal Service Managers	Klerksdorp	64	135.59
	Potchefstroom	86	210.44
	Lichtenburg	49	152.79
	Mafikeng	86	167.98
	Zeerust	50	151.43

	Total	335	

The mean rank of the customers' perceptions of the aspect of the current status of the service quality postal service managers is highest for Mafikeng and Potchefstroom, followed by Klerksdorp, followed by Zeerust and the lowest mean rank is observed for Lichtenburg according to the tabulations above. Since the scale ranges from 1: Strongly Disagree to 4: Strongly Agree, the higher the mean the rank the more positive (towards agreement side) the responses. That is, the customers from Mafikeng concur more that the post office centre grants them a feeling of assurance.

This section shows the result of the relationship between other demographic variables and service quality variables in this study.

Table 5.17: Relationship between other demographic variables and service quality variables

		Age Group	Highest Educational Qualification	Household Monthly Income
Tangibility	Correlation Coefficient	.050	-.036	.076
	P-value	.358	.508	.163
Reliability	Correlation Coefficient	.035	-.036	.014
	P-value	.527	.512	.802
Responsiveness	Correlation Coefficient	.000	-.009	-.004
	P-value	.994	.873	.941
Assurance	Correlation Coefficient	-.025	.022	-.092
	P-value	.654	.693	.093
Overall Satisfaction	Correlation Coefficient	-.166**	-.133*	-.139*
	P-value	.002	.015	.011
The expectation of the service quality Service Centre	Correlation Coefficient	-.054	-.088	-.157**
	P-value	.323	.110	.004
The expectation of the service quality Frontline Employees	Correlation Coefficient	-.078	-.186**	-.140*
	P-value	.157	.001	.010
The expectation of the service quality Postal Service Managers	Correlation Coefficient	-.081	.032	.050
	P-value	.137	.560	.362
Current Status of the service quality Service	Correlation	-.078	-.030	-.121*

Centre	Coefficient			
	P-value	.156	.578	.026
Current Status of the service quality Frontline Employees	Correlation Coefficient	-.112*	-.081	-.077
	P-value	.040	.142	.159
Current Status of the service quality Postal Service Managers	Correlation Coefficient	-.084	.038	.030
	P-value	.125	.485	.585

The following pairs of variables are significantly correlated (p -values < 0.05): age group and overall satisfaction, age group and current status of the service quality frontline employees, highest education level and overall satisfaction, highest education level and expectation of the service quality frontline employees, monthly household income and overall satisfaction, monthly household income and expectation of the service quality service centre, monthly household income and expectation of the service quality frontline employees, and monthly household income and current status of the service quality service centre.

The strength of the correlations is determined using the absolute values of the correlation coefficients. The strength of the significant correlations in the table above may be interpreted as follows (Salkind, 2007): 0 to less than 0.2 is weak or no correlation, 0.2 to less than 0.4 is weak correlation, 0.4 to less than 0.6 is moderate correlation, 0.6 to less than 0.8 is strong correlation, and 0.8 to 1 is very strong correlation. The negative sign shows that the variables are negatively correlated; a positive correlation coefficient implies the variables are positively related.

Table 5.18: Statistically significant associations

Variables	Chi-Square Tests	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Gender * Reliability	Likelihood Ratio	7.548	3	.056
Gender * Overall Satisfaction	Likelihood Ratio	10.855	3	.013
Occupation * Responsiveness	Likelihood Ratio	25.000	12	.015
Occupation * Assurance	Likelihood Ratio	29.677	12	.003
Occupation * Overall Satisfaction	Likelihood Ratio	23.166	12	.026
Occupation * Expectation of the service quality Service Centre	Likelihood Ratio	40.493	8	.000
Occupation * Expectation of the service quality Frontline Employees	Likelihood Ratio	44.984	8	.000
Occupation * Current Status of the service quality Service Centre	Likelihood Ratio	27.202	12	.007
Occupation * Current Status of the service quality Frontline	Likelihood Ratio	20.963	8	.007

Employees				

The tables show some statistically significant associations (p-values < 0.050) between gender and the consumer's responses to some of the service quality measures, as well as between occupation and some of the service quality measures. Only significant associations are presented in the table to avoid cumbersome results. The significant associations between the demographic variables (gender and occupation) and the measures of the service quality in the table above are further explained by the following cross-tabulations.

Table 5.19: Crosstab overall satisfaction

Crosstab					
		Reliability			
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Gender	Male	5.9%	53.5%	39.6%	1.0%
	Female	0.9%	59.0%	39.7%	0.4%

The table shows that there are more males who strongly disagreed that the services received from their service centres are reliable than females. On the contrary, there are more females than males who disagreed that the services received from their service centres are reliable. More males than females agreed that the services that they have received from their service centres are reliable whereas more females than males strongly agreed that the services that they have received from their service centres are reliable.

Table 5.20: Crosstab Overall Satisfaction

Crosstab					
		Overall Satisfaction			
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Gender	Male		58.4%	40.6%	1.0%
	Female	0.9%	73.8%	23.6%	1.7%

The table shows that there are more males who strongly disagreed that the overall satisfaction that they have received from their service centres are satisfactory than females. On the contrary, there are more females who disagreed that the overall satisfaction that they have received from their service centres are satisfactory than males. More male respondents agreed that the overall satisfaction that they have received from their service centres are reliable than female, whereas more female strongly agreed that the overall satisfaction that they have received from their

service centres are reliable than male. Responsiveness is the willingness to help customers and provide prompt service

Table 5.21: Crosstab responsiveness

Crosstab					
		Responsiveness			
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Occupation	Student	16.4%	54.5%	27.3%	1.8%
	Self Employed	5.4%	32.4%	56.8%	5.4%
	Employed	7.1%	60.9%	30.2%	1.8%
	Unemployed		33.3%	66.7%	
	Retired	25.0%	37.5%	37.5%	

The table shows that there are more retired consumers who strongly disagreed that the services that they have received from their service centres are not prompt service followed by students. On the contrary, there are more employed consumers, followed by self-employed who also strongly disagree with the prompt service of the service centres. On the other hand, more employed disagree with the above statement than student. More retired consumers disagree with the prompt service of the service centres than unemployed consumers followed by self-employed. More unemployed consumers agreed that the services that they have received from their service centres are prompt service followed by self-employer's consumers. Whereas more retired consumers strongly agreed that the services that they have received from their service centres are prompt service than employed consumers and students.

Table 5.22: Crosstab assurance

Crosstab					
		Assurance			
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Occupation	Student	8.9%	55.4%	28.6%	7.1%
	Self Employed		73.0%	27.0%	
	Employed	2.7%	73.8%	22.7%	0.9%
	Unemployed		22.2%	77.8%	
	Retired		62.5%	37.5%	

The table shows that there are more students who strongly disagreed that the services that they have received from their service centres are reliable than employed consumers. On the contrary, there are more employed consumers who disagreed that the services that they have received from their service centres are reliable than self-employed consumers. More unemployed consumers agreed that the services that they have received from their service centres are reliable than retired consumers, whereas more student strongly agreed that the services that they have received from their service centres are reliable employed consumers.

Table 5.23: Overall satisfaction

Crosstab					
		Overall Satisfaction			
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Occupation	Student	1.8%	46.4%	46.4%	5.4%
	Self Employed		75.7%	24.3%	
	Employed	0.4%	75.0%	23.7%	0.9%
	Unemployed		55.6%	44.4%	
	Retired		50.0%	50.0%	

The table shows that there are more students who strongly disagreed that the overall satisfaction that they have received from their service centres are satisfactory than employed consumers. On the contrary, there are more self-employed who disagreed that the overall satisfaction that they have received from their service centres are satisfactory than employed consumers. More retired consumers agreed that the overall satisfaction that they have received from their service centres are reliable than employed consumers whereas more students strongly agreed that the overall satisfaction that they have received from their service centres are reliable than employed consumers.

Table 5.24: Crosstab the expectation of the service quality service centre

Crosstab				
		The expectation of the service quality service centre		
		Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Occupation	Student	41.1%	41.1%	17.9%
	Self Employed	35.1%	64.9%	
	Employed	59.1%	40.0%	0.9%
	Unemployed	77.8%	11.1%	11.1%
	Retired	50.0%	50.0%	

The table shows that there are more unemployed consumers who disagreed that the quality of the services that they have received from their service centres are reliable than self employed consumers. On the contrary, more self-employed consumers agreed that the quality of the services that they have received from their service centres are reliable than unemployed consumers whereas more student strongly agreed that the quality of the services that they have received from their service centres are reliable than unemployed consumers.

Table 5.25: Crosstab the expectation of the service quality frontline employees

Crosstab				
		The expectation of the service quality Frontline Employees		
		Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Occupation	Student	57.1%	26.8%	16.1%
	Self Employed	70.3%	24.3%	5.4%
	Employed	75.6%	23.6%	0.9%
	Unemployed	66.7%	22.2%	11.1%
	Retired		100.0%	

The table shows that there are more employed consumers who disagreed that the services that they have received from the frontline employees are reliable than the student. On the contrary, more retired consumers agreed that the quality of the services that they have received from the frontline employees are reliable than unemployed consumers whereas more student strongly agreed that the quality of the services that they have received from their frontline employees are reliable than unemployed consumers.

Table 5.26: Crosstab current Status of the service quality frontline employees

Crosstab				
		Current Status of the service quality Frontline Employees		
		Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Occupation	Student	67.3%	30.9%	1.8%
	Self Employed	75.7%	24.3%	
	Employed	82.2%	17.3%	0.4%
	Unemployed	66.7%	22.2%	11.1%
	Retired	25.0%	75.0%	

The table shows that there are more employed consumers who disagreed that the current status of the service quality that they have received from the frontline employees are reliable than retired consumers. On the contrary, more retired consumers agreed that the current status of the service quality that they have received from their service centres are reliable than employed

consumers whereas more unemployed consumers strongly agreed that the current status of the service quality that they have received from their service centres are reliable than students. All the statistical tests were done in this section to find answers to the research questions offset out at the initiation of this study. The subsequent section presents qualitative findings.

5.9 Presentation qualitative results

The qualitative data here presents findings as obtained from the semi-structured interviews conducted with five managers and fifteen frontline employees from the postal branches, making a total of 20 respondents. A 70% participation rate was recorded since not all postal managers and frontline employees selected for the interview could avail themselves at the time of the scheduled interviews. In analysing the data, as outlined by Creswell (2010) and Holton and Walsh (2016), this involved recording and capturing the participant responses through field notes, organising the data, reading through all data, coding the data into themes and categories, interrelating themes and discussing the findings.

5.9.1 Sampling for qualitative data

Sampling for qualitative research is not prescriptive as is the case with quantitative studies Grix (2010). There are no clearly defined rules governing qualitative sampling, since qualitative research usually relies on selecting participants with in-depth knowledge of the research problem. Therefore, it was decided to use purposive sampling as already elaborated upon in Chapter Four.

The following section presents and interprets the empirical outcomes from the analysis of the qualitative data obtained during the interviews.

5.9.2 Sampling of postal manages and frontline employees

The respondents consisted of 4 managers and 10 frontline employees making a total of 14 respondents. These were selected purposively due to their vast knowledge in postal service matters. For each postal branch, one postal manager and 2 frontline employees were interviewed from every post office, as indicated in Table 5.27. The table below reflects the sampling of participants from each postal branches for the purposes of the qualitative fieldwork.

Table 5.27: Respondents' in qualitative strand by pseudonym

Pseudonym	Respondents
KBM	Klerksdorp Branch Manager
PBM	Potchefstroom Branch Manager
MBM	Mafikeng Branch Manager
ZAM	Zeerust Area Manager
KFE1	Klerksdorp Frontline Employee 1
KFE2	Klerksdorp Frontline Employee 2
PFE1	Potchefstroom Frontline Employee 1
PFE2	Potchefstroom Frontline Employee 2
LFE1	Lichtenburg Frontline Employee 1
LFE2	Lichtenburg Frontline Employee 2
MFE1	Mafikeng Frontline Employee 1
MFE2	Mafikeng Frontline Employee 2
ZFE1	Zeerust Frontline Employee 1
ZFE2	Zeerust Frontline Employee 2

The names of postal managers and frontline employees of the post offices have been omitted for the sake of confidentiality and each group was therefore given a unique code, as per Table 5.27.

5.9.3 Interview response rate - qualitative

The sampling plan had five managers and fifteen frontline employees from the post offices but of the 20 targeted, only 14 participants, representing 70% made it. Drawing from the views of Serame (2011), a valid and reliable conclusion can be drawn if a 70% response rate is obtained from interviews.

5.9.4 Qualitative data collection

In the qualitative component of this study, data was collected from respondents using semi-structured interviews. These respondents were selected purposively because of their vast knowledge in postal matters. Interviews were scheduled and were estimated to take twenty minutes each and the process took 4 weeks to complete. Details on how the data was captured during the interviews have been explained in Chapter Four.

5.9.5 Qualitative data processing

The entire process of the study, from identifying the research objectives to the collection and presentation of the research findings was aimed at obtaining a deeper understanding of the research topic. In this study, the qualitative data was collected using semi-structured interviews administered to the managers and frontline employees of the post offices. This was transcribed to generate themes and categories. These themes were linked to the research questions as appropriate and responding to the research objectives.

5.9.6 Qualitative data analysis

All the interviews were recorded together with field notes and were transcribed into comprehensible text. Atlas-ti (Version 8.0) was used to code data into meaningful sections to represent the responses according to each research question.

5.10 Demographical description

This section presents the demographic description of all the respondents in the qualitative component. The two questions on biographical details read as follows: average years of experience and position at work.

5.10.1 Average years of experience and position of the respondents

This question sought an impression of the postal service experience and the position of the respondents in this study. The respondents were requested to indicate their years of experience and their position in the five postal branches. The responses are summarised in Table 5.28 below.

Table 5.28: Demographic description of participants

Klerksdorp post office	
Position	Branch manager
Duration of work	27 years
Position	Frontline employee
Duration of work	9 years
Position	Branch manager
Duration at work	7 years
Potchefstroom post office	
Position	Branch manager
Duration of work	13 years
Position	Frontline employee
Duration of work	7 years
Position	Frontline employee
Duration of work	13 years
Lichtenburg post office	
No branch manager	
Position	frontline employee 1(FE)
Duration of work	9years
Position	frontline employee 2(FE)
Duration of work	8 years
Mafikeng post office	
Position	Branch manager
Duration of work	9 years
Position	frontline employees 1 (FE)
Duration	5 years
Position	Branch manager
Duration	10years
Zeerust post office	
Position	Area manager
Duration of work	11years
Position	frontline employee (FE)
Duration of work	9 years
Position	Frontline employee (FE)
Duration of work	5 years

This section explains on the demographic details of the respondents in the five selected postal branches as indicated in Table 5.28 above.

5.10.1.1 Klerksdorp post office staff's duration and position of work

Table 5.28 illustrates the Klerksdorp branch manager has worked for 27years, Klerksdorp frontline employee 1 has worked for 9years while Klerksdorp frontline employee 2 has worked for 7years. This depicts that Klerksdorp branch manager and Klerksdorp frontline employee 1

and 2 have experience of postal services and are thus considered capable to handle postal services in their postal beach.

5.10.1.2 Potchefstroom post office staff's duration of work and position of work

Table 5.28 illustrates that Potchefstroom branch manager has been working for 13years, while Potchefstroom frontline employee 1 has worked for 7 years and Potchefstroom frontline employee 2 has worked for 13 years in the same organisation. This portrays that PBM and PFE2, have worked for a longer duration as compared to PFE1.

5.10.1.3 Lichtenburg post office staff's duration of work and position of work

Table 5.28 shows that respondent LFE1 has worked for the postal branch for 9 years while LFE2 has worked for 8 years. This depicts that LFE1 and LFE2 have similar work experience thus considered capable of handling postal services in their branch. It should be noted that no branch manager was available for interviewing at Lichtenburg due to the busy schedules of the branch manager. The findings are displayed in Figure 5.35.

5.10.1.4 Mafikeng post office staff's duration of work and position of work

Table 5.28 established that MBM has been working for 9 years, while MFE1 has been working for 5 years and MFE2 has been working for 10 years in the post office. This depicts that MFE1 and MFE2 have longer working experience as compared to MFE1 who has worked for a shorter duration.

5.10.1.5 Zeerust post office staff's duration of work

Table 5.28 shows that respondents ZAM has been working for this postal branch for 11years, ZFE1 has been working for 9 years while ZFE2 has worked for 5 years. This reflects that ZAM and ZFE1 have been working for a longer duration as compared to ZFE2 who has worked for 5 years.

From the above findings, it is clear that post office manages in all the cases have the longest duration of work in the post offices with Klerksdorp branch manager been the first, follow by Potchefstroom branch managers, Zeerust area manager and Mafikeng branch manager. Also

Potchefstroom frontline employee 2 with the longest duration of work, follow by Mafikeng frontline employee 2, Klerksdorp frontline employee 1, Lichtenburg frontline employee 1 and Zeerust frontline employee 1 with the same duration of work. Hence the need for managers and frontline employees with their longer duration of work need to know and understand the needs of it postal consumers better in other to give out effective service quality to reach consumers satisfaction.

5.11 Views on research questions in the qualitative research

The purpose of conducting this component was to investigate if the effective application of strategy implementation, training and development, motivation and monitoring and evaluation could enhance the strategic management of service quality for postal services. The responses from all the respondents are summarised in the Atlas-ti output presented in each component. The study further presents each theme and sub-theme generated from each research question for the sake of clarity. These themes are presented in Table 5.29 and are explored in detail for data analysis and interpretation in the study.

Table 5.29 presents a summary of (1) themes, and (2) sub-theme according to the interview guide.

Table 5.29: Themes and sub-theme

Theme 1: Strategy implementation at SAPO in North West province		
	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
	Managers and frontline employees views on strategic plans associated with strategic implementation within SAPO in the North West province	Strategic plans outside SAPO in the North West
Sub-themes • Approaches to formulating strategic implementation • Relevant factors to consider • Challenges experienced • Techniques used to overcome the challenges		
Theme 2: Training and Development		
	Training and development that can facilitate the development of managers and frontline employees in SAPO within the North West province	Training and development outside the facilitation of the development of managers and frontline employees in SAPO within the North West province
Sub-themes • Frequencies of training and development • Views on the training and development • the proportion of trained employees • Problems of training and development • Ways to improve training and development		
THEME 3: Motivation		
	Managers and frontline employees opinions on motivation towards enhancing service quality in SAPO in the North West province	Managers and frontline employees opinions on motivation outside enhancing service quality in SAPO in the North West province
Sub-themes • Concept 'motivation • 3 Motivators at work • Demotivated at work • Events that trigger demotivation at work		
Theme 4: Monitoring and evaluation		
	Managers and frontline employees' perspective on monitoring and evaluation towards service quality in SAPO in North West province	Managers and frontline employees' perspective on monitoring and evaluation outside service quality in SAPO in North West
Sub-themes • Involvement in monitoring and evaluation • Commencement of monitoring and evaluation • Design and implementation of a monitoring and evaluation system • Challenges encountered • Overcoming the challenges		

5.11.1 Findings connected to each emerging theme

This study strove to propose a framework for the strategic management of service quality by managers and frontline employees at the service center to improve consumer satisfaction at the five selected branches of the SAPO in the North West province, South Africa. Overall service delivery and the level of current consumer service was examined to make recommendations for the strategic management of service quality at SAPO in the North West Province.

5.11.2 Findings regarding the theme of strategic implementation

This section presents the findings regarding strategic implementation of service quality at the five post offices with 3 branch managers, 1 area manager and 10 frontline employees stationed at Klerksdorp, Potchefstroom, Lichtenburg, Mafikeng, and Zeerust post offices. In terms of strategy implementation, it is understood that strategy implementation would enable managers and frontline employers to have effective managerial and administrative leadership skills and achieve service excellence in order to reach customer satisfaction. The purpose of including this section was to acquire participant's views on the following sub-themes: approaches to formulating strategic implementation, relevant factors to consider when formulating strategic, important factors management considers in reaching its organisational objectives, investigating the challenges managers and frontline employers experienced in the process of implementing the post office strategy plan and finally the techniques they use to overcome the challenges in the process of strategy implementation in the five postal branches.

5.11.2.1 Findings related to strategy implementation with managers at the five post offices

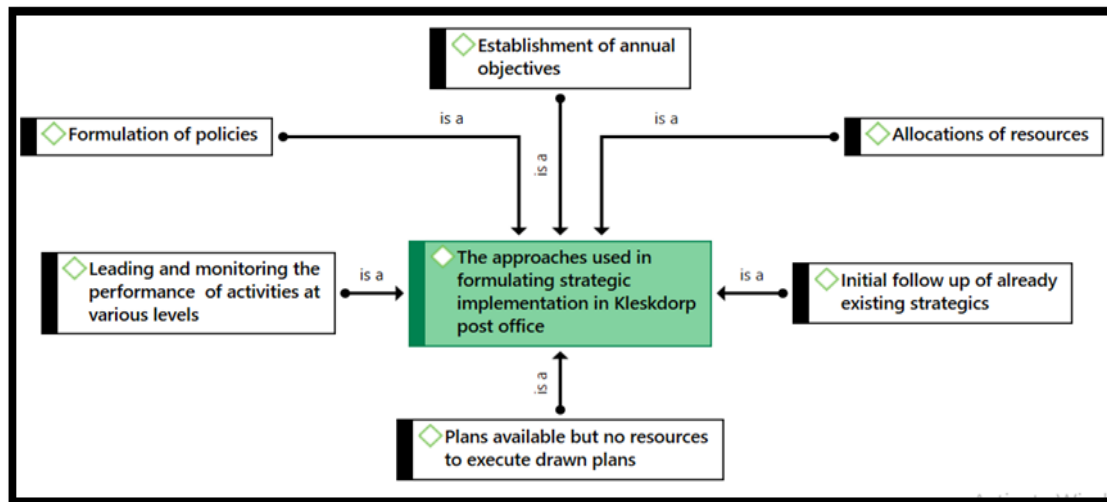
The respondents were sampled from the Klerksdorp, Potchefstroom, Lichtenburg, Mafikeng and Zeerust postal branches and responses of the four post office managers at the five post offices are captured in the figures below.

5.11.2.2 Findings related to strategic implementation at SAPO Klerksdorp branch manager (KBM)

This section indicates the findings of Klerksdorp branch manager (KBM) on strategy implementation in Klerksdorp postal branch. The essence of asking these questions was to determine how effective managers and frontline employees implement the strategic plan of the

post office. Details on approaches in formulation strategic implementation with Klerksdorp branch managers are explained in Figure 5.33 below.

Figure 5.33: Klerksdorp branch managers' views on strategic implementation



Note P = participant,

KBM = Klerksdorp Branch manager

Figure 5.33 is explained in the subsequent sub-sections.

This section indicates the findings of Klerksdorp branch manager (KBM) on strategic implementation in Klerksdorp postal branch. The essence of asking these questions was to determine how effective managers and frontline employees implement the strategic plan of the post office. Details on approaches to formulating strategic implementation with Klerksdorp branch managers are explained.

Findings related to approaches to formulating strategic implementation at SAPO Klerksdorp Branch managers' (KBM)

Based on the data collected in Figure 5.33, Klerksdorp manager is of the view that the strategic plan that was put in place by the post office management is not working. He associates this malfunction with lack of resources, shortage of staff, lack of financial resources as well as delays in goods reaching the post office on time. According to KBM, these challenges impede the post office strategic plan from being implemented correctly. The manager stressed that, while there are drawn plans, the concern is on proper implementation. The reasons given for this are system

failure and lack of resources. Besides, the branch manager stressed that over the years, operations have changed in that the first approach used to be the establishment of annual objectives, followed by the formulation of policies for the execution of strategies and allocation of resources. Thereafter, the actual performance of tasks and activities would then be allocated to the various units.

Also, KBM expressed that monitoring has changed over the years as managers currently work and implement this aspect according to the small resources available.

The verbatim words of KBM express this clearly:

...As an organisation, the first approach is the establishment of annual objectives. After that is done we, need to the formulation of policies for the execution of strategies and also the allocation of resources. Furthermore, the actual performance of tasks and activities are been allocated to the various units (P-KBM)

... As first, those were there the approaches we use to follow, but now that things have all changer, we work and implement according to the small resources that we have we don't follow the strategic plan (P- KBM).

...if there should come to this post office, is a mass, there are a lot of transactions that are in complicate due to systems problems, ((P- KBM)).

1) Findings related to most relevant factors to consider when implementing a strategy

Figure 5.33 displays the most relevant factors as expressed by KPOBM; the workforce was perceived as a very significant factor in implementing a strategy because people implement the strategy. In his exact words, KPOBM said:

...We have to look at the people: Two enquiries must be answered: "Do you have enough people to implement the strategies?" and "Do you have the right people in the organization to implement the strategies?" The number of people in your workforce is an issue that is easier to address because you can hire additional manpower. The tougher part of this is seeing to it that you have the right people, looking into whether they have the skills, knowledge, and competencies required in carrying out the tasks that will implement the strategy, but our post office management does not consider this factors (P-KPOBM).

Knowledge, skill, the system in place, availability of non-financial resources displayed in Figure 5.33 are relevant factors to consider. Explaining further, resources were classified as basic in strategy implementation. The KBM explained that this refers to both financial and non-financial resources that (a) are available to the organization and (b) are lacking but required for strategy

implementation. Funding is considered very important as this supports implementation, covering the costs and expenses incurred in the execution of the strategies. Another important resource is time. Systems are considered another relevant factor, what systems, tools, and capabilities are in place to facilitate the implementation of the strategy.

According to KPOBM, the afore-discussed factors must be considered but are not due to the lack of resources in KPO. Some selected responses from KPOBM are:

...Resources: One of the basic activities in strategy implementation is the allocation of resources. (P, KPOBM)

...Another important resource is time. Is there more than enough time to see the strategy throughout its implementation? The answer is not, all this the post office management those not take into consideration effectively (P, KPOBM).

...Systems: What systems, tools, and capabilities are in place to facilitate the implementation of the strategy, we as post office don't have enough of the above facilities? What are the specific functions of these systems? The system is not working accordingly. After all the post office system is failing us as workers (P. KPOBM)

2) Findings related to challenges experienced

As depicted in Figure 5.33, it was voiced out that employees and managers do not fully implement the strategy, and this was explained mainly from, lack of resources in reaching the post office overall objectives, the implementation stage is often the most difficult simply because the process is often poorly defined, a poorly defined implementation process causes confusion and uncertainty and makes it difficult, and often impossible, to successfully implement the strategy.

The finding further reported the lack of effective communication, in general. It falls upon the shoulders of senior management and the strategic management team to communicate the organisational mission and goals to every member of the workforce, and also make them understand the strategy and each member's particular role in how it ought to be carried out and finally, a lack of ownership on the part of the "implementers", there is a lack of ownership, since the employees do not feel that they have a stake in the plan. Such positioning results in poor implementation of the strategy as little attention is paid to management. They do not devote a token number of hours in a month to go over the plan and discuss strategies, just to see if the plan is working accordingly.

3) Findings related to techniques used to overcome the challenges

As displayed in Figure 5.33 above, branch manager in Klerksdorp identified the following 5 ways to overcome challenges in Klerksdorp:

- There should be enough resources in reaching the post office's overall objectives.
 - Strategic planning should be in clear to all teams so that it should be easy to understand and implement.
 - There should be effective communication of the strategic plan by top managers in the organisation.
 - All post office workers must take ownership of the strategic implementation.
- Also, managers in all the post office need to be at the forefront in ensuring the strategy reaches the company objectives.

4) Findings related to KPOBM opinion on strategy implementation as it concerns employees

Figure 5.33, respondent KPOBM indicated that employees play a role in the strategy implementation, but not the planning process. The findings indicate managers' responsibilities in explaining to the staff how the strategic plan works. The findings further indicated that employees offer services to the consumers, but are never a part of the strategic planning process. Below is the verbatim words of KPOBM in this regard:

...They are the ones implementing the strategies that have been done by top-level managers. Our employees make sure to give services to the postal consumers by implementing the plan objective of this post office (P, KPOBM)

BM also explained that they face resistance from employees concerning strategy implementation. This is because, employees are not part of the strategic planning. As such they lack understanding of the strategic plan making it difficult to implement. But to deal with this challenge KPOBM often creates time to explain to employees how the strategic plan works.

Findings from KPOBM on strategy implementation as it concerns customers

Figure 5.33, indicates that KPOBM said customers at Klerksdorp post office face serious challenges in strategic implementation and these are listed below verbatim.

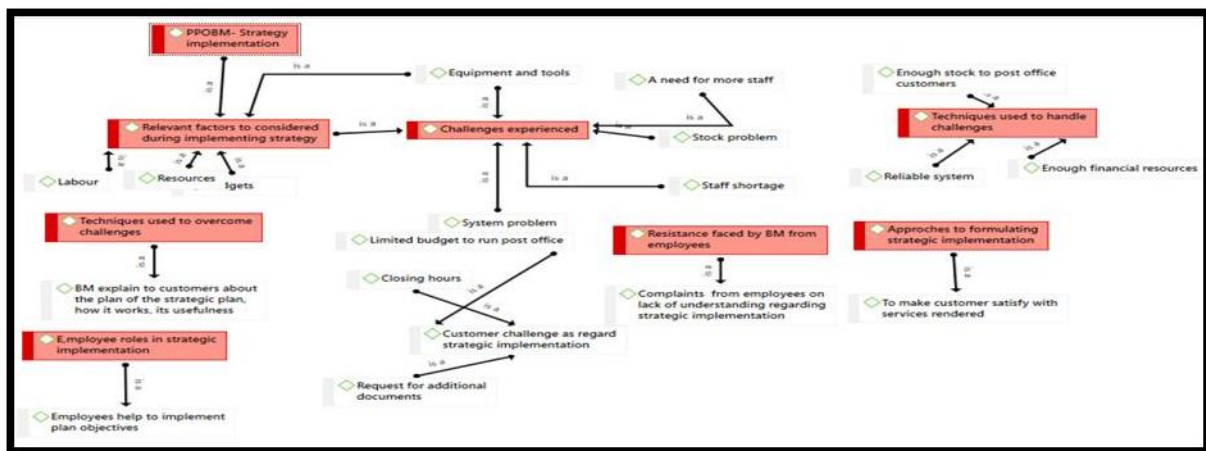
- There are new changes in our strategic plan, such as the closing hours, additional document on TV licence etc.

- To overcome the challenge, as managers and frontline employees, we need to explain the changes that have been made from the strategic plan and make the workers appreciate the reasons for the changes and how it might benefit them.

5.11.2.3 Findings related to strategic implementation Potchefstroom branch manager

This section covers the views of strategic implementation with Potchefstroom branch manager as displayed in ATLAS.ti below in Figure 5.34, gives details of the findings as obtain to this regard.

Figure 5. 34: Potchefstroom branch managers' (KBM) views on strategic implementation



Note P = participant,

PBM = Potchefstroom Branch manager

Figure 5.34 is explained in the subsequent sub-sections.

1) Findings related to approaches to formulating strategic implementation

In Potchefstroom post office, the approaches used by BM in formulating strategic implementation relate to making customers satisfied with services rendered based on the analysis on Atlas Ti (Figure 5.34 showing PPOBM-strategic implementation). PPOBM believed that when customers are pleased with the services offered, this ensures achieving organizational objectives. Below are verbatim words from the branch manager in Potchefstroom post office.

...Our first approach to strategic implementation is to make our customers satisfied with our services. I believe when our customers are well pleased with

the services we offer, we as managers will end up achieving our objectives (P, PPOBM).

2) Findings related to the factors to consider when implementing a strategy

A participant from PPOBM related to the most relevant factors to consider when implementing a strategy are: the need to consider the post office budget, the firm resources, the labour as well as equipment and tools needed in carrying out daily activities.

3) Findings related to challenges experienced

The results in Figure 5.34 above indicate some challenges facing PPOBM in strategic implementation. The following challenges were identified by the PPOBM: stock problem-it takes longer for the stock to be delivered to the post office such as stamps and envelopes. Since there are many post offices, orders are made in the preceding month and only delivered in the following month. This develops into disappointment amongst our clients, limited budget to run our post offices, lack of financial resources that stop us from reaching our company objectives. Staff shortage is the biggest problem we are facing at our post office. The post office does not have enough staff to serve our customers in the shortest time, finally, system problem. Our postal system is failing us in offering services to our customers because it is always down.

4) Findings related to techniques used to overcome the challenges

PPOBM expressed that more staff must be employed to overcome shortages of staff in Potchefstroom post office branch. It was further noted that enough financial resources, reliable systems and enough stock to serve post office customers could assist overcome challenges noted in the post office.

5) KPOBM opinion on strategy implementation as it concerns employees

As displayed in Figure 5.34, similarly like Klerksdorp post office, employees in Potchefstroom play a role in the process of strategy implementation, according to PPOBM and the employees in PPO.

...Help to implement the plan objectives of the post office as instructed by the post office strategic planning process (P, PPOBM).

Similar reasons cited in Klerksdorp for resistance to strategic implementation was cited in Potchefstroom as displayed in the figure. PPOBM explained that during regional meetings on

strategic plan, employees submit their own opinions of unhappiness with the new changes, but are left with no choice but to work according to the new plan. This challenge, however, was resolved through effort made by BM to explain to staff members how the plans of the post office work and how this is beneficial to staff in the long run. Below are responses from PPOBM in this regard:

...Since the staff are not put off the strategic planning in the organisation, most of the staff complain of not understanding some of the items on the plan which make it difficult for them to implement (P, PPOBM).

...We as managers, we try our best explaining to them how the plan of the post office works and hope it will also benefit them as staff now and in the future (P, PPOBM).

6) PPOBM on strategy implementation as it concerns customers

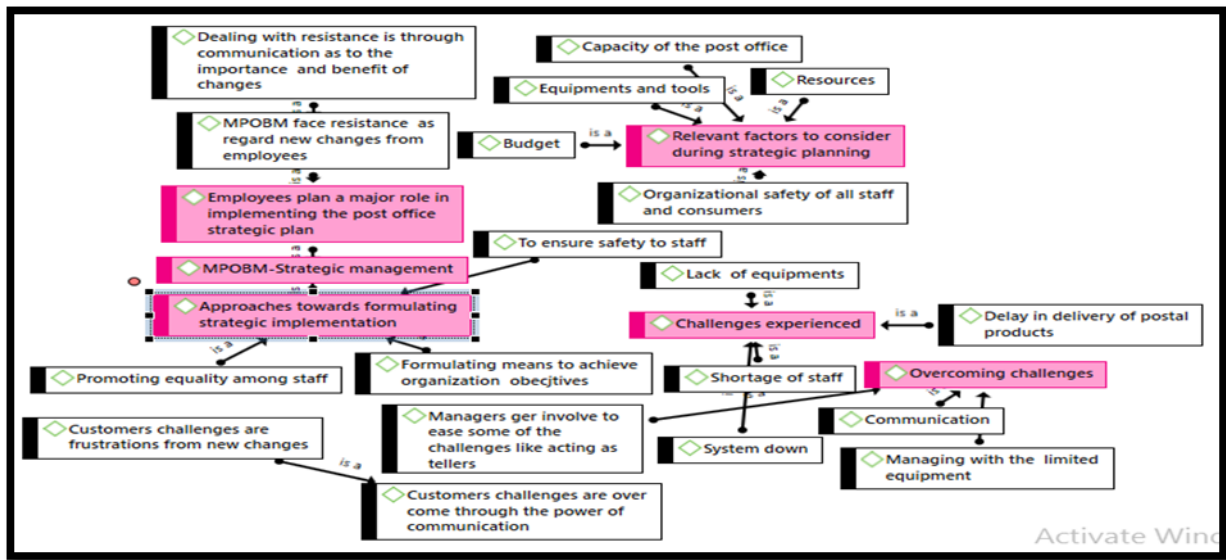
PPOBM believed that customers are faced with challenges when a new policy is introduced. An illustrative good example cited was changing the closing time from 17h00 to 16h30 that affected customers. Likewise, when customers are requested to bring in additional documents, they are disgruntled. Below is an extract in this regard

...What are some of these challenges and how do you overcome them?
When the post office changes its closing from 5:00 to 4:30 at the time it affects the customers. Also when customers are asked to bring additional document for services, there are not happy when things changes that will be to their disadvantages (PPOBM).

5.11.2.4 Findings related to strategy implementation Mafikeng branch manager

Atlas Ti identified based on the data collected MPOBM play a role in strategic implementation and planning process and they ensure that staff work effectively and offered good services to customers. The responses of the participants are captured in Figure 5.35.

Figure 5.35: Mafikeng branch manager' (MBM) views on strategic implementation



Note P = participant,

MBM = Mafikeng Branch manager

Figure 5.35 is explained in the subsequent sub-sections.

1) Findings related to approaches to formulating strategic implementation

Figure 5.35, indicates that no branch manager was available for interview in Lichtenburg due to the busy schedules. What follows next is the findings from the data collected in Mafikeng from Branch manager on strategic implementation.

The data established that MPOBM approach towards formulating strategic implementation is to first consider post office overall objectives. BM in Mafikeng prioritises making employees happy. The reason given is that employees are in charge of the daily running of the business, thus their job satisfaction and happiness become a priority for MPOBM, compared to BM in Klerksdorp and Potchefstroom who formulate strategic implementation without considering employee's views. MPOBM's next approach is to ensure safety to company staff, ensuring the working environment is conducive and the working equipment is in good condition. Thereafter, equality is promoted amongst staff and managers. This aspect helps to improve performance and make employees feel recognised by top managers. Besides, such confidence in employees enables them to manage the post office activities in the absence of BM. Below are the words of MPOBM on approaches to formulating strategic implementation.

...My approach to strategic implementation firstly is to look at my post office overall objectives. I as manager formulate other means in achieving those strategic by making sure my subordinate are happy with the policy and too sure of good working conditions (P, MPOBM).

2) Findings related to the relevant factors to consider when implementing a strategy

As displayed in the network of Atlas-Ti Figure 5.35, MPOBM considers some relevant factors in implementing a strategy in the post office such as organisational safety of staff and consumers, equipment and tools, resources of the organisation as well as the capacity of the post office and the budget. Below are challenges experienced in Mafikeng as listed by MPOBM.

3) Findings related to challenges experienced

As illustrated in Figure 5.35 above, the biggest challenges identified by MPOBM are:

- There is a lack of equipment such as computers.
- The system is always down and this discourages customers, there are just a few staff serving many customers leading to delays in serving the very same delicate and important customers.
- There are delays in the delivery postal products and when customers ask for specific services, these are invariably unavailable.

4) Techniques used to overcome the challenges

According to Figure 5.35, the techniques used to overcome the challenges at the post office include managing the limited equipment and getting involved in the challenge by acting as teller. The following vignettes are illustrative:

...We try to explain to our customers anytime they got frustrated with our services, such as system down, product not available at that moment, we as managers act at times as teller to help serve customers as we don't have enough staffs (P, MPOBM).

...We also try to manage with the few pieces of equipment we have main while still requesting the regional office to solve our problems, though no solution or measure has been taken for long (P, MPOBM).

5) Findings related to KPOBM opinion on strategy implementation as it concerns employees

As presented in Figure 5.35 above, employee's role in the process of strategy implementation in Mafikeng post office, similar to Klerksdorp and Potchefstroom, is to implement the post office strategic plan and help the company achieve the overall mission and vision objectives. With regards to resistance, it emerged from the data that Klerksdorp, Potchefstroom and Mafikeng share the same views on resistance. MPOBM revealed that resistance is linked to staff not being a part of the strategic planning meeting, therefore, new changes become difficult for the employees to implement. To deal with this, MPOBM said:

...We as branch manager tried to explain the reasons why the time change and the benefit it will do to our organisation. We do provide training on changes and new aspect that comes up at the post office... (P, MPOBM).

6) Findings from MPOBM on strategy implementation as it concerns customers

It can be observed in Figure 5.35 above, in Mafikeng, MPOBM that customers face challenges in the process of strategic implementation. The challenge, like in Klerksdorp and Potchefstroom, is that customers in Mafikeng do not like new policies, they do not appreciate bringing in additional documents as it frustrates customers in Mafikeng and because most may not know how to read notices, this becomes very challenging for customers. To overcome this challenge, the technique adopted in MPO is that the customers are reassured of better services in their next visit.

5.11.2.5 Findings related to strategy implementation Zeerust area manager

As displayed in the network of Atlas-Ti, Figure 5.36 displays the findings of ZPOAM on the strategy implementation in the Zeerust postal branch. Details are explained below.

A participantsrespondent from ZPOAM highlighted some of the relevant factors to consider when implementing a strategy in Zeerust post office such as; determine the key managerial tasks and responsibilities to be performed and the qualifications required of the person. The findings further indicate the need to assign the tasks to the appropriate departments of the organisation, and finally, to evaluate the current staffing structure, checking if you have enough manpower and if they have the necessary competencies to carry out the tasks. This may result in some reorganization or reshuffling of people. In some cases, it may also require additional training for current staff members, or even hiring new employees with the required skills and competencies. This is also where the organization will decide if it will outsource some activities instead.

3) Findings related to challenges experienced

In this findings series of challenges encountered with ZPOAM on strategy implementation in the Zeerust post office. These challenges include lack of performance tracking and monitoring system at the post office, lack of proper information and feedback system and the lack of proper communication of the policy and programs to the members of the organisation. Of the challenges presented, the feedback system was a very significant factor, as communication was a key factor in ensuring staff and customer's happiness. Techniques used to overcome the challenges presented below.

4) Findings related to techniques used to overcome the challenges

The findings from Figure 5.36, indicate various techniques used to overcome the challenges, firstly, the need to establish a performance tracking and monitoring system. This will be the basis of evaluating the progress of the implementation of strategies, and monitoring the rate of accomplishment of results, or if they were accomplished at all. Define the indicators for measuring the performance of every employee, of every unit or section, of every division, and every department. Secondly, to establish a performance management system. Quite possibly, the aspect of performance management that will encourage employee involvement is a recognition and reward structure. When creating the reward structure, make sure that it has a clear and direct link to the accomplishment of results, which will be indicated in the performance tracking and monitoring system. Thirdly, to establish an information and feedback system that will gather feedback and results data, to be used for strategy evaluation later on.

5) Findings related to ZPOAM opinion on strategy implementation as it concerns employees

Like the previous branches, employees in Zeerust post office play an important role in the implementation of strategic implementation as they help in making sure the strategic plan is implemented correctly. The resistance from employees concerning strategy implementation is associated with challenges faced when it comes to implanting our company strategic plan, they give excuses of not understanding the strategic planning process, so is difficult for them to implement it correctly and the fact that they are not part of the planning process makes it more difficult to implement. To deal with this challenge the following was expressed by ZPOAM.

...As a manager, I have forward staff complains to the regional office for action to be taken. I try to explain to them how the strategic plan work even though there were not part of the planning (P, ZPOAM).

6) Findings from ZPOAM on strategy implementation as it concerns customers

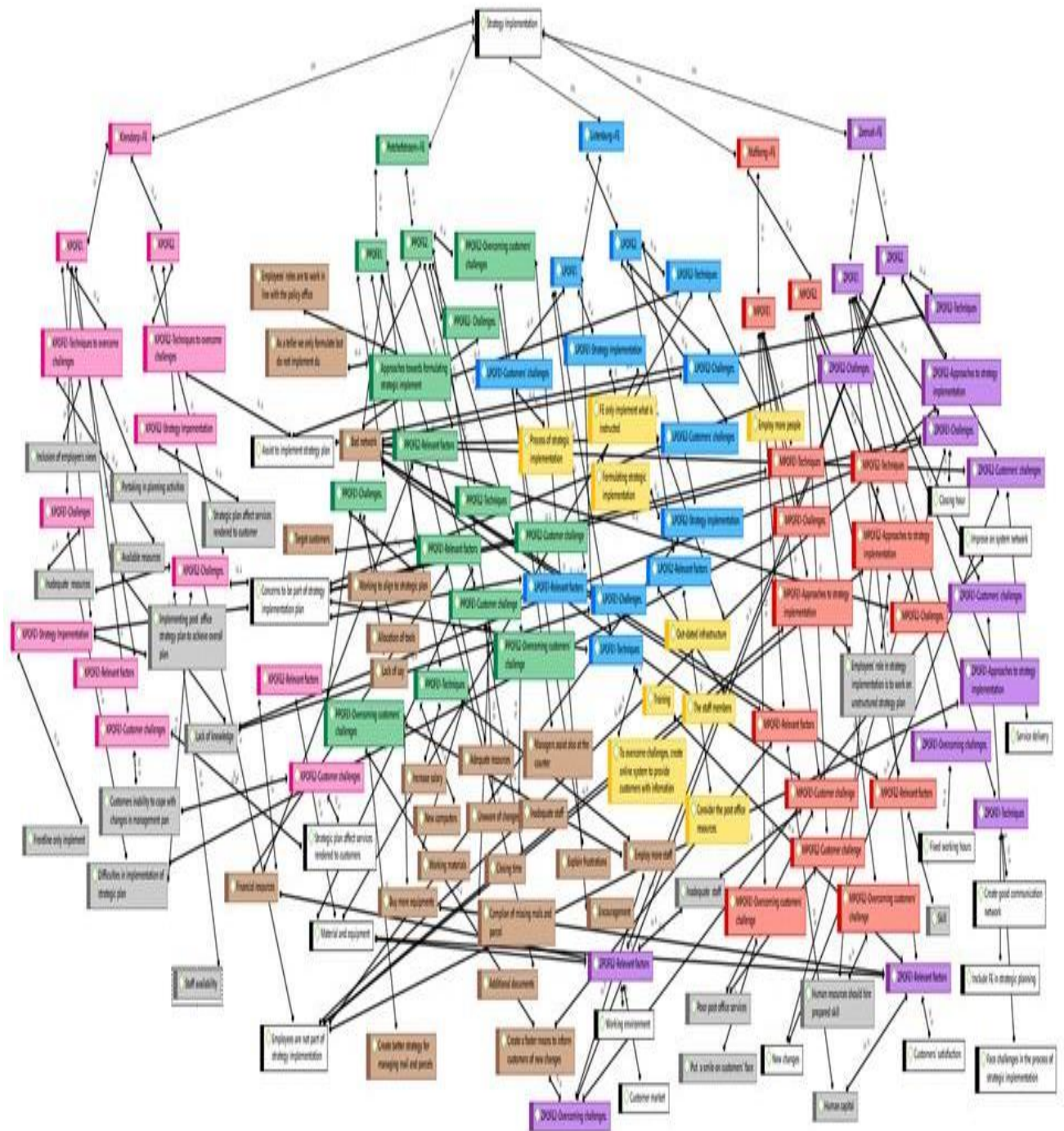
According to Figure 5.36, ZPOAM indicate that postal consumers are also faced with the problem on strategy implementation, such as, not having an update on the new changes carry out by post office management, this reveals that customers in Zeerust face challenges in the process of strategy implementation. To deal with this, below is what was said by ZPOAM:

...When we need to upgrade our service provider unit, by changing different ways in which we render our services, it does affect them and it will take some times for them to accept a new way of us doing things. All we as managers do is to be patient in explaining to every customer's reasons why way changing our services procedures (P, ZPOAM).

5.11.3 Findings related to the strategic implementation with frontline employees in the five postal branches

This section involves presenting the findings as obtained from the semi-structured interviews conducted with the 10 frontline employees from the five selected postal branches (Klerksdorp, Potchefstroom, Lichtenburg, Mafikeng and Zeerust) 2 frontline employees were interview from each post office. Below are the participant's views on strategic implementation as summarised in the general Atlas-ti output presented in Figure 5.37.

Figure 5.37: General views on strategy implementation with frontline employees



Note P = participant,

Note on colours

Klerksdorp=Pink, Potchefstroom=Leaf green, Lichtenburg=Blue, Mafikeng= Orange and Zeerust=Purple

Figure 5.37 is explained in the subsequent sub-sections.

1) Findings related to approaches to formulating strategic implementation

Figure 5.37, data from the semi-structured interviews conducted with 10 frontline employees at the five post offices revealed frontline employees are not part of the strategic planning process. There are not aware of the various approaches to formulating strategic implementation in other to enhance postal service quality, they further explain that all they do is to implement according to the orders given by their branch managers or area managers. All the participants further affirm that, not been part of the strategy planning, make it difficult for them to implement the strategic plan effectively. To further elaborate on this result, the following direct responses are related to the aforementioned outcomes:

...As not part of the strategic planning I am not happy, I wish to be part of the planning meeting so that I will not face difficulties to implement the strategic plan of our post office (P, KPOFE1).

... but I could have love to be part of the planning because we are the once doing the day to day running of the business we can be in a better position in helping the strategic plan to be effective. (P, KPOFE2).

...I for one I am not involved in formulating strategic implementation in this post office, all I do is to implement what I do not formulate (P, PPOFE1).

...As a teller, we are not involved in formulating the strategic implementation of our post office, all we do is to implement a strategic plan of the managers (P, PPOFE2).

...I am not part of the strategic planning so I don't know the approaches that are been used, but I am part of the implementation process (P, LPOFE1).

...We just implement as our boss ask us to do (P, LPOFE2).

...Not part of strategic planning, but part of the implementation process. So I will not know what to answer on the approaches to formulating strategic implementation (P, MPOFE1).

...I am not part of strategic planning, but I do implement what the manager as me to do. What I would have loved to suggest if I was part of the strategic planning meeting is that since we are faced with several challenges, such challenges need to be addressed first in all meetings. And secondly, I will

advise management to create an appropriate organisational structure that supports the implementation system (P, MPOFE2).

...I am not part of the strategic planning so I will not know the approaches that have been used, all we do is to implement what we have on our manager's plan (P, ZPOFE1).

...Not sure of the answer, because I am not part of strategic planning in this post office all we do as a staff is to implement what is asked by our area manager (P, ZPOFE 1).

2) Findings related to relevant factors to consider when implementing a strategy

Figure 5.37 above illustrated the relevant factors to consider when implementing a strategy by the 10 frontline employers in their various post offices. The findings revealed that generally all participants not been part of the strategic planning process, but give the following suggestion on the relevant factors to be considered in order to enhance postal service quality such as; adequate capacity, good networking system, prepare complain system, employing more staff members, more financial resources, research consumers' satisfaction, training and development facilities, good infrastructure, meet customer demand, sufficient materials and equipment. All those factors need to be considered in order to reach the post office objectives.

More so, from the above discussion, it is clear that the post offices did not consider frontline employers in their company plan, it will be difficult for them to know the relevant factors that need to be considered when implementing a strategy to enhance quality service. However, it is indicated that if the post office can consider the above factors, employees will be able to give out quality service to customers. To elaborate further, the following direct responses are relevant in this regard:

...As a frontline employee, I will consider the resources of the post office, staff availability, financial resources, materials and equipment need to achieve the post office overall objectives (P, KPOFE2).

...Not sure of those factors, but I know management do consider labour force, materials and equipment that are available, financial resources and the target customers (P, PPOFE1.)

...will, first of all, take into account the numbers of staff available for the implementation of the strategic plan, I will also look as the available resources needed as well as the financial resources (P, PPOFE2).

...I just follow what the managers ask me to do. I just implement as the manager says not the policy (P, LPOFE1).

...We need to consider the post office resources, the staff members as well the infrastructure. If all these factors are being taken into consideration, it will help to improve the quality of services we give out to consumers (P, LPOFE2).

...I am not part of strategic planning. But as part of the implementation of the post office strategic plan, I will suggest as a staff member that the following factors must be taken into consideration: The human capacity is a big problem we are facing in this post office, secondly, is the networking system, I will advise the post office to take into consideration a prepare networking system to ensure prepare networking in all service area at the post office. Finally, a good complain system unit should be created to ensure all complaints should be taken into consideration (P, MPOFE1).

...As part of the implementation of the strategic plan of this post office, I will suggest that management takes in into account the following factors when it's come to implementation, the human capacity, resources of the post office, financial aspect, training and development facilities and customer's satisfaction (P, ZPOFE1).

3) Findings related to challenges experienced

The results in Figure 5.37 above indicate that there are several challenges experienced by the 10 frontline employees through the post offices in other to implement an effective strategic plan. However, there are series of challenges were employees reveals that, frontline employees lack clarity about the strategic plan that is been formulated by top management. As such, it becomes difficult for them to implement. This affects them daily. They also mentioned the lack of proper infrastructure, poor system, lack of proper communication system, low salary, shortage of staff, as well as limited knowledge on the strategy implementation process.

The findings further indicate that the post office lacks the resources to implement the strategic plan effectively. They also acknowledge that frontline employees with clarity on strategic planning, are executing their responsibility following acceptable principles, while frontline employees who have no clarity on strategic planning, execute their mandates poorly due to limited knowledge. They also indicate that most of the postal consumers complain of not

receiving good services at all time and the fact that new changes affect staff as well as consumers. This shows that frontline employees do not have a proper understanding of the strategic plan, which makes it difficult for them to perform well in order to give out quality services to consumers. The following direct responses are related to the aforementioned outcomes:

...As teller not been part of the planning, we face difficulties in implementing the strategic plan. Our opinions do not count in this organisation, of which we are the one seeing the challenges of customers and what we are going through to make them happy with the post office services. Lack of resources to implement the strategy effectively is also a big problem (P, KPOFE1)

...We are not aware of what is in the strategic plan, we just work as instructed by the branch or area managers, so is sometimes difficult to implement what you don't know or understand. Lack of resources to implement the strategy appropriately is also a big problem (P, KPOFE2).

...Also, we don't work according to the strategic plan, because the plan does not enable high-quality services to our customers, for example, the plan speaks of providing better equipment and more staff to the post office to gain high services quality, but as you can see, I do the work for two staff and our system is always down (P, PPOFE1).

...Challenges of not having a say on our company strategic planning as a staff member who is involved on the day to day running of the business and experiencing all the different problems with clients. At times, it is difficult to implement because we don't understand some issue on the strategic plan since as we were not part of the planning meeting (P, PPOFE2).

...No prepare training on how the strategic planning policy is implemented and as tellers not been part of the planning process, it makes it difficult to implement what you don't know or understand (P, LPOFE1).

...Management lacks the resource to implement the strategic plan correctly (P, LPOFE2).

...As not part of the strategic planning, is so difficult to understand and implement the strategic plan (P, MPOFE1).

...In order to overcome, management needs to employ more staff, improve on the networking system and also create a channel to inform customers about recent changes that come up all the time in order to always keep its customers satisfied (P, ZPOFE1).

...I will like to be part of the strategic planning so that I can explain the challenges we are going through with customers and also with management (P, ZPOFE2).

4) Findings related to techniques used to overcome the challenges

Figure 5.37 above illustrated some challenges. Data from the semi-structured interviews conducted with 10 frontline employees at the five post offices revealed that to overcome some of those challenges, there is a need for frontline employees to be part of the planning and their views must be taken into consideration. They also indicated that enough resources are needed to implement the strategy plan correctly, increase of staffs, more computers, working material and increases in salaries and create better infrastructure. The findings further indicate that the human resources department should take into account all the criteria of employment before employment takes place. The findings indicate that if all these factors are taken into consideration by management, it will help improve staff performance. To further elaborate on this result, the following direct responses are related to the aforementioned outcome.

...We just need to be part of the planning process at some stage and also to have all the available resources in implementing the strategic correctly (P, KPOFE2). (P, PPOFE2).

...For me, we need more staffs, my computer, working materiel and increases in our salaries (P, PPOFE2).

...I will like to be part of the strategic planning meeting so that my view as a frontline employee should be considered because we are the one facing the challenges as we give out direct services to the consumers at this post office so we know what the problems are. So I think management need to consider us at part of the planning process (P, LPOFE1). (P, MPOFE2) (P, ZPOFE 1).

...Human resources department should make sure to hire the prepare skill needed for each position not people with no proper knowledge of postal services, it delays our service. Because its take long for unskilled staff to give service to consumer correctly (P, MPOFE2).

5) Findings related to 10 frontline employee's opinion on strategy implementation as it concerns employees and customers

As indicate in Figure 5.37, the findings indicate that employees are not happy not been part of the strategy. They complain of working according to the intra-station of managers and not what the policy says. They also raised the issue of limited resources, limited staff as well poor infrastructure. On the part of consumers, the findings indicate that consumers are not happy with changes that are been made by management that affect customers in receiving postal services, when the closing times of the post office change, the additional document added in some postal services such as TV licences, limited staff to deliver services on times to consumers and complaints of missing mails and parcels from customers, poor quality service, lack of communication with regard to changes in the post office services and post office system not working all the time to give out service to customers affect the quality of service they deliver. Below are the verbatim words of some frontline employees in this regard:

...I help to implement the strategic plan as coached by my branch manager and to ensure that the implementing strategic help us reach the post office gold (P, KPOFE1), (P, KPOFE2)

...Is difficult for customers to accept new changes that are been done by the post office management, but as frontline staff, we try our best to keep our customers (P, KPOFE1).

...Yes, customers face challenges in the process of strategy implementation especially when there are new changes that work to their disadvantage, it gets them frustrated especially if there were not aware of the changes before coming to the post office (P, PPOFE2).

...The fact that we as teller are not happy with the system been down all the time and too much workload for few tellers, it is at time difficult to save our customer with a happy face due to the challenges we as teller are facing (P, KPOFE1).

...When we have so many customers, for example when the time is for payment of SASSA grants, the branch manages and the area manages do assist at the counter to serve customers (P, PPOFE2).

...In other for post office to overcome these challenges I will like to advise the post office to employed more staffs, buy more equipment and create a fasted channel to inform consumers whenever there are new changes. Better strategic of managing mail and parcels (P, PPOFE2).

...To overcome, the post office needs to create am online system with his customers notifying them about current changes so that there should be aware before coming to the post office, the notice outside the post office is not enough.

The strategic planner must try to forecast the future before making the final plan in order to avoid so many changes (P, LPOFE1).

...I try to work with the strategic plan that is not properly structured, but our managers try to structure the plan to fit our post office current resource (P, MPOFE2).

...In order to overcome, I suggest the post office need to increase more staffs, solve the problem, build better postal infrastructure, look into financial problems as well as providing us with tools and equipment at the workplace (P, ZPOFE2).

The findings presented above portray that strategy implementation aims to help the company overall mission and vision objectives. The findings indicate that managers and frontline employees are faced with series of challenges with strategic implementation at the various post office. The findings also indicate that frontline employees are not part of the planning process. All they do is to implement according to the manager's instruction. The findings further indicate that due to the lack of financial resources, managers come up with their own strategic plan and implement the strategic plan according to the available resources. From the above results it is clear that managers and frontline employees are faced with challenges that stop them in reaching the company overall objective and customer satisfaction. The subsequent deliberation expounds on findings on training and development.

5.11.4 Findings regarding the theme training and development

Training and development help to improve knowledge and skills and to change trainee's attitude. Thus, training becomes one of the most important potential motivators and hence the following benefits do accrue from training and development programmes: Increase in the confidence and commitment of staff, with confidence comes the feeling of personal satisfaction and achievement. This could further broaden career progression opportunities, it provides the needed recognition and enhances responsibility which could lead to an increase in pay and promotion and finally training and development improves the availability, quality and skills of staff.

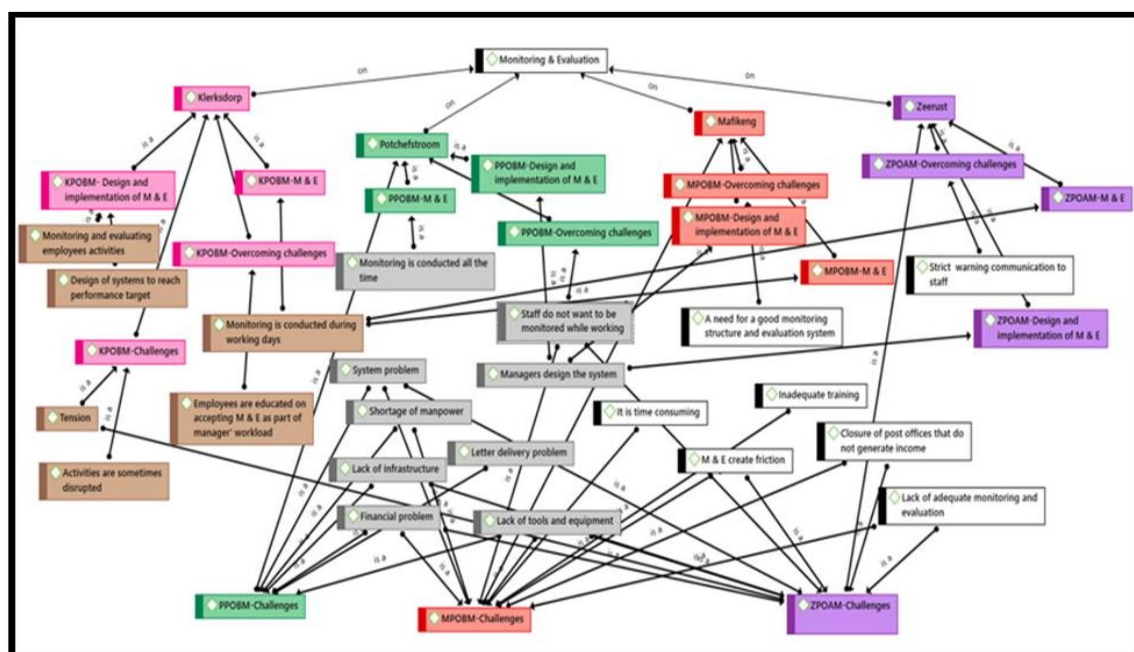
The main aim of training and development in this study is to investigate if training and development increases the performance of managers and frontline employees, and the productivity of an organisation. Training and development has become an issue of strategic importance. Below are emerging themes based on data collected from three branch managers, one area manager and ten frontline employees stationed at Klerksdorp, Potchefstroom,

Lichtenburg, Mafikeng, Zeerust post office concerning training and development. This mix of experience produces sub-themes on five main perspectives which include, frequencies of training and development, views on the training and development, proportion of trained employees per year, problems of training and development and ways to improve training and development. The themes are expanded on below.

5.11.4.1 Findings related to training and development with managers in the four postal branches

This category investigated the impact of training and development with managers in the four postal branches. Training and development is an important factor impacting staff performance and development in any organisation and across departments. The responses of the respondents on training and development are presented in the Figure 5.38 below.

Figure 5.38: General views on training and development for all branch managers across four post offices



Note P = participant,

Note on colours

Klerksdorp=Pink, Potchefstroom=Leaf green, Lichtenburg=Blue, Mafikeng= Orange and Zeerust=Purple

Figure 5.38 is explained in the subsequent sub-sections.

Findings related to frequencies of training and development

Frequency of training and development refers to the numbers of training and development program a manager attends within a specific period. The findings in Figure 5.38, indicates that some managers attend training and development only when there is a need for that. For examples when there are new changes, new opportunities and new contracts such as the SASSA, DTT and when TV stations no longer use disks. This indicates that managers in the Klerksdorp, Mafikeng and Zeerust only goes for training and development whenever there is a new development in the post office. The findings further indicated that internal training and development is been carry out in the Potchefstroom post office every Wednesday morning before opening time, This item was included to establish if the frequencies of training and development at the post offices could enhance service quality. To further elaborate on this result, the following direct responses are related to the aforementioned outcomes:

...they provide adequate training and development only when there is a need. KPOBM also attest that training and development is not a tradition for our post office year program. This indicates that training and development is not a priority to the organization (P, KPOBM).

...We do training and development ever Wednesday in our post before we open the office, email is sent ahead of time on what we will be training on. But I for one have never gone for training and development out of the post office (P, PPOBM).

1) Findings related to whether training and development enhances service quality

Participants on the views of the training and development with managers as indicate in Figure 5.38 in the four postal branches indicate that training and development help to improve employee performance, help to promote employees. Findings further explains that employees who are well train perform well as well as training and development also help to reinforce those skills that each employee needs to improve on in order to reach the post office objectives. The findings also reveal that training and development that is been run every Wednesday in the post office in the case of potchefstroom, enables the employees to know what is to been done and to explain their challenges, as well as help to orientate new employees. Finally, the findings explain that training and development is a major prerequisite for any organisation that wants to achieve maximum productivity through the effective performance of its employees. And from all indication, employees can only perform better through the acquisition of new skills, knowledge

and abilities utilizing training and development programmes. Some excerpts from participants are as follows:

...Firstly, I will like to say its help improve employee performance, secondly, the employee who receives the necessary training is more able to perform in their job, thirdly, a training program allows as to strengthen those skills that each employee needs to improve, while on the other hand, the development program brings all employees to a higher level so they all have similar skills and knowledge (P, KPOBM).

...I enjoy the tanning we do on Wednesdays at our post office because we learn and we also get the opportunities to air out our frustrations with regards to our day to day activities (P, PPOBM).

...Training and development help to orientate new employees to the organisation and teach them how to perform in their initial assignment, it also helps to improve the current performance of employees who may not be working as effectively as desired or to prepare employees for future promotional as well as facilitates the implementation of strategy by providing employees with the skills and knowledge needed to perform their jobs (P, MPOBM).

2) Findings related to the proportion of trained employees

Data from the semi-structured interviews conducted with managers in the four postal branches revealed a mixed response were some employees indicates that two staff member went on training and development within the last 12 months, especially when there is a need for training. Others explains that no staff members have attended training and development for this 2019 in the post office. All they do is the internal training program organized by the managers since the budget is not allocated for that. To further elaborate on this result, the following direct responses are related to the aforementioned outcomes:

...I know of two staff who want for training and development at our post office over the last 12 months just for 3 weeks (P, KPOBM).

...I cannot tell, about the external training and development, but for the tanning, we do on Wednesday almost all of the staff attend the tanning at our post office (P, PPOBM).

...A few percentages of our staffs go for training and development as I said when need be. All because we are short of staff we can send a high percentage,

for example, we have 5 staff if the need for training we send one or two (P, MPOBM).

...For this year none of my staff when for training and development, we just had some minor internal training at our post office when every need be (P, ZPOAM)

3) Findings related to problems of training and development

Data from the semi-structured interviews conducted with managers as indicated in Figure 5.38, identify some of the challenges faced by the post offices with regards to training and development such as lack of commitment, lack of skill and knowledge from employers that affect high-quality work performance. Some participants indicated that management needs to open the door for external training and development for its staff members as well as creating opportunities to further staff education in order for them to perform on a more advanced level compared to those with lower qualifications. Other challenges mentioned include lack of training resources, hectic employee schedules, that makes them not to have time for most training and development programs and management has limited interest in training and development in the post office. To further elaborate on this result, the following direct responses are related to the aforementioned outcomes:

...I am sure the fact that we do not go for training and development all the time is because of a lack of resources. All top management doesn't look at training and development as being an important aspect of this organisation (P, KPOBM).

...From all indication, staff performances are not too good, our post office needs more training and development programs in order to improve staff skills, knowledge and performance (P, POAM).

4) Findings related to ways to improve training and development

According to Figure 5.38 above, respondents in the four postal branches specify ways training and development can be improved in the post offices. These include, the need for the post office to allocate budget for training and development for staff members in order to improve their skills, as well as the need for management to take training and development as an important component in the post offices. The findings further indicated the need to send staff members for further education and training and development programs at all times. This is considered to hopefully help increase postal services performance. Participants also indicated that getting more

tool needed for training and development as well as training and development should be added in the strategic plan and must be compulsory to all staff members. To further elaborate on this result, the following direct responses are related to the aforementioned outcomes.

...The post office should create a budget for training and development for his staff members in order to improve their skills. And management should take training and development as an important aspect that will help improve services quality at our post offices (P, KPOBM).

...I suggest we should have external training and development so that we can get views of other post offices on how they manage their challenges at their post offices. Add to that I will like the post office create openings for us to further our education in order for us to perform on a high level because most of us do not have a university degree (P, PPOBM).

5.11.4.2 View on the training and development with frontline employees in the five postal branches

This section involves presenting the findings as obtained from the semi-structured interviews conducted with the 10 frontline employees from the five selected postal branches (Klerksdorp, Potchefstroom, Lichtenburg, Mafikeng and Zeerust) 2 frontline employees were interviewed from each post office. Below are the respondents' views on training and development.

Figure 5.39: General views on training and development for all frontline employees across five post offices

Note P = participant,

Klerksdorp=Pink, Potchefstroom=Leaf green, Lichtenburg=Blue, Mafikeng= Orange and Zeerust=Purple

1) Findings related to frequencies of training and development

there was a need for training and development. The findings further indicated that training and development is carried out every Wednesday before the start of business activities for Potchefstroom. Moreover, the data further revealed that participants (frontline employees) were not given the opportunities to go for further training or to develop their skill. Finally, the findings also indicate that two staff members in one of the five post offices went for training and development this 2019. Some excerpts from the respondents are as follows:

...Only when there is a need for training and development, is not a tradition for our post office year program that we go for training and development from this period to this period, we only go when the managers ask us to go, especially when there is a new project such as the SASA grand project that was newly introduced to the post office (P, KPOFE1), (P, KPOFE2).

...We do training and development ever Wednesday in our post before we open the office, email is sent ahead of time on what we will be training on. But I for one have never gone for tanning and development out of the post office (P, PPOFE1), (P, PPOFE2).

...No training and development for this year. But I had one last year with regarding to SASSA grants training (P, LPOFE2).

...Training and development are carried out only when our post office sees the need for that, but is not part of our strategic plan (P, ZPOFE2).

2) Findings related to whether training and development improves service quality

According to Figure 5.39, responses from five postal branches explain that training and development, help to develop employees against future challenges. It's also helped to improve performance and staff skill as well as staff promotion Training and development further helps to solve immediate business problems, and also help to improve personal development as well as improve staff knowledge on the good and services offered by the organisation. The result further indicates that its help in increased job satisfaction among employees and it is a form of learning new things as well as help to increase promotion and group employees with similar knowledge. Some excerpts from the respondents are as follows:

...Firstly, I will like to say its help improve employee performance, secondly, the employee who receives the necessary training is more able to perform in their job, thirdly, a training program allows as to strengthen those skills that each employee needs to improve, while on the other hand, the development

program brings all employees to a higher level so they all have similar skills and knowledge (P, KPOFE1).

...I will like to say, it helps in increasing the productivity of our post office, it also improving learning effectiveness. It helps to deliver consistent service across the organization, as well as increasing product knowledge amongst employees (P, KPOFE2).

...Training and development is a very important unit that needs to be in-store at our post office (P, ZPOFE1).

...It helps in staff development, improves skills and also improves the knowledge of employees in an organisation. Also, its help to increase the company output and also led to the promotion of organisation staff (P, ZPOFE1).

3) Findings related to the proportion of trained employees

Participants from five post office as shown in Figure 5.39, indicate that two employees in their post office went for training and development over the last 12 months just for one week. Participants further indicate that they are not sure of the numbers of staff who go for training and development at their post office since they are only aware of the Wednesday training that takes place in their post office. This indicates that staff do not go for external training out of their organisation. Some excerpts from the respondents are as follows:

...I know of two staff who want for training and development at our post office over the last 12 months just for one week (P, KPOFE2).

...I cannot tell, about the external training and development, but for the tanning, we do on Wednesday almost all of the staff attend the tanning at our post office (P, PPOFE1), (P, PPOFE2)

4) Findings related to problems of training and development

Participants from five post offices as shown in Figure 5.39, explain frontline employees are faced with problems with regards to training and development and such problems affect quality services at the post offices. Some of the problems they face regarding training and development includes: lack of resources, lack of interest in training and development as well as lack of staff development opportunities to move staff from one level to a higher one, lack of training and development facilities as well as lack of food during the training program. Some expressed dissatisfaction with the duration of the training session. This was peculiar with the Wednesday

morning training which was considered too short. Some excerpts from the respondents in this regard are presented below:

...I am sure the fact that we do not go for training and development all the time is because of a lack of resources. All top managers don't look at training and development as being an essential component of this organisation (P, KPOFE1).

...The training we do is just for a short period, so I easily forget most of the things that were been thought in the training. And we don't have staff development at our post office that could help improve our level of education (P, KPOFE2).

...We don't have any good training and development program at our post office that can help build up the staff in performing services effectively. Lack of staff development program that can improve the staff level of education and promotion (P, MPOFE2).

5) Ways to improve training and development

Participants from ten frontline employees as indicated in Figure 5.39, in this category suggest that the post office should create a budget for training and development for staff members in order to improve their skills. They also suggest that management should take training and development as an important aspect that will help improve service quality at the post office and should be consistent in the system. Also, the findings suggest that the post office management should make training and development to take a longer period and must be done at least four to five times a year to make sure they understand the training program well as well as bring in more staff development programme. The findings further highlight that post office need to bring in external training not only the Wednesday session and should make provision for food during the process of training. To further elaborate, the following direct quotes are in line with the aforementioned.

...I suggest we should have external training and development so that we can get views of other post offices on how they manage their challenges at their post offices. Add to that I will like the post office create openings for us to further our education in order for us to perform on a high level because most of us do not have a university degree (P, PPOFE2).

...We also need external training and development workshops outside the post office, as well as the post office, brings in experts to train us on the current development (P, PPOFE2).

...The post office should come up with more training and development programs in order to perfect employees' skills and that will help to increase the company output (P, LPOFE1).

...Management must bring in more training and development programs that can help in improving staff development and skill, in order for them not to remain in one level or position throughout their working career (P, ZPOFE2).

This discussion verified that training and development could most likely influence the strategic management of service quality in the postal branches. The findings from managers and frontline employees further indicate that the postal branches do not have effective training and development system to enhance staff performance in rendering high quality service to postal consumers. The subsequent delineation expounds on the results on motivation.

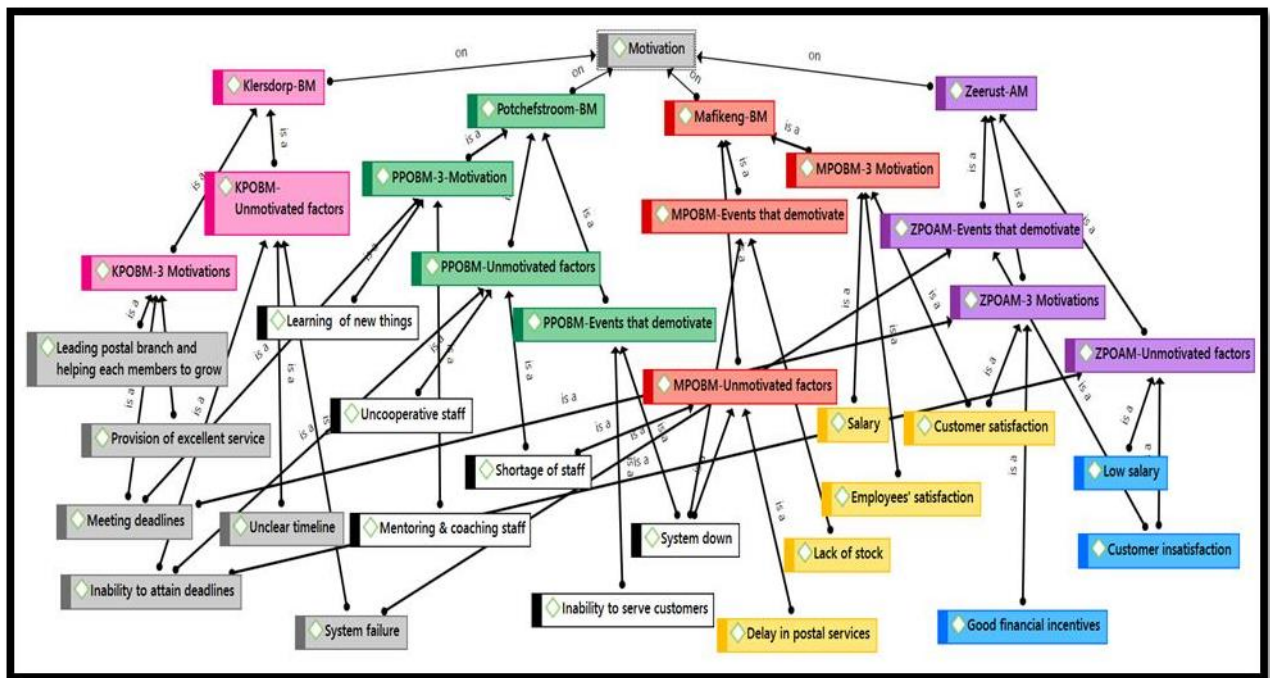
5.11.5 Findings regarding the theme motivation

The term motivation entails psychological forces that determine the direction of a person's behaviour in an organisation, a person's level of effort and persistence. There are many ways to motivate employees in today's working environment. Companies globally have been using different strategies to improve employees' motivation. This study investigated how strong motivation influences the effectiveness of the post offices staff. Below are emerging themes based on data collected from 3 Branch managers, 1 area manager and 10 frontline employees stationed at Klerksdorp, Potchefstroom, Lichtenburg, Mafikeng, Zeerust post office concerning training and development. This mix of experience produces sub-themes on four main perspectives which include motivation, 3 motivators at work, unmotivated workers as well as events that trigger demotivation at work.

5.11.5.1 Findings related to motivation with managers in the four postal branches

This section details findings on motivation with four managers in the five postal branches.

Figure 5.40: General views on motivation for all branch managers and 1 area manager across four post offices



Note P = participant,

Note on colours

Klerksdorp=Pink, Potchefstroom=Leaf green, Lichtenburg=Blue, Mafikeng= Orange and Zeerust=Purple

Figure 5.40 is explained in the subsequent sub-sections.

- 1) Findings related participant's views on the concept of 'motivation' with 3 branch managers, 1 area manager

According to Figure 5.40, participants indicates that the concept 'motivation' relate to the provision of excellent service, meeting deadlines, leading the postal branch and helping members of the company as well as offered opportunities to grow from one stage to another. The findings further explain that motivations are a planned managerial process, which stimulates people to work to the best of their capabilities.

- 2) Findings related to 3 motivators at work

As indicated in Figure 5.40, managers in the four post offices indicated similar factors. They indicated that employees are motivated by the following:

- Ensuring consumers are satisfied with the services with the services offered by the post office.
- Providing employers with all the facilities needed in performing their duties.
- Meeting deadlines.
- Mentoring and coaching as well as learning new things make them feel motivated.
- Good financial incentives help motivate staff.
- Salary increase as indicated in Figure 5.40.

To further elaborate, the following directs quotes are in line with the aforementioned.

...Salary increase make my staff happy, while making my customers satisfied by giving them the right services at the right time and place, and seeing my staff happy increases performance and end up making a good profit at the end of the day (P, MPOBM).

3) Findings related to factors that leads to demotivation at work

Looking at Figure 5.40, managers indicated some demotivating factors impeding excellent work performance at the post office: staff shortage, uncooperative staff as well as not meeting datelines, system issues, low salary. Inability to have a clear timeline and inability to reach customers' expectations as displayed in Figure 5.40 above. To further elaborate, the following directs quotes underscore the aforementioned.

...When I don't meet deadlines, when the systems are down when staff are not ready to work, as well as storage of staff at our post office demotivate me (P, PPOBM).

...When I don't meet deadlines, when the systems are down when staff are not ready to work, as well as storage of staff at our post office demotivate me (P, MPOBM).

...When our customers are not satisfied with our services, when I don't meet datelines and when my salary cannot cover my daily expenses (P, ZPOAM).

4) Findings related to an event that triggers demotivation at work

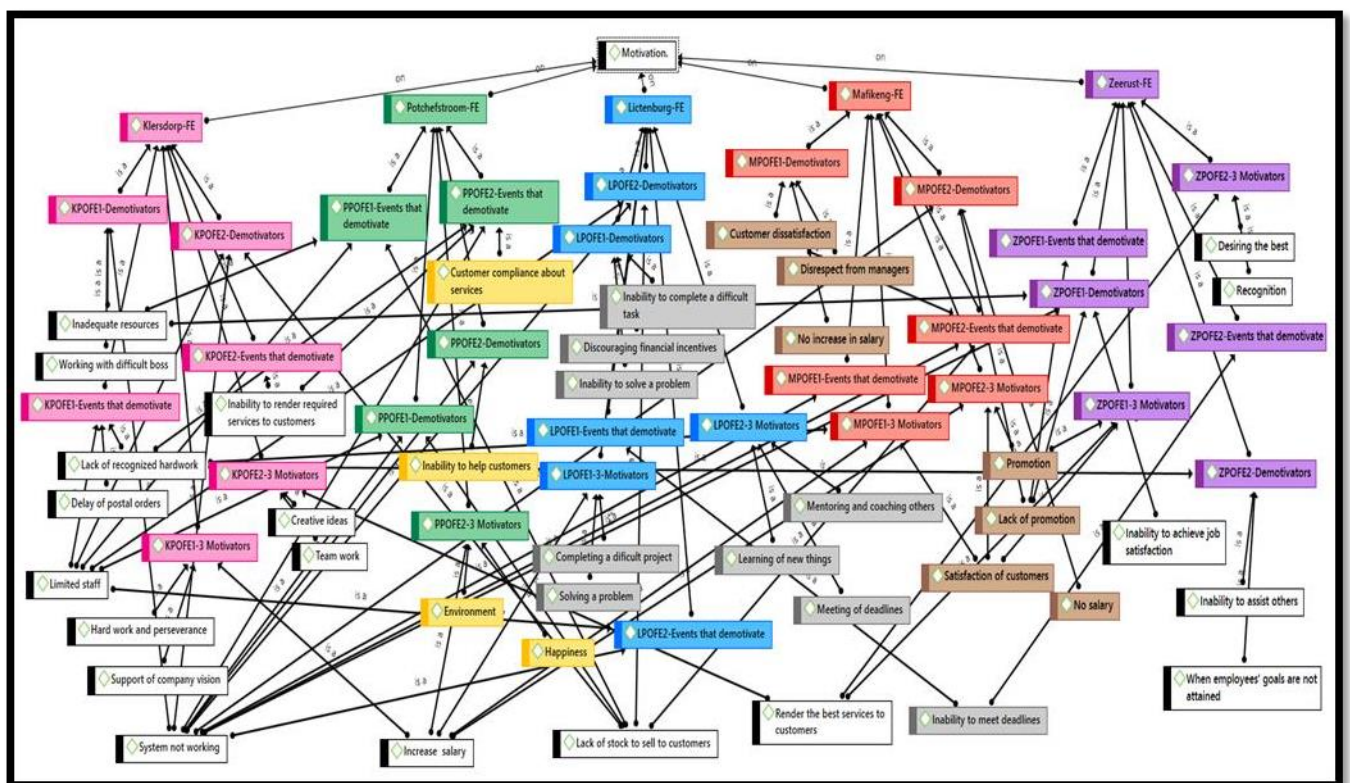
According to Figure 5.40, managers indicated some event that triggers demotivation at work such as: when the post office has shortages of stock to the extend that when customers enter the post office to receive services, the best they can give to the customers is the excuse that they are out of stock. Other participants mentioned incidents in which the system was down that impeded staff in offering superior service to customers. These events had a direct impact on motivation and performance. An excerpt from branch manager is as follows:

*...When most of our systems were down and we could not serve our customers,
all we sell is system is down (P, PPOBM).*

5.11.5.2 Findings related to the motivation with frontline employees in the five postal branches

This section presents the findings as obtained from the semi-structured interviews conducted with the 10 frontline employees from the five selected postal branches (Klerksdorp, Potchefstroom, Lichtenburg, Mafikeng and Zeerust) 2 frontline employees were interview from each post office.

Figure 5.41: General views on motivation of all frontline employees across all five post offices



Note P = participant,

Note on colours

Klerksdorp=Pink, Potchefstroom=Leaf green, Lichtenburg=Blue, Mafikeng= Orange and Zeerust=Purple

Figure 5.41 is explained in the subsequent sub-sections.

1) Findings related to the understanding of the concept ‘motivation’ with 10 frontline employees

In Figure 5.41 above, 10 frontline employees were interviewed to understand their view of the concept motivation. Some participant’s respondents submitted that motivation takes you to a higher level at your job, motivation refers to that inner voice that drives you to do something either good or bad, as well as what makes me accept the job I am doing. The findings further affirmed that motivations offer opportunities to grow and improved work performance in an organisation. Respondents also explain that motivation is the processes that account for an individual's intensity, direction, and persistence of effort toward attaining a goal as well as that make you happy at your job place and the willingness to do something.

2) Findings related to 3 motivators at work

According to Figure 5.41 above, participants in the five post offices explain the things that motivate at work, this includes, completing a difficult project, and seeing it through to the end, finding a way to solve a problem and good financial incentives. Also, the findings explain that given the best services to customers, bring in creative ideas to improve work performance, meeting deadline, reaching targets or goals, mentoring and coaching others and learning new things at the end of the day. To further elaborate, the following directs quotes are in line with the aforementioned.

*...Recognition: I always like to be recognized by others for my performances
(P, MPOFE1).*

*...I desire to be the best: I cannot just accept to be number two in their lives. I
always fight hard and I work hard because I hate to lose (P, MPOFE1).*

...Helping others: I am motivated by helping others. I want to see changes in people's lives and they want to fight for a better future for the world (P, MPOFE2).

3) Findings related to factors that leads to demotivation at work

As indicated in Figure 5.41, participant's respondents from 10 frontline employees indicate some of the factors that demotivate excellent work performance includes, system failure, delay in postal orders, not comfortable when customers are no satisfied with their services, lack of work recognized and shortage of staff and lack of stock demotivate their work performance, when unable to complete a project and could not submit on dateline. Also the findings explain that when no increase in salary, also when no respect from managers, as well as no promotions demotivation them at work. To further elaborate, the following directs quotes are in line with the aforementioned.

...When I am not been recognized by others for my performances, when my desire is not fulfilling and when I can help others to reach their goals (P, ZPOFE1).

...When the system is down and we can save our customers and also lack of stock to sell to our customers (P, PPOFE1).

...When there are so many customers on the queue who needs help but cannot be helped due to staff shortages (P, PPOFE1), (P, PPOFE2).

...This happen when it was the time for payment of SASSA grants seeing our parents waiting for hours all because of a shortage of staff or the system is not functioning well (P, LPOFE2).

4) Findings related to an event that triggered demotivation at work

According to Figure 5.41, participants from the five post offices explain some serious of factors that led to demotivation such as when our system is down, when they have so many customers' and limited staff members to serve them, when no stock to sell to our customers, when projects cannot be completed and when financial incentives not encouraging. Participants further indicated that when SASSA grants could not be pay due to system failure. To further elaborate, the following directs quotes are in line with the aforementioned:

...Working with a boss that does not understand our frustration, as for the managers we just need to work even if the resources are not there. The system not working and lack of good to save customers (P, ZPOFE1).

...When there are so many customers on the queue who needs help but cannot be helped due to staff shortages (P, PPOFE1).

...Yes, when our customers enter our post office for services and we are unable to render to them our service all because our network is down is so frustrating to us and the customers (P, MPOFE1), (P, LPOFE2).

...Yes, after working as a frontline employer for 9 good years, I am still a frontline employer with no promotion. Also, the post office system lack of recourses, help to discourage excellent job performance (P, ZPOFE1).

It could be deduced that adopting the concepts of motivation in this study would likely enhance the postal service quality. However, it emerged that postal role-players understand the concept and could outline those factors that cause their job satisfaction and those that cause job dissatisfaction in their various postal branches. From the above finding, it will help the post office management to take into consideration the listed factors in other to help improve high- quality services to consumers. The subsequent delineation expounds on the findings on monitoring and evaluation.

5.14 6 Findings regarding the theme of monitoring and evaluation

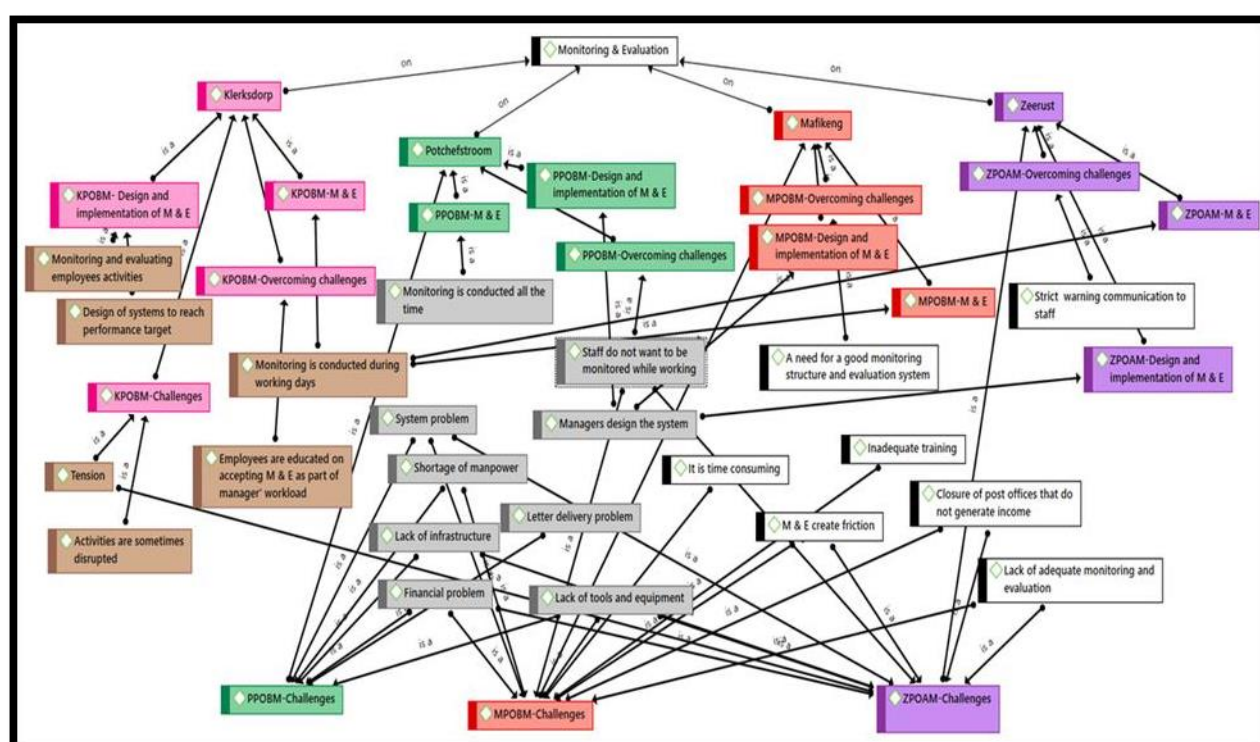
Monitoring and evaluation refer to a set of organisational structures, management processes, standards, strategies, plans, indicators, information systems, reporting lines and accountability relationships which enable national and provincial departments, municipalities and other institutions to discharge their monitoring and evaluation functions effectively. In addition to these formal managerial elements are the organisational culture, capacity and other enabling conditions which determine whether the feedback from the monitoring and evaluation function influence the organisation's decision-making, learning and service delivery. This study investigated staff involvement in monitoring and evaluation that led to a high-quality performance in the five postal branches. Below are emerging themes based on data collected from 3 Branch managers, 1 Area manager and 10 frontline employees stationed at Klerksdorp, Potchefstroom, Lichtenburg, Mafikeng, Zeerust post office concerning training and development. This mix of experience produces sub-themes on four main perspectives which include, involvement in monitoring and evaluation, the commencement of monitoring and

evaluation, design and implementation of monitoring and evaluation system, challenges encountered and overcoming the challenges. The themes are expanded on below.

5.11.6.1 Findings related to monitoring and evaluation with managers in the five postal branches

This section gives a details explanation on the finding of monitoring and evaluation with managers in the five postal branches as presented in Figure 5.42 below.

Figure 5.42: General views on monitoring and evaluation of all branch managers and 1 area manager across the four post offices



Note P = participant,

Note on colours

Klerksdorp=Pink, Potchefstroom=Leaf green, Lichtenburg=Blue, Mafikeng= Orange and Zeerust=Purple

Figure 5.42 is explained in the subsequent sub-sections.

1) Involvement of managers in monitoring and evaluation in the four post offices

As shown in Figure 5.42 above, participants said monitoring and evaluation is a part of their responsibility, and this is done all the time to make sure workers are on the right track. Also, participants explain that the system is designed by them as managers according to the resources they have in place. Findings further explains monitoring and evaluation are a part of manager duties, and the undertaking is done from Monday to Friday. Below are examples of response in this regard:

...As a manager, is my responsibility to monitor and evaluate the performance of workers at my post office (P, PPOBM).

...We as managers are the systems designed at my post to monitor and evaluate the performance of our employees (P, PPOBM).

...I do that all the time to make sure work is done according to plan (P, KPOBM).

2) The commencement of monitoring and evaluation

As reported in Figure 5.42, managers explained that commencement of monitoring and evaluation in the post office is done from Monday to Friday, and the monitoring and evaluation systems are designed by the managers since the post office as an entire organisation do not have a structured design. Below are examples of responses in this regard:

...As a branch manager is my responsibility to monitor and evaluate the activities of my staffs. I can proudly say is part of my job (P, KPOBM).

...In my post office, monitoring and evaluation are done from Monday to Friday during working hours (P, ZPOAM).

...It's been done every day at my post office since as we don't have a special system for training and evaluation, we as managers monitor and evaluate the job performance of our staff at any given time. As a manager, I work close to their computer to ensure that there are doing the right work and ensure their reach the target of the day (P, MPOBM).

...Since as we have no structure monitoring and evaluation system, we as managers design and implement how we monitoring and evaluation our organisation performance (P, MPOBM).

3) Design and implementation of monitoring and evaluation system

As shown in Figure 5.42 above, managers explain that the system is designed by them as managers according to the resources they have in place, since the post office as an entire organisation do not have a structured design.

4) Challenges encountered during monitoring and evaluation in the post office

As portray in Figure 5.42 above, managers from all the four post offices reported series of challenges during the monitoring process such as: managers spend more time looking at what staff are doing to ensure proper prepare efficiency. This often creates tension between managers and staff in the post office, because not all staff like to be monitored and evaluated. The finding further explains the need of more staff at our post office that will help to reduce the workload. The data further discourage the practice of opening too many post office branches in the same city without ensuring that they all have good working equipment or resources. The need for good monitoring and evaluating system and the need for a research unit to understand what customers' needs and how they react toward our services was also highlighted. Below are verbatim statements on overall challenges by managers:

... It's sometimes disrupts our own activates as managers, because we spend more time looking at what our staff are doing to ensure prepare efficiency. It also creates tension with us as managers and staff in our post office, because not all staffs like to be monitored and evaluated (P, KPOBM).

...Why post office management open so many post offices in their same town and cannot provide all with good working equipment or resources is better there close more post offices that do not generate income (P, POBM).

Staff don't like to be monitor and evaluated upon their performances, which at the time make them put on attitudes (P, PPOBM).

...I do what I think is right because we need to monitor and evaluate, in other to make sure there are at the right trick is given out services (P, PPOBM).

...There is a need for the creation of a good structure monitoring and evaluation system to be planted in this organisation. And training should be done to make the staff understand why monitoring and evaluation are important to this organisation (P, MPOBM).

5) Overcoming the challenges of monitoring and evaluation in the post office

Findings from managers involved in the semi-structured interviews on monitoring and evaluation presented in Figure 5.42 above, suggests the following to overcome the challenges mentioned: managers suggest a need to explain to employers the importance of monitoring and evaluation especially when workers perform their duties to meet and satisfy a specific clientele. Also, managers suggested that management design and implement a monitoring and evaluation instrument in order to avert the tension between managers and employees, as well as creating a training programme for managers to see the need, as well as saving manager's time to do other jobs. Below are examples of responses in this regard:

...As a branch manager is my responsibility to monitor and evaluate the activities of my staffs. I can proudly say is part of my job (P, KPOBM).

I do that all the working days to make sure they reach their target for the day (P, KPOBM).

... Since we have no prepared system for monitoring and evaluation, we as managers design our system to ensure we reach our performance target (P, KPOBM).

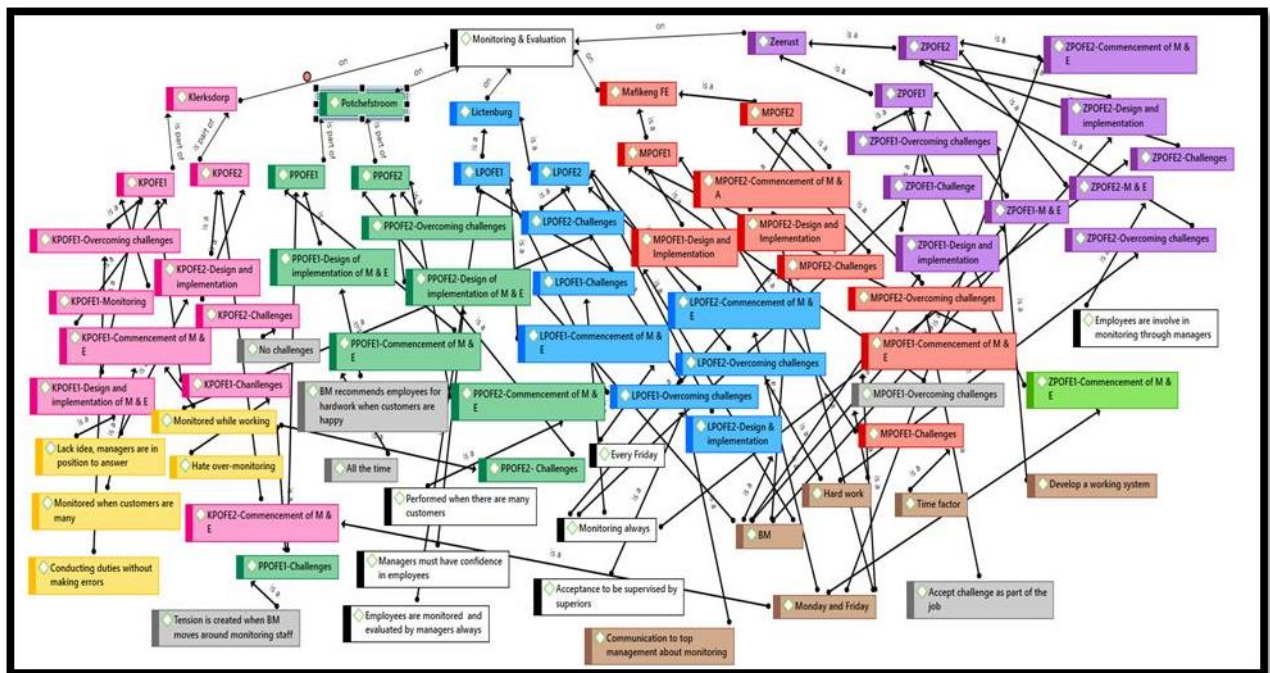
...I make them understand monitoring and evaluating is part of my workload (P, KPOBM).

...As a manager be the one controlling this unit, I try to talk to them in a friendly manner and to make them understand that if anything goes wrong in them performing their duties correctly, it might lead them to lose their jobs (P, ZPOAM).

5.11.6.2 Monitoring and evaluation with frontline employees in the five postal branches

This section presents the findings from the semi-structured interviews conducted with the 10 frontline employees from the five selected postal branches (Klerksdorp, Potchefstroom, Lichtenburg, Mafikeng and Zeerust). Two frontline employees were interviewed from each post office. Below are the participant's views on monitoring and evaluation.

Figure 5.43: General views on monitoring and evaluation of all frontline employees across the 5 post offices



Note P = participant,

Note on colours

Klerksdorp=Pink, Potchefstroom=Leaf green, Lichtenburg=Blue, Mafikeng= Orange and Zeerust=Purple

Figure 5.43 is explained in the subsequent sub-sections.

1) Involvement of frontline employees monitoring and evaluation in the five post offices

Figure 5.43 above, shows responses from some frontline employees who form part of monitoring and evaluation by their managers at their post office. They submitted that this is done at the convenience of their managers especially when there are so many customers to be served by limited staff members. The finding further indicate that employees are monitored and evaluated by their branch managers in the post office during their working hours to ensure consumers are served correctly. To further elaborate, the following directs quotes endorse this interpretation.

...Most of the time when we have so many customers in front of us as teller, our managers always moving around checking what we are doing (P, ZPOFE1).

...It all depends on our managers, someday you will see them busy moving and monitoring our daily activities and also making comments if we are not doing the right thing. This monitoring and evaluation in our post office is mostly done every week (P, ZPOFE2).

...The branch manager monitors our performance at all time to make sure we give out services correctly to our customers by moving around our computers and asking if everything is fine (P, PPOFE1).

...Through our managers, as we are monitored and evaluated by them (P, LPOFE1) and (P, LPOFE2).

2) The commencement of monitoring and evaluation

According to Figure 5.43 above, all participants indicate that the process of monitoring and evaluation takes place every working day. Below are examples of response in this regard:

...We are been monitor from Monday to Friday by our manager, he moves around making sure we are doing the right time, and also help us when he finds out we are not doing the right thing at that moment, but not part of designing the process (P, MPOFE1).

...I am involved as I am monitored and evaluated by my branch managers as I perform my day to day activities (P, ZPOFE1).

...Most of the time when we have so many customers in front of us as teller, our managers always moving around checking what we are doing (P, ZPOFE1).

3) Design and implementation of monitoring and evaluation system

Figure 5.43 above, shows responses from all the five post offices explain that they are not involved in the design of the monitoring and evaluation system. To further elaborate, the following directs quotes endorse this interpretation.

...It have been designed by our managers, but no idea how the design and implementation of strategic works (P, MPOFE2).

...I don't know how it has been designed and implemented, all I see is the manager moving up and down as we are working, and some days she will recommend you on doing a great job, especially when our customers are happy with the way we render the service to them". (PPOFE1), (P, PPOFE2).

...I don't know how it was designed and implemented, all I see is the manager moving up and down as we are working, and some days she will recommend

you on doing a great job, especially when our customers are happy with the way we render the service to them (P, LPOFE1).

...No idea, the manager will be in a better position to answer this question". (P, ZPOFE1).

4) Challenges encountered during monitoring and evaluation in the post office

The participants involved in this semi-structured interviews as presented in Figure 5.43 above, explain some of the challenges they experience which include; the unhappiness of staff to be monitored when working because it gives them a lot of tension, managers spend more time on this process and most of the staff are not comfortable with the process. That finding also indicate that few staff members enjoy being monitored and evaluated. Below are examples of responses in this regard:

...It's taken more of the manager time to make sure we are doing the right job all the time (P, MPOFE1).

...I am not so comfortable working and someone is moving around monitoring what I am doing, it creates tension at time and can lead me in making mistakes (P, LPOFE1).

Is challenging at times working and the manager is correcting your work at every given step (P, PPOFE2).

...For me, I have no challenges been monitor nor evaluated by the branch managers. I enjoy being monitored because it helps in building my work performance. Being evaluated helps me know my level of performance in this post office. And from a recommendation from my managers, I am up to date with my work performance (P, ZPOFE2).

5) Overcoming the challenges of monitoring and evaluation in the post office

As portray in Figure 5.43 above, to overcome these challenges, employees should be oriented to understand and accept that monitoring and evaluation is part of the manager's job description. Employees further need to oriented to understand that they need to be doing excellent work without mistake as this fosters confidence in the managers. Also, the need for management to design an effective monitoring and evaluation system that will be included in the strategic plan. Below are examples of response in this regard:

...We as staff need to instil confidence to the managers by always doing our jobs righty all the time (P, MPOFE1).

...I have just accepted that is part of our organisational culture for staff to be motioned or evaluated by managers (P, MPOFE2).

...I have accepted that that is how things work in the post office when it comes to monitoring and evaluation (P, LPOFE2).

...Managers must just have confidences in our services we give out to customers (P, PPOFE2).

According to all the respondents, from managers and frontline employers, the post offices do not have an appropriate monitoring and evaluation system that control and evaluate work performance. The findings in this study confirm that the monitoring and evaluation system is been designed by their managers according to the available resources they have in their position. Most of the employers are not comfortable with the monitoring and evaluation system in their various postal branches that is be design by their managers. The subsequent delineation expounds on the overall challenges experienced by the 3 branch managers and 1 area manager and the 10 frontline employees in the five postal branches.

Figure 5.44: Overall challenges experienced by the three branch managers and one area manager in Klerksdorp, Potchefstroom, Lichtenburg, Mafikeng and Zeerust

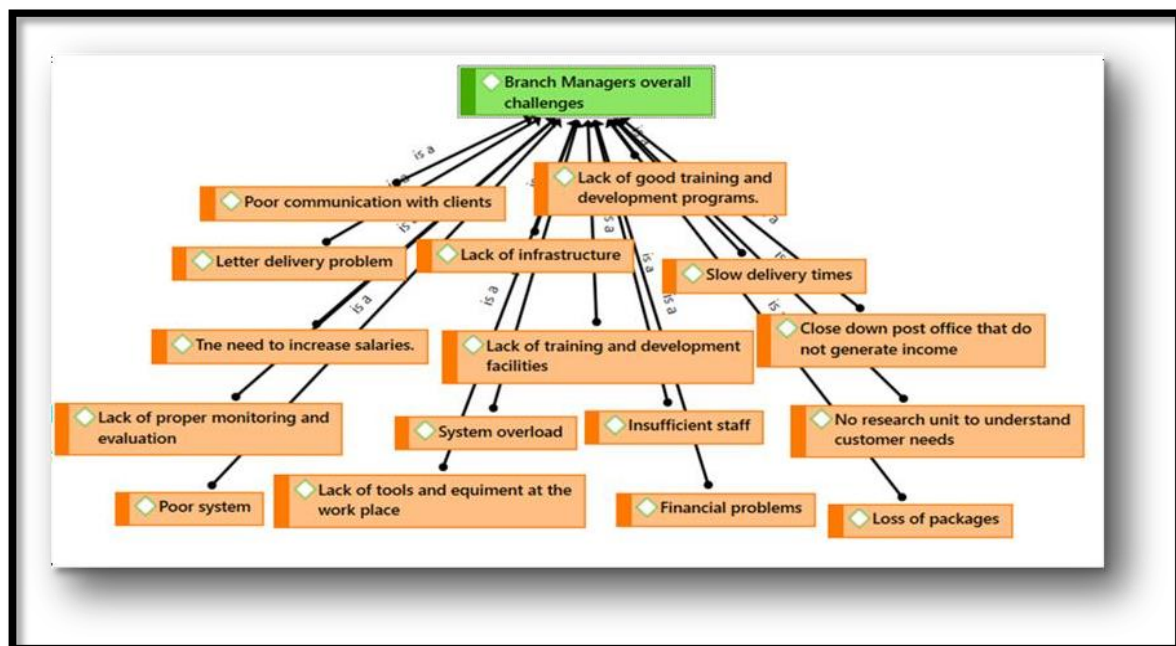
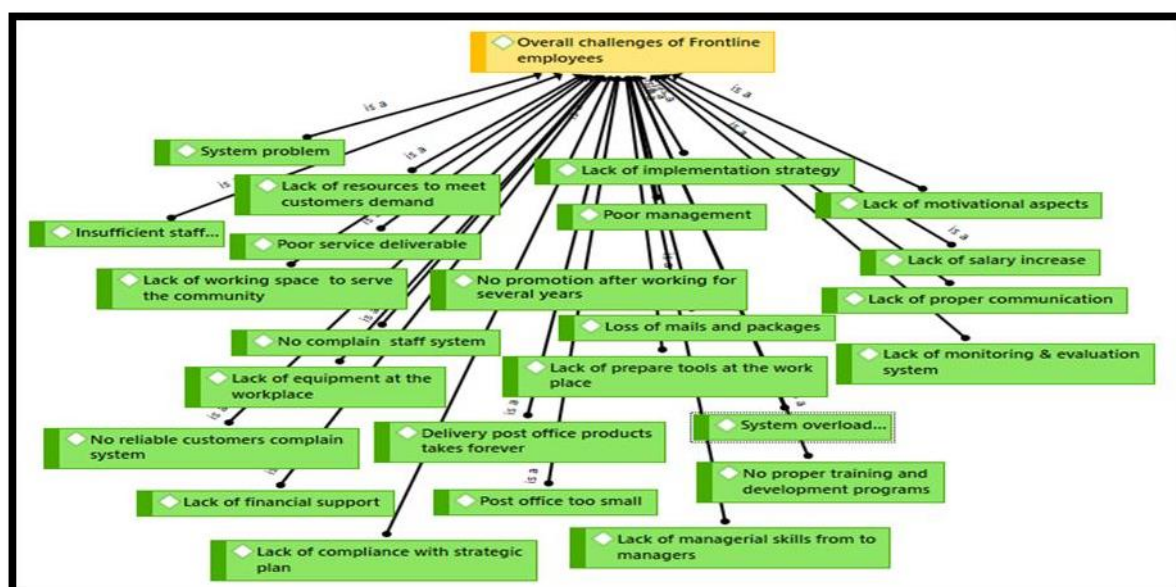


Figure 5.45: Overall challenges experienced by the 10 frontline employees across all the post office branches



Figures 5.44 and Figure 5.45 depict the overall challenges that could be addressed in improving the strategic management of service quality in the SAPO in the NW province. However, the challenges mentioned by managers and frontline employees, indicate that there is a need for the

post office management to consider those challenges in order to improve the service quality render to the postal customers, in other to reach their satisfaction and for them to remain loyal to the postal services. The subsequent session of discussion is a summary of the chapter.

5.12 Summary

This chapter presented the research results of the quantitative and qualitative phases of the study. It commenced with the quantitative and this was followed by the qualitative, covering four research questions as opposed to the five covered in the quantitative phase. The quantitative study provides findings such as biographical information of the postal consumers; presentation of findings as obtained in views of consumer's perception on tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy experience, views on service quality, views on overall satisfaction and views on expectations and perceptions of consumers on the service quality. The qualitative phase provides findings such as biographical information of managers and frontline employees; views of strategy implementation, training and development, motivation and monitoring and evaluation. The findings of literature review were presented to establish a framework for the strategic management of service quality that could be implemented by the Ngaka Modiri Molema District. The target was Mafikeng, Zeerust and Lichtenburg post offices. Under Dr Kenneth Kaunda District, the target areas were Klerksdorp and Potchefstroom post offices in their bid to enhance service quality in the North-West province.

The relevance of the quantitative phase was to investigate consumer's perceptions on services quality components in the five postal branches. In addition, the chapter strove to provide an analysis of service quality expectation and perception of managers, frontline employees and consumers. The relevance of the qualitative phase was to determine those variables that could enhance the strategic management of services quality with managers and frontline employees. In addition, the effort was designed to investigate if strategy implementation, training and development, motivation and monitoring and evaluation could enhance high services quality to reach consumers satisfaction. The data collected from both the quantitative and qualitative findings was linked to identify similarities and differences between the samples.

The key findings in this chapter show that the consumers are generally not happy with the service quality provided by the post offices as noted by lower perception scores compared to their expectations. It was also clear that even the managers and employees had low perceptions

regarding their service delivery despite their high expectations of service delivery. It is interesting that the management and employees do not treat consumers with respect as well as not having their best interest at heart. Therefore, it can be concluded that post office managers and frontline employees do not prioritise the following aspects: helpfulness to the customer's even when busy, give services on time, respect consumers, see consumers as king, give high quality services. There are indications that the post office management and employees do not prioritise strategy implementation, training and development, motivation and monitoring and evaluation variable. Such inconsistencies in management and employee perspectives could explain the poor service quality in the North West post office. Such glaring inconsistencies call for management to consider those variables as priorities in enhancing the strategy management of service quality.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

The strategic management of postal services in South African post offices has been a contested issue as consumer service quality keeps decreasing without adequate organisational interventions to stem this negative accrual. Inadequate strategic management planning as well as ineffective strategy implantation could have contributed towards poor service delivery resulting in loss of customers, loss of revenue, riotous protests, as well as a loss of trust in the South African postal services. Such challenges obstruct business in attaining their overall objectives. Due to the continuous loss of postal consumers and revenue at the post offices, particularly in the North West province, this study investigated the strategic management of service quality offered by the North West post offices to its consumers. This was executed in order to develop a framework that could be used to cultivate sustainable postal service excellence and thereby arrest the deteriorating service quality in the postal sectors, not only in the North West province but throughout South Africa. The proposed framework for the strategic management of service quality by managers and frontline employees at the service unit contributes to consumer satisfaction at the SAPO in the North West province, South Africa.

The previous chapter presented the empirical findings as obtained from both the quantitative and qualitative studies. An explanatory sequential mixed method design was used to address the service quality provision within the postal services in North West. This chapter presents a summary of findings, discusses these findings, and proffers recommendations in lieu of the critical issues raised in the five postal branches. The literature review is used to substantiate the empirical quantitative and qualitative discussion of findings of this study where it is applicable.

The main objectives for the study, as indicated in Chapter One, are as follows:

Quantitative objectives

These were designed to:

- Identify the challenges of the strategic management of service quality at post offices in the North West by means of an empirical study.
- Evaluate the expectations and perceptions of managers with regards to service quality at SAPO in the North West by means of an empirical study.
- Assess the expectations and perceptions of frontline employees with regards to service quality at SAPO in the North West by means of an empirical study.
- Measure the expectations and perceptions of consumers with regards to service quality at the SAPO in the North West by means of an empirical study.
- Draw conclusions and recommendations concerning the improvement of the service quality rendered by means of a proposed framework.

Qualitative objective

The qualitative objectives were designed to:

- Identify the challenges of strategic implementation of service quality with managers, frontline employees, and consumers in the SAPO in the North West by means of an empirical study.
- Establish how training and development can be used to enhance service quality with managers and frontline employees in the SAPO in the North West by means of an empirical study.
- Assess how motivation could be used to enhance service quality with managers and frontline employees in the SAPO in the North West by means of an empirical study.
- Explore how monitoring and evaluation could be used to enhance service quality with managers and frontline employees in the SAPO in the North West by means of an empirical study.

This subsequent section provides a triangulation of findings, discussion of findings, the contribution of the theoretical background, strategic management of service quality proposed framework, recommendations, limitations of the study, and lastly, conclusions to this study.

6.2 Triangulation of results

Triangulation is a process of verification that increases validity by incorporating several viewpoints and methods (Johnson *et al.*, 2017). In the social sciences, it refers to the

combination of two or more theories, data sources, methods, or investigators in one study of a single phenomenon to converge on a single construct, and can be employed in both quantitative (validation) and qualitative (inquiry) studies (Turner *et al.*, 2017). Thus, the purpose of triangulation in this study is to increase the credibility and validity of both the quantitative and qualitative results. As such, in the following section where the summary of findings and discussion of findings are presented, the findings of both the qualitative and quantitative data of the study are incorporated.

The summary of findings of this study as obtained from the non-empirical study (literature review) and the empirical study (quantitative and qualitative) are presented in relation to the research questions as postulated in Chapter One of this study.

6.2.1 Summary of findings from the quantitative result

This section deals with the summary of the results obtained from the quantitative sets of data with regards the research design of this study as indicated in section 4.5.

- 1) The findings on views of the biographical description of the respondents in relation to the two SAPO units deduced that:
 - More postal consumers in the North West Province are located in Potchefstroom and Mafikeng.
 - There are more female postal consumers than male.
 - The majority of the postal consumers are within the ages of 31 to 40 years, while a minority of the postal consumers are within the ages of 20 and 60 and above.
 - The majority of the respondents hold a diploma certificate, while a minority of the respondents hold a PhD degree.
 - More respondents in the study are employed consumers, while a minority of the respondents are retired consumers.
 - More postal consumers in the study received at least R15 000 to R20 000 as monthly income suggesting that they can pay for postal services.

This section concludes that more respondents make use of the postal services in their various postal branches and to a large extent face multiple challenges related to postal services. The next discussion elaborates on the quantitative objectives of this study.

2) The views on challenges to the strategic management of service quality with postal consumers established that:

Tangibility, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, and Empathy help to determine consumer satisfaction. The Empathy construct was excluded from further analysis due to poor reliability. Based on these findings it can be concluded that for this dimension service quality is not in line with consumer's expectations. Below are the four dimensions of service quality.

- Tangible dimension

The tangible dimension speaks to the physical environment and appearance. The findings documented in Chapter 5 show that postal consumers' expectations are met by the five postal branches, with the majority indicating that they found the waiting areas and restrooms clean, well-lit, and ventilated, atmosphere and décor of the waiting room are attractive. Participants also confirmed that staff are neat and easily identified by their uniform, and the post office provides detailed information packs about the services provided. The majority of the respondents agree with the tangible dimension and these are from the Potchefstroom post office, followed by Mafikeng, Klerksdorp, Lichtenburg, and Zeerust. It can be concluded that for this dimension service quality is in line with consumer expectations, which has a positive effect on customer satisfaction.

- Reliability dimension

This dimension concerns the ability of postal sectors to execute the promised service accurately. The majority of the respondents reported that services are not provided at the promised time, dependably and accurately. Also, a minority of the respondents agreed that staff are competent in providing efficient services, records are kept up-to-date, as well as staff scheduling appointments so much so that customers do not wait an unreasonable time to receive attention. The findings established that the majority of the respondents who agree with the reliability dimension are from the Mafikeng, followed by Potchefstroom, Klerksdorp, Zeerust, and Lichtenburg been the minority. For this dimension, it can be concluded that service quality is not 100% in line with customer expectations because the majority of the respondents reported not satisfied with the services not provided at the promised time and dependably and accurately. Thus, Zeerust and

Lichtenburg are in the minority, and there is a need to invest more resources on their reliability dimension so as to meet consumer demand.

- Responsiveness dimension

This dimension deals with keeping postal consumers informed about when services will be performed and responding quickly to their needs. The majority of the respondents reported that staff are not always willing to help, they do not respond quickly to queries, staff do not provide them with detailed information on the process, they are too busy to assist, and do not set up follow-up appointments quickly and professionally. It is clear that responsiveness reflected negative feedback. Thus, the five postal branches need to improve on the responsiveness dimension, by proving an effective monitoring and evaluation system that could help to ensure that consumers are provided with prompt service. This dimension emphasizes attentiveness and promptness in dealing with customer's requests, questions, complaints, and problems.

- Assurance dimension

This relates to the degree of confidence and trust with respect to receiving quality service that postal consumers feel when visiting the post office. Postal consumer's perceptions in terms of confidence and trust are not in line with the perceived performance provided at the five postal branches. The majority of the respondents reported that the services provided by post office staff do not instil trust and confidence in the consumers. Consumers of postal services do not feel secure when receiving services from the staff at the post office and that staff are not consistently courteous when dealing with clients. In the positive findings, respondents agreed that staff are knowledgeable about the services the post office offers to its consumers. In addition, the majority of the respondents who agree with the assurance dimension are from the Mafikeng, followed by Potchefstroom, Klerksdorp, and Zeerust with the same response rate, and Lichtenburg in the minority. Thus, Klerksdorp and Zeerust with the same response rate and Lichtenburg are in the minority and there is a need to improve on the assurance dimension by proving effective training and development programs on postal products and services to its managers and frontline employers in order to meet consumer satisfaction. It can be concluded that for this dimension, service quality is not in line with customer expectations. It can also be concluded that service rendered by staff is not consistent across the branches in the province, which has negative implications for consumer satisfaction.

3) The summary of findings on perceptions to overall satisfaction with postal consumers established that:

A satisfied customer is always supposed to recommend the service to their friends, relatives, and the persons that they encounter. The idea behind this question was to figure out how customers feel about the overall services offered by the five postal branches as well as the willingness of the customer to recommend the postal services for others. If the customers are highly satisfied with the services, then it determines that there is the possibility of high-income growth and customer loyalty. The findings presented in Chapter 5 show a negative response by the level of service provided. This can be attributed to lack of training of staff to provide certain services. The staff does not seem capable of providing the services needed. In this respect, the post office fails to meet the client's expectations and also over-promise its consumer without meeting their expectations.

Further findings indicate that majority of the respondents are not satisfied with the overall service quality in the various postal branches, and would not continue to use the services. Consumers specifically indicated that they would not recommend the services to others. In addition, the majority of the respondents who disagree with the overall satisfaction of the postal services are from Potchefstroom, followed by Klerksdorp, Lichtenburg, and Mafikeng with the same response rate, and Zeerust in the minority. It can be concluded that the overall postal service quality is not in line with customer expectations, which has negative implications for consumer satisfaction.

4) Summary of findings on expectations and perceptions in the service centre, frontline employees, and postal service managers.

This section discusses the expectations and perceptions in the service centre, frontline employees, and postal service managers, as well as the current status of consumers on the service quality in the service centre, frontline employees, and postal service managers, the findings exposed the following details:

- Views on expectations of consumers in the service centre

A service centre is an administrative division that offers a specific service or product to a particular set of people or clientele. The service centre of the post office provides postal services

to all postal consumers within the five postal branches. The services provided by the five postal branches influence consumer's expectations. The findings confirm that most of the post offices are not situated in a convenient location, and are not equipped with a monitoring service system that assesses performance. This service lacks adequate security systems. The finding further shows limited guarantees to sending or receiving mails and parcels through the post office. On the other hand, the majority of the respondents are in support of the statement that the post office has visually presented brochures and directories in their post offices, operating hours are convenient, and also offers affordable postal services to consumers. In addition, the majority of the respondents who disagree with the services offered in the service centre are from Potchefstroom, followed by Mafikeng, Klerksdorp, while Lichtenburg and Zeerust are in the minority. The service centre in Potchefstroom, Mafikeng, and Klerksdorp in this instance should have the best products and services so that they can meet the expectations of the customers. As a result, consumers would have a good impression of the post office. It can be concluded that the views of consumers in the service centre are not in line with consumer expectations, which has negative implications for consumer satisfaction.

- Views on expectations of consumers on service quality from frontline employees

The findings confirmed in the quantitative results depict that participants reported that the respondents expect that staff are polite, perform services accurately, provide services on time, are willing to serve clients, and are available to respond to clients' requests. But the finding shows that respondents are in a disagreement that staff are polite, perform services accurately, provide services on time, are willing to serve clients, and are available to respond to clients' requests. Consumers expect that staff should be flexible in addressing clients' demands, deliver mails and parcels to the correct address at all times, and also quick in resolving mail and parcel problems, as well as been knowledgeable about postal services. The respondents are in a disagreement that staff are flexible in addressing clients' demands, deliver mails and parcels to the correct address at all times, and also quick in resolving mail and parcel problems, as well as been knowledgeable about postal services. Furthermore, respondents expect that the staff takes into account their opinions or complaints into consideration. But respondents are in a disagreement that staff takes into account their opinions or complaints into consideration.

Finally, respondents expect that staff should be acknowledged of the firm product and service, neat in appearance, solve problems with honesty as well as keeping records confidential. The findings confirm that staff are knowledgeable about the firm product and service, neat in appearance, solve problems with honesty as well as keeping records confidential. In addition, the majority of the respondents who are in disagreement with the expectations of service quality- with frontline employees were from Potchefstroom, followed by Klerksdorp, Mafikeng, Lichtenburg, and lastly Zeerust. The findings suggest that employees of the five postal branches need proper and thorough training in handling the demands of customers. It appeared that certain consumers felt that the post office lacked strategies and mechanisms for dealing with customers. Moreover, service providers all confirmed that the post offices need to improve on the resources, training and development programs, motivational aspect as well as monitoring and evaluation system and introduce more accessible mechanisms that will accommodate the interests of consumers. In doing so, employees of the various postal branches would inspire confidence in the customers and maximise production which might positively position the post office and enhance its reputation. It can be concluded that the views on service quality-frontline employees are not in line with customer expectations since consumers disagree with some variables, which has negative implications for customer satisfaction in the postal branches.

- Views on the expectations of consumers on service quality from postal service managers

Consumers expect that the postal managers should be visible, accessible, and approachable to their consumers. But the findings confirmed in the quantitative results depict that participants reported that the five postal branches respondents disagree that managers are visible, accessible and approachable to their consumers. Consumers also expect that managers follow up on complaints and report back to clients, provide services on time, friendly and polite to consumers, treat a customer as a king, conduct surveys on the service quality of the various branches as well as been problem solvers to consumers. But the findings indicate that managers do not follow up on complaints and report back to clients. They do not provide services on time and are not friendly and polite to consumers, managers do not treat a customer as a king, do not conduct surveys on the service quality of the various branch as well as not been problem solvers to consumers. In addition, the majority of the respondents who disagreed with the expectations of service quality- with managers are from Mafikeng, followed by Klerksdorp, Zeerust, lastly Potchefstroom, and Lichtenburg. This implies that managers in Mafikeng, Klerksdorp, and Zeerust do not meet the expectations of its postal consumers. In this instance, constant research

and evaluation of service quality must be undertaken by those managers in order to update expectations strategies and develop mechanisms for providing fulfilling services to consumers. It can be concluded that the views of service quality on managers are not in line with customer expectations, which has negative implications for customer satisfaction in the postal branches.

This section discusses the current status of consumers on the service quality at that moment the services were been delivered by frontline employees and postal service managers. Below are detailed responses from the quantitative findings.

- Views on consumers on service centre current status in terms of logistics

This section sought to establish the current status of the service quality in terms of logistics at the service centre delivered to consumers in the five postal branches. The findings confirmed that the majority of the respondents do not see the post office as equipped with comfortable facilities and equipment. They do not agree that the post office gives visually presented brochures and directories to its consumers, the post office is equipped with a monitoring service system to improve work performance. The findings further indicate that the post office is not equipped with security systems, there are no guarantees to sending or receiving mails and parcels through the post office, and operating hours are not convenient to consumers, while a minority are in support with the above findings. In addition, the majority of the respondents who are in disagreement with the expectations of the service centre current status are from Potchefstroom, followed by Mafikeng, Klerksdorp, Lichtenburg, and lastly Zeerust. This implies that consumers from Potchefstroom, Mafikeng, and Klerksdorp are not satisfied with the service centre current status. Thus, management should design service standards that promote reliability, consistency in service delivery, and not promising more than they can deliver. It can be concluded that the views of consumers with regards the service centre current status are not in line with consumer expectations, which has negative implications for consumer satisfaction in the postal branches.

- Views on consumers on frontline employee's current status on the service offered

This section strove to clarify the frontline employee's current status on service quality they offer to postal consumers in the five postal branches. The findings confirmed that the majority of the respondents are not in support with the statement that staff are polite, neat in appearance, perform services accurately, provide services on time, are willing to serve clients, and are

available to respond to clients' requests. The finding further disagrees with the fact that frontline employers are flexible in addressing clients' demands, deliver mails and parcels to the correct address at all times and also quick in resolving mail and parcel problems, as well as being knowledgeable about postal services and also not busy to respond requests of consumers and not taking into account consumers opinions or complaints into consideration. This indicates that frontline employers solve problems with honesty as well as keeping records confidential. Finally, the majority of the respondents who disagree with the expectations of service quality of frontline employees are from Potchefstroom, followed by Mafikeng, Klerksdorp, Lichtenburg, and lastly Zeerust. This implies that more infancies must be placed on the training and development of frontline employees in Potchefstroom, Mafikeng, and Klerksdorp to improve on the inter-personally skill as well as operational skill in other to reach consumers demand. It can be concluded that the frontline employee's current status is not in line with customer expectations, which has negative implications for customer satisfaction in the postal branches.

- Views on consumers on postal service manager's current status

This section aimed to establish the postal manager's current status on service offer to postal consumers in the five postal branches. The findings confirmed that the majority of the respondents are not in support with the following statement as mentioned in the questionnaire: that the managers of the postal branches are visible, accessible, and are approachable to its consumers, managers follow up on complaints and report to clients, managers provide services on time and are friendly and polite to consumers. The findings also indicate that majority of the respondents disagree that managers treat a customer as a king, often conduct surveys on the service quality of the branch, speak to clients and find out about their needs as well as being a problem solver to consumers, that postal branches have visible suggestion/complaint box available and encourage clients to use it. In addition, the majority of the respondents who are in disagreed with the current status of service quality with service manages are from Mafikeng, followed by Klerksdorp, Potchefstroom, and Zeerust with their same responds rate, and lastly Lichtenburg. It can be concluded that the current status of service quality with service manages is not in line with customer expectations, which has negative implications for customer satisfaction in the postal branches.

6.2.2 Summary of the qualitative results

This section deals with the findings of the results obtained from the qualitative sets of data with regards research design of this study (see section 4.5).

Theme 1: The biographical data of respondents compels this study to deduce the following:

- The majority of the respondents hold a position as branch managers and frontline employees while a minority of the respondents are area manager.
- More respondents have work experience from 7 years to 27 years, while a minority have work experience from 5 years below.

This section submits that more respondents have worked for a long period and have experience of postal services in their postal branches. The next discussion elaborates on the qualitative findings of this study.

Theme 1: Views on strategic implementation with managers and frontline employees

- On approaches in formulating strategic implementation respondents had a mixed feeling on the strategic plan that was put in place by the post office management and they submitted that this is not working. Managers do not consider strategy implementation as a priority and they do not take into account the yearly objectives before formulating their own strategic plan. On the other hand, the study established that frontline employees are not part of the strategic planning, making it difficult for them to implement the strategic plan effectively due to their lack of understanding of the strategic plan. The findings further indicate that frontline employees implement the strategy according to the orders given by their branch managers or area managers and not according to the policy.
- On the relevant factors that have to be considered when implementing strategies by manager's respondents indicated the following: Financial resources, staff competencies on strategic implementation, high skills, a system in place, need to assign the tasks to the appropriate departments of the organization, evaluate the current staffing structure, determine the key managerial tasks and responsibilities, consider budget, resources, labour as well as equipment and tools. On the other hand, the findings affirmed that frontline employees are not part of the strategic planning process, making it difficult for them to know

those relevant factors. Also, the frontline employees implement strategies as per the branch managers and area manager's instructions. Essentially, the post office needs to consider the following factors: the need for management to create an appropriate organisational structure that supports the implementation system, more financial resources, materials, equipment and labour.

- Findings on challenges experienced in strategic implementation by managers and frontline employees were similar: Lack of resources, lack of clarity about the strategic plan, thus, it becomes difficult for them to implement, this affects daily functioning, lack of effective communication of the policy, lack of ownership on the part of the "implementers, little attention is paid to strategy implementation by management, stock problem, a limited budget to run the post offices, staff shortage, system problem, lack of equipment, delay in the delivery postal product, lack of performance tracking and monitoring system as well as lack of a good performance management system, lack of the understanding of the strategic plan that is been formulated by top management, lack of proper infrastructure, proper communication system, low salary, the complaints from consumers of not receiving good services at all times, due to the above challenges.
- Findings on how to overcome the above challenges experienced in the strategic implementation by managers and frontline employees are as follows: need to establish a performance tracking and monitoring system, establish a performance management system, establish an information and feedback system, effective communication of the strategic plan by top managers, strategic planning should be in the clear teams, staff must take upon ownership on the part of the strategic implementation, employees need to be considered as a role player to implement the post office strategic plan, as well as been part of strategy planning meetings, employ more staff, enough financial resources as well as reliable system and enough stock to serve post office customers. human resources department must take into account all the criteria of employment before employment takes place, there is a need for salary increment, provision of more computers, more working material, and enough resources are needed to implement the strategy successfully.
- Findings on strategy implementation as it concerns employees suggest the respondents had mixed feelings. The employees are not part of the strategic planning; they lack understanding of the strategic plan making it difficult to implement. While findings by frontline employees indicate that staff implements the post office strategy plan as instructed by their post office manager not using the original postal policy, limited staff to deliver services to consumers as

well as attend to their complaints, the inefficiency postal system to reach out to customers as well as customer's dissatisfaction towards postal services most of the time.

- The findings on strategy implementation by managers and frontline employees as it concerns customers revealed that customers do not like new changes, the issue of bringing in additional documents frustrate customers without advance notification as well as changing the closing time from 17h00 to 16h30, limited staff as well as limited products to serve customers.

Theme 2: Training and development with managers and frontline employees revealed that:

- Frequencies of training and development by managers and frontline employers show that training and development were only carried out whenever there was a need, as such training is not a priority to the organisation. Another is that training and development are carried out on Wednesday morning before opening time, and this is just internal training. Finally, only one staff member received external training in the year 2019.
- Findings on the view on training and development by managers revealed that this helps to improve employee performance and it enhances the promotion of employees. The training and development reinforces needed skills to attain post office objectives. In addition, the respondents enjoy training and development sessions, particularly the Wednesday's sessions, this according to them enables employers to know what is to be done and it was an avenue to table their challenges. It was evident that training and development help to orientate new employers in an organisation.

Finally, the findings indicated that training and development is a major prerequisite for any organisation that strives to achieve maximum productivity through the effective performance of its employees. Frontline employees revealed that training and development helps to increase staff knowledge of the service and product, act as a problem solver to an organisation, as well as increases productivity and efficient work. The training and development help to increase promotion and group employers with similar knowledge as well as help to prepare employers to live up to future challenges. The training and development enables employers to learn new things, and to improve performances, increase employer's growth, build staff performance, and increased job satisfaction among employees.

- Findings on the proportion of training and development of managers and frontline employees confirmed that a majority of the respondents affirm that just one staff member went for external training and development within the last 12 months. Apart from the internal post office training programme organized by the managers, staff does not go for any other external training and development programme.
- With regards training and development by managers and frontline employees, similar challenges revolve around the fact that there is a lack of sufficient training resources, limited interest from management to organise training and development in the post office. Likewise, the time factor was another problem, employees reported to tight work schedules, lack of external training and development programmes, lack of skill and knowledge from employers that affect high-quality work performance in the post office. Lack of external training and development program and the time slot for the Wednesday morning training is too short as well as lack of food during the training and development programs and training and development opportunities are limited.
- On ways to improve training and development by managers and frontline employees, the study established that sufficient budget should be allocated for training and development and management should take training and development as an important component in the organisation that will help improve service quality at our post offices. The suggests that training and development should take a longer period, and at list four times a year, a need to bring in external training not only the Wednesday session that is been carry out on one post office, bring in an expert to train staff on the current development which is taken place in postal sectors, management should also make provision for food during the process of training and more consistent training and development programs must be organize externally. There is a need for educational awareness and training and development programmes at all times, more tools are needed for training programmes. Finally, management needs to create more training and development programmes at the post office and it should be added in the strategic plan and must be compulsory to all staff members.

Theme 3: Managers' and frontline employees' views on motivation

- Findings on the concept of motivation by manages and frontline employees revealed that motivation is related to the provision of excellent service, meeting deadlines, and providing effectively post-office activities. Giving staff members the opportunities to grow from one stage to another led to motivation. Further, motivation stimulates people to work to the best

of their capabilities. Motivation takes people to a higher level, gives them opportunities to grow, and foster education. Indeed, motivation is what makes staff accept their jobs. Also, motivation accounts for an individual's intensity, direction, and persistence of effort toward attaining a goal, factors that make bring about happiness at the workplace, as well as an internal and external influencer that stimulate desire and energy in people to be continually interested and committed to a job.

- Findings on three motivators at work by managers and frontline employees, it emerged that staff meeting deadlines, mentoring and coaching as well as learning new things makes them feel motivated. Ensuring customer satisfaction and good financial incentives led to motivation at work. Good work and perseverance, archiving company objectives, bring in creative ideas to improve work performance, job promotion, excellent job performance, safety environment, completing a difficult project, be a problem solver, respect from managers and employees as well as enough working resources.
- On factors that demotivate managers and frontline employees at work the study established the inability to meet datelines, system issues such as network problems, not reaching customers' expectations, staff shortage, uncooperative staff, and delay in delivering postal services are real issues in the postal services. Lack of work recognition, lack of stock, lack of resources, difficulties in understanding the strategy plan, when customers were not satisfied with our services, inability to complete a project, no respect from managers, and working for years no job promotion are other mitigating factors.
- Findings on factors that trigger demotivating incidents or events by managers and frontline employees at work include the experience of a shortage of stock, system failure that makes it impossible for services to go through, lack of stock to serve customers as well as poor attitude from frontline employees. delay in postal orders, when experiencing a shortage of staff, limited resources in given out postal services, difficulties in understanding the strategy plan, when customers were not satisfied with our services, unable to complete a project, working for years no job promotion, and when deadline could not be met.

Theme 4: Managers' and frontline employees' views on monitoring and evaluation revealed that:

- The branch manager and area manager monitor and evaluate activities of its staff members only when need be, while on the other hand frontline employees confirmed that there are no systems designed for monitoring and evaluation. Essentially, branch managers and area managers only carry out monitoring and evaluation when need be.

- Findings on commencement of monitoring and evaluation by managers and frontline employees revealed that: the commencement of monitoring and evaluation in the post offices is done only when managers feel the need to do so, to make sure workers are on the right track.
- Findings on design and implementation of monitoring and evaluation systems revealed that: branch manager and area manager have no structure design for monitoring and evaluation. While on the other hand frontline employees reveal that respondents have no idea how monitoring and evaluation is being designed and implemented, all they witness is how they are monitored and evaluated by their managers during some working hours.
- Findings on challenges encountered with regards to monitoring and evaluation and suggested strategies to overcoming the challenges by managers and frontline employees revealed that: branch manager and area managers spend more time looking at what staff are doing to ensure efficiency, on the other hand, the finding revealed that frontline employees do not like to be monitored nor evaluated, because it creates tension and misbehaviour between managers and staff in the postal branches. The findings further reveal few respondents have no problem of been monitored or evaluated.
- To overcome those challenges managers, suggest the need for training programs to explain to employers the importance of monitoring and evaluation and make staff understand that it is part of their job description, as well as management, should design a structured monitoring and evaluation system. While on the other hand frontline employees suggest staff has to accept that it is a part of the manager's job, they need to earn their manager's trust by working hard and timely. On the part of the managers, they need to develop confidence in their staff. In addition, the finding suggests a proper system or unit should be created for this particular purpose.

The following section will be a discussion of findings.

6.3 Discussion of findings

This study interprets and describes the significance of the findings in light of what was already known from existing literature about the research problem investigated. It also explains any new and fresh insights into the research problem. The quantitative and qualitative findings are discussed below.

6.3.1 Discussion of findings from the quantitative results

This section deals with the themes from the quantitative sets of data, expounding on the responses.

Theme 1: Challenges to the strategic management of service quality with postal consumers

Strategic management, according to Thompson *et al.* (2014), is a management practice in which organisations (Post offices in this case) adopt to address the challenges occurring from both internal and external environments. Consistent with this, Hill *et al.* (2017) maintain that the progress achieved by any organisation depends on the effort of applying the concepts of strategic management. This theme was considered as management, frontline employers, and consumer issue and was included only in the quantitative data because both managers, frontline employers as well as consumers in the post offices were variables in this component. This construct sought to establish if challenges to the strategic management of service quality affect managers and frontline employers in an endeavour to enhance sustainable service quality to postal consumers. The results indicate certain challenges, which include lack of effective communication, stock problem, lack of equipment, delay in the delivery postal product, lack of performance tracking and monitoring system, lack of a good performance management system, lack of proper information and feedback system and lack of notification to customers on new changes.

The lack of resources to implement the strategic plan effectively, poor quality service, closing times of the post office change affect customers, the additional document added in some postal services such as TV licences, lack of security receiving services from the post office, frustrate the customers, lack of trust on postal services and staff, consumers complaints of missing emails and parcels cause by postal management, lack of proper infrastructure, poor system, shortage of staff, lack of staff confidence, ineffective human resources sections, limited staff knowledge on the postal products and services, lack of proper training and development. Canhada and Rese (2011), affirmed that strategic management encounters serious challenges which affect effective service quality in an organisation such as lack of consensus, understanding, and transparency on the meaning of the company's mission and vision; the lack of relation between strategic content and strategic management; lack of consistency between strategic management and resource allocation; lack of customer demand; lack of strategic feedback; a relatively inflexible formal structure due to Information Technology and lack of involvement of the company's management and the use of strategic management models that are not suited to organizational reality. The

findings are consistent with Nazemi *et al.* (2015), who explained eight different challenges affecting strategic management, stressing that they include cultural barriers, insufficient resources, structural barriers, lack of effective performance measures, managerial barriers, environmental barriers, human resource management barriers, and inadequate strategy formulation.

Similarly, according to Latif *et al.* (2013), the most common barriers in effective strategic management which organizations frequently face in strategy formulation and implementation include strict time limits, duplicate procedures, unaccountability, power, and influence. This finding is also in line with the Contingency Theory where Ndolloh. (2016) affirms that organisations should interact continuously with the internal and external environment thereby receiving feedback and also developing adaptive features to overcome challenges that may arise as circumstances change. Strategic management practice, according to Thompson *et al.* (2014), involves the ability of management to transform an organisation (post offices in this case) to cope with the challenges in the environment. The organisational strategy should stipulate the actions that should be taken by each functional department and/or the operating section. The factors highlighted by the respondents entail that managers and frontline employers should accommodate environmental change, think creatively and devise measures to sustain post offices towards strategic development, change, and transformation. Most importantly, post office management should strive to understand the internal and external environments and be to provide enough resources in order to meet the needs of postal consumers.

Besides these challenges in the quantitative findings, a typically new concept arises from the empirical study, suggesting that management should develop a plan for improving quality. This plan includes analyzing the current situation and predicting the impacts of any future decision and developing appropriate measurement system. It was found in the study that management does not include frontline employees in the company strategic plan meeting. The immediate recommendation is that management should include all its frontline employees in their company strategic planning meeting that would help give their views and also understand how to implement the strategic plan correctly as well as providing sufficient resources in meeting consumers demand.

Theme 2: Expectations and perceptions of managers with regards service quality offered to consumers

In an organisation, management plays a major role in excellent service quality provision as this quality results in the retention of current customers and the luring of new customers (Piaralal *et al.*, 2016; Musikavanhu, 2017). This construct was included in this study to investigate the understanding of expectations of consumers concerning service quality offered by managers in the postal branches. Data from the quantitative study indicates that the majority of the responses agreed that managers of the postal branches are not visible and accessible, are not approachable to consumers. Managers do not follow up on complaints and report to clients. Respondents further disagree that managers provide services on time and are friendly and polite to consumers. In addition, respondents indicated that managers do not treat customers like a king, do not often conduct surveys on the service quality of the branch, and do not speak to clients and find out about their needs as well as being a problem solver to consumers. This is in line with Wilson *et al.* (2008) who affirm that knowing what the customer expects is a very important step in delivering a service of high quality. If the management of SAPO does not know what customers expect, they can lose the customers' business as well as money and resources.

On the other hand, the minority of the respondents are in agreement that their postal branches has visible suggestion/complaint box available and encourage clients to use it. This corroborates prior studies, for example, Zeithaml *et al.* (2009) who express the need for managers knowing what the consumer expects is one of the most critical factors in delivering good and service quality. Liu *et al.* (2013), affirmed that the basis of effective management of consumer expectation, firstly it cannot ignore basic collection and analysis of consumer information which includes information collection and statistical information based on properties of consumers, the level and instability consumption, personal preferences, service and satisfaction feedback information regarding the analysis of consumer expectations and needs provide a basis to measure the level of information support. Kerzner (2017), confirmed that designing for relationships requires a consumer centered approach, maintaining consumer relationship just does not happen accidentally, they are constructed through the service and product provided.

The perception of SAPO managers influences the way service quality is managed. Thus, the need for SAPO managers to clearly understand its consumers and the perceived desired service quality. If SAPO manager would clearly understand their customers correctly, which would require the use of resources and measurement tools, to create the right specifications of service quality which would translate into service delivery. Supposedly if SAPO managers lack the resources or commitment for this, surely all that follows would result in service quality below

acceptable levels. Thus, SAPO managers must have the right understanding of customer expectations, engendering the right perception of the desired service quality.

Based on the above discussion in the quantitative findings, a typically new concept arises from the empirical study, which indicate that managers need to be devoted when dealing with postal consumers as well as carrying out continuous research on consumers' needs in dealing with post consumers, that will help led to high service quality.

Theme 3: Consumers' expectations and perceptions of frontline employees with regard service quality offered to consumers

Employees play a central role in service quality as they are the contact between customers and management. Their role is seminal to service delivery. Service delivery depends then on the skills and knowledge employees possess which is the duty of management to take care of their employees (Sok & O'Cass, 2015). Also, Piaralal *et al.* (2016) and Musikavanhu (2017) affirm that management and employees play a major role in excellent service quality provision as excellent service results in the retention of current customers and luring of new customers. Expectations and perceptions of frontline employee's dynamics were factored into this study to examine if the services offered by frontline employees to postal consumers meet their expectations (consumers) and hence enhance high service quality. The responses were obtained from the respondents on the understanding of expectations of consumers concerning service quality offered by frontline employees in the postal branches. Data indicates that the majority of the responses from the quantitative study disagreed that frontline employees are polite, neat in appearance, perform services accurately, provide services on time, willing to serve clients, and available to respond to clients' requests. In addition, the finding indicates that frontline employees are not flexible in addressing clients' demands, do not deliver mails and parcels to the correct address at all times, and also not quick in resolving mail and parcel problems, as well as being knowledgeable about postal services.

On the other hand, a minority of the respondents affirmed that the staff solve problems with honesty as well as keeping records confidential. According to Hooper *et al.* (2013) employee is one of the most influential factors on service quality. They maintain that understanding employee perceptions of service quality is relevant because their perception of the work environment determines what kind of service quality the organisation will offer to the customers. In other words, the perception of employees contributes to the delivery of high-quality services

(Sok & O'Cass, 2015). This explains why it can be argued that exploring how employees perceive the services they deliver is critical. Elnagal and Imran (2014), Omotayo (2015) and Teece (2016) confirm that employees are the most valuable assets for the organisation as they are invariably the source of knowledge and abilities that cannot be imitated by competitors. This was established in the human resource-based theory where Koch and de Kok (2014) and Grant (2016) affirm that the values and attitudes of these stakeholders determine the long-term goals and impact on how the management of employees is accomplished. It also recognizes that the operation of such an organization is constrained by organisational, social, and product components.

This justifies the observation that respondents and participants expressed mixed feelings, thus post office management should educate frontline employees on the importance of postal consumers as well as the effect of losing a customer. More training programmes should be organized on customer service encounters in order to help improve service quality as well as frontline employee's attitudes toward postal consumers. The education and training programme would enable frontline employees to deliver postal service consistently.

Theme 4: Consumers' expectations and perceptions with regards service quality in the service centre

The responses were obtained from the respondents (consumers) on their expectations and perceptions concerning service quality offered by the service centre in the postal branches. Data from the quantitative study showed that the majority of the consumers are not in support that the post office is situated in a convenient location, equipped with comfortable facilities, visually presented brochures and directories in their post offices as well as equipped with a monitoring service system that assesses performance. It was further found that the post is not equipped with security systems, operating hours are not convenient to consumers and no guarantees of sending or receiving mails and parcels are reliable. These results concur with previous studies (Manwa, 2011) who also obtained low ratings for reliability, assurance, and empathy. It can be concluded that the postal customers have very low perceptions of these areas hence, the SAPO employees need to improve tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, and assurance. Solving customers' problems could be addressed by having service recovery strategies in the organisations (see Chapter 2, Section 2.5.6.6). Service recovery strategies are advantageous in that employees are empowered to solve problems without a waste of time and they also communicate to the customers that the organisation values them (Kotler *et al.*, 2014; Aguilar-Rojas *et al.*, 2015;

Piaralal *et al.*, 2016). In contrast, postal consumers support that the post office offers affordable postal services. It can be concluded that in terms of prices on postal services, postal customers are satisfied. Therefore, SAPO consumer's priorities relate to low pricing of postal services. Soriano (2014) concluded that the quality of postal services is the most important reason for repeat purchases. The findings are also in line with the Theory of Planned Behaviour where Moss (2016) confirms that belief and behaviour predicts peoples' intention to engage in the behaviour at a particular time.

Since respondents and participants expressed mixed feelings, SAPO managers and employees need to improve service quality by conducting service quality assessments not only from a customer perspective but the perspectives of both management and employees. SAOP needs to reduce the differences between the management, employee, and customers' expectations by conducting continuous service quality assessments and acting on the results obtained in order to improve SAPO service quality.

6.3.2 Discussion of findings from the qualitative results

This section discusses themes from the qualitative sets of data.

Theme 1: Challenges to the strategic implementation of service quality with managers and frontline employees

Concerning challenges to the strategic implementation of service quality with managers and frontline employees, both managers and frontline employees in this study indicated similar challenges: poorly defined strategy, lack of effective communication of the policy, lack of ownership on the part of the "implementers, little attention is paid to strategy implementation by management, stock problem, a limited budget to run our post offices, lack of financial resources, staff shortage, system problem lack of equipment, delay in the delivery postal product, lack of performance tracking and monitoring system as well as lack of a good performance management system.

This suggests the lack clarity about the strategic plan, making it difficult for staff to implement them, the lack of resources to implement the strategic plan effectively, lack of the understanding of the strategic plan that is been formulated by top management, lack of proper infrastructure, poor system, low salary and complaint of not receiving good services at all time. This conforms

to the research conducted by Ndambiri (2015), who investigated the barriers encountered in the execution of a strategy where two factors often hinder the implementation of a formulated strategy, namely: the organisation's vision and an organisation's business processes. Concerning vision, she stated that there is often a problem linking the organisation's vision to the strategy. She stated that managers have a problem linking what needs to be done to where they want to go. This happens when managers are unable to draw the bigger picture concerning strategy, structures, and processes. This also happens when the people involved in strategy implementation do not understand the vision. The missing of targets brings about disconnect often found in the vision, the strategies, and objectives. The business processes include the structures and the programmes that are designed to facilitate the operation of an organization like control systems, reward and disciplinary systems, resource distribution, and allocation and structures.

Besides these challenges to the strategic implementation of service quality with managers and frontline employees, a new concept arises from the empirical study. This study established that management should include frontline staff in their company strategic planning meeting since they are in direct contact with the postal consumers and are in a better position to advise management on the strategies to improved service quality. Management needs to employ more staff, improve on the networking system and also create a channel to inform customers about recent changes that come up all the time in order to always keep its customers satisfied and establish an information and effective feedback system. And finally, they should open a post office training centre in all the five postal branches and employ training experts in the centre, enabling employees to gain weekly or monthly training at the same time still performing their duties.

Theme 2: Use of training and development to enhance service quality with managers and frontline employees

The results from the managers and frontline employers verified that most of the respondents confirmed the important role of training and development on their performance and productivity. They submitted that this brings new potentials for managers and employees when performing a task and resulted in increased performance and productivity. This consolidates the view of Schaufeli and Taris (2014) who affirm that training has implications for productivity, health, and safety at work and personal development. According to responses on the frequency on training and development, respondents and participants expressed mixed feelings with some mentioning

that T&D are only carried out whenever there is a need, some mentioning no T& D, while others mentioned T&D is carried out on some specific days. Thus, post office managers and frontline employees should have compulsory training development programmes that should be consistent across all postal branches for all employees in order to improve the knowledge and understanding of annual business strategy and objectives. This finding is consistent with Elnaga and Imran (2014) where it was disclosed that to develop the desired knowledge, skills, and abilities of the employees, to perform well on the job, requires effective and compulsory training and development programmes that may also affect employee motivation and commitment. This explains that training and development face serious threats with managers and frontline employees such as lack of resources as well as management having limited interest in training and development, hectic employee schedules that makes them not to have time for most training and development programmes, lack of external training and development programmes for staff development, lack of commitment, lack of training programs and lack of training resources, lack of skill and knowledge from employers that affect high-quality performance in the post office.

This gels with the study of Ngirwa (2009) which noted that training and development are poorly undertaken and effected by many organisations. Thus, employers, managers, and decision-makers should endeavour to create an enabling training environment and favourable training policies that will give every worker the opportunity to attend training. Management should also take into consideration the training need of each worker and act as appropriate. The managers and frontline employers could improve training and development following needs analysis; allocating a budget for training and development. Essentially, management should take training and development as an important component in the organisation, need to send staff members for further education and training and development programs all the time. This is line with the view of Whelan and Carcary (2011) and Nwokeiwu (2013) who affirm that training and development enhance the ability of an organisation to be knowledge-intensive and equally enables employees to take up new tasks efficiently.

The qualitative results depict that training and development could enhance the strategic management of service quality for postal services. However, post office management should design strategies for the training and development of employees in their organization and before carrying out the training programmes. These strategic approaches should be adopted to ensure that training and development programmes are consistent with the overall objectives of the organisations. Sheehan *et al.* (2016) affirms that investment in training and development is

generally regarded as a good management practice to maintain appropriate expertise now and in the future.

From the above discussion, the study verified that for management to reap the full benefits of training initiatives as well as development programmes, training needs should be executed more professionally in conjunction with individual workers and human resource personnel. Everyone should agree on what the training lacks and what attitudes ought to be changed. Lastly, training and development should be part of the strategic plan, effective and consistent across all postal branches in a bid to improve high service quality.

Theme 3: Use of motivation to enhance service quality with managers and frontline employees

Employee motivation has a strong influence on the effectiveness of an organisation (Khan *et al.*, 2017). The results on the concepts motivation from managers and frontline employees show that in general, the respondents attribute similar perceptions that motivation refers to, increase salary, meeting deadlines, excellent service, personal growth, improve skills, and a work-life balance, flexibility of work and a good relationship with their supervisors and colleagues. Thus, post office management must have clear goals, priorities, and objectives at work plus sufficient working facilities. This would inspire managers and frontline employees to give the best effort and meet the set goals every day. Above all, they are happy with what they are currently doing and glad to recommend their organization as a great place to work with others.

Some components that motivate managers as well as frontline employees at work this include; mentoring and coaching, learning new things, financial incentives, bring in creative ideas to improve work performance when customer and employers are satisfied, salary increase and ensuring customers are satisfied, seeing my customers happy, job promotion, safety environment, completing a difficult project, be a problem solver. This is consistent with the study of Gaebler Ventures (2006) showing ten different motivational factors that are important for increasing motivation both for managers as well as employees: high wages, job security, promotion potential, good working conditions, interesting work, personal loyalty of supervision, tactful discipline, appreciation of work done, help with personal problems and feeling of 'being in on things.' The managers and frontline employees rank these factors differently, but in order for managers to have motivated employees, they might use some simple suggestions: ask for employee help in setting goals, both managers and employees should be part of the decision process of setting department or company goals.

Demotivation as well as events that trigger demotivation at work such as the inability of not meeting datelines, system failure, not reaching customers' expectations, staff shortage, uncooperative staff, delays in postal services, demotivation at workers compound the satisfaction profiles of customers. Shortage of stock, poor attitude from managers, delays in postal orders, lack of work recognized, lack of resources, financial incentives not encouraging, difficulties in understanding the strategy plan are other factors in this construct. When customers were not satisfied with our services, unable to complete a project, and working for years with no job promotion, they are likely to search for alternatives elsewhere. Pinder (2014) affirms that more motivated employees tend to perform better, such as doing more work in less time. Srivastava and Banerjee (2016) also recognise that motivation involves a gathering of beliefs, perceptions, values, interests, and actions that are all closely related.

The qualitative results indicated that the motivation of managers and employees are indeed a major component to SAPO development and success. Thus, the motivation of SAPO managers and employees can be achieved through the empowerment of managers and employees. Motivation helps SAPO management to indicate the degree to which the employees are involved in decision-making processes, the existence of a mutual connection between the employees and the company, and the authorization over the task they are working on. High employee involvement shows a higher level of employee motivation and satisfaction. Therefore, SAPO ought to engage employees in meetings and discussions and letting them know that their ideas and contributions are listened to and appreciated. SAPO should therefore ask for employee help in setting goals, both managers and employees should be part of the decision process of setting department goals, giving them space to experience and be aligned with the corporate culture, delegating them a higher responsibility level for the task they are in charge of, and the freedom in making choices and decisions regarding their specific tasks. Furthermore, having repetitive tasks every day is a reason for demotivation, boredom, and a lack of enthusiasm. Thus, it is recommended for companies to implement job rotation in order to keep the employees' interest and satisfaction with work.

From the above discussion, a typically new concept arises from the empirical study. It was found in the study that one of the most effective ways to motivate your customer service team is to increase employee morale. Praising your employees is an efficient way to do this. The great thing about praise is that it's free and easy to do. Praise your employees' involvement as well as their improvement.

Theme 4: Use of monitoring and evaluation to enhance service quality with managers and frontline employees

The monitoring and evaluation paradigm explains the effectiveness of managers and frontline employees gained by postal consumers for adequate services provided by SAPO. Due to the continuous increase in consumers' complaints of poor service quality in the North West post offices, this construct was added to this study to investigate if the post office does have an effective monitoring and evaluation system to provide effective services to their postal consumers. Some branch managers monitor and evaluate activities of staff, and that is done from Monday to Friday. There were other indications that monitoring and evaluation is performed to ensure workers are on the right track. On the other hand, the frontline employee's findings reveal that staff are involved in monitoring and evaluation as coordinated by their branch and area managers, and this is executed from Monday to Friday in one post office as workers carry out their daily activities. Monitoring and evaluation are carried out when the manager sees the need. Thus the need for effective monitoring and evaluation that should be consistent across all postal branches. Meredith and Mantel (2011) confirm that monitoring and evaluation as an observation system for the project managers to verify whether the project activities must be executed according to plan and ought to be deployed to establish whether means are used correctly and efficiently.

The findings also indicated that the branch manager has no prepared system for monitoring and evaluation. The system is designed according to the resources they have in place since the post office does not have a structured mechanism. On the other hand, staff has no idea how monitoring and evaluation is designed and implemented, all they witness is how they are monitored or evaluated by their managers during working hours. Thus the need for a good design monitoring and evaluation system by management, not managers, and this must be in the strategic management yearly plan. In the study of Govender (2011) they affirm that monitoring and evaluation system is described as a powerful tool that is used by governments and private organisations in improving results. They further explain that to make the monitoring and evaluation system work properly one must identify the individual components and ensure that these components are working thereby ensuring the working of the whole system. This is also in line with the study of Mackay (2007) who affirm that there is no one model of building monitoring and evaluation system as it all depends on the various reasons for which such systems are designed.

From the qualitative results, it was deduced that the post offices do not have an effective monitoring and evaluation system to enhance the strategic management of service quality for postal services. Thus, post office managers designing their own monitoring and evaluation system due to their available resources is not a problem, but the system should guarantee the effectiveness of the monitoring and evaluation system, managers must clearly allocate tasks for monitoring and evaluation, at every level of management.

The findings indicate some of the challenges on monitoring and evaluation from managers and frontline employees, respondents and participants expressed mixed feelings such as branch manager spending more time looking at what staff are doing to ensure efficiency. Staff in the study were not comfortable with such monitoring as it creates tension and misbehaviour between managers and staff members. Staff essentially resent monitoring and evaluation as they see these as engendering tension at times, and leading them into making mistakes when working. In solving these challenges, managers suggested that management ought to prepare monitoring and evaluation instrument in the work environment to gauge performance of its staff members.

In order to overcome those challenges, frontline employees suggested that monitoring and evaluation become part of a manager's job and that managers nurture confidence in frontline employee's job. Managers were exhorted always to do the job correctly and design a proper system or unit for this particular purpose. This is consistent with the findings of Wu *et al.* (2010) who provided a list of issues that could impede the implementation of effective monitoring and evaluation processes based on both bottom-up and top-down approaches to implementation. Three broad categories of issues were identified as possible barriers for effective monitoring and evaluation, including support barriers, issues of poor implementation incentives, as workers were not involved during design were less willing to buy-in at the implementation stage. Analytical competence barriers may include poor design, changing priorities, and feasibility issues regarding some of the components of the system. For instance, given that components of the system may be linked together, if some components could not be implemented, they may impede the functionality of the other components. Operational capacity barriers may include funding and budget limitations, weak coordination capacity, and issues such as an unclear specification of roles, responsibility, and accountability. Thus, Wu *et al* (2010) affirm that if the issues discussed above hinder the successful implementation of the monitoring and evaluation system if not addressed properly. Thus, the SAPO monitoring and evaluation system should be integrated into the organizational budget and plans to promote transparency and accountability. SAPO staff

should view monitoring and evaluation as a tool that helped them, rather than a burden, making the staff more co-operative in executing duties.

From the above discussion, it was found in the study that for management to achieve high performance, SAPO management has to establish a culture of M&E within the five postal branches in the NWP province. This can only be achieved if top management, as well as frontline employees, support and become accountable for M&E. It is also recommended that further education and training needs be given to many frontline employees as well as managers in aspects of monitoring and evaluation so as to effectively utilize the M&E tools and findings. The SAPO management has to do follow-up visits in the various postal branches and service units so they can determine whether M&E is being done properly.

6.4 Contribution of the theoretical background

This study investigated theories by scholars in management theory in an endeavour to find solutions to the challenge of enhancing strategic management of service quality for postal services in the North West province. The Systems Theory is proposed to ensure that all their unit's function in unison, communicate effectively with the internal and external environment for equitable service delivery, as well as effective service delivery. Profit maximizing and competition-based theory is proposed to maximize long term profit and developing sustainable competitive advantage over competitive rivals in the external market place. Decision-making Theory provides reasonable steps in making decisions and reprimands post offices to think rationally when faced with risk and uncertainty in order to select the best alternative amongst decisions. The human resource-based theory is proposed to adopt specific human resource policies and practices for different strategies and that human resource policy must be consistent with other elements of the organisation for the strategies to be effective. The Theory of Planned Behaviour was also proposed for its solid position with regards the fact that human behaviour is deliberate and planned; therefore, post offices should strive to understand early warning signals from postal consumers who are dissatisfied with postal services then devise measures to salvage the situation as soon as possible. Lastly, the Contingency Theory is proposed to as one of the best management approaches to resolve issues that may arise in their work environment.

The theoretical background further emphasises the need for post offices to adopt strategic management and philosophy to ensure they achieve equitable service quality with regard to the challenges in their market environments. Kaner (2014), Ferlie and Ongaro (2015), and Joyce

(2015) expressed that strategic management helps organisations (whether private, public, or non-profit) think strategically, help to achieve specific objectives, helps to clarify its future direction, enables it to make today's decisions while considering their future consequences, help develop a coherent and defensible basis for decision making as well as exercising maximum discretion in the areas under organizational control. Finally, strategic management helps solve major SAPO problems, improve overall corporate performance, deals effectively with a rapidly dynamic environment, and helps build teamwork and expertise.

The theoretical background further emphasises the need for post offices to adopt strategic management of services quality and philosophy to ensure they achieve equitable service delivery with regard to the challenges in their internal and external environments. Strydom (2015), affirm that strategic management as the process of determining how to reach the organisation long-term goals with the resources expected to be available, it involves the major strategic issues of an organization and it must meet certain criteria which include the relationship between the organization and its external environment and the involvement of the organization, as a whole, in decision- making. Strategic management concentrates on the fate, survival, and growth of the organization, and its leaders are actively involved in advancing positive organizational change toward quality and quality assurance. The strategic management process was explored in this study which post offices should consider for them to achieve adequate service quality and enhance consumer satisfaction. Strategy formulation specifically was proposed to post office management, managers, and employees. Strategy implementation enables SAPO employers in the execution of formulated strategies. Strategy evaluation enables SAPO employers in comparing the actual performance against the desired performance. Finally, Strategy control was proposed to ensure that SAOP employers progressing in the intended direction as indicated in the mission and vision statement as well as enhancing service quality.

This study further reviewed the literature on the development of service quality models (see Chapter 2, Sections 2.3 & 2.5). The review revealed that there has been no agreement regarding which model is the best to use for measuring service quality in the postal services sector. However, it appears that the SERVQUAL has been used as-is or adapted by many researchers hence the adaptation of the SERVQUAL and its use for this particular study. Thus, the contribution to the literature and service quality framework of the adapted SERVQUAL instrument. A review of the literature showed that generally there is poor service quality in the postal sector globally and that perceptions and expectations of management and employees

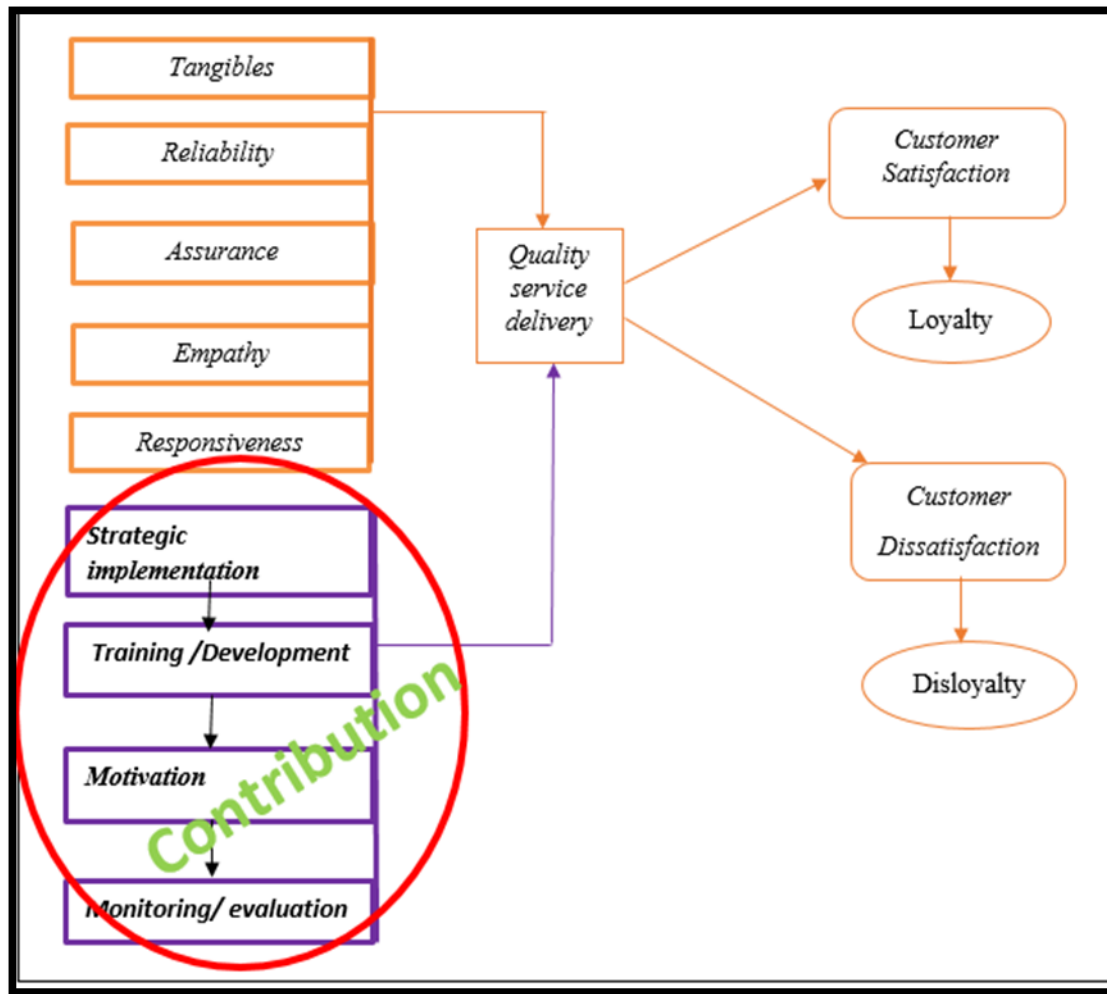
differ with those of customers. In addition, customer expectations and perceptions of service quality differ per customer and are influenced by time and settings suggesting, the need to conduct time and setting specific studies on service quality (Tsang & Qu, 2000; Blesic *et al.*, 2011; Douglas & Connor, 2013).

Finally, the theoretical background further emphasises the need for SAPO to adopt service management and philosophy to ensure the service management concept can be useful when communicating the importance of services and the interrelatedness between the service organization and other parts of the firm. It has been argued that, in order to achieve successful service management, firms should adopt a multidimensional, holistic approach that does not separate service development from service production and within which the customer interface and new technology are both taken into account (Kowalkowski *et al.*, 2009; Stauss *et al.*, 2010). Thus, even if the service function is generally regarded as the (local and/or central) organizational entity that is responsible for the firm's main service activities, it is not sufficient to only investigate the service organization of the industrial firm. Thus, the service function only concerns the management of services that are offered, locally and globally, to external customers in an industrial business-to-business context. In other words, it does not refer to any internal services and support organizations.

6.5 Strategic management of service quality framework

The strategic management of service quality, as indicated in Chapter One of this study, explain that strategic management of excellent service quality seems to be a serious challenge in the postal service sector, thus, threatening client satisfaction (Boxall & Purcell, 2011). SAPO Corporate Plan (2018) affirms that South Africa, post office, has been battling for several years with the development of a sound strategic plan for postal services. As indicated in Section 1.6 a strategic management of service quality framework is proposed in this study to the postal managers and frontline employees to enhance reputable strategic management of service quality for postal services as the end goal of this study. The strategic management of service quality framework as presented in Figure 6.1 incorporates the empirical findings from both the quantitative and the qualitative datasets.

Figure 6.1 Strategic management of service quality framework for postal services



The strategic management of service quality framework presented in Figure 6.1 is the main contribution of this study, suggesting that there should be collaboration between strategy implementation, training and development, motivation, and monitoring and evaluation in an endeavour to achieve high service quality for postal services. The framework further portrays that management should adopt the prescripts of the strategic management to manage the factors identified as influencing strategic management of services which include strategy implementation, training and development, motivation and monitoring, and evaluation to achieve high service quality. However, it was discovered that effective strategic implementation could be applied by the managers and frontline employees to achieve effective service quality. In combination, the presentation of all these addition caps is anticipated to finally enhance responsible strategic management of service quality.

The framework shows that quality services management encourages high-quality service delivery showing that when management has an effective strategic plan, managers and frontline employee's delivered services effectively. Consistent with this, the framework further indicates that effective quality service delivery could consistently motivate postal consumers to retain and inform others about the postal services. Finally, it is recommended in the framework that management should always refer to the challenges of the strategic management to reconsider their transformational strategies due to problems faced by managers, frontline employers, and postal consumers in an endeavour to stabilise responsible strategy management of services quality for postal services.

Having presented the strategy management of services quality framework for postal services, the subsequent discussion derives the recommendations emanating from the study.

6.6 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are presented for consideration by SAPO in the North West and other postal offices in South Africa, so as to achieve excellence in their strategic management of services quality for postal services.

The following section presents recommendations for postal consumers, frontline employees and managers concerning the current study, as well as further research.

6.6.1 Summary of recommendations related to postal consumers of departments

The following recommendations are made to postal consumers in order to achieve high service quality:

- The post office management should adjust its reliability component by ensuring that before services are given out to postal consumers, a specific time frame depending on the type of services needed should be designed in a specific and accurate manner that assures consistency by the staff.
- The post office management should adjust its responsiveness component by ensuring an appropriate communication network with it postal consumers such as creating a WhatsApp group for its consumers that would be managed by the post office administration in sending out important notification and changes that occur at the post office. This app should be

created in such a way that only the post office administration can send messages, all that the customers need to do, is to read the update if any complaint or inquiry, they will have to go to their various post offices for more clarity. This would help to reduce the frustration of postal consumers entering the post office hoping to be served, but at the end be told of an additional document before they can be helped due to changes that they as customers are not aware of.

- The post office management should try and nurture confidence and trust that postal consumers create appropriate courier services that carry mail and parcels direct to the postal consumers by giving them a call to know what time they can be at home to receive the parcels and avoid using delivery of mail to wrong addresses. The post office management should take this seriously because most consumers complain of missing mails, bills, and parcels.
- Post office management must train its staff members to be polite to its customers, treat them with respect as well as see customers asking in the business.
- It is recommended that post office management should come up with a service recovery management programme to address service failures. Customer problems should be handled professionally when there is a service breakdown. As such, steps to recovery should be put in place and communicated to all workers with clear lines of responsibility on what should be done when customers register problems or complaints. Post office management should train its staff members on customer care relationship, this will help to promote a customer-staff positive relationship.
- It is recommended that management should come up with strategies for establishing and maintaining consumer loyalty. These include encouraging members of staff to deliver high service quality consistently, reduce customer defections through effective complaints handling and service recovery. In addition, loyalty programs such as rewards, recognition, and appreciation can be introduced to enhance relationships with customers.
- All the challenges faced by the postal consumers that restrict them in receiving excellent services at the postal branches should be reported immediately to the customer's care unit in the post office in charge of complaints about action to be taken.

6.6.2 Summary of recommendations related to frontline employees of departmental

The following recommendations are made to frontline employees who need to ensure postal consumers received effective service delivery:

- It is recommended that the post office management should include frontline employees on the post office strategic planning meeting since they are the one doing the day to day running of the business and having direct contact with postal consumers, this will be in the best position to advise management of the postal challenges that they as employers encounter as well as postal consumers. This will help managers come up with an effective strategic plan to help achieve postal objectives as well as reaching excellent customer satisfaction. Frontline employees have been part of the strategic plan, make it easier for them to understand the plan as well as to implement the plan correctly and effectively. If the strategic plan is been formulated by post office managers, frontline employees should be part of the formulation.
- The employees at the post offices should ensure that they instil trust and confidence in their dealings with customers. Employees must also show respect to customers regardless of their status or how they look. It is further recommended for employees to be properly oriented in the aspects of the business to better their understanding of the postal services. This can be supplemented with training on product knowledge. In this regard, management should champion the creation of product manuals. Customers enjoy dealing with employees who are knowledgeable and have ready answers to their needs and requests other than dealing with members of staff who are clueless about the business.
- It is recommended that post office management needs to provide staff members with all the available resources, such as materials and equipment, and effective operating system that do not fail its employees in giving out services to members of the public, good infrastructure, postal security as well as good working environment.
- It is recommended that the post office management should provide an effective training and development program that would help to develop postal staff members. Management should create a unit for effective training and development programs that can be done three times a year and also create opportunities for staff members to improve on their educational level.

The training and development programme should be included in the strategic plan and must be compulsory to staff members and this unit should be created within the post offices.

- The post office management should create an effective monitoring and evaluation system that is included in the strategic plan, not the monitoring and evaluation that is presently design by their managers that are been changed at any time they want. There is a need for an effective monitoring and evaluation system designed by management, and this should receive acceptance by all staff members. It is important for management to create a unit within the post offices whose duties are to monitoring and evaluation both managers and staff performance and give feedback to management every month. This will help increase managers and staff delay performance and efficiencies.

6.6.3 Summary of recommendations applicable to the postal management of departments

The following recommendations are made to postal management who should ensure effective collaboration in an endeavour to achieve effective service quality over its competitors:

- The implementation of the strategic plan in the post offices is a persistent challenge, and this fails management to reach their strategic ambitions. It is recommended that post office management should pay more attention to the implementation of their strategic plan, by providing the necessary resources needed to implement the strategic plan effectively.
- It is suggested that the postal sectors should take into account frontline employees to be part of the strategic planning meeting since they are the once dealing with the day to day running of the business, they are in a position to understand the need and wants of the postal consumers as well as the challenges faced by the consumer. It is clear that, if employees are involved in the strategic planning meeting, it makes it easier for them to understand and implement the strategic plan effectively in other to help achieve the post office overall objectives.
- The study recommends that managers and frontline employees must have similar expectations and perceptions towards the post office service quality as the study found that employees thought are different from managers. This is made possible by having a strategic orientation philosophy in the post office.

- It is recommended that management should also consider those post offices that are in one area or town that does not generate income and move all the staff members and the facilities to the one that generates more income in order to give out the best service quality to its citizen.
- The study further recommends that the post offices should improve greatly on communicating with customers on delivery time, be polite to consumers, giving customers special attention, and being helpful to customers even when busy as these four areas reflected very low perceptions by the customers. The post offices also need to emphasize on good quality services, the effective service notification, and delivery emails and parcels to correct address as these aspects reflected very high priority to the customers from the analysis of the customer expectations.
- The post office management needs to develop a prepared notification system that informs postal customers on new changes, such as closing times of the post office and additional documents needed for postal services. Since social media is a preferred platform for many customers now a day, the researcher suggests that the post office management should open a WhatsApp group to its postal customers and that will only be managed by a postal administrator to send an important notification to all postal consumers when needed. On this WhatsApp group, postal consumers will not be enabled to send messages, but can only receive important notification from the post office.
- It is clear that postal consumers do not trust the security of the postal branches. For this reason, the researchers suggest the need for effective services security, through integrating with other carriers services such as DHL, Post net, Fastway couriers, RAM courier as well as the Aerospeed couriers. For example, the post-net makes use of the DHL courier, in order to give its customers excellent service quality even if the post-net do not have the facilities, they use other courier services to make sure its customers are satisfied.
- It is recommended that Post Offices in SA must guarantee that at least 95% of users are located within 5 km of an access point, capable of receiving the largest relevant postal packages and registered mail and fulfil other regulatory requirements. This approach is

similar to the Swiss postal service and United Kingdom postal service (UK Postal Services Annual report, 2015) and (Swiss Post, 2017b).

- The study recommends that the post office should conduct service quality assessments not only from a customer perception but perceptions of both managers and employees. Post offices need to bring to reduce the differences between the management, employee, and customers' expectations by conducting continuous service quality assessments and acting on the results obtained in order to improve service quality.
- Due to the evolution of the SAPO culture to operate in a high-performance environment, this has become a key ingredient for future success. It is recommended that SAPO should stress its importance on change and performance management, culture, ethics, agility, and development needs by management in order to improve service quality.
- It is recommended that SAPO management should establish a specific training section in order to ensure that the programme is carefully planned, coordinated, and put into practice proper training and development processes and procedures as required. The human resource management of SAPO should be responsible for designing and managing training programmes.
- The post office management should consistently motivate its employees, items of performance bonus at the end of the years for those will perform above their maximum and to promote them to a higher level, as well as increase on staff salaries, and the most important for managers to always acknowledge extra effort or ideas given by staff members to help reach its company goals and objectives.
- The study recommends that post offices must ensure total commitment to service quality. This is usually made possible by managers who embed and instil service quality values in their management and also in their employees. There is a need for an effective mentoring and evaluating system that would help to monitor and evaluate employee's performance as the results revealed that lack of proper mentoring and the evaluating system as well a very little mentoring of these inexperienced employees. The implantation of an effective monitoring

and evaluation system could reduce the work of managers moving up and down at the various postal branches to monitor and evaluate its staff members.

- It is recommended that management should develop mechanisms of collecting customers' feedback on their perception of service quality and other aspects of the business. Initiatives such as customer satisfaction surveys can be adopted and implemented to gauge feedback on a regular basis. These initiatives can assist the post office to uncover areas affecting quality and customer satisfaction. In addition, it will facilitate the creation of strategies to respond to problems identified.
- It is clear that digital services were responsible for the constant declines in profitable letter service volumes. It is recommended that SAPO should adapt to the new technologies that do not necessarily lead to less convenience, higher prices, or less consumer-oriented services. The study shows that innovations in the postal sector lead to empowered consumers and to more choice for many consumer groups. Technology is the key enabler for such new services. Consumers in general benefit from new technology which enables them to access an increasing range of new services, particularly in relation to online retail fulfilment.
- Finally, all the challenges faced by the postal managers and frontline employees that restrict them in carrying out their activities should be reported immediately to the regional managers of the post offices in charge of complaints about action to be taken.

6.7 Recommendations for further study

This study investigated the strategic management of service quality in the North West province post offices, as well as proposing strategic management of service quality framework for post office management in order to improve on their service quality. This study identified important challenges that hinder the post office to reach its target objectives as well as giving out excellent services to consumers in order to satisfy them. All the above mentioned challenges had led to the decline in postal revenue, loss of postal consumers as well as poor service quality. Concerning these findings, it is recommended that another study should examine the strategy post office management could use to overcome those challenges faced by managers, frontline employees as well as consumers. The researcher further proposes that periodic research studies on the impact

on the strategic management skill on managers and frontline employees on service quality in the private sector could be conducted in the future. Furthermore, research should be conducted to develop a framework that would update the flow of information in the postal sector to obtain reliable information to be used in informing managers, staff as well as postal customers on new and updating postal information within postal branches.

The following section discusses the limitations of the study.

6.8 Limitations of the study

This study was delimited to the two local municipalities of the selected district. The participants of this study were the postal managers and frontline employees in the five selected branches in the North West province. This study is confined to strategic management of service quality in the North West province post offices and may be applied to other post offices in South Africa which fall in the same situation. All research studies have some limitations caused by either time or budgetary constraints. The following limitations were encountered during the research study:

- Exposure to the subject matter- The researcher has never worked in a fully-fledged strategic management of service quality in the postal sector. Therefore, some of the matters referred to in the research have not been explored physically before.
- The non-availability of enough material on the subject of research was also a limitation.
- It was difficult to secure appointments with the respondents of this study in the qualitative component. Postal managers were busy honouring appointments which limited the number of respondents as explained in chapter five findings. Frontline employees also have very busy schedules which caused the constant rescheduling of appointments and extended the period of data collection with significant financial consequences.

6.9 Conclusion

This study investigated the strategic management of service quality for postal services in the North West province of South Africa. This was motivated by constant decline revenue and mail volume, poor strategic planning and implantation, loss of postal consumers, the lack resources by post offices, poor postal service quality and performance, shortages of staff, and a lack of materials and equipment, managers, frontline employee's engagement between postal consumer's. The foremost aim of the study was to create a framework that could serve as a guide

for post offices which could be used in their endeavour to create responsible strategic management of service quality that will help to prove excellent service quality to its postal consumers.

This study adopted a mixed-method research approach incorporating both quantitative and qualitative principles. A total of five postal branches were selected from Ngaka Modiri Molema and Dr. Kenneth Kaunda (Mafikeng Molopo post office), Zeerust (Zeerust post office), (Lichtenburg Itsoseng post office), (Klerksdorp Freemanville post office) and (Potchefstroom post office) were involved in this study. The respondents of this study include postal consumers living in the five postal branches, postal managers, and frontline employees. The findings of this study disclosed that the strategic management plan within the post offices is of low quality and that makes it difficult for managers and frontline employers to implement. Thus managers come up with their strategic plan that is based on the available resources on their disposer, and frontline work implements the strategic plan made by managers based on their manager's instructions. This means managers and frontline employees do not comply with the post office strategic plan, due to limited resources of the post office management. The study recommends that more studies should be conducted on the strategic management as well as challenges of services quality in other post offices in other provinces of South Africa, or a comparative study between South Africa and other countries of the world.

The study further concluded that adequate training of staff is important as it ensures the provision of quality service to the consumers, thus reducing complaints. Even though the results of the study were not satisfactory, it is important for the management of the organisation to concentrate on those unhappy consumers. Finally, it is understood that analyzing consumer's services is difficult and time-consuming, but to succeed, it requires an effective strategic management plan, as well as an effective implementation strategy, an organisation wishing to have a high perceived service quality, must create an effective recovery strategy. Consumers having a high expectation of such strategies and will be dissatisfied if there are services failure and no recovery strategy in place. Business with an effective strategic management plan anticipates in advance the areas with the service delivery process where failures are most likely to occur and they bring in the services recovery strategy as soon as possible.

In terms of the research conducted within the ambit of this dissertation, insight was obtained into aspects that have a negative impact on the strategic management of services quality within the postal branches. This has enabled the formulation of recommendations towards resolving the

impact of inefficient strategic management of service quality. It is acknowledged that "knowledge is power" The researcher has benefited through undertaking this study as it has nurtured the necessary skills and ability to investigate areas of importance to ultimately contribute to the country and quality service to the clientelle.

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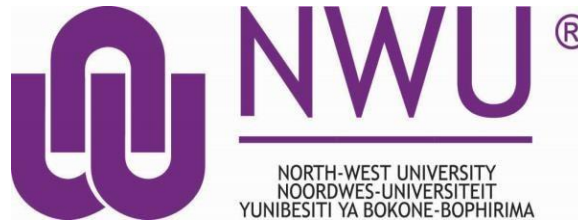
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ANNEXURE

ANNEXURE A: CONSUMER SURVEY



CONSUMER CONSENT FORM

Researcher: Elsie Mbua Eposi
Contact: Phone: +27 732041945
Email: eposimbua811@yahoo.com

Dear Participant,

You are by this note invited to consider participating in this research study. I am a Doctor of Philosophy in Business Management student in the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences, North-West University, Mahikeng Campus undertaking a research study titled, a proposed framework for the strategic management of service quality for the South Africa post offices in the North West Province.

The aim of this study is to establish guidelines that will help to improve strategic management of service quality with management and frontline employees at the service unit in order to improve client's satisfaction at the post offices in the North West. The data you give will be used to achieve this aim hence your contribution is highly valued and appreciated.

For ethical reasons, you deserve to be well-informed of your rights to participate in this research project. If you agree to participate

in this research after reading the following below, please sign this consent form.

- The researcher will request to use a tape recorder during the interview process in order to gather accurately complete information as note-taking may not be sufficient.
- Everything you say will be strictly confidential.
- You are guaranteed anonymity. No information pertaining to your identity as a participant or that of your post office will be revealed.
- The information you provide will be used solely for educational purposes.
- The interview activity will take approximately 40-60 minutes.
- Your participation in this research is voluntary.
- You can decide to withdraw your participation at any stage of the interview process.
- You pledge to provide this investigation with the most honest information to the best of your knowledge and ability.

I have read the information provided in this informed consent form. Please tick if you agree or disagree.

Agree

Disagree

Thanks.

..... Signature & date (Participant)

Thank you very much for your participation!

A) DEMOGRAPHICAL PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

1. Please indicate your gender	male	female

2. Please indicate your age category	Below 20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	Above 60

3. What is your highest education qualification	Below grade 12	Grade 12	Diploma	Bachelor's Degree	Honours degree	Master's degree	PhD degree

4. Please indicate your occupation	Student	Business	Employed	Unemployed	Retired	Other

5. Please indicate the region area where this service is offered.	Mahikeng	Zeerust	Lichtenburg	Klerksdorp	Potchefstroom

B) SERVICE QUALITY EXPECTATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS FROM THE POST OFFICE

Please relate your feelings about the Post Office with regard to services quality and highlight the extent to which you consider this Post Office has the attribute mentioned in the statement. Tick the numbers 1 to 7 to demonstrate your perception and expectations about the Post Office service quality.								
Rate the following expectations in accordance to how important they are to you using the scale provided:								
	Scale of importance							
1= Extremely poor and 7= Extremely good	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Objective 1								
<i>To evaluate the overall quality of service rendered to consumers in the North West post offices.</i>								
<i>In this section, we wish to collect information relating to the quality of service rendered to consumers in the North West post offices. This information will help to get your view on the service quality of the post office.</i>								
1. The products and services of the post office have good quality.								
2. The post office services quality are excellent.								
3. Consumers trust the quality of our postal services.								
4. The post office meet my expectations.								
6. The post office meet my perceptions.								
7. The post office give me prompt service.								
8. The post office provide their services at the time they promise to do so.								
9. The post office performs the service right at the first time								
10. The post office tell customers exactly when services will be performed.								
11. You will recommend this post office to someone who seeks your advice.								
12. You will encourage friends and relatives to do business with our post office.								
13. Consider our post office as your first choice to buy services.								
12. Overall I am satisfied with the services quality of the Post Office.								
Objective 2								
<i>To evaluate the expectations and perceptions of customers with regards to service quality in the North West post offices.</i>								
<i>In this section, we wish to collect information relating to consumer's expectations and perceptions with regards to service quality in the North West post offices. This information will help management to understand how consumers feel or react toward their services render.</i>								
Expectations								
1. The Post Office has modern looking equipment.								
2. The Post Office's physical facilities are visually attractive.								

3. The post office employees are well dressed and appear neat.								
4. The Post Office frontline employees will greet consumers in a friendly manner.								
5. The Post Office frontline employees will smile to consumers.								
6. Post office perform the service right the first time.								
7. Post office provide their services at the time they promise to do so.								
8. I expect that when you have a problem, the post office shows a sincere interest in solving it.								
9. The post office understand the needs of their customers.								
10. The Post Office service unit delivery mail and parcel to the correct address all the time.								
11. I expect that post office keeps me informed about when services will be performed.								
12. The Post Office service unit assist in resolving consumer problems relating to mail and parcel services.								
13. You feel safe to send or receive mail and parcel through the Post Office.								
14. Price label on postal services is correct as being mentioned in the contract.								
15. I expect that the behavior of employees in the post office instils confidence in me.								
16. I expect that employees at post office have the knowledge to answer my questions.								
17. Employees are always willing to help you.								
18. Employees are never too busy to respond to your requests.								
19. The post office have operating hours convenient to all their customers.								
20. The post office takes into account your opinions or complaints.								
21. I intend doing more business with this post office in the next few years.								
Perceptions								
1. The post office customer service unit have up to-date equipment's.								
2. Physical facilities (like, computers, flyers) are visually appealing.								
3. The post office employees are well dressed and appear neat.								
4. The Post Office frontline employees will greet consumers in a friendly manner.								
5. The Post Office frontline employees will smile to consumers.								
6. Post office perform the service right the first time.								
7. The Post Office promises what they can deliver and they do it on time.								
8. When a customer has a problem, the service operator shows a sincere interest in solving it.								
9. The post office employees give prompt service to customers.								
10. The Post Office service unit delivery mail and parcel to the correct address all the time.								
11. I expect that post office keeps me informed about when services will be performed.								
12. The Post Office service unit assist in resolving consumer problems relating to mail and parcel services.								
13. You feel safe to send or receive mail and parcel through the Post Office.								
14. The post office price on service delivery is correct as being mentioned in the contract.								
15. I expect that the behavior of employees in the post office instils confidence in me.								
16. I expect that employees at post office have the knowledge to answer my questions.								
17. The post employees are always willing to help you.								
18. Post Office has employees who give you personalised service or attention.								
18. Employees are never too busy to respond to your requests.								
19. The post office have operating hours convenient to all their customers.								
20. The post office takes into account your opinions or complaints.								
21. I intend to stay with this post office in the years to come.								
Objective 3								
<i>To evaluate the expectations and perceptions of employees with regards to service quality in the North West post offices.</i>								
In this section, we wish to collect information relating to employee's expectations and perceptions with regards to service quality in the North West post offices. This information will help management to understand how employees' render services to its postal service consumers.								
Expectations								
1. When we promised to do something by a certain time, we do so.								
2. We show sincere interest on solving our customers' problems.								

3. We perform services right the first time.								
4. Post Office employees are willing to help you.								
5. Post Office employees are never busy to address your request.								
6. Post Office employees provide quick service.								
7. The Post Office employees gives an indication to you on the timing when the service will be rendered or completed.								
8. The behaviour of Post Office employees at the service unit gives you confidence to deal with them.								
9. Post Office has employees who give you personalised service or attention.								
10. Post Office employees are always polite with you.								
11. Post Office employees have sufficient knowledge to respond to your questions on mail and parcel services.								
12. Post Office employees understand your specific needs.								
Perceptions								
1. When employees promised to do something by a certain time, we do so.								
2. Employees show sincere interest on solving our customers' problems								
3. The post office employees perform services right the first time.								
4. Post Office employees are willing to help you.								
5. Post Office employees are never busy to address your request.								
6. Post Office employees provide quick service.								
7. The Post Office employees gives an indication to you on the timing when the service will be rendered or completed.								
8. Employees behavior instill confidence in you.								
9. Post Office employees gives you individual attention.								
10. Post Office employees are always polite with you.								
11. Post Office employees have sufficient knowledge to respond to your questions on mail and parcel services.								
12. We provide correct /accurate information to our customers								
Objective 4								
<i>To evaluate the expectations and perceptions of managers with regards to service quality in the North West post offices.</i>								
<i>In this section, we wish to collect information relating to manager's expectations and perceptions with regards to service quality in the North West post offices. This information will help management to understand consumer's expectations and perceptions with regard to the post office overall services render to its consumers.</i>								
Expectations								
1. The overall management system of service quality is good.								
2. Overall, the service quality of mail and parcel service is excellent.								
3. Post Office has your well-being at heart.								
4. We have up-to-date equipment.								
5. Post Office operating hours are convenient to you.								
6. There is long queue to wait at the post office.								
7. Post of have a good system for consumers complains								
8. I often tell positive stories about Post Office mail and parcel services to other people.								
9. I recommend my friends and relatives to send and receive mail and parcel through the Post Office.								
10. I recommend Post Office mail and parcel services to anyone seeking postal service solution.								
11. I will continue to use Post Office services to send and receive mail and parcel.								
Perceptions								
1. The overall management system of service quality is good.								
2. Overall, the service quality of mail and parcel service is excellent.								
3. Post Office has your well-being at heart.								
4. We have up-to-date equipment								
5. We have convenient working hours.								
6. There is long queue to wait at the post office.								
7. Post of have a good system for consumers complains.								
8. I often tell positive stories about Post Office mail and parcel services to other people.								
9. I recommend my friends and relatives to send and receive mail and parcel through the Post Office.								
10 I recommend Post Office mail and parcel services to anyone seeking postal service solution.								

11. I will continue to use Post Office services to send and receive mail and parcel.							
1= Strongly disagree							
2=Moderately disagree							
3=Disagree							
4=Neutral							
5=Agree							
6=Moderately agree							
7=Strongly agree							
Thank you for your cooperation							

ANNEXURE B: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR FRONTLINE EMPLOYEES



FRONTLINE EMPLOYEES CONSENT FORM

Researcher: Elsie Mbua Eposi
Contact:
Phone: +27 732041945
Email: eposimbua811@yahoo.com

Dear Participant,

You are by this note invited to consider participating in this research study. I am a Doctor of Philosophy in Business Management student in the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences, North-West University, Mahikeng Campus undertaking a research study titled, a proposed framework for the strategic management of service quality for the South Africa post offices in the North West Province.

The aim of this study is to establish guidelines that will help to improve strategic management of service quality with management and frontline employees at the service unit in order to improve client's satisfaction at the post offices in the North West. The data you give will be used to achieve this aim hence your contribution is highly valued and appreciated.

For ethical reasons, you deserve to be well-informed of your rights to participate in this research project. If you agree to participate

in this research after reading the following below, please sign this consent form.

- The researcher will request to use a tape recorder during the interview process in order to gather accurately complete information as note-taking may not be sufficient.
- Everything you say will be strictly confidential.
- You are guaranteed anonymity. No information pertaining to your identity as a participant or that of your post office will be revealed.
- The information you provide will be used solely for educational purposes.
- The interview activity will take approximately 40-60 minutes.
- Your participation in this research is voluntary.
- You can decide to withdraw your participation at any stage of the interview process.
- You pledge to provide this investigation with the most honest information to the best of your knowledge and ability.

I have read the information provided in this informed consent form. Please tick if you agree or disagree.

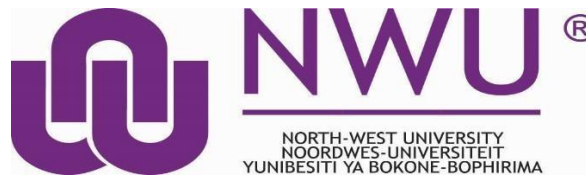
Agree

Disagree

Thanks.

..... Signature & date (Participant)

Thank you very much for your participation!



INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR FRONTLINE EMPLOYEES

Introduction Phase

Good day, my name is Elsie Mbua Eposi, a PhD research student from the North-West University, Mafikeng Campus. This face-to-face interview is aimed at gaining your insight on the strategic management of service quality in the SAPO in the North West province. This is in relation to the SAPO Annual Report of 2015/2016 that established that the postal sectors in South Africa is facing a decline in postal services and loss of consumers. This interview, however, is not intended to investigate your job specification but to find solutions on how to enhance the service quality of postal services so that the postal branches in the North West province can improve in their service delivery obligation. This interview will only last for 20 minutes and your concise and unbiased responses will be appreciated. Any information provided in this exercise is considered confidential, it will not be used against you in anyway. More so, participation is voluntary, you may withdraw at any point in time, also the results of this study will be open for inspection, you may request a copy of the results if you wish.

Please note that this interview is recorded to ensure that your comments and contributions are adequately captured for processing purposes. However, your name will not be attached to any comments, views presented and/or perceptions expressed. Do you have any questions in this regard before we continue?

Interview Phase

[Ensuring that adequate notes are taken and the tape recorder is recording correctly.]

Section A: Demographic Information

1. What is your current position in the organisation?
2. How long have you been in this position?

SECTION B: STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

Please share with me your strategic implementation of service quality at your postal service branches.

- 1) Strategic implementation employees:
 - What are your approaches in strategic implementation in your post office?
 - What are the most relevant factors to consider or you considered when implementing a strategy?
- 2) Challenges experienced:
 - What do you believe are the biggest challenges facing strategic implementation in your entity?
 - What can your entity do, OR what has your entity done, to overcome the challenges identified in 2 above?
- 3) Employees:
 - Do you play any role in the process of strategy implementation?
 - What role do you play and how does it impact on strategy implementation?
 - What challenges do you face as an employee in the process of strategy implementation and how do you overcome it?
- 4) Customers
 - Do customers pose a challenge in the process of strategy implementation?
 - What are the challenges and how do you overcome it?
 - Do you also face the challenge of customers not adapting new strategies?
 - How do you deal with such a challenge?
 - What other challenges do customers pose in the process of strategy implementation and how do you deal with it?

SECTION C: TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Share with us your views on T&D as an approach to empower staff.

- 1) How often are you provided with T&D as a staff in your postal branch?
- 2) What are your views on the T&D program you received from this post office?
- 3) What proportion of the workers had T&D over the last 12 months?

- 4) How are the T&D organised?
- 5) What problems do you face with regard to T&D within your organisation?
- 6) Please specify idea you may have to improve the T&D in your organisation.

SECTION D: MOTIVATION

The next question is on motivation; I wish to know how you are motivated as an employer on job performance.

- 1) Please explain your understanding of motivation.
- 2) When do you feel motivated at work?
- 3) What 3 things motivate you most at work?
- 4) When do you feel unmotivated at work? Why?
- 5) Can you remember some events that make you feel very unmotivated at your work? What and Why?

SECTION E: MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The next set of questions are based on monitoring and evaluation relevant to your post office.

- 1) How are you involved in M&E at your post office?
- 2) When is the commencement of M&E at your post office?
- 3) How are the M&E systems in your post office designed and implemented?
- 4) What are your experiences with the implementation of the M&E system in your post office?
- 5) What challenges do you encounter in using the various components of the M&E system in post office?
- 6) How do you overcome these challenges?

We now have come to the end of this interview. But before we finish, is there anything you would like to add about this subject?

Thank you for your cooperation and assistance

Post office.....

ANNEXURE C: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR POST OFFICE MANAGERS

MANAGERS CONSENT FORM

Researcher: Elsie Mbua Eposi

Contact: Phone: +27 732041945

Email: eposimbua811@yahoo.com

Dear Participant,

You are by this note invited to consider participating in this research study. I am a Doctor of Philosophy in Business Management student in the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences, North-West University, Mahikeng Campus undertaking a research study titled, a proposed framework for the strategic management of service quality for the South Africa post offices in the North West Province.

The aim of this study is to establish guidelines that will help to improve strategic management of service quality with management and frontline employees at the service unit in order to improve client's satisfaction at the post offices in the North West. The data you give will be used to achieve this aim hence your contribution is highly valued and appreciated. For ethical reasons, you deserve to be well-informed of your rights to participate in this research project. If you agree to participate in this research after reading the following below, please sign this consent form. The researcher will request to use a tape recorder during the interview process in order to gather accurately complete information as note-taking may not be sufficient. Everything you say will be strictly confidential.

You are guaranteed anonymity. No information pertaining to your identity as a participant or that of your post office will be revealed.

- The information you provide will be used solely for educational purposes.
- The interview activity will take approximately 40-60 minutes.
- Your participation in this research is voluntary.
- You can decide to withdraw your participation at any stage of the interview process.
- You pledge to provide this investigation with the most honest information to the best of your knowledge and ability.

I have read the information provided in this informed consent form. Please tick if you agree or disagree.

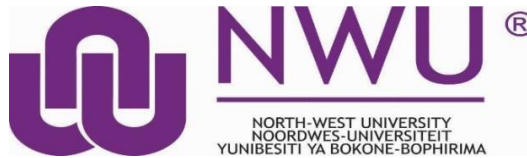
Agree

Disagree

Thanks.

..... Signature & date (Participant)

Thank you very much for your participation!



INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR MANAGERS

Introduction Phase

Good day, my name is Elsie Mbua Eposi, a PhD research student from the North-West University, Mafikeng Campus. This face-to-face interview is aimed at gaining your insight on the strategic management of service quality in the SAPO in the North West province. This is in relation to the SAPO Annual Report of 2015/2016 that established that the postal sectors in South Africa is facing a decline in postal services and loss of consumers. This interview, however, is not intended to investigate your job specification but to find solutions on how to enhance the service quality for postal services so that the postal branches in the North West province can improve in their service delivery obligation. This interview will only last for 20 minutes and your concise and unbiased responses will be appreciated. Any information provided in this exercise is considered confidential, it will not be used against you in any way. More so, participation is only voluntary, you may withdraw at any point in time, also the results of this study will be open for inspection, you may request a copy of the results if you wish.

Please note that this interview is recorded to ensure that your comments and contributions are adequately captured for processing purposes. However, your name will not be attached to any comments, views presented and/or perceptions expressed. Do you have any questions in this regard before we continue?

Interview Phase

[Ensuring that adequate notes are taken and the tape recorder is recording correctly.]

Section A: Demographic Information

What is your current position in the organisation?

How long have you been in this position?

SECTION B: STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

Please share with me the challenges affecting strategic implementation of service quality in your postal service branches.

Strategic implementation:

- What are your approaches in formulating strategic implementation in your post office?
- What are the most relevant factors to consider or you considered when implementing a strategy?

Challenges experienced:

- What do you believe are the biggest challenges facing your entity strategic implementation?

Techniques used to overcome the challenges:

- What can your entity do, OR what has your entity done, to overcome the challenges identified in 2 above?

Employees:

- Do employees play any role in the process of strategy implementation?
- What role do they play and how does it impact on strategy implementation?
- Do you at times face resistance from the employees in relation to strategy implementation?
- How do you deal with it?
- What other challenges do you face with employees in the process of strategy implementation and how do you overcome them?

Customers

- Do customers pose a challenge in the process of strategy implementation?
- What are some of these challenges and how do you overcome them?
- Do you also face the challenge of customers not appreciating new strategies?
- How do you deal with such a challenge?
- What other challenges do customers pose in the process of strategy implementation and how do you deal with them?

SECTION C: TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Share with us your views on T&D as an approach to empower yourself and the staff that work under you.

- How often do you provide T&D to staff in this branch?
- What are your views of the T&D received at your post office?
- What proportion of the employees had T&D over the last 12 months?
- How are the T&D organised?
- What problems do you face with regard to training and development within your organization?
- Please specify any ways you think training and development in your organization can be improved.

SECTION D: MOTIVATION

The next question is on motivation; I wish to know how you are motivated as an employee on job performance.

- How do you understand the concept 'motivation'?
- When do you feel motivated at work?
- What are 3 things that motivate you most at work?
- When do you feel unmotivated at work? Why?
- Can you remember some events that you felt very unmotivated at your work? Why?

SECTION E: MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The next question is on monitoring/evaluation; I want to know about the monitoring/evaluation system at your postal area.

- How are you involved in M&E in your post office?
- When is the commencement of M&E in post office?
- How are the M&E systems in your post office designed and implemented?
- What challenges do you encounter in using the various components of the M&E system in post office?
- How were the challenges overcome?

Now we have come to the conclusion. Before we finish, would you like to add any comments about the subject?

Thank you for your cooperation and assistance

ANNEXURE D: SAMPLE SIZE CALCULATOR

Required Sample Size†								
Population Size	Confidence = 95%				Confidence = 99%			
	Margin of Error				Margin of Error			
	5.0%	3.5%	2.5%	1.0%	5.0%	3.5%	2.5%	1.0%
10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
20	19	20	20	20	19	20	20	20
30	28	29	29	30	29	29	30	30
50	44	47	48	50	47	48	49	50
75	63	69	72	74	67	71	73	75
100	80	89	94	99	87	93	96	99
150	108	126	137	148	122	135	142	149
200	132	160	177	196	154	174	186	198
250	152	190	215	244	182	211	229	246
300	169	217	251	291	207	246	270	295
400	196	265	318	384	250	309	348	391
500	217	306	377	475	285	365	421	485
600	234	340	432	565	315	416	490	579
700	248	370	481	653	341	462	554	672
800	260	396	526	739	363	503	615	763
1,000	278	440	606	906	399	575	727	943
1,200	291	474	674	1067	427	636	827	1119
1,500	306	515	759	1297	460	712	959	1376
2,000	322	563	869	1655	498	808	1141	1785
2,500	333	597	952	1984	524	879	1288	2173
3,500	346	641	1068	2565	558	977	1510	2890
5,000	357	678	1176	3288	586	1066	1734	3842
7,500	365	710	1275	4211	610	1147	1960	5165
10,000	370	727	1332	4899	622	1193	2098	6239
25,000	378	760	1448	6939	646	1285	2399	9972
50,000	381	772	1491	8056	655	1318	2520	12455
75,000	382	776	1506	8514	658	1330	2563	13583
100,000	383	778	1513	8762	659	1336	2585	14227
250,000	384	782	1527	9248	662	1347	2626	15555
500,000	384	783	1532	9423	663	1350	2640	16055
1,000,000	384	783	1534	9512	663	1352	2647	16317
2,500,000	384	784	1536	9567	663	1353	2651	16478
10,000,000	384	784	1536	9594	663	1354	2653	16560
100,000,000	384	784	1537	9603	663	1354	2654	16584
300,000,000	384	784	1537	9603	663	1354	2654	16586

† Copyright, The Research Advisors (2006). All rights reserved.

ANNEXURE E: ENGLISH EDITING CERTIFICATE (Chapter 1 and 2)



Office: 0183892451

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

Cell: 0729116600

Date: 18th November, 2020

TO WHOM IT MAY

CONCERN

CERTIFICATE OF

EDITING

I, Muchativugwa Liberty Hove, confirm and certify that I have read and edited the entire thesis, A proposed framework for the strategic management of service quality for the South Africa Post Offices in the North West province, submitted by Elsie Mbua Eposi, orcid.org/0000-0001-9128-8158, for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in Economic and Management Science at the North-West University

Elsie Mbua Eposi was promoted and supervised by Professor Marius Potgieter of the North-West University.

I hold a PhD in English Language and Literature in English and am qualified to edit such a thesis for cohesion and coherence. The views expressed herein, however, remain those of the researcher/s.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Liberty Hove', is written over a horizontal line.

Professor M.L. Hove (PhD, MA, PGDE, PGCE, BA Honours – English)

ANNEXURE F: ENGLISH EDITING CERTIFICATE (Chapter 3-6)



ZANEZ EXPERT EDITING

**Registered with the South African Translators' Institutes (SATI)
Reference number 1000363
SACE REGISTERED**

303 Merriman Building 9
Merriman Avenue
Vereeniging
1939
9 November 2020

Cell: 0631434276
Email: kufazano@gmail.com
Email: kufazano@yahoo.com

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

CERTIFICATE OF EDITING A PHD THESIS

This serves to confirm that I have read and edited **Elsie Mbua Eposi PhD thesis**. The candidate corrected the language errors identified. The document is of an acceptable linguistic standard.

Yours faithfully

Dr. K. Zano
PhD in English (UNISA)

ANNEXURE G: PROOF OF STATISTICAL CONSULTATION

281, Onkgopotse Tiro St.

Unit 7, Mmabatho, 2735

27/10/2020

To whom it may concern

Dear Sir/ Madam,

RE: Proof of Statistical Consultation for a PhD study

This serves to confirm that I have reviewed Elsie Mbua Eposi's (23003006) proposal and questionnaire titled "A proposed framework for the strategic management of service quality for the South African Post Office in the North West province". I guided the student regarding the correct statistical methods that she needed to use in order to address the objectives of her study and about the right way to the structure and phrase the questionnaire.

I also confirm that I have conducted data analysis for her study and I provided some guidance to the student regarding the correct interpretation of the statistical analysis results.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Volition
Montshiwa

Digitally signed by
Dr Volition
Montshiwa
Date: 2020.10.27
15:13:14 +02'00'

PhD in Statistics

tlhavolmon@gmail.com

0741074981

ANNEXURE H: ETHICAL CLEARANCE



Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299-1111/2222
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

Economic and Management Sciences Research
Ethics Committee (EMS-REC)
Tel: 018 299-1427
Email: Bennie.Linde@nwu.ac.za

31 May 2019

Prof M Potgieter
Per e-mail

Dear Prof M Potgieter,

FEEDBACK – ETHICS APPLICATION 31052019 – E M Eposi (23003006)(NWU-00380-19-A4) – PhD in Business Management – Prof M Potgieter

Your ethics application on *A proposed framework for the strategic management of service quality for the South African Post Offices in North West*, that served on the EMS-REC meeting of 31 May 2019 refers.

Outcome:

Approved as a minimal risk study. A number NWU-00380-19-A4 was given for three years of ethical clearance.

Kind regards,

Recoverable Signature

M Rathbone

Signed by: 23309296

Prof Mark Rathbone
Deputy Chairperson: Economic and Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee (EMS-REC) Potchefstroom

Do not type here

ANNEXURE I: Permission letter from post office



Physical Address
32 Corner Martin and Carrington str
Mafikeng
2745

Tel: 018-3810152/6
FAX - 086 558 8867

Email
Rosy.Senyang @postoffice.co.za

Dear Sir

RE: PhD RESEARCH

Your letter dated 26 March 2019 refers:

Permission is hereby granted for Elsie M Eposi to conduct reserch and interviews at Zeerust Post Office and Mafikeng Post Office.

The Branch Manager and the staff will be informed in due course to corporate fully.

Yours sincerely

20190403

Molopo Area Manager

Rosy Senyang

ANNEXURE J: Permission letter from post office

27. Mar. 2019 10:41

No. 1686 P. 1



Office of....

Physical Address
Area Manager SAPO
35 Oliver Tambo Street
Potchefstroom
2520

Postal Address
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Tel: 018 2944822
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Email: Donald.Mokgobinyane@postoffice.co.za
27 March 2019

Dear Sir

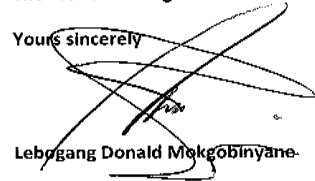
RE: PhD RESEARCH

Your letter dated 26 March 2019 refers:

Permission is hereby granted for Elsie M Eposi to conduct research and interviews at Potchefstroom and Klerksdorp Post Office.

The Branch Manager and the staff will be informed in due course to corporate fully.

Yours sincerely


Lebogang Donald Mokgobinyane

ANNEXURE K: SIMILARITY INDEX

PhD SAPO

ORIGINALITY REPORT

20%

SIMILARITY INDEX

PRIMARY SOURCES

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