

IMPROVING CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AT MS FABRICATIONS AND ENGINEERING

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Declaration

“I, Motlatsi Sekhesa (student number: 2020082679), hereby declare that this research project dissertation submitted by me in fulfilment of the requirement of the Master’s Degree in Business Administration at the University of the Free State’s Business School is my original work and that the intellectual property of the authors cited in this product was not compromised. I also hereby declare that I give the copyright of this work to the University of the Free State. Finally, I declare that there is no conflict of interest between myself as the researcher and any of the research participants.”

Date: 23 November 2023

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'M. Sekhesa', enclosed within a large, loopy oval scribble.

Abstract

Customer satisfaction for companies and institutions of any size is an important marker of how they connect with their clientele. In some cases it could be the difference between success and failure in business. This study sought to determine how to improve customer satisfaction at MS Fabrications and Engineering (MSFE). It is a mechanical engineering company operating from the capital city, Maseru, Lesotho. In the past few years, the company experienced stagnation in terms of growth across its strategic objectives. Logically, customer engagement and subsequent customer satisfaction became the primary research objective. The study employed a qualitative research design, together with non-probability sampling, and semi-structured interviews were used to collect data. Three categories of participants were purposively selected. The first group comprised a mixture of both high and low performing customers of MSFE. Meaning companies who do repeat business, places orders with MSFE regularly. While low performing customers give orders occasionally. The second group of participants were employees of MSFE at managerial level. The last group comprised experts on customer issues from a variety of companies and institutions.

The major findings of the study show that it is possible to achieve customer satisfaction but fail to realise economic gains, particularly when the customer base is not big enough. The other key finding is that all the customer groups were satisfied with the service that MSFE was offering. However, the need for MSFE to diversify its offering and consider expanding to new markets were also revealed. The study concludes that the management of the company needs to ensure the expansion of their customer base through marketing, venturing into new markets, diversifying offering and expanding services to the existing customer base.

Key words: Customer behaviour, customer engagement, customer experience, customer satisfaction

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Chapter 1: Proposal

1.1 Background

The world experienced different economic conditions over the years. Some regions or even countries experienced development and growth while others had the opposite. Those on the opposite depended on the direct investments to hoping to improve their condition. A citable case is the aftermath of the global financial crisis that started in the United States of America in 2008. It is labelled as the most severe shock to the global economy in seven decades (Wenjie Chen, 2019). Nowadays, world economic growth has reached even lower levels because of different reasons. Nowadays, world economic growth has reached even lower levels following that event. This is because some countries never fully recovered. According to Matlanyane, (2019, p. 16), the world experienced a synchronized growth slowdown in 2019 resulting in the growth weakening to 2.9% in 2019, from 3.6% in 2018.

Nonetheless, years before the crisis, a barometer was developed and introduced in Sweden around 1989, measuring customer satisfaction in their market throughout the country, according to Hsu (2008). Shortly after that, the successful experience of the Swedish Customer Satisfaction Barometer (SCSB) inspired other regions to develop their own. The American Customer Satisfaction Index and the European Customer Satisfaction Index are a few examples of the regions that followed. Researchers argue that this measure is important, because it can serve as a predictor of companies' profitability and market value. Therefore, customer satisfaction has become the desired goal for many studies to provide answers to the many problems that were not known at the time.

In South Africa, Mncedisi (2019) writes that the South African Customer Satisfaction Index reported a drop from 74.2% in 2017, to 72.7% in 2018 for the Medical Schemes. He further points out that the drop was caused by the increasing premiums, shrinking benefits and lack of value for money. It seems that companies have grouped themselves by industry. In such an association they determine the customer satisfaction levels and as result, they can collectively respond to negative reports about their performance insofar as customer satisfaction is concerned.

MS Fabrications and Engineering Pty Ltd (MSFE) operating in Maseru, Lesotho commenced its operations in 2016, but has experienced significant economic difficulties due to both its macro-economic and micro-economic circumstances. One of its market segments is the mining industry. This industry is referred to as the sunrise industry due to the fact that the country has huge potential for diamond mining but it has only started recently to explore this potential. According to the officials at the Ministry of Mining in Lesotho, there are about forty possible diamond mining sites that are expected to yield fairly well. Currently, there are only three fully functional diamond mining operations taking place at full capacity. The other market industry is the construction and manufacturing industry. In this industry, similar to the mining industry, MEC mainly supplies maintenance and repair services in small-scale and new constructions. Besides the two industries mentioned, the other is the agricultural industry where (MSFE) has established itself as a service provider. Largely, the customers in this market are individual farmers whose mechanisation requirements, repairs and maintenance are handled by the company.

The three-year strategic plan of MSFE is anchored in the following:

Vision: To be a leader in the provision of mechanical fabrications and maintenance solutions/services in the sub-Saharan.

Mission: To provide maintenance, fabrication, construction and manufacturing services within acceptable quality standards in the interest of all stakeholders through transparency and consistency, employing professional, committed and well-motivated workforce.

The company currently employs 16 people, four of whom are women who hold qualifications in fields such as Finance and Accounting Management, Human Resources Management, and Marketing Management, and are leaders in the organization. The strategic statements cited above are now in their third year since the time they were adopted by the company. There is some progress, but the strategic objectives are not met satisfactorily due to various reasons. Just through simple observation, what seems to stand out as lacking is in the area of customer satisfaction. As a result, the company has missed some big opportunities in the past. One among the many that are given is that the prospective clients are not satisfied with the quality of work we do based on international standards. These jobs usually

come from mining companies and large construction companies. Being multinational companies, they often demand service that matches the international standards they operate under.

Looking at its micro-economic issues, the high number of customer complaints has persisted since the company started its operations. The complaints seem to pop up all over the company's departments. However, the most complaints registered are from the operations. The Administration Manager's weekly reports highlight the number of customer complaints and these are quite high. Since the start of operations, all complaints were addressed accordingly whenever they came up. However, this may be interpreted as though the underlying problem has not been addressed because the complaints keep coming back. The other districts of the country do not have access to the MSFE services and there are currently no communication strategies to ensure that the message gets to the potential buyers about the available services at the company.

Currently, the company serves everybody who seeks the services of a mechanical engineering company. The jobs range from the smallest, which often require just ten minutes to complete, to those that could take up to a week to complete. The expectations for these customers differ widely, but their jobs keep the same queue, because the company policy states, "first in first out". In the past, providing services to everyone used to deliver the desired results, primarily because Lesotho's economy is still very small. Specialisation would severely lower the company's customer base and this would not be sustainable. As a result, different businesses tend to do general work, as opposed to specialised work. Also, initially the company was still very new and with a low customer base; hence the reason why the time was available to attend to everything.

The customers also complain about the lead time for jobs done by the company. This particular complaint is common in the operations department, and has resulted in a consistent backlog in operations. The operation manager's monthly reports have shown that at any given time, there are about 45 outstanding job cards in the workshop over a five-month period. This could justify why there are so many complaints, as the customers have to endure lengthy waiting periods for their jobs to

be completed. At times, there is no other company that may be capable of handling such jobs and the customers are forced to wait.

Furthermore, other customers raise the price issue where they feel that work performed does not meet their expectations. This issue has recently been worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic, which disrupted all economic activities and rendered many individuals jobless and companies without business. The reason is that everyone would like to hold on to the little resources they have in anticipation of worsening economic conditions. It appears that the current economic conditions have engendered more price complaints from customers.

The other issue raised is the quality of work. Sometimes the employees fail to fully engage with the customer to make them understand the requirements of a specific job. This creates a situation where the employee's participation in the efforts that are intended to attract and retain customers is non-existent. The employees do not see themselves as part of the important contact points for the company and that they must do all they can to act and behave in a manner that enhances customer satisfaction. The above-mentioned issues do not seem to stop; they keep recurring. One would reasonably assume that after the first incident, employees would learn how to avoid such pitfalls, but this is not the case, which is the reason this study was undertaken.

1.2 Problem statement

The problem is that the company has not realised growth in the past two years. The company has managed to procure new machines and some good-quality, second-hand machines to do machining and welding services. Also, it has invested money in terms of staff training in their respective specialties. For example, welders have developed to the level of coded welder where they weld according to the requirements of ISO 3834 and the machinists or fitters are trained up to the level of Trade Test A, which is the highest in the country a tradesman can obtain. On the administrative side, training has been conducted trying to equip employees with customer care, leadership and managerial skills. Having assessed the competitors' strengths, the above-mentioned capabilities put the MSFE ahead in the market.

The persistent backlog of job cards and the frequent customer return jobs are the problems the company constantly faces. A significant number of customers are not satisfied with the service they get at the MSFE under study, according to the complaints register. Failure to address this issue could cause the company to gradually lose customers, resulting in reduced market share and compromising the sustainability of the company. In addition, new business was not attracted because of the negative image the existing companies and clients may have about MSFE.

1.2.1 Research questions

The study sets out to answer the following research questions:

- What literature exists on customer satisfaction in the engineering services industry?
- What models are available to measure customer satisfaction in the engineering services industry?
- How do customers engage with MSFE?
- What is the customers' experience at MSFE?
- What factors influence customer satisfaction in MSFE?
- How can customer engagement and service be improved?

1.3 Research objectives

The objectives of the study are classified into primary and secondary objectives. These are provided below.

1.3.1 Primary research objective

- To improve customer engagement and satisfaction at MSFE.

1.3.2 Secondary research objectives

- To review what literature exists on customer satisfaction in the engineering services industry.
- To determine what models are available to measure customer satisfaction in the engineering services industry.
- To investigate customer satisfaction challenges at MSFE.
- To explore how customers engage with MSFE.

- To determine factors that influence customer satisfaction at MSFE.
- To determine how customer engagement and services can be improved at MSFE.

1.4 Strategies to manage customer satisfaction

According to Cant and Van Heerden (2017) companies implement a myriad of strategies to improve customer satisfaction. There are a few examples that could be cited. One is market segmentation, where each segment is exploited fully either according to demographic, psychographic, geographical and behavioural characteristics. This helps the marketing section of the company to develop specific marketing activities for such specific segments. The other is marketing mix, which includes aspects such as pricing, branding, distribution, communication and customer retention. Each organisation has preferences as to which ones to implement. In other cases, the type of organisation determines which strategies to use.

1.5 Research methodology

1.5.1 Research design

The qualitative research design approach was employed to conduct this research study. The qualitative research design seeks to describe and interpret some human phenomena based on the words of the selected people's experiences (Ndlovu, 2020). The researcher must be free of bias, presuppositions and interpretations so that readers can decide for themselves what they think about such work. Scholars have given different definitions to the phrase, because they had many other variables, which may have caused different viewpoints. For this study, qualitative research design was explained as a method that can answer questions like how and why things are the way they are. Also, it is said to capture actual peoples' lived experiences in depth and accurately. Therefore, the epistemological stance is constructionism, which is explained by Bryman and Bell (2014), as those social phenomena and their meaning are continually under construction by the social actors involved, be it individually or collectively through speech or any other mode of interaction.

1.5.2 Sampling

The qualitative research design aligns well with non-probability sampling methods. This is because the researcher was an integral part of the research. The researcher must be a qualified and able person who can conduct him/herself around the research issues with the utmost care and diligence, without bias and other behaviour that might compromise the credibility and validity of the study. Amongst the non-probability sampling methods, purposive sampling is the appropriate method to use sampling, considering the research design and the size of the study area. The fact that this study is specific to an organisation whose customer population or potential research participants are relatively low, a qualitative research design employing a purposive sampling method is most likely to help the study achieve its goals, as it is mainly concerned with in-depth knowledge of their research topic.

The purposive sampling method, according to Devers and Frankel (2000), is designed to enhance understanding of phenomena through the experiences of those who experience such. They further state that researchers strive to accomplish this by selecting their samples in anticipation of finding the richest information from individuals, groups or organisations. Therefore, the participants were selected according to the seniority and level of responsibility in their respective organisations, their level of skills, and the gender balance was also considered while also considering convenience issues.

1.5.3 Data collection method

The data collection method was individual interviews with each participant. The interview is defined by Bryman and Bell (2014, p. 60) as social interaction, where the interviewer and interviewee create an environment as close as possible to the natural environment of the interviewee to engage in the questions and answers session. The interviews were semi-structured, meaning that there would be prepared questions intended to probe for certain specific responses relating to the subject matter. Also, they were open-ended to encourage the participants to explain themselves to their satisfaction. Follow-up questions are allowed during this type of interview. All the interviews were scheduled and spaced sufficiently to ensure that both the participants and the interviewer were ready to engage.

1.5.4 Ethical considerations

Many institutions that have research as one of their main activities usually have a committee called the ethics committee in place. The main duty of this committee is to ensure that the researcher has thought about the ethical issues that may arise during the research and has plans how to deal with them. It is most probable that ethical issues will arise during the research and if they are not dealt with by sound ethical practices, they are bound to affect the integrity of the research negatively. As a result, the trustworthiness of such work may be compromised thus rendering it useless. Amongst the published literature, Bryman and Bell (2014, p. 131) explain that ethics committees develop ethics guidelines to protect research participants, researchers and institutions from the possibility of adverse publicity or legal actions being taken against them. For this study, only five ethical issues that could arise in this study were be discussed and the ethical clearance was issued. Appendix A.

1.5.4.1 Permission obtained

Permission obtained' refers to the situation where the researcher has received permission to carry on with the study. The permission is usually granted by the university in the case where the research forms part of a student's requirement to complete some qualifications. For this study, the researcher applied for permission from the university before starting the research. Appendix A. On the company's side, there is an advisory board that dealt with the request to do the research, evaluate the risks and give permission once they were satisfied with the proposal. Appendix B. Several other bodies are tasked with the task of giving permission to different organisations. In general, they are called Institutional Review Boards (IRB), according to Connelly (2014), and their work is to ensure that human subjects are protected against unethical behaviour by researchers and to weigh any possible harm against the benefits of the proposed studies. Also, they assess the competence of the researcher and whether the credentials show that the researcher is be able to conduct the research according to the ethical requirements of such a study. Another example of an IRB is the Department of Health if the research is about the hospitals, its workers or even patients.

1.5.4.2 Informed consent

The participants in the research must be given all the necessary information about the study so that they understand the benefit and the purpose of the study. Also, the participants need to give consent in writing. They must also know that, at any stage of the study, if they want to change their mind about their participation in the study, they are free to do so, having no obligation justify their decision. Consent, according to Connelly (2014), should be voluntary, while participants understand what they are being asked to do. In other words, they must be competent to give consent. The researcher ensured that consent was given in writing by every individual who participated in the research.

1.5.4.3 Voluntary participation

Voluntary participation in research refers to a situation where one participates in a study freely and without having been coerced into doing it. This is closely linked to informed consent, because one can only participate voluntarily once consent is in place. Similar to consent, the subject must be capable to participate in the research. All the elements that might render such a subject vulnerable to exploitation must be eliminated before consent and subsequent participation. Voluntary participation and informed consent in research are to a large extent dependent on the autonomy and independence of the participants, as explained by Marshall et al. (2006, p. 2).

1.5.4.4 Confidentiality and anonymity

The researchers involved with human participants are duty-bound to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of their participants and their information (Anon, 2017). In this study, participants were assured of their anonymity. Also, the researcher noted that the nature of the study to be undertaken sought to develop the organisation and ensure that its employees also develop.

1.5.4.5 No harm

The researcher must ensure that there is no harm to the participants, no harm to the environment, and any kind of damage even to flora and fauna in the area of the research. Neither physical nor emotional harm is allowed in the research space. No harm is defined by Charangle and Lucch (2018, p. 12) as stepping back from the act and having a bird's-eye view of context and mitigating potential negative effects on

the social fabric. The do-no-harm ethical consideration draws its strength from the Hippocratic Oath.

1.6 Demarcation of the study

This study was about improving customer satisfaction at a MSFE. The company is based in Maseru, Lesotho. The participants were purposefully selected customers. This study fell under marketing management.

1.7 Conclusion

The study is about the improving customer satisfaction at an MSFE. The company stands to benefit the most and instantly through the findings of this research. However, the other stakeholders and colleagues benefited because they would have access to the findings. In particular, the Lesotho Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) where MSFE is affiliated as a corporate member benefit, because there many small and medium-size companies like MSFE are affiliated. Also, there are other businesses that MSFE does business with that could benefit from the study. Furthermore, considering that the managing director at the company was the researcher, it was therefore concluded that in any meeting where such a topic may be discussed, the acquired knowledge from undertaking the study would be shared accordingly amongst the interested participants.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Many publications by academic authors and business leaders have noted that business' success is dependent on many factors, and amongst them is customer satisfaction. Some other factors must be met before customer satisfaction is experienced. As a result, the review of literature for this study begins with customer satisfaction models. The models provide that there is some consensus amongst the authors and scholars that five factors affecting customer satisfaction are perceived quality, perceived value, customer expectations, customer loyalty and customer complaints. Also, there are strategies that managers use to influence satisfaction amongst customers. Examples include customer retention, as well as factors affecting customers' buying decisions. Furthermore, strategies like customer centricity, customer relationship management and digital business strategy are designed to help businesses to survive the current turbulent and rapid technology advancement conditions.

2.2 Customer satisfaction definition

Looking back at what the earlier researchers thought about customer satisfaction, a study titled 'Customer Satisfaction Incentives' by Hauser et al. (1994) reveals that customer satisfaction is defined as a multi-period issue, where a firm takes actions today in anticipation of positive purchasing behaviour in the future. Another explanation by the same authors is that customer satisfaction measures are indicators of the future profit potential; meaning that satisfied customers buy more, but often at higher prices and they communicate their satisfaction to others. On the other hand, Frank (2003) defines customer satisfaction as determining the values required now and in the future by customers, as well as the amount required, how it should be delivered and when it should be provided. Furthermore, Frank (2003) clarifies that it stems from giving attention to raw materials, engineering quality, design and innovation and this should be a never-ending engagement.

Similarly, Araigat and Almubarak (2015) write that customer satisfaction has become one of the key success factors for companies in their efforts to improve quality in the marketplace. The same study (YI 1991, in Araigat & Almubarak, 2015) explains that customer satisfaction could be looked at as an outcome or result and as a process that concentrates on a perceptual, psychological and evaluative part of the satisfaction. In agreement with Araigat and Almubarak, Cant and Van Heerden (2017) define customer satisfaction as the extent to which the products or services offered meet or even exceed the customers' expectations.

Other authors (Lim et al., 2020) write that customer satisfaction is a market-based ability where firms benefit from the reduced cost of selling and increasing customer retention and loyalty through the generation of positive word of mouth and higher willingness to pay. Furthermore, Tse and Wilton (1988, cited in Araigat & Almubarak, 2015) state that customer satisfaction is the response to customer evaluation of the perceived conflict between previous expectations and the actual performance of a product or service.

According to Leninkumar (2019, p. 1), in the article on commercial banking in Northern Sri Lanka, customer satisfaction is a cornerstone of all marketing activities. This is the case because the competing banks have realised that their ability to retain customers is very important for the success of their organisations. Again, their organisations' good performance is not only dependent on identifying the gaps in the market and exploiting them, but on customer satisfaction, which is brought about by the ability of the company to meet customers' needs and expectations. This is an addition to the mutual or good relationship that the organisation strives to build with its customers. As a background, Leninkumar (2019) explains that in Sri Lanka, the commercial banking industry experienced an influx of new entrants and that further heightened the need for the banks to retain the existing customers, while on the other hand, they had to increase efforts to get new customers in a much more challenging environment.

Other authors seem to think that the definition of customer satisfaction is somewhat intertwined or synonymous with quality service (Leninkumar, 2019). This is because an organisation providing quality service is most likely meeting the customer needs and expectations, which in turn produces customer satisfaction (Salman, 2019, p. 1).

Following this view, customer satisfaction is defined by Salman (2019, p. 3) as the fulfilment of customer expectations regarding the service or product, specifically where quality is concerned. This is further clarified by noting that satisfaction would be achieved in the case where the product or service meets the perceived performance and expectations of the customer.

Customer satisfaction is further defined by Barusmand and Rulian (2020) as a result of a cognitive and affective evaluation, where the standard expectation is compared to the actual perceived performance with a disconfirmation paradigm. They further clarify that when the performance exceeds the expectation, the result of the evaluation reaches satisfying results, translating into a satisfied customer. In the end, conformity expectations and willingness to repurchase and recommend can be the attributes of customer satisfaction (Patna et al., 2020).

In essence, all the authors have the same messages as to what customer satisfaction is. They may have used slightly different words, but the meaning comes down to one thing. They seem to have taken different perspectives according to dimensions or elements of customer satisfaction. According to the Oxford English Dictionary (2023), though, a person who buys goods or services from a shop or business is a customer. The same source says satisfaction is the fulfilment of one's wishes, expectations or needs, and the pleasure derived from this. Other authors, in an attempt to clarify their views, go further and give examples of the behaviour of a satisfied customer. In the context of the study, the most appropriate definition must be able to capture the fact that customers are the lifeline of the organisation selling products or services, and getting them satisfied ensures the sustainability of the organisation. Therefore, this study adopts the customer satisfaction definition according to Lim et al. (2020), which states that customer satisfaction is a market-based ability where firms benefit from the reduced cost of selling and increasing customer retention and loyalty through the generation of positive word of mouth and higher willingness to pay.

It is generally accepted that to gain maximum customer satisfaction, it is very important for service providers to determine the level of customer expectation (Araigat & Almubarak, 2015). This statement is true to the extent that the service provider considers the customer to fall within his or her target market range. In

addition to this, Woratsche et al. (2019) report that a happy customer is extremely valuable to any company as it most probably leads to customer loyalty. As soon as the company has managed to get its customers satisfied, then it can expect a certain beneficial relationship with the customer. One amongst many is the reduced cost of selling.

2.3 Cost of selling

Managers, having understood that the reduced cost of selling provides a competitive advantage because of reduced expenditure towards marketing activities, strive to satisfy their customers to benefit from the concept. Cost of selling, as explained by Lim et al. (2020), refers to the costs incurred by a firm in persuading customers to purchase its offering and in making it convenient for them to do so. Understanding that, although the cost of selling may seem to be an issue affecting internal customers to the business, it has a very strong influence on the external customers. For example, satisfied employees are most probably going to implement all customer satisfaction strategies with more diligence and passion than dissatisfied employees (Haspari et al., 2021).

Studies suggest that employee satisfaction is crucial in assisting companies to achieve their strategic objectives, particularly the financial ones noted (Koys, 2003, in Chi & Gursay, 2009). They further explain that the logic for this argument is that if the company takes care of its employees, the employees have taken care of the customers. Also, customers indeed tend to have a better experience with organisations that have higher levels of employee satisfaction and engagement. It is particularly important, according to Lam et al. (2001), for the services industry to ensure employee satisfaction because of the nature of the industry. Also, those actions by the company could have a long-term impact in influencing tomorrow's sales. Therefore, the marketing manager can closely apply the marketing mix model to determine whether or not there is an immediate impact.

In addition, customer satisfaction incentives include amongst others those that are targeted at employees. As Hauser et al. (1994) write in their article, employee incentives are tied to customer satisfaction and quality measures. In many cases, marketing managers would have their compensation policy dependent on customer

satisfaction, in the sense that the primary responsibility of such a manager is to ensure that the company has customers now and in the future for it to grow over time. This may mean that the marketing manager is the one who, in most cases, is tasked with the responsibility of ensuring customer retention as a strategic objective of an organisation.

2.4 Customer retention

In most cases, repeat purchases occur as a result of retained customers. Customer retention as a strategic objective, according to Barusmand and Rulian (2020, p. 2), is the customer's commitment towards a company and its service and product offerings for a specific period through their repeat purchases while spreading positive word of mouth among the cycle of influence. This is generally achieved through maintaining superb customer experience. Customer retention is important for the company, because it can lead to significant benefits like reduction in operating costs and increased revenue by referrals (Haspari et al., 2021). Also significant is the fact that acquiring a new customer is more costly than maintaining a relationship with a current customer.

The retention of customers depends on the level of satisfaction with the specific service attributes such as call quality, tariff/price level, handset characteristics and brand image, according to Capponi et al. (2021, p. 2), who study the telecommunications industry in the Italian market. In the study, the authors explain that dissatisfaction indicators such as the number of complaints and the call drop rate have a significant impact on the probability of churning or switching. They suggest that to achieve customer retention, an organization needs to develop a complex service plan, a sophisticated handset, membership card programs, long-term contracts and a high quality of service. Above and beyond all that, the element of customer behaviour imposes itself into the discussions.

2.5 Customer behaviour

It is common knowledge that customers or consumers are an integral part of every business. What they see, think, prefer and buy is of great importance to providers of services or products to fine tune their marketing offers and achieve a high level of

consumer acceptance and satisfaction (Eze & Bello, 2016, p. 3). Therefore, when making a decision, the buyer considers many factors such as cultural factors, social, personal and psychological categories. It can be noted that these determinants of consumer behaviour are both individually influenced and societally influenced (Cant & Van Heerden, 2017, p. 57) as shown in Figure 1. It is essential, therefore, for marketers or leaders of organizations to understand consumer behaviour to survive and succeed in the competitive marketing environment.

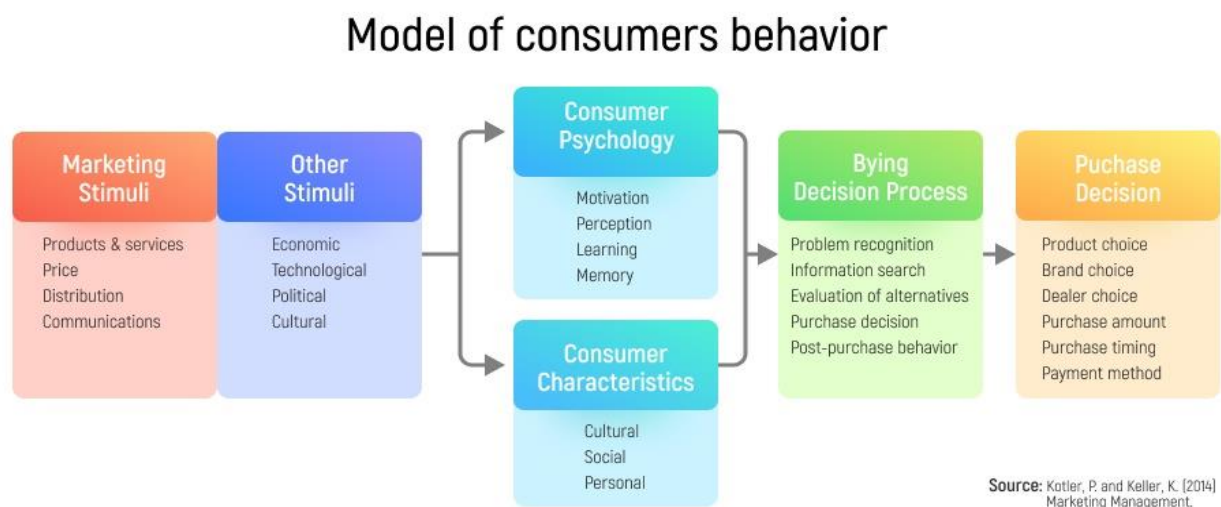


Figure 1: Consumer behaviour model by Khratovich (2019)

Noting that the study is focused on the organisation doing business in the services industry, it is apparent therefore that the contact points between the company and its customers are mostly exposed to those behaviours of the customers. It is also reasonable to accept that these behaviours can be both dysfunctional and good. According to Paloma et al. (2019, p. 307), customer service employees are expected to bring their emotions and personalities to the role; creating empathy with consumers. When dysfunctional customer behaviour occurs, it is unlikely that the employees were able to distance themselves from its effects and not take the abuse as a personal offence (Asif et al., 2020).

The dysfunctions can manifest themselves in many different forms. For example, a customer who believes that he or she is important for the company may disregard the company policies and expect to be given priority over other customers. This kind of behaviour is believed to be problematic, because it causes dissatisfaction among

the employees. Such dissatisfaction can potentially cost the company money in terms of employee turnover and subsequent training of the new employees. Moreover, Asif et al. (2020, p. 3) believe that frontline employees in a service setting face dysfunctional customer behaviour which affects their emotional well-being, which in turn affects not only the employees' attitude, but also customer well-being in the form of low-quality service recovery. Furthermore, Asif et al. (2020) mention that dysfunctional behaviour has a trickle-back effect where even the people who are not directly in contact with the customers may face similar dysfunction. In other words, family members, friends, fellow employees and other customers may encounter such difficulties because the receiver of the dysfunction may want to release it on the easier target downstream. This behaviour affects the value co-creation strategies and efforts negatively.

2.6 Value co-creation

Value co-creation can take place between customer and supplier, as well as suppliers collaborating to deliver more value for the customer and it can manifest itself in many ways (Schulz et al., 2021). The concept of value co-creation focuses on participatory measures and the necessities of organizations and customers to develop solutions to meet the needs of customers and create value (Kamali et al., 2021, p. 7). It may be generally accepted that value co-creation is a strategic issue, because the establishment of common values between participants seeking value requires planning, alignment, implementation and intimate control within organizations. According to Jin and Kai (2021, p. 434), value co-creation is a process where all sides work together to generate a better experience for customers. This is achieved when both customers and enterprises collaborate to give one another the best experience as they go about doing their different businesses. Furthermore, Jin and Kai (2021, p. 434) note that value in use occurs when customers integrate and utilize resources during consumption activities. In addition, Tran and Vu (2021, p. 5) state that customers may contribute to value co-creation through motivations and customer-owned resources. Motivation in the form of trustworthiness, commitment and passion and customers' resources may include knowledge, skills, creativity and connectedness. Value co-creation is regarded by (Haro et al., 2014) as an effective

marketing strategy because of the intimate nature of collaboration and planning that take place.

2.7 Marketing

Marketing as a concept is defined by Cant and Van Heerden (2017, p. 13) as a managerial philosophy where the organisation focuses on meeting the customers' needs and wants at a profit. The marketing manager undertakes the marketing function of the organisation by employing a marketing-mix model that considers product, price, promotion and place. In recent years, through further studies, three more factors were added to the marketing mix model, namely people, processes and physical evidence (Cant & Van Heerden, 2017). They are now referred to as the 7P, according to Hanlon (2022). Over time, marketing managers have utilised available technologies to fulfil their duties to the extent that in recent times, technological advancements have enabled a new way of doing marketing activities via digital media (Eze & Bello, 2016). Also, it is widely accepted that if an organisation does not utilise these platforms, the likelihood of failure is quite high (Luara, 2021).

2.7.1 Digital media impact on customer satisfaction

The advent of the fourth industrial revolution exposed many organisations to the technological advancements that are taking place at a very fast pace. According to Cant and Van Heerden (2017, p. 373), customers can now view, discuss and order products and services directly online. This has disrupted the conventional way the customers used to interact with their suppliers and the change keeps on taking place. As a result, the impact of digital media has become a very important element in the studies related to customer satisfaction (Luara, 2021).

2.7.2 Business to business marketing

Numerous studies are conducted on business-to-business marketing (Kalajdzic et al., 2020). However, there seems to be a shortfall insofar as factors affecting business to business marketing in terms of sustenance of such relationships. Also, models and frameworks have not been established and the authors think the mutual benefit for both parties has not been developed. Also, how such a relationship is forged, is still unknown. However, customer centricity has been studied for over half a century, according to Denish et al. (2006). They purport that its scope is applicable

to both business to business and business to customer in terms of benefits and maybe short falls.

2.8 Customer centricity

History tells us that in the past, companies or firms used to have their products as the main focus or the things they existed for. All the resources and activities were used to ensure that the product or service is perfect according to the leaders of such companies. This business posture is referred to as being product centric. It is characterised by the following approaches, according to Denish et al. (2006), but is not limited to:

- Highlighting the product features and advantages.
- Internally focused.
- Taking portfolio of products.
- Market share growth by product.
- Acquisition or development of new products.

Sheth (2020) highlights several disadvantages, like the poor market fit, more risk and high expenditure that product centric companies have to contend with every product launch, because it is not built with the customers' perspectives in mind.

Anyhow, being customer centric is not easy; also, as Denish et al. (2006) outline, companies need to contend with impediments caused by the existing organisational culture, organisational structure, business processes and the financial metrics. This type of change is surely intentional and goal oriented. However, Robbins et al. (2019, p. 689) state that people's egos are fragile and they see change as threatening. Even where there is evidence suggesting that change is inevitable, they latch onto some flimsy data that suggest otherwise in order to avoid the change. Amongst other things, Denish et al. (2006) argue that the firm that seeks to achieve customer centricity must establish financial priorities that support the firm's own processes and management practices that breed possessiveness of the firm's customers and the associated customer equity instead of possessiveness of the products.

In the same vein (Uhl & Macgillavry, 2020), customer centricity offers the possibility of a long-term differentiation; it is difficult to copy and it represents a significant barrier for those trying to enter the market. Furthermore, the authors state that a customer-centred approach is focused on the maintenance of existing customer relationships rather than acquiring new customers all the time. The definitions from the different authors provide proof that it is a good idea to transform firms to a customer centric strategy because it is clear that both the firm and the customers' values are priority in the relationship. This, in turn, brought customer satisfaction.

2.9 Customer satisfaction models

The customer satisfaction model is composed of influencing factors that are experienced by the customer for them to be satisfied as shown in Figure 2. When customers are satisfied, companies can expect certain long-term benefits like loyalty and others (Hsu, 2008).

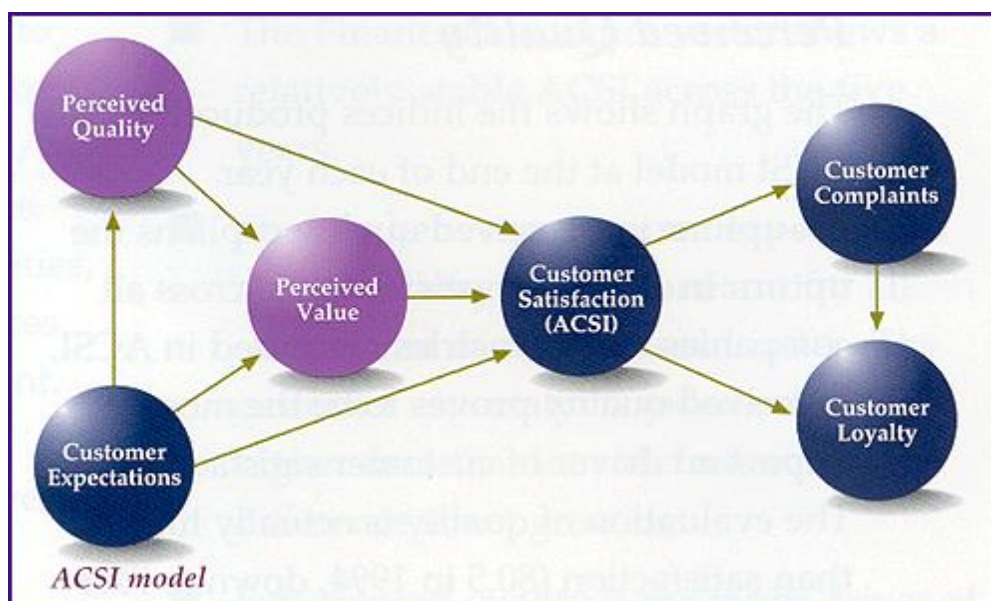


Figure 2: Customer satisfaction model (Hsu, 2008)

2.9.1 Customer-perceived quality

Customer-perceived quality in the services industry mainly refers to the following dimensions: reliability, assurance, responsiveness and empathy, according to Sumarwan et al. (2018, p. 178). This, in simple terms, means that the service

provider must deliver, as promised, a service that meets expectations at the time that it is needed and at the same time is considerate to the customer. Other authors refer to the same concept as service quality. Service quality can be thought of as the level of service related to customer expectations and needs (Haspari et al., 2021). Also, Wyckoff (2002, cited by Haspari et al., 2021) defines the notion of service quality as the level of excellence expected. Furthermore, Sumarwan et al. (2018) believe that service quality is seen not only from the point of view of producers, but also by consumers who use these services. In other words, service quality can be considered from the perspective of the consumer, while quality service is about whether the company can provide products and services according to customer expectations.

2.9.2 Customer expectations

Customer expectation means that the ideas and feelings of a customer about the product or service depend on what he or she needs from the product and expects it to do (Hamza & Zakkariya, 2012, p. 2). A customer's expectation depends on his or her previous experience, advertising and word of mouth and his/her expectation about the product or service is the core of their satisfaction. Also, according to Schulz et al. (2021, p. 2), considerable customer engagement is required to understand these customer expectations and gain a systemic understanding of a situation, since their assessment is not homogenous and customer requirements may be conflicting.

2.9.3 Customer complaints

Research shows that people who are better at handling negative feedback tend to be more successful than those who can handle negative feedback less so (Guillemard, 2017, p. 74). According to Ola (2016), customers are generally reluctant to complain when faced with some inconvenience, especially when it comes through minor problems. This is despite the fact that many customers complain indirectly. They find it very attractive to complain on the Internet on various forums and specialized websites.

2.9.4 Customer loyalty

Customer loyalty is the ultimate purpose of a business to sustain the effort. According to Patna et al. (2020), customer loyalty is the commitment held firmly by the consumer to make a purchase, provide positive reviews and recommend a product that has been purchased to other people. It can be shaped by quality of service, customer-perceived value and consumer experience.

2.9.5 Customer-perceived value

To understand the meaning of the phrase 'customer-perceived value', perception must be defined. According to Boamah et al. (2020, p. 33), perception is influenced to a large extent by expectations, motivation, expectancy value, and attitude. These factors are largely the result of the impact of the environment one is exposed to. Therefore, customer-perceived value can be defined as the result of the personal comparison between perceived overall benefits and perceived sacrifices or costs paid by the customer (Tuncer et al., 2021). As a result, if a customer sees that the value of a product or service is high, then there is also a relatively high probability that they have bought the product (Zeithaml, 1988, cited by Petr & Maria, 2019, p. 4). In agreement with Zeithaml (1988, cited by Tuncer et al., 2021), Petr and Maria, 2019, p. 4) define perceived value as a customer's general evaluation of a service or product using a comparison of his or her perception of benefit from the service received and the sacrifice required to receive it.

Furthermore, Aulia (et al., 2016) propose three dimensions, depending on which perspective one is looking from. These are product-related value, social-related value and personal-related value. In addition, Zauner et al. (2015) note that, over time, the customer-perceived value concept developed from a unidimensional construct followed by a multidimensional construct and subsequently a taxonomy of the multidimensional construct. As a takeaway, perceived value involves the relationship between customer and the product or service related to the benefits the customer gets following the purchase. Thus, that perception can be influenced by the firm through a strategic approach named customer relationship management.

2.10 Customer Relationship Management

Customer relationship management, according to Frow and Payne (2009), is an encompassing strategic approach concerned with creating improved shareholder value through the development of appropriate relationships with key customers and customer segments. In another article, Suoniemi et al. (2022) purport that customer relationship management is a specialised technology that enables firms to capture, store, access, share and analyse large quantities of customer data. They further highlight that the benefits include higher customer loyalty, improved marketing effectiveness, and better customer service, and support lower costs due to improved efficiency. In addition, Drenich and Croson (2013) note that customer relationship management capability can help defend the value of the firm against competitors, suppliers and customer encroachment.

Deshpande (2023), partly in agreement, notes that it is a process, strategy or technology that enables organisations to manage relationships with customers and suppliers. In practical terms it means the use of customer information collected in a data base to facilitate the pleasurable customer experience in their different segments intelligently. This approach, although it may be costly at the beginning and complex to implement, has the potential to bring about long-term success and individualised customer experiences. Considering Suoniemi et al.'s (2022) definition of customer relationship management, one can safely conclude that information technology infrastructure is imperative to support the strategy. This then calls for the leadership of the firm to direct the firm towards a digital business strategy.

2.11 Digital Business Strategy

Digital business strategy is defined by Bharadwaj et al. (2013) as the organisational strategy formulated and executed by leveraging digital resources to create differential value. There are four themes that characterise the digital business strategy, namely scope, scale, speed and the sources of value creation. While Oestreicher-Singer and Zalmanson (2012) view digital business strategy as an approach that takes into account the embeddedness of technology in the business process and daily lives. In the face of rapid technology advancements, businesses are confronted with challenges of information technology strategy not meeting the

influx of information availability, where the traditional information management is no longer capable of handling current situations. Therefore, firms are encouraged to make the switch to a situation where use of digital technology is no longer an add-on, but a way of business by employing the digital business strategy. Both financial and non-financial benefits follow the successful implementation of a digital business strategy. Financial benefits include increased profitability and value creation, while non-financial benefits include, among others, faster time to market for products or services, competitive advantage, improved responsiveness and flexibility (Uhlig & Remané, 2022). The mentioned financial and non-financial benefits can easily become influencing factors for customer satisfaction for a specific firm in an industry.

2.12 Factors influencing customer satisfaction

Five factors influence customer satisfaction, according to Cant and Van Heerden (2017), namely product and service feature, customer emotions, causes of service failure and success, perception of fairness, and other reference groups. In addition, Warsame et al. (2018) determined that factors influencing customer satisfaction at some selected banks in Mogadishu are service quality, product differentiation, customer relationship marketing, information technology, customer feedback, organizational culture and service delivery. In the restaurant industry, the influencing factors align with the type of service or product being offered. The factors in this industry are cleanliness, convenience and accessibility, while Hwang and Zhao (2010) add that service quality, food quality, atmosphere and other factors including price, parking space and location also play a big role in influencing customer satisfaction.

2.13 Customer satisfaction advantages and disadvantages

Organisations are advised to measure customer satisfaction regularly because it is important for customer retention, even though customer loyalty cannot be guaranteed (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010, cited by Cant & Van Heerden, 2017). The advantages of customer satisfaction include, but are not limited to the following mentioned by Cant and Van Heerden (2017):

- Customers stay loyal longer.

- The customer gives a positive word of mouth.
- The customer pays less attention to competing brands.
- This relationship leads to lower service costs because transactions may become routine with the customer.

The disadvantages, among others, include the risk of losing business from those dissatisfied customers. They usually just leave without even giving notice. Then they tend to talk negatively about the company, with the company thus losing on word-of-mouth publicity. Profitability goes down in line with the number of dissatisfied customers. Loss of revenue also comes as a result of reduced customer numbers (Kucukosmanoglu & Sensoy, 2010).

2.14 The role of culture in the organisation

Culture is said to have five roles in an organisation and, according to Robbins et al. (2019, p. 612), the first is that culture has a boundary-defining role. Secondly, it conveys a sense of identity. Thirdly, it facilitates commitment to something larger than self-interest. Fourthly, it enhances the stability of the social system. Fifthly, it is a sense-making and a control mechanism that guides and shapes employees' attitudes and behaviour. Comparing these roles with customer satisfaction determinants in the services industry clearly shows that the organisation with a strong organisational culture is more likely to fulfil determinants of customer satisfaction.

Looking at culture in the global context, Wild and Wild (2016, p. 95) purport that it is a set of values, beliefs, expectations and norms for a certain group. Things like religion are different in each country and even where nations may share the same religion, some practices may differ, depending on the preferences of the people in the area. Also, taking a look at the consumer behaviour model in Figure 2, it becomes clear that culture is one of the stimuli for consumers to make a purchase. Moreover, Yulk and Gardner III (2020, p. 388) note that the increasing number of joint ventures, mergers and strategic alliances bring together people from different types of organisations and national cultures. It is apparent therefore that diversity and inclusion may bring benefits or reduced costs to the organisation. As a result,

managers must ensure that a variety of perspectives in their teams are utilised effectively to achieve an organisation's goals.

2.15 Criteria for customer satisfaction

Rashvand and Majid (2014) discuss seven-point criteria of customer satisfaction after performing a study about satisfaction of both the supplier and the customers. These are expectations, competence, perception, profitability, commitment, communication and dispute reduction. They also acknowledge that criteria differ with different people. For instance, between the supplier and customer, each has his/her perspective by which he/she judges the satisfaction, while Raisiene and Raisys (2022) explain that criteria in the business-to-business context may include a long list of important measures to consider. The noticeable difference is that criteria can be classified as key, specific and auxiliary. They are at different levels according to the models used to derive them, where;

- Key criteria are those who appear to be popular.
- The specific criteria are explained as important,
- The auxiliary criteria are those in the minority.

2.16 Conclusion

The chapter reviewed literature about improving customer satisfaction at MSFE. The main themes that emerged include:

- Cost of selling
- Customer retention
- Customer behaviour
- Value co-creation
- Marketing
- Customer centricity
- Customer satisfaction
- Customer relationship management
- Digital business strategy

It seems there is consensus amongst the academia and business that customer satisfaction can be considered to be one amongst the leading indicators to the success of a business. Business leaders are advised to strive intentionally and diligently to create an environment that seeks to improve the customers' experience. Having reviewed the literature about customer satisfaction and the associated models, one cannot help but notice that there is a knowledge gap where accessible databases do not have academic work that is specific to MSFE's situation. However, in the services industry there are numerous research areas that have been published across different regions of the world.

Furthermore, the literature review included the strategies that are recently developed in business due to the rapidly changing technological environment. These advancements have forged changes in the traditional ways of doing business where businesses have access to markets that could have not been accessible in the past twenty years. Customers nowadays are more knowledgeable about what they want and where they can get it. They also have the buying power that businesses need. That is why companies have to embrace the implementation of strategies such as customer centricity, customer relationship management and digital business strategy. These ultimately lead to long-term profitability and customer satisfaction. The next chapter presents the elements of the research methodology.

Chapter 3 Research methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the method that was followed to conduct this study. It entails elements like research design, sampling, data collection methods and ethical considerations.

3.2 Research design

The qualitative research design approach was employed to conduct this study. According to Creswell (2009, p. 22), qualitative research is a way of exploring and making sense of the meaning the groups or individuals ascribe to in the face of social issues. This is achieved through following specific steps, engaging questions, specific appropriate data collection and analysis methods, and the subsequent interpretation of results. This eventually culminates in an inductive process (Dawson, 2007, p. 121). Concurring with Creswell, Ndlovu (2020) writes that qualitative research design seeks to describe and interpret some human phenomena based on the words of the selected people's experiences.

Furthermore, the researcher must be free of biased presuppositions and interpretations so that readers can decide for themselves what they think about such work. Scholars have given different definitions to the phrase 'qualitative research design', because they had many other variables that may have generated different viewpoints. For this study, qualitative research design is defined as a method that can answer questions like how and why things are the way they are. Also, it is said to capture in-depth and accurately actual people's lived experiences. Therefore, the epistemological stance is constructionism, which is explained by Bryman and Bell (2014, p. 17) that social phenomena and their meanings are continually under construction by the social actors involved, be it individually or collectively through speech or any other mode of interaction.

3.3 Sampling

The qualitative research design aligns well with non-probability sampling methods. This is because the researcher is an integral part of the research; hence the researcher must be a qualified and able person who conducts him/herself around the research issues with the utmost care and diligence, without bias and other behaviour that might compromise the credibility and validity of the study. Amongst the non-probability sampling methods, purposive sampling was found to be the appropriate method to use for this study, considering the research design and the size of the population. The fact that this study is specific to one organisation with a small population, a qualitative research design employing a purposive sampling method is most likely to help the study achieve its goals, because as data are collected, some immediate analysis takes place and the researcher may identify themes that require different participants from the ones anticipated to be involved in the research. Here researchers are mainly concerned with in-depth knowledge of their research topic.

The purposive sampling method, according to Devers and Frankel (2000), is designed to enhance understanding of phenomena through the experiences of those who experience such. They further claim that researchers strive to accomplish this by selecting their samples in anticipation of finding the richest or most informative information from individuals, groups or organisations. In the case of the present study, the targeted population is the clientele and the employees of MSFE and experts in customer services. While traditionally, experts might be found in academia or in industry as leaders who have extensive experience, the researcher included the public sector expert.

The participants were therefore selected according to their seniority, function or participation in the procurement of services from MSFE and level of responsibility in their respective organisations or companies and their level of skills, hoping to get the individuals who can articulate well. Both direct e-mails and direct calls were used to recruit participants. All the participants' contact information was collected for their account management purposes. Gender balance was considered; however, convenience factors became the deciding factors due to time constraints of participants' availability.

In order for customer satisfaction to occur, the customer and the supplier must work together, and a decision was taken to interview both of these major players in their respective spaces. Two representatives from each segment that the company recognized were selected to be part of the research participants. The segments were mining, construction and agricultural industries. Having the customers as participants was anticipated to have some benefits to the study. Firstly, customer engagement was important, because it provided the opportunity to hear from the people who use the product or service how they felt about it. Secondly, it was an opportunity to learn about customer behaviour and their buying behaviour so that a product or service could respond to the need. Thirdly, it can be used as an early warning strategy about other product or services that might be a threat to the current offering. Lastly, talking to customers provided new ideas whose potential to determine new revenue streams was high.

On the employees' side, four participants were recruited. They are employees in leadership positions, particularly those who interact with customers regularly such as a workshop manager and a customer care manager. They are important, because they have first-hand experience with the customer. Their insights might provide a breakthrough as far as the customer pain points are concerned. On the other side it is an opportunity of introspect for them to see where problems might lie.

Furthermore, it seems that it would be a good idea to include three experts in field of customer service. The expert's contribution might be able to provide valuable insight into the recent business challenges and the means by which other people in different markets cope with them. When there is a knowledge gap in any field, the people that are considered experts are usually responsible for closing such gaps for the society to use the new-found knowledge. In most cases they are expected to do this in a short time. In total, customer, employee and expert participants were estimated to be 17, notwithstanding the requirements of data saturation, which might reach beyond that.

Considering that there is still a lot of uncertainty and risks about contracting Covid-19, the research interviews were planned to be conducted remotely, using online platforms such as Zoom or Microsoft teams. However, in the event that a participant preferred a different platform, this was allowed as long as the researcher was also

able to use it. The preferred participants from all three segments should be holding senior management positions in procurement or any responsibility overseeing the interaction of their company with MSFE. It is possible for the participants to know the researcher very well because, due to the managing director position, the researcher also has had interactions with many of the participating businesses.

The fact that the researcher is the managing director might pose some level of discomfort for the participants to engage freely. However, the participants were notified early during the request to participate in the research that the information needed was intended for study requirements only and nothing else. Also, before starting the interview, participants were once again made aware that their participation was voluntary and if during the interview they felt they wanted to pull out, they could do so without furnishing any reasons.

The conflict that could possibly arise from the fact that the researcher is also the managing director of the company would be mitigated by assuring participants that what they say would not in any way affect them or their company negatively in the future. Researchers must at all times remember that their views are not important in the research. Their role is only to listen and ensure that the information is used in an unbiased manner. Furthermore, the principal researcher must ensure transparency so that participants are satisfied that there is no hidden agendas. Moreover, if participants are still not satisfied, interview questions may be shared with participants before the interviews.

3.4 Data collection method

Data were generated through interviews that were conducted individually with each participant. An interview is defined by Bryman and Bell (2014, p. 60) as social interaction where the interviewer and interviewee create an environment as closely as possible to the natural environment of the interviewee to engage in the question and answer session. The interviews were semi-structured, meaning that there were prepared questions that intended to probe for certain responses relating to the subject matter. Also, the questions were open-ended to encourage the participants to explain themselves to their satisfaction.

Follow-up questions and notes that were developed during the interviews, as well as transcription documents became part of the research material. In addition to this, a voice recorder was used to ensure that nothing was left out due to short-hand notes during the interview and subsequent coding and analysis. Also, between 30-60 minutes were anticipated to be the average time for the interview to avoid a situation where both the principal investigator and the participant became tired during the interview. A backup of the recordings was kept in a password-protected laptop to ensure the safety and anonymity on the part of the participants.

Furthermore, all the interviews were scheduled to ensure they were well spaced to allow the researcher enough time between interviews. This was to ensure that data from the previous interview were saved accordingly. Also, the participant was given a reasonable time between notification and the date of the interview. Overall, about two months were expected to be adequate for data collection, including follow-up on the emerging themes that may be found to be worthy of more investigation. In other words, the timelines with respect to all participants' interviews took about two months and two weeks. The major activities during data collection were summarised thus: request for the interview, agreement to conduct the interview, preparation for interview and the actual interview. The subsequent steps that took one more month were transcription, followed by results analysis as well as the conclusion with recommendations.

During the data collection process, the researcher was vigilant so that, if necessary, follow-up interviews could be arranged to collect more in-depth information. According to Dawson (2007, p. 119), in qualitative research, a researcher reflects on the emerging themes throughout the interview process and is at liberty to schedule more interviews to pursue such themes. At the same time, the researcher must also note the situation termed 'data saturation', which follows in the next section.

3.4.1 Data saturation

Data saturation occurs when the researcher has reached the point of no more new data or themes (Fusch & Ness, 2015, p. 1409). Furthermore, Fusch and Ness (2015) note that many authors agree that data saturation can be different for different researchers, but agree that when no more new data, new themes, new coding and the ability to replicate the study are evident, then data saturation has occurred.

Therefore, the chosen sample was generally an estimate which the researcher tried to accomplish. In the event that saturation occurs early or even beyond the estimated sample, the researcher managed that accordingly. For this study, ten customer participants, four employee participants and three experts were anticipated to provide the needed information about the subject matter. However, like the authors point out, only during the interviews can the principal investigator determine when saturation takes place.

3.4.2 Coding and data analysis method

Coding is referred to as another form of data analysis. In fact, it is one of the first stages of thematic data analysis, according to Medelyan (2022). The author further expresses that researchers use coding to make data-driven decisions based on participants' feedback and the common themes derived from that coding process make it easy for the accurate interpretation and analysis of the qualitative data. There are several data analysis methods which researchers use to analyse qualitative data. Generally, all of them have benefits as well as pitfalls. As a result, the researcher needs to select the most suitable method for their research and ensure that the negative influences that could emanate from the method are mitigated. The thematic data analysis method seems to be more appropriate for this research, according to Kiger and Varpio (2020, p. 2). Thematic analysis is a method by which qualitative data can be analysed and involves searching across a data set to identify, analyse and report repeated patterns or themes. Its distinguishing feature is the flexibility that allows it to be applied widely within theoretical and epistemological frameworks. Also, Maquire and Delahunt (2017, p. 3356) concur that it can be applied to a range of study questions, designs as well as samples.

3.5 Ethical considerations

Many institutions that have research as one of their main activities usually have in place a committee called an Ethics Committee. Its main duty is to ensure that the researcher has considered the ethical issues that may arise as they do the research and have plans of how to deal with them. It is most probable that ethical issues arise during the research and if they are not dealt with by sound ethical practices, they are bound to affect the integrity of the research negatively. As a result, the

trustworthiness of such work may be compromised, thus rendering it useless. According to Bryman and Bell (2014, p. 131), ethics committees develop ethics guidelines to protect research participants, researchers and institutions from the possibility of adverse publicity or legal action being taken against them. The sections that follow below discuss five ethical issues which are relevant to this study.

3.5.1 Permission obtained

Permission obtained refers to the situation where the researcher has received permission to carry on with the study. The permission is usually granted by the university in the case where the research forms part of a student's requirement to complete a qualification. This applies to this study; hence permission was sought from the University of the Free State's Ethics Committee before starting the research. With regard to MSFE, which was the main subject of study, there was an advisory board that considered the request to do the research and evaluated the risks and gave permission once they were satisfied with the proposal. Several other bodies are tasked with granting this permission to different organisations. They are generally called Institutional Review Boards (IRB), according to Connelly (2014), and their work is to ensure that human subjects are protected against unethical behaviour by researchers and to weigh up any possible harm against the benefits of the proposed studies. Also, they assess the competence of the researcher and whether the credentials show that the researcher was able to conduct the research by the ethical requirements of such a study. Another example of an IRB is the Department of Health if the research is about a hospital, its workers or even patients.

3.5.2 Informed consent

In research, participants must be given all the necessary information about a study so that they understand its benefit or purpose. In this research, implementation of the recommendations would see the participants and their respective organisations benefit by getting an improved customer service where value co-creation is the order of the day from MSFE. Also, the participants had to give consent in writing but they also had to be informed that at any stage of the study, if they wanted to change their mind about their participation, they were free to do so without any consequences. Consent should be voluntary while participants understand what they are being asked, to do according to Connelly (2014). In other words, they must be adequately

informed to give consent. The researcher ensured that consent was given in writing by every individual who participated in the research, irrespective of whether the participation would be in a group or individually.

Furthermore, other organisations may have, within their internal control processes, the means by which an interviewee must disclose the intention to participate in a study. In this case, interviewees were requested to ensure that such steps were not omitted in preparation for the interview. Also, the education barrier were closely monitored to assess the ability of a participant to understand some of the concepts being asked. It was anticipated that some participants might prefer that the interview be conducted in their home language. In such a case, if such an individual was believed to be important, the interview questions would have been translated into their preferred language. The subsequent translation to English would ensure that the original message was not lost.

3.5.3 Voluntary participation

Voluntary participation in research refers to a situation where one participates in a study freely and without being coerced to do so. This is closely linked to informed consent, because one can only participate voluntarily once consent is in place. Similar to consent, the participant must be capable of participating in the research. All the elements that might render such a participant vulnerable to exploitation must be eliminated before consent and subsequent participation. Voluntary participation and informed consent in research are, to a large extent, dependent on the autonomy and independence of the participants (Marshall et al., 2006, p. 2).

3.5.4 Confidentiality and anonymity

The researcher, understanding that his actions about the research may affect the participants negatively even though that is not the intended outcome, undertook to ensure confidentiality and anonymity. This confirms what Kang and Hwang (2023) suggested that researchers involved with human participants are duty-bound to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of their participants and their information. Participants assured of their anonymity by not mentioning their names as well as their organisations. Furthermore, the data gathered were stored on the researcher's personal computer which is password protected. Also, the researcher noted that the nature of the study to be undertaken sort to develop the MSFE's understanding of its

clientele to ensure that its employees provide the best service and experience to the customers.

3.5.5 No harm

The researcher had to ensure that there was no harm to the participants nor to the environment. Any damage even to flora and fauna in the area of research was not acceptable. Neither physical nor emotional harm was allowed in the research space. Doing no harm is defined by Charangle and Lucch (2018, p. 12) as stepping back from the act and having a bird's-eye view of the context and mitigating potential negative effects on the social fabric. The do-no-harm ethical consideration draws its strength from the Hippocratic Oath.

3.6 Demarcation of the study

The study is about customer satisfaction at MS Fabrications and Engineering based in Maseru, Lesotho. The participants included purposefully selected customers with the three revenue streams that the organisation has identified. The three streams differ in terms of size and numbers. Also, the three participant groups, namely customers, employees and the experts, were conveniently selected. This study fell under the discipline of marketing management.

3.7 Conclusion

This qualitative research was conducted employing a purposive, non-probability sampling method. The data collection method was through recorded interviews while data were analysed using thematic data analysis approach. Furthermore, all ethical considerations were taken into account.

Chapter 4: Data analysis and interpretations

4.1 Introduction

This chapter sought to capture the data collection journey right from when the permission to proceed was granted through, to the interpretation of the collected data. The outline followed the chronology of the events as they unfolded according to the proposal, following the approval to proceed with the semi-structured interviews, as outlined in Chapter 3. Interviews amongst the clients, employees of MSFE and the experts in the field of customer service were conducted and a wide range of data were collected. Themes were developed that had relevance to the research questions. Lastly, the results would be interpreted based on the primary objective improving customer satisfaction at MSFE.

4.2 Analysis of biographical data and research procedure

In total, seventeen participants were interviewed individually according to the planned methodology. The participants constituted three groups from which the semi-structured interviews were conducted. The first group was the customers of MSFE, who were segmented according to the revenue streams that were realized in the company over time. The first segment is the mining industry where one participant representing each of the two mining companies was interviewed. Both high-performing and low-performing mining companies were represented.

The construction industry segment also had participants who met the criteria, and to top it, the majority were founders, even though their companies are still relatively small, while the walk-in customers or the agricultural industry, as is commonly referred to at MSFE, had a good mixture of individuals and small company owners who were able to participate.

The second group was the employees where four participants were invited. They hold positions within the senior management of the company. Moreover, the choice of participants involved employees who frequently have contact with customers. Lastly, three experts in customer service were invited, such that one works within

academia, the other in the private sector, and the third one in the public sector. Table 1 depicts the participants according to their gender in the first column and the second column bears the codes used to anonymize the participants but maintaining clarity on the different groups. The third column indicates the participants' current position, the number of years they have worked to date and the industry they work in. The motivation behind such a diverse group was to follow the triangulation approach to this research, where data from three different groups would be compared. It is believed that the triangulation approach gives research some level of credibility. Moreover, the participants can also be grouped by industry and that provides more inside into the demography of the participants, as shown in Figure 3. While female participants constituted only 18%, at least each group had a female participant.

Table 1: Participants' demography

Gender	Code	Demography (Position, Years' experience and Industry)
Customers		
Male	CU1	Entrepreneur, Managing Director, 19 years' experience, Services industry
Male	CU2	Entrepreneur, Managing Director, 13 years' experience, Construction industry
Male	CU3	Employed, Branch Manager, 19 years' experience, Water utility
Male	CU4	Employed, Procurement Manager, 7 years, Construction industry
Male	CU5	Employed, Production and Maintenance Manager, Brewing and Milling industries
Female	CU6	Employed, Procurement Manager, 11 years' experience. Mining industry
Male	CU7	Employed, Operations Manager, 14 years' experience. Maintenance services
Male	CU8	Employed, Plant Engineer, 21 years' experience. Mining industry
Male	CU9	Individual, Subsistence farmer, 9 years' experience. Agricultural industry
Male	CU10	Individual, logistics 14 years' experience. Services Industry
MSFE Employees		
Female	EM1	Human resource Manager, Degree in Human resource, 3 years' experience
Male	EM2	Design Engineer, Degree in Mechatronics Engineering 4 years' experience
Female	EM3	Customer services manager, Diploma in Sales and Marketing
Male	EM4	Manufacturing Engineer, Degree in Mechanical Engineering, 2 years' experience

Experts In customer service		
Female	EX1	Finance and Administration Manager, Chartered Accountant, 13 years' experience, Public Service
Male	EX2	Administration Manager, Degree in Public relations, 29 years, Academia
Male	EX3	Sales and Marketing Manager, Degree in Marketing and Sales, 25 years' experience, Private sector

The procedure for the data collection was such that, following the ethical clearance issued by the university and permission granted by the institution being investigated, telephone conversations were used to recruit potential participants. Depending on the outcome of such discussions, the information leaflet, together with the consent forms, was distributed to those prospective participants. The returned filled forms were followed up by setting up interview times and most of them took place after working hours. During the interview, all participants were assured about the ethical considerations to avoid any kind of harm and that they reserved the right to withdraw their consent, should they feel uncomfortable about the proceedings in any way. Most participants preferred to use Zoom because they were used to it. Before the recording could commence, each participant was asked to verbally give consent to that action. All recordings were saved in two different folders to ensure data safety. Only three participants preferred Microsoft Teams as a collaboration tool and the same process was followed for all participants.

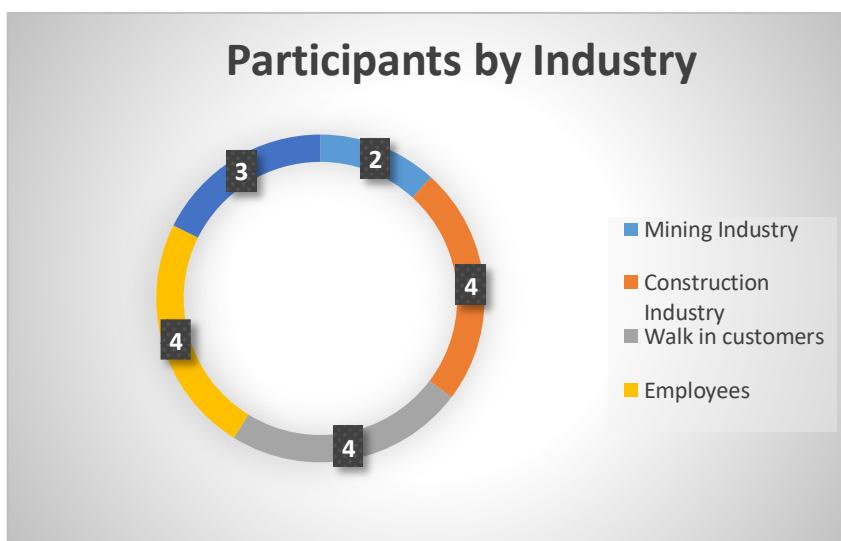


Figure 3: Participants by industry

The overall time for the data collection from all participants took longer than what was anticipated. It proved to be a challenge to find suitable times for most participants. When they happened, the interviews lasted about twenty minutes. This is the case for customers and employees groups, even though there was one outlier amongst the employees that took less than fifteen minutes, while one interview with an expert took about two and half hours. The other two experts approximately took 30 minutes.

The experts were particularly challenging to recruit for the interview, following a number of last-minute pull-outs of several prospective participants for the experts group. A short research was conducted to determine what could be the cause for such behaviour. Indications were that there might be an improvement if the questions were shared along with the information leaflet. Indeed that proved to be correct. Also, being patient seemed to have worked, because some participants postponed several times, but eventually the required interviews were achieved.

Following the completion of the data collection, the thematic analysis was commenced. It is a six-step manual process of analysing qualitative data according to Braun and Clarke (2006, cited by (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017)). They instruct researchers first to familiarize themselves with the data. Secondly, the researcher must generate initial codes. In this research, the literature review topics were used. The participants' responses were checked for similarities with the literature review as shown in Table 2. The literature review column has the topics covered in Chapter 2. The customer column has codes extracted from the transcribed data. As an example, every participant's response was reviewed against the covered literature topics. So, looking at the first row of Table 2, all the codes that emerged from different participants having some or other link with cost of selling were grouped together under their participant group responses, and that was the initial coding. The next steps were transcription, coding and themes development. The transcription was verbatim and the themes were semantic.

Table 2: Initial Coding

Literature Review	Customers	Employees	Experts
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Cost of selling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Good service and Credit facility. - Expertise. - Staff .know their work - Supply of critical spares. - No return jobs. - Quick turnaround time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gaining Experience and Developing skills. - Job security. - Getting exposure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High quality products/ services at low costs. • Demonstrate professionalism, honesty, trustworthiness and long-term relationship. • Efficient, cost-effective service, customer support. • Ethical conduct and data security.
Customer Retention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Exceed customer expectations. - Suggest solutions for customer problems. - Committed to procurement. - After service consultations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide safe working space. - Encourage innovation. - Compliance with industry. standards - Research about retention strategies. 	Service provider: Warm reception, Competitive pricing, empathetic Actively seek customer feedback
Customer Behaviour	Raise complaints through available channels. Lack of contracts. Communication has improved.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Disputes and complaints get addressed timely - Introduction of work procedures 	Switching service providers, Encourage constant engagement with customer, Implement customer centricity strategies
Value co creation	Communication and collaboration. Meet our expectations. Turnaround time. Computerised accounting system. Respond timely during emergencies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Training of employee, increased competence, demonstrate compassion. - Personal growth. 	Protection of employees, equipment and environment. The service provider should be Responsive, accessible, transparent, consistent and reliable.
Marketing	Improve customer engagement about the services being offered. Expand business Supplier of variety of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase platforms where information is shared. - Be available everywhere. 	Ensure availability on all social media and monitor the feedback for negative reviews. Ensure customer support

	products and services Include field services.		at every contact point. Actively listen to customer needs and wants in order to accurately solve their problem. Empower client facing staff. Create interest and desire to purchase product or service and follow it up with retention strategies.
Customer Centricity	Turnaround time. Credit arrangement. Negotiated price agreements. Advice about our product or service. Go the extra mile.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Customer focused strategies - Meeting deadlines 	Foster trust, avoid hidden costs, communicate price changes timely and transparently. Offer multiple channels to support the customer. Avoid service failure, take responsibility of product challenges
Customer satisfaction Models	Meet expectations (time, specifications and cost). Meet other departments Market conditions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Warm reception through creation of rapport. - Deliver work timely. 	Update customer, inform them about associated benefits. Engage, advice and help customer to help themselves.
Customer Relationship Management	Response to service failure. Follow company policy. Repair capacity very high.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Engaged and ethical employees - Effective communication - Reliable, accountable we show empathy 	Strategy for long term relationship with customers.
Role of culture in organisations	Harmonious working relationship. Committed to international industry standards.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Systematic working processes known everybody. 	Unifies the employees, encourages innovation

In other words, Table 3 shows the extraction of sub-themes from the codes. In that way, all the codes under the customer column and the cost of selling row were assessed and the theme that emerged was competitiveness, as shown in Row 2 Table 3. It was named 1st-code iteration. These steps were repeated for all

participants groups and all literature review themes. At the end of that exercise, the sub-themes were too many. As a result, a second iteration had to be performed to reduce the themes to about five, hence the need to develop Table 4, showing main themes. All 25 sub-themes were assessed and five themes were extracted, following the assignment of colours on the sub-themes with similar annotations. For example, sub-themes coloured in red were empathy, adaptability, transparency, reliability and integrity. They all have some resonance with values that companies want to espouse when they are trying to encourage customers to work them. The process was repeated for the five colours, and as a result the five main themes are available.

Table 3: Extraction of sub-themes from the codes

NO	Literature Review	Customers	Employees	Experts
1	Cost of selling	Good service and Credit facility Expertise Staff know their work Supply of critical spares No return jobs Quick turnaround time	Gaining Experience and Developing skills Job security Getting exposure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High-quality products/services at low costs. Demonstrate professionalism, honesty, trustworthiness and long term relationship. Efficient, cost-effective service, customer support. Ethical conduct and data security.
2	1 st Code Iteration	Competitiveness	Experienced and skilled	Competitiveness
3	Customer Retention	Exceed customer expectations, Suggest solutions for customer problems Committed to procurement After service consultations	Provide safe working space. Encourage innovation Compliance with industry standards Research about retention strategies	Service provider: Warm reception, Competitive pricing, empathetic. Actively seek customer feedback.
4	1 st Code Iteration	Excellent customer service	Competence	Empathy
5	Customer	Raise complaints through	Disputes and complaints	Switching service

	Behaviour	available channels Lack of contracts Communication improved	Timely resolutions Introduction of work procedures	providers. Encourage constant engagement with customer. Implement customer centricity strategies.
6	1 st Code Iteration	Conflict	Effective leadership	Strategic direction
7	Value co creation	Communication and collaboration. Meet our expectations Turnaround time Computerised accounting system Respond timely during emergencies	Training of employee, increased competence, demonstrate compassion Personal growth	Protection of employees, equipment and environment. The service provider should be responsive, accessible, transparent, consistent, reliable
8	1 st Code Iteration	Value creation	Proficiency	Long-term relationship
9	Marketing	Improve customer engagement about the services being offered. Expand business Supplier of variety of products and services Include field services	Increase platforms where information is shared. Be available everywhere.	Ensure availability on all social media and monitor the feedback for negative reviews. Ensure customer support at every contact point. Actively listen to customer needs and wants. Empower client facing staff. Create interest and desire to purchase product or service and follow it up with retention strategies.
10	1 st Code Iteration	Diversify offering	Adaptability	Buying decision
11	Customer Centricity	Turnaround time. Credit arrangement. Negotiated price agreements. Advice about our product or service	Customer-focused strategies Meeting deadlines	Foster trust, Avoid hidden costs, Communicate price changes timely and transparently. Offer multiple channels to

		Go the extra mile		support the customer. Avoid service failure. Take responsibility of product challenges.
12	1 st Code Iteration	Customer-focused	Reliability	Transparency
13	Customer satisfaction Models	Meet expectations (time, specifications and cost) Meet other departments Market conditions	Warm reception through creation of rapport Deliver work timely	Update customer, inform them about associated benefits. Engage, advice and help customer to help themselves.
	Customer Relationship Management	Response to service failure Follow company policy Repair capacity very high	Engaged and ethical employees Effective communication Reliable, accountable and show of empathy	Strategy for long-term relationship with customers.
14	1 st Code Iteration	Integrity	Service expert	Engaging the customer
15	Role of culture in organisations	Harmonious working relationship Committed to international industry standards	Systematic working processes known to everybody	Unifies the employees, Encourages innovation.
16	1 st Code Iteration	Operating procedures	Systems	Functional team

Table 4: Main themes extraction

Sub-themes			Main themes
Customers	Employees	Experts	
Excellent customer service	Competence	Empathy	1. Company Systems 2. Excellent customer service 3. Long-term relationship 4. Organisation Competitiveness 5. Organisational Values
Conflict	Effective leadership	Strategic direction	
Value creation	Proficiency	Long-term relationship	
Diversify offering	Adaptability	Buying decision	
Customer-focused	Reliability	Transparency	
Integrity	Service expert	Engaging the	

		customer	
Operating procedures	Systems	Functional team	

4.3 Analysis and interpretation of data on customer satisfaction at MSFE

4.3.1 What literature exists on customer satisfaction in the engineering services industry?

There seemed to be limited or no academic studies specifically focused on customer service or even customer satisfaction in the engineering services industry. However, there are studies that covered the banking, telecommunications, hospitality industries and many others. Some of these studies did not discriminate between the business-to-business or customer-to-business factors. As a result, the researcher could learn and apply the knowledge from such studies. There is nothing that suggests that the use of the knowledge from this studies was not adequate for this study. The common factor that places this study with the other research papers that have been published is that the customers could be either individuals or businesses. Also, the capability of the customer to buy in small or large quantities did not appear to be a factor to contend with.

This view is held to the extent that there could be other knowledge that proves otherwise like the construction industry. It is said to experience the traditional outcomes of the customer relationship management models differently, the reason being that construction projects are generally very large, periodic and take a long time to complete, and the client and contractor's relationship is forced to be long term Karna (2004). They further purport that customer satisfaction in construction is relationship specific and should be understood as such, as opposed to being transaction specific like with the product manufacturing and or services industries. As a result, the uniqueness of the construction project distorts the comparison efforts of the past experiences and the customer feedback into the future.

In any case, MSFE operates in both product and services industries and generally theories about customer satisfaction can be applied to its operations, where factors such as customer retention, customer loyalty and customer complaints are real in the day-to-day operations of the company. The company operates such that its revenues

are generated through having many customers who buy the numerous services and products that are on offer. Therefore, the more customers the company has, the higher are the chances to realise its financial objectives.

4.3.2 What models are available to measure customer satisfaction in the engineering services industry?

Company systems refer to internal dealings of the company where a certain desired culture is entrenched amongst the employees by using policies. It is common knowledge that companies that run efficiently depend on the development and implementation of policies, procedures and norms to go about their daily business. This ensures the standardized provision of services or products that meet the desired quality requirement. This, to some extent, guarantees the repeatability of the provision of the service at the same quality level. This means that if we talk about a service, it should be the same for everyone and if it is a product it should be identical with others, irrespective of the date or shift that made it. Thus, when the organization decides to pursue certain objectives that would lead to it reaching certain milestones. The company ensures that every member of the company works to achieve that goal by streamlining all processes to reach the desired result.

Other company systems are digital, like accounting systems that a company uses to capture all financial activities. Other organizations adopt certain international standards to be able to ensure that their company is capable to deliver products according to the requirements of such a standard, knowing that such preferred standards are relevant for the industry.

Participant EM3 said,

Quality is brilliant, we have just acquired an international standard called ISO 3834 and things are looking fine. We are currently working towards getting certification for Integrated Management System comprising of ISO 9001, 45001 and 14001. They help us to manage our internal processes efficiently, so that we manage to save costs, avoid backlog and unnecessary losses and many other business challenges.

A customer satisfaction survey is another tool that is commonly used to actively get customer feedback so that the company can learn from the feedback where the pain

points are for the customers so that they can be addressed accurately. Also, it is used to identify where the opportunities as well as the successes lie so that the appropriate action can be taken to either exploit the opportunities or to maintain the successes.

In response to the question: What should the service provider demonstrate as commitment to its client? Participant EX3 put forward two statements:

Client feedback: *service provider should actively seek feedback from client.*

Communication: *service provider should ensure regular and consistent communication with client in order to maintain engagement.*

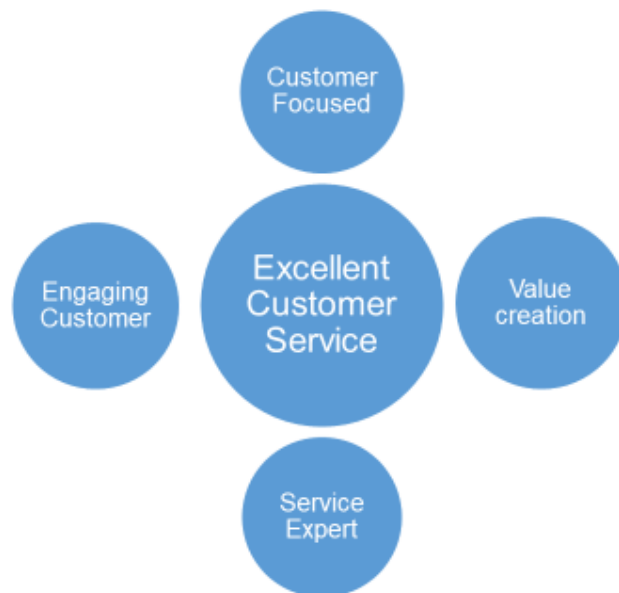


Figure 4: Customer satisfaction model developed from data analysis in table 4.

The results from the analysis of data indicate that excellent customer service is one of the main themes. The sub-themes according to the participants groups show strategies that organisations need to implement in order for their organisations to achieve excellent customer service. There were no customer satisfaction models that were relevant to the mechanical engineering service organisations.

Customer focused considers a situation where an organisation strategically puts customer needs as the most important factor when doing its business. This approach fosters a culture where customer relationships are built and valued.

Value creation is concerned with ensuring that the customer gets value from the service or product rendered.

Service expert means that the organisation giving service must be able to solve types of problems regard their service. Also, it must be able to provide expert advice about their service.

Engaging customer refers to a situation where an organisation actively maintains constant communication with the customer not only to deal with challenges but to talk about opportunities as well as feedback.

This confirms that it is crucial for companies to ensure continuous improvement in relationships formed with clients through in-depth understanding of client needs and wants via communication channels.

4.3.3 How do customers engage with MSFE?

Participant CU8 raised a request,

Your organisation should try to figure out how to deal with informal requests for quotations from us. Due to production pressures from our operations, sometimes leaders there request quotes informally to avoid lengthy downtimes.

Participant CU6 said,

From the procurement point of view. We receive adequate advice from your company. Recently you made an assessment of the products that we held in stock, and you were able to tell us that the product would not meet our need and that proved to be true and you further recommended the appropriate product, and it works.

Four out of ten participants representing the customer group expressed their satisfaction and appreciation for the credit facility that MSFE has given their organisation. This opportunity, according to them, demonstrates the strength of their relationship. It means they depend on one another and each party respects the

interests of the other, and as a result the relationship becomes mutual. Looking at this matter from a customer engagement point of view, different departments in the customers' business regularly request from the service provider, site visits, quotations, invoices and statements. Similarly, as an example, the service provider seeking for more work asks for the request to quote, purchase orders and proof of payment, at this stage, using the advice of Participant EX1, who said,

Active listening and asking what the customers are saying and ensuring that the message is clearly understood would help in delivering the correct solution for the client.

Engaging the customer can be considered amongst the activities that contribute towards excellent customer services. It is purported by (G, et al., 2019) that excellent customer service is pleasurable and satisfying. Not only that; both giving and receiving excellent service can actually reduce stress amongst customers and service providers. They furthermore declare that those findings have proven to be true in three countries.

It seems that it is not by mistake that service providers need to implement customer-focused strategies to ensure value creation during their interaction and collaboration with the customer. In addition to that, they are expected to be service or product experts so that the customers can be assisted to get the maximum benefit from their offering. Participant EX3 advised that multichannel support for the customer is needed in order to ensure good customer service.

4.3.4 What are the customers' experience at MSFE?

Bear in mind that organisational values, according to (M & S, 2012), are integrated into personality of a company, thus playing a similar role as values do in lives of individuals. They direct behavioural patterns, influence relationships within the organization and influence how a company perceives its customers, suppliers and competition. The lived experiences of MSFE customers are as follows;

Participant CU1 said,

Up to date I have no doubt about their competence. They listen well to the client's requirements and then they execute very well.

Participant CU2 said,

They have adequate machinery; they give us quicker services because they have expertise.

Participant CU3 said,

We are very happy with your services and you always deliver on time.

Participant CU4 said,

I never experience problem with the work that I send to them. The quality of work is also very good.

Participant CU5 said,

We have not encountered a situation where we have to return your products because they do not meet our requirements. That for us could be a loss of time and money. In that sense your employees are competent because we always receive products that work.

Participant CU6 said,

They are committed to the quality of the product as per client request. MSFE manages to deliver good quality work on time. However, sometimes cost can be high and we fight about it, but the relationship is still growing.

Participant CU7 said,

The biggest value is quick turnaround time since most of your competitors are based in the neighbouring country of South Africa. We are also satisfied with the quality of work. Also, the fact that you are based in the country and you know the culture and speak the local language provides an added value.

Participant CU8 said,

They provide quality of service, through their work one can see that they affiliate with bodies that regulate and control the quality of work service in their industry.

Participant CU9 said,

Generally we are satisfied with the service offered and they seem to follow certain international standards.

It seems that all the participants do not have negative comments about MSFE. The choice of participants was such that an equal number of poorly performing customers were compared with high-performing customers. The anticipated result was at least that one group of participants would more or less have similar views which would be different from the other group. Also, eight out of ten participants appreciated that MSFE delivers on time while ensuring the quality of work meets the customers' specifications. This may be taken as an indication that most customers of MSFE regard time as one of the important factors that affect their different operations. Also, all the experts responded that timeliness is key to delivering excellent service to customers, even though they did not use the same expressions. The agreements between the customer group of participants and the experts group about timelines may mean that the most important commodity that the MSFE has to review and ensure accuracy on is cost of time. Alternatively, it might be that customers believe that the longer the project stays in the hands of the service provider, the more costly it becomes. It might be some generally held belief in the industry, because there might be past experiences that may have influenced such a belief.

The overwhelming and general satisfaction expressed by the customer group came as a big surprise and a contradiction to the expected result. The general view was that poor performance of the company could be a lagging indicator that the customers are not satisfied. Then the source of dissatisfaction would be determined and the solution would be crafted. It seems that something else causes that stagnant performance as outlined in chapter 1 under the problem statement section. Then, it came to the realisation of the principal investigator that it might be that following the expansion due to additional machinery and the employee development, the market size has not increased.

Looking at highlighted comments about the lived customer experiences of MSFE, one can notice that the majority of the participants strongly agree that MSFE is reliable and demonstrate integrity in its dealings with customers. Some of the

supporting facts are that the company has adequate equipment and experienced and motivated staff to execute with ease a number of different projects. Also, the fact that its customer base spans across so many sectors of the economy bears proof that it is an organisation that adapts to the environment. The experts mention that the service provider must be transparent. This was demonstrated by the comments from CU6 that MSFE advised their organisation and provided specifications about their product that would not deliver the intended results.

4.3.5 What factors influence customer satisfaction at MSFE?

The theme that arose when dealing with the question of factors influencing customer satisfaction was competitiveness. It is described by Zuñiga-Collazos et al. (2019) as an ability of the organisation to adapt to changing environmental factors while developing the company business successfully. It can be taken for granted that a company has no chance of achieving competitiveness without skilled and experienced employees who are also motivated. The results also show that all three participants groups made mention of the fact that competitiveness is one key factor to achieving customer satisfaction.

Participant EX3 noted that customer satisfaction is the lowest achievement that the customer can expect from the service provider. As a result, the service provider must aim to provide excellent customer service that exceeds their expectations if they take their business to heart. The employee group has a combined view that competitiveness can be achieved through rigorous employee development through classroom training and systematic on job training. Participant EM4 said,

We get training. Since I have been here, I have attended five out of six fully funded courses.

Participant EM2 said,

Very experienced, vast knowledge in terms of engineering and somethings one only can learn certain skills on the field not in class. I realised that following my employment at MSFE.

This may result in a competent workforce that is proficient, which is the desired outcome following the rigorous training.

Furthermore, the implementation of the industry specific standards of operation is considered to be important in ensuring competitiveness. Participant EM1 said,

It is good because we are trying hard to provide best quality. We have now gotten certification to international standards like ISO 3834. We are currently pursuing other certification in Integrated Management System composed of SHEQ standards.

In addition, Participant EM4 said,

We are putting a lot of money to improve quality of service. There is an International standards that the company has managed to acquire so that our operations are done according to the quality requirements of ISO 3834.

Additionally, the expert group seemed to concur to the views about competitiveness because Participant EX2 said,

Competence of the service provider employees contributes to its overall success, high productivity, customer satisfaction, customer retention, competitiveness.

The customer group seemed to indicate that the benefits they get from being in a relationship with a competitive company are generally short lead time for service delivery, value for money, and a mutually beneficial relationship, which is well captured by Participant CU10. When responding to a question requesting the reasons that could be used to recommend the potential customer to choose MSFE, he said,

Quality, time, cost and professionalism.

4.3.6 How can customer engagement and service be improved at MSFE?

Participant EX3 said that the customers seeking services are broadly looking for a reliable and consistent service provider that meets deadlines, provides quality service, exceeds customer expectations and gives the customer support in all the needs. Indirectly, all the mentioned customer needs are somewhat linked with customer engagement strategies. It appears as if the experts group has the general perception that the long-term relationship that the customers seek occurs in most

cases when the customer has experienced excellent customer service, which in turn occurs when the service provider employees are service experts, competent and proficient.

While customers and employee groups emphasise effective leadership and conflict resolution, the employee group believes that the customers need to use the provided channels to raise their complaints in order for the speedy and concise resolution to their issues to be accomplished. At the same time they believe that effective leadership is one that takes into account employee training and development to eventually lead a team of competent and compassionate people.

The customer group is concerned about the clarity of process or procedures to deal with complaints. This must be transparent and simple to follow and get feedback. Customers need to be sure that support is adequate for their requirements to avoid lost time due to service failure. In the view of the customers, effective leadership is one that drives a company towards the digitisation of systems for ease of use and reporting, as well as access of the company business processes, according to Participant CU9.

Furthermore, about half the members of the customer group seem to hold the view that MSFE needs to diversify its offering. The diversified offering should be such that additional services are introduced in the hope to increase the company's revenues. The other leg of diversity envisions expansion on the part of service providing in a form of specialised service tailored to solve many, if not all the problems within the customer's sphere of operation. This second diversity approach requires that the buying decisions of the customer are greatly influenced by the service provider. This may be achieved by strictly adhering to effective control of the internal company processes. That ultimately result in increased output like the timeliness or quality of service. Therefore, customers hoping to benefit from such output prefer to deal with organisations that achieve those.

4.4 Conclusion

The chapter detailed the data collection procedure where the qualitative data were collected from three participants groups, namely customers, employees, and experts in the field of customer service. This was followed by data transcription, then data

coding, which underwent two iterations where five themes were extracted. These themes were then used to guide the response to the research questions in the form of analysis and interpretation of data across the three participant groups as outlined in Chapter 1.

The main themes following the data analysis were used to respond to the research questions came out as follows:

- Organisation Competitiveness
- Organisational values
- Excellent customer service
- Company systems
- Long-term relationship

In the customer group the majority of the participants were happy with the quality of service, even though there were a few recommendations about what to improve. The employee group had 50% of its participants responding to interview questions taking the personal stance while the other 50% responded having the organisation standpoint in mind. The expert group was also unified in its responses. Their differences in experience did not seem to cause major difference in responses. Moreover, the majority of the comments from the customer and the experts groups were in agreement, while about 40% of the employee group`s comments were supported by those of the experts.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and recommendations

5.1 Introduction

This covered the conclusions that were developed following the analysis and interpretation of the data. Each research question following the analysis of data have its own conclusion. Also, the same approach was used when making recommendations. Lastly, the limitations of the study would be addressed so that the future researchers can determine which direction their research directions may take.

5.2 Conclusions

5.2.1 What literature and customer satisfaction models are available?

Following the extensive search for literature that covers customer satisfaction at a MSFE, there seemed to be no specific literature about mechanical engineering companies. As a result, it proved to be difficult therefore to come across models that are used to measure customer satisfaction at mechanical engineering companies. However, there is consensus amongst the authors that the common practice where service providers seek customer feedback still provides good results. As mentioned earlier, literature covering other industries was used, specifically covering customer satisfaction within the services industries.

5.2.2 How do customers engage with MSFE?

It seems that there is some level of customer engagement, even though there is still room for improvement. Taking from the data there is evidence, particularly amongst the customer groups, which shows that any communication from the customer is addressed with adequate enthusiasm. The available tools that MSFE has made available for the customers to engage with the company are predominantly a visit to their premises, telephone calls and e-mails. Customers such as mining companies and large construction companies regularly invite MSFE to their site to engage with them about a variety of issues. The availability of the website and social media accounts has not been fruitful, because the company has not appointed a person to manage such responsibilities.

On the one hand, there was no evidence that shows the service provider pursuing or engaging the customers. Stakeholder engagement activities could be some of the tools used to engage with the customer. The opportunities that are brought up by the availability of social media are not fully exploited for purposes of engaging the customer, which might lead to limited company exposure to new customers. As a result, the company's market share is less than what it could be.

5.2.3 What is the customers' experience at MSFE?

The majority of the customers seemed to be satisfied with the general relationship that MSFE has with them. However, there are some special, isolated cases where, for example, the customer categorically states that their organization needs special treatment from MSFE. They would prefer a solution tailored to their specific organization's needs. On the other hand, one customer hinted at their organization's discontent about the prices. At the same time they also appreciated that the relationship continues to grow between the two companies.

MSFE has proven its commitment to strengthen the internal processes in order to ensure that the customer experience reaches levels of excellence. This can be seen by the aggressive drive to acquire certification to relevant industry standards such as ISO 3834-2. Secondly, the acquisition of new and good second-hand machines to ensure machining capability as well as employee training to develop customer service, leadership and managerial skills was necessary.

The company systems run properly when there are competent employees who see to it that they function as they were intended. Some of them are digital systems while others are manual in the form of policies and procedures. All of them combined inform the organizational behaviour where competitiveness of the organization is anchored.

5.2.4 What factors influence customer satisfaction in MSFE?

Following the analysis of data, organizational values were identified as one of the main themes. As mentioned earlier, the competitiveness of an organization is anchored in such an organization's values. The customers of MSFE seem to be happy when the employees of the company demonstrate and show empathy to the

customer. They also appreciated when the company was able to adapt to changing customer needs, even with specific solutions for specific customer needs.

All the participant groups agreed that the service provider must be reliable and dependable because customers seek to build relationships with service providers who are service or product experts. This helps the customer to realize value for money when working with such service providers. Transparency appeared to be another factor that customers appreciate; they feel comfortable with a predictable environment. Where price changes are communicated timely, internal business processes can be reviewed to accommodate the customer comments. The service provider, according of the customer group, must be seen to hold integrity in high regard. Customers should not feel at any given time that some unethical practices are taking place because that has the likelihood of damaging their own organizational reputation. In summary, the factors that influence customer satisfaction at MSFE are:

- Integrity
- Adaptability
- Reliability
- Transparency
- Empathy

5.2.5 How can customer engagement and service be improved?

MSFE, in the face of the rapidly changing business environment due to technology advancement, Covid-19 restrictions and different conflicts in the world, has managed to achieve some level of success. The seven years of its existence is proof that the organization has managed to fight and survive these storms. While the successes are welcomed, the research has also provided inside information on where gaps exist for MSFE to exploit and make better in order to realize improved performance in the future.

Several factors following the data analysis seem to be the end result when the service provider and the customer collaborate. When the relationship is mutually beneficial to the parties involved, then a long-term relationship becomes a reality. Influencing factors are effective leadership, conflict management, and customer

buying decisions as well as diversified service provider offering. In order for the MSFE to achieve long-term relationships with its customers, it must employ a multi-channel approach to support its customers. This means that the telephone lines, website, social media, and automatic response systems for frequently asked questions, amongst others, must be available for the customer to engage, while some of the customers, particularly within the services industry, wish to be helped so that they can help themselves, especially with minor problems.

The other important thing to do emanating from the data is that client-facing employees need to be empowered to deal with lower customer challenges to avoid delayed solutions for small problems. This may include ensuring that they are capable of maintaining a positive attitude within their written or spoken communication. According to the theory, the implementation of customer-centric strategies contributes towards improving engagement and the service itself. Activities such as customer questionnaires have been used widely by other companies to get customer feedback, which should be a consistent feature of MSFE.

Service-level agreements are said to be important, because they help to manage and regulate expectations, with no unexpected actions on the part of the involved parties. However, the service provider is in control of the level of service excellence that the customer can experience. MSFE should demonstrate high levels of professionalism, particularly when confronted with service failure cases. They must be accessible, take responsibility and mitigate the negative impact that may arise as a result.

Improvement of pricing strategies would greatly impact the customer in a positive manner. Some customers raised concerns about the prices and it seems that the standardised pricing causes some discontent. Therefore, considerations to expand the companies offering within one company to specific needs of such organizations look like a good idea. While this initiative maybe be important, it would be much more valuable if it was combined with the continued compliance with safety and health, environment and quality requirements. Collaboration and corporation between the MSFE and its customers about their industry standards may bring huge benefits like improved shareholder value, improved employee satisfaction, and higher environmental performance.

5.3 Recommendations

5.3.1 How do customers engage with MSFE?

MSFE must, in the chaotic business environment where disruptions occur in an unprecedented manner, opportunities created by the availability of internet and social media, adapt to new ways of doing business using these new-found technologies. Increased presence and the use of those platforms for business purposes would encourage as well as increase the customers' options to engage. Also, the company must recruit qualified persons for this role, considering its importance.

5.3.2 What is the customer experience at MSFE?

The majority of the customers suggested that they were satisfied with the performance of MSFE in general. This is contrary to the belief that the poor performance of the company was due to low levels of satisfaction amongst the customers. The growth is not realized because either the company is doing business in a saturated market or in the small and undeveloped market. Therefore, to avoid bankruptcy, MSFE needs to expand to new markets. This can be in the form of expanding the existing business to increase the volume of work, or to seek opportunities either higher or lower in the same value chain. It can be within the boundaries of the country of origin or beyond; what matters, is the viability of such markets.

5.3.3 Factors affecting customer satisfaction at MSFE

Customer satisfaction, according to one EX3, is the lowest achievement as far as customer service is concerned. It is not in the best interests of MSFE to aim for mere customer satisfaction, while levels such as excellent customer service are higher goals that are more fulfilling with more benefits. While appreciating the existing factors influencing customer satisfaction, the company can still take a strategic decision to pursue higher goals within the customer service sphere. It seems that aiming for excellent customer service is a good idea, since that promises value creation as an end result. Also, the whole intention of excellent customer service is to please customers as they encounter a service expert equipped with knowledge of the customer being the most important person in the workplace.

5.3.4 How can customer engagement and service be improved?

Seeing that many customers' organizations are changing their internal business processes to move to more digitized ways of doing business, it is also very important for MSFE to transform its operations and systems to digital systems. This is referred to as digital business strategy. This strategy is concerned about the safekeeping of all company information in a manner in which it is easy to use for decision-making. In other words, employees in unison use electronic resources provided by the company to do business.

5.4 Limitations of study

The research took place when there were still threads of the Covid-19 pandemic present. As a result, all the interviews were conducted virtually using Zoom or Microsoft teams to avoid the possible spread of the disease. These may have affected the overall observations, because the face-to-face interviews would have provided some facial expressions that would have contributed to the richer outcome.

As is the case with many qualitative studies, the sample size was not big enough to take the conclusion as applicable to different situations. Furthermore, the customer group of participants were larger in number than the two groups.

5.5 Conclusion

The research managed to unearth some of the hidden issues about the research questions. It intended to determine what challenges there are within the company following its poor financial performance. Knowing the importance of customers in the life of a business and in-depth search about of how customers engage with the company were undertaken, which unveiled the importance of taking advantage of the existing and available technology resources to try to propel the company out of its current situation.

Secondly, the finding that the majority of the customers are happy with the services the company offers activated a new perspective about where the problem may be. As a result, a new potential target market was realized. Furthermore, factors

affecting customer satisfaction specific to MSFE were found. The realization that it was possible to aim higher than customer satisfaction was profound.

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7. Appendices

Appendix A: Ethical clearance



GENERAL/HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (GHREC)

06-Feb-2023

Dear Mr Motlatsi Sekhesa

Application Approved

Research Project Title:

Improving Customer Satisfaction at MS Fabrications and Engineering

Ethical Clearance number:

UFS-HSD2022/1769/23

We are pleased to inform you that your application for ethical clearance has been approved. Your ethical clearance is valid for twelve (12) months from the date of issue. We request that any changes that may take place during the course of your study/research project be submitted to the ethics office to ensure ethical transparency. Furthermore, you are requested to submit the final report of your study/research project to the ethics office. Should you require more time to complete this research, please apply for an extension. Thank you for submitting your proposal for ethical clearance; we wish you the best of luck and success with your research.

Yours sincerely

Dr Adri Du Plessis

Chairperson: General/Human Research Ethics Committee

Digitally signed
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Appendix B: MSFE's permission to conduct research



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MASERU 100
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2231496

14th October, 2022

Approval letter to conduct research at MS Fabrications and Engineering

This letter serves as approval for Mr Motlatsi Sekhesa bearing student number 2020082679, employed at MS Fabrications and Engineering to conduct a school research and to access the company's data bases to select the suitable participants. The title of the research is "Improving Customer Satisfaction at MS Fabrications and Engineering".

This project is commendable and its findings are likely to be beneficial to the company and the industry at large. This initiative will receive full support until it is completed and feel free to communicate any challenges during the research.

Yours Sincerely,

Molefi Khama



Chairperson

Advisory Board of Directors

MS Fabrications and Engineering

Phone: +266 624 000 70 / +266 630 617 83

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Appendix C: Interview questions

Customers

- What is your organisation getting from the relationship with MSFE?
- What do you think about the competence of MSFE employees?
- What commitment does MSFE have towards its clients?
- What is your comment about the quality of service at MSFE?
- Explain to what extent MSFE meets your organisations expectations.
- How has MSFE responded to your previous complaints?
- What reason would you use to recommend MSFE to a potential customer?
- How can MSFE improve its customer service?
- What is your observation about MSFE's adoption of new technologies?

Employees

- What value are you getting from the relationship with MSFE?
- What do you think about the competence of MSFE employees?
- What commitment does MSFE have towards its clients?
- What is your comment about the quality of service at MSFE?
- Explain to what extent MSFE meets your expectations.
- How has MSFE responded to previous customer complaints?
- What reason would you use to recommend MSFE to a potential customer?
- How can MSFE improve its customer service?
- What is your observation about MSFE's adoption of new technologies?

Experts

1. What value do organisations seeking services expect from the relationship with the service provider?
2. What does competence of the service provider employees mean in a business to business relationship?
3. What should the service provider demonstrate as commitment to its client?
4. What characterises quality of service from the perspective of the customer?
5. What are the major influencing factors that cause customers to switch service providers?
6. What models do practising marketers employ when interacting with potential customer?
7. What strategies do companies employ to ensure good customer service?
8. What is the recommended level of new technology adoption nowadays?

Appendix D: Supervisor and Student agreement

POSTGRADUATE SUPERVISION AGREEMENT: Master's & Doctoral Candidates



The following agreement is entered into between the student and the supervisor, in line with principles of academic freedom and integrity, and keeping in mind individual responsibility and reasonable autonomy. Both student and supervisor are expected to take ownership of this agreement in a spirit of mutual accountability.

The Supervisor	The Student
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Undertakes to provide academic guidance and support to the best of their ability in relation to the scope and design of the research project, as detailed in a formal research proposal accepted by the department/school. 2. Will make time available for regular contact with the student (at least once a month). This contact may include emails or phone calls, as well as face-to-face contact sessions, as agreed in advance with the student. 3. Will provide written feedback and constructive criticism within a reasonable timeframe of receiving written submissions from the student. This timeframe for feedback is to be agreed upon in advance but should not exceed 4 weeks. 4. Will provide a 6-monthly progress report on the student's work to the HOD, which will be entered onto the student's academic record and may be accessed by the Dean's Office or Institutional Higher Degrees Committee. 5. Will be prepared for any pre-arranged meeting with the student. 6. Will consider the student's academic, technical and writing skills and refer them to an appropriate postgraduate workshop/support activity if deemed necessary to supplement any gaps in knowledge or expertise. 7. Will support and advise the student in preparation for all required steps on the postgraduate journey, including title registration, ethical clearance, legal or policy issues relating to the conduct of the research and the submission and assessment processes. 8. Undertakes to familiarise themselves with all policies and rules governing postgraduate programmes and to advise the student on such issues should the student request clarity on any particular issue. 9. Will help to ensure, to the best of their ability, that student's final submission is of sufficient quality for examination, including complying with all submission requirements and policies. 10. To liaise with the Examination Control Office or other relevant body to ensure the examination process and feedback/corrections are managed according to standards set by the university. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Undertakes to work independently and conscientiously under the guidance of the supervisor, including reading widely on the topic to ensure a thorough knowledge of the pertinent literature, and familiarising themselves adequately with the agreed-upon methodology. 2. Takes responsibility to make appointments with the supervisor well in advance, to confirm such appointments closer to the time and to ensure appointments are kept. 3. Will carefully plan and prepare for contact sessions with the supervisor for maximum benefit of the time allotted. This could include doing required reading or preparing written input for the meeting. 4. Should submit written work for discussion at the meeting well in advance, as agreed upon with the supervisor. 5. Will ensure written work is relatively free of grammar and spelling errors. Responsibility for writing quality should rest with the student. 6. Undertakes to consider all advice and feedback provided by the supervisor and will demonstrate how they have done so in the following draft of their work. 7. Should keep a record of all points discussed in each meeting, in writing, and ensure appropriate steps are taken to apply such feedback and advice. These discussion reports/minutes should be kept on record and presented at meetings if requested by the supervisor for further discussion. 8. Should plan their time to ensure they keep to an agreed-upon schedule with their supervisor. 9. Will ensure that all steps are taken to uphold university policies, ethical principles and rules in all their applied research and written work. Where unsure, they should contact their supervisor for clarity. 10. Will not apply undue pressure or unrealistic expectations on a supervisor by missing deadlines, expecting feedback within unreasonable timeframes or submitting substandard or rushed work. This includes trying to submit the final research product before the supervisor is satisfied that it meets all examination criteria and is of sufficient standard.

MS

Contact Us

T: +27 (0)51 401 7161

E: postgrad@ufs.ac.za

Johannes Bril Building, Ground Floor, Bloemfontein Campus


Both Supervisor & Student

1. Agree on all expected roles and processes, including the specific roles of co-supervisors where appropriate.
2. Will communicate regularly and as frequently as is reasonably expected, to ensure steady progress and will keep appointments, be punctual and respond appropriately and timeously to messages. Meetings will be arranged as, and when, required by either the student or the supervisor. The party requesting the face-to-face meeting will provide a **minimum of five working days written request** for face-to-face appointments.
3. Will ensure they are contactable by the other party and will respond to queries or requests within a reasonable, agreed-upon timeframe.
4. Will keep each other informed of any unforeseen absences or changes in personal circumstances, which could impact on the work schedule. Alternate plans must be discussed and agreed-upon in such cases.
5. Will undertake to ensure all written work or practical research is done according to expected university standards and abide by all university policies and rules. Where it is felt this is not the case, breaches of quality or ethical standards should be discussed and attempts made to improve this situation before any grievance proceedings are engaged.

We confirm that we have read and understood the statement on the previous page and that we will agree to uphold this agreement. In addition, we agree to the following:

- The student will submit work according to an agreed-upon schedule and will receive written feedback within **two to four weeks** of submission.
- We, the student and supervisor, agree to meet at as required and according to the notice period agreed (minimum five working days).
- If for some reason one party is unable to meet at the agreed-upon date, we will reschedule the meeting to suit both parties well in advance.
- Record of Skype meetings will be held as follows:
- Feedback from the supervisor will be provided in electronic format. Either by making use of track changes and comments in word, or by scanning written comments on paper copies.
- The student will engage and report back relating to feedback in the following manner:

We, the student and supervisor, will both keep a copy of this signed agreement.

Student Name: <u>MOTLAISI SEKHESA</u>	Supervisor Name: _____
Student Nr: <u>2020 082679</u>	Staff nr: _____
Student email address: <u>2020082679@uFSHlife.ac.za</u>	Supervisor email: _____
Student Phone number: <u>+266 55738807</u>	Supervisor Phone number: _____
Signature: 	Signature: _____
Co-supervisor Name: _____	Co-supervisor Name: _____
Staff Nr: _____	Staff Nr: _____
Co-supervisor email: _____	Co-supervisor email: _____
Co-supervisor Phone nr: _____	Co-supervisor Phone nr: _____
Signature: _____	Signature: _____

Faculty: _____

Department/School: _____

Degree: _____

Date: _____

Appendix E: Participants' filled consent forms

Customers



Consent to participate in this study

I, the undersigned,

Pitso Hlomo

(participant's full names to be included), (the "Participant")

confirm that I voluntarily agree to participate in the research study referred to as the
"Improving Customer Satisfaction at M.S. FE" (the "Study") in relation to
Masters in Business Administration

and which Study is being conducted by

Motlatsi Sekhesa

(insert the name of the researcher), (the "Researcher").

I, the undersigned Participant, further confirm that-

1. the Researcher has explained the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of my participation in the Study;
2. I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the Study as explained in the attached information sheet;
3. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the Study;
4. I understand that my participation in the Study is entirely voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable);
5. I voluntarily provide the UFS and the Researcher with my personal information and consent to the UFS and the Researcher collecting, disclosing and processing my personal information in order to conduct the Study and any related activities in relation thereto;
6. I hereby acknowledge and confirm that I understand the purpose for which the UFS and the Researcher may collect, store, use, delete, destroy, outsource, transfer or otherwise process, as the context and circumstances may require and as contemplated in terms of POPIA, my personal information as set out herein;
7. I am aware that the findings of the Study will be anonymously processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings and that my personal information will be aggregated and deidentified at such stage;
8. I also give the UFS permission to share, without notification, the collected data with other researchers at the UFS or other Higher Education Institutions. This permission is dependent on the same principles of ethical research practices, anonymity/confidentiality, safekeeping of information, and other issues listed above applying.

I, the Participant, agree to the recording of the Structured Interview.

Full Name of Participant: Pitso Hlomo

Signature of Participant: [Signature]

Date: 23/09/2023

Full Name(s) of Researcher(s): Motlatsi Sekhesa

Signature of Researcher: [Signature]

Date: 28/10/2023



Consent to participate in this study

I, the undersigned,

MOLEFI MOKHEETHA
(participant's full names to be included), (the "Participant")

confirm that I voluntarily agree to participate in the research study referred to as the
"IMPROVING CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AT M.S.F.C"
(the "Study") in relation to

MASTERS IN BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

and which Study is being conducted by

MA. MOTLATSI SEKHESA
(insert the name of the researcher), (the "Researcher").

I, the undersigned Participant, further confirm that-

1. the Researcher has explained the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of my participation in the Study;
2. I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the Study as explained in the attached information sheet;
3. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the Study;
4. I understand that my participation in the Study is entirely voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable);
5. I voluntarily provide the UFS and the Researcher with my personal information and consent to the UFS and the Researcher collecting, disclosing and processing my personal information in order to conduct the Study and any related activities in relation thereto;
6. I hereby acknowledge and confirm that I understand the purpose for which the UFS and the Researcher may collect, store, use, delete, destroy, outsource, transfer or otherwise process, as the context and circumstances may require and as contemplated in terms of POPIA, my personal information as set out herein;
7. I am aware that the findings of the Study will be anonymously processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings and that my personal information will be aggregated and deidentified at such stage;
8. I also give the UFS permission to share, without notification, the collected data with other researchers at the UFS or other Higher Education Institutions. This permission is dependent on the same principles of ethical research practices, anonymity/confidentiality, safekeeping of information, and other issues listed above applying.

I, the Participant, agree to the recording of the Structured Interview.

Full Name of Participant: Molefi Mokheetha

Signature of Participant: [Signature] Date: 17/09/2023

Full Name(s) of Researcher(s): Motlatsi Sekhesa

Signature of Researcher: [Signature] Date: 18/09/2023



Consent to participate in this study

I, the undersigned,

Fako Khoanyane
(participant's full names to be included), (the "Participant")

confirm that I voluntarily agree to participate in the research study referred to as the
Improving Customer Satisfaction of M.B.F.E. (the "Study") in relation to
Masters In Business Administration

and which Study is being conducted by

Motlatsi Sekhesa
(insert the name of the researcher), (the "Researcher").

I, the undersigned Participant, further confirm that-

1. the Researcher has explained the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of my participation in the Study;
2. I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the Study as explained in the attached information sheet;
3. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the Study;
4. I understand that my participation in the Study is entirely voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable);
5. I voluntarily provide the UFS and the Researcher with my personal information and consent to the UFS and the Researcher collecting, disclosing and processing my personal information in order to conduct the Study and any related activities in relation thereto;
6. I hereby acknowledge and confirm that I understand the purpose for which the UFS and the Researcher may collect, store, use, delete, destroy, outsource, transfer or otherwise process, as the context and circumstances may require and as contemplated in terms of POPIA, my personal information as set out herein;
7. I am aware that the findings of the Study will be anonymously processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings and that my personal information will be aggregated and deidentified at such stage;
8. I also give the UFS permission to share, without notification, the collected data with other researchers at the UFS or other Higher Education Institutions. This permission is dependent on the same principles of ethical research practices, anonymity/confidentiality, safekeeping of information, and other issues listed above applying.

I, the Participant, agree to the recording of the Structured Interview.

Full Name of Participant: Fako Khoanyane

Signature of Participant: [Signature] Date: 29/09/2023

Full Name(s) of Researcher(s): Motlatsi Sekhesa

Signature of Researcher: [Signature] Date: 04/10/2023

Consent to participate in this study

I, the undersigned,

Phello Manyane
(participant's full names to be included), (the "Participant")
confirm that I voluntarily agree to participate in the research study referred to as the
Improving customer satisfaction (the "Study") in relation to
Ms Fabrications and Engineering

and which Study is being conducted by
Motlatsi Sekhesa
(insert the name of the researcher), (the "Researcher").

- I, the undersigned Participant, further confirm that-
1. the Researcher has explained the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of my participation in the Study;
 2. I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the Study as explained in the attached information sheet;
 3. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the Study;
 4. I understand that my participation in the Study is entirely voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable);
 5. I voluntarily provide the UFS and the Researcher with my personal information and consent to the UFS and the Researcher collecting, disclosing and processing my personal information in order to conduct the Study and any related activities in relation thereto;
 6. I hereby acknowledge and confirm that I understand the purpose for which the UFS and the Researcher may collect, store, use, delete, destroy, outsource, transfer or otherwise process, as the context and circumstances may require and as contemplated in terms of POPIA, my personal information as set out herein;
 7. I am aware that the findings of the Study will be anonymously processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings and that my personal information will be aggregated and deidentified at such stage;
 8. I also give the UFS permission to share, without notification, the collected data with other researchers at the UFS or other Higher Education Institutions. This permission is dependent on the same principles of ethical research practices, anonymity/confidentiality, safekeeping of information, and other issues listed above applying.

I, the Participant, agree to the recording of the Structured Interview.	
Full Name of Participant: <u>Phello Manyane</u>	
Signature of Participant: <u>[Signature]</u>	Date: <u>2022/03/01</u>
Full Name(s) of Researcher(s): <u>Motlatsi Sekhesa</u>	
Signature of Researcher: <u>[Signature]</u>	Date: <u>02/10/2023</u>



Consent to participate in this study

I, the undersigned,

Thapelo Holoane (Minopex Procurement Manager)

(participant's full names to be included), (the "Participant")

confirm that I voluntarily agree to participate in the research study referred to as the

Improving Customer Satisfaction at MS Fabrications and Engineering (the "Study") in relation to

the research on improving customer satisfaction at MS Fabrications and Engineering

and which Study is being conducted by

Motlatsi Sekhesa (MS Fabrications managing Director)

(insert the name of the researcher), (the "Researcher").

I, the undersigned Participant, further confirm that-

1. the Researcher has explained the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of my participation in the Study;
2. I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the Study as explained in the attached information sheet;
3. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the Study;
4. I understand that my participation in the Study is entirely voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable);
5. I voluntarily provide the UFS and the Researcher with my personal information and consent to the UFS and the Researcher collecting, disclosing and processing my personal information in order to conduct the Study and any related activities in relation thereto;
6. I hereby acknowledge and confirm that I understand the purpose for which the UFS and the Researcher may collect, store, use, delete, destroy, outsource, transfer or otherwise process, as the context and circumstances may require and as contemplated in terms of POPIA, my personal information as set out herein;
7. I am aware that the findings of the Study will be anonymously processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings and that my personal information will be aggregated and deidentified at such stage;
8. I also give the UFS permission to share, without notification, the collected data with other researchers at the UFS or other Higher Education Institutions. This permission is dependent on the same principles of ethical research practices, anonymity/confidentiality, safekeeping of information, and other issues listed above applying.

I, the Participant, agree to the recording of the Structured Interview.

Full Name of Participant: Thapelo Holoane

Signature of Participant: _____

Date: 30/03/2023

Full Name(s) of Researcher(s): Motlatsi Sekhesa

Signature of Researcher: _____

Date: 30/09/2023

Consent to participate in this study

I, the undersigned,

Sebajoa Tau

(participant's full names to be included), (the "Participant")
confirm that I voluntarily agree to participate in the research study referred to as the

Improving Customer Satisfaction at MS Fabrications and Engineering
_____ (the "Study") in relation to

_____ Master in Business Administration _____

and which Study is being conducted by

Motlatsi Sekhesa

(insert the name of the researcher), (the "Researcher").

I, the undersigned Participant, further confirm that-

1. the Researcher has explained the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of my participation in the Study;
2. I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the Study as explained in the attached information sheet;
3. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the Study;
4. I understand that my participation in the Study is entirely voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable);
5. I voluntarily provide the UFS and the Researcher with my personal information and consent to the UFS and the Researcher collecting, disclosing and processing my personal information in order to conduct the Study and any related activities in relation thereto;
6. I hereby acknowledge and confirm that I understand the purpose for which the UFS and the Researcher may collect, store, use, delete, destroy, outsource, transfer or otherwise process, as the context and circumstances may require and as contemplated in terms of POPIA, my personal information as set out herein;
7. I am aware that the findings of the Study will be anonymously processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings and that my personal information will be aggregated and deidentified at such stage;
8. I also give the UFS permission to share, without notification, the collected data with other researchers at the UFS or other Higher Education Institutions. This permission is dependent on the same principles of ethical research practices, anonymity/confidentiality, safekeeping of information, and other issues listed above applying.

I, the Participant, agree to the recording of the Structured Interview.

Full Name of Participant: Sebajoa Tau

Signature of Participant:  Date: 2023/03/28

Full Name(s) of Researcher(s): Motlatsi Sekhesa

Signature of Researcher:  Date: 07/10/2023

Consent to participate in this study

I, the undersigned,
Seriti

Mampho

Ralekuku

(participant's full names to be included), (the "Participant")

confirm that I voluntarily agree to participate in the research study referred to as the

Improving Customer Satisfaction at MS Fabrications and Engineering
(the "Study") in relation to

Master's in business administration

and which Study is being conducted by

Motlatsi Sekhesa

(insert the name of the researcher), (the "Researcher").

I, the undersigned Participant, further confirm that-

1. the Researcher has explained the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of my participation in the Study;
2. I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the Study as explained in the attached information sheet;
3. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the Study;
4. I understand that my participation in the Study is entirely voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable);
5. I voluntarily provide the UFS and the Researcher with my personal information and consent to the UFS and the Researcher collecting, disclosing and processing my personal information in order to conduct the Study and any related activities in relation thereto;
6. I hereby acknowledge and confirm that I understand the purpose for which the UFS and the Researcher may collect, store, use, delete, destroy, outsource, transfer or otherwise process, as the context and circumstances may require and as contemplated in terms of POPIA, my personal information as set out herein;
7. I am aware that the findings of the Study will be anonymously processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings and that my personal information will be aggregated and deidentified at such stage;
8. I also give the UFS permission to share, without notification, the collected data with other researchers at the UFS or other Higher Education Institutions. This permission is dependent on the same principles of ethical research practices, anonymity/confidentiality, safekeeping of information, and other issues listed above applying.

I, the Participant, agree to the recording of the Structured Interview.

Full Name of Participant: Seriti Mampho Ralekuku

Signature of Participant:  Date: 19 03 2023

Full Name(s) of Researcher(s): Motlatsi Sekhesa

Signature of Researcher:  Date: 02/10/2023

Consent to participate in this study

I, the undersigned,

Phatoli Leuta

(participant's full names to be included), (the "Participant")
confirm that I voluntarily agree to participate in the research study referred to as the

Improving Customer Satisfaction at MS Fabrications and Engineering (the "Study") in relation to
Research study required by the University of the Free State

and which Study is being conducted by

Motlatsi Sekhesa

(insert the name of the researcher), (the "Researcher").

I, the undersigned Participant, further confirm that-

1. the Researcher has explained the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of my participation in the Study;
2. I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the Study as explained in the attached information sheet;
3. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the Study;
4. I understand that my participation in the Study is entirely voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable);
5. I voluntarily provide the UFS and the Researcher with my personal information and consent to the UFS and the Researcher collecting, disclosing and processing my personal information in order to conduct the Study and any related activities in relation thereto;
6. I hereby acknowledge and confirm that I understand the purpose for which the UFS and the Researcher may collect, store, use, delete, destroy, outsource, transfer or otherwise process, as the context and circumstances may require and as contemplated in terms of POPIA, my personal information as set out herein;
7. I am aware that the findings of the Study will be anonymously processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings and that my personal information will be aggregated and deidentified at such stage;
8. I also give the UFS permission to share, without notification, the collected data with other researchers at the UFS or other Higher Education Institutions. This permission is dependent on the same principles of ethical research practices, anonymity/confidentiality, safekeeping of information, and other issues listed above applying.

I, the Participant, agree to the recording of the Structured Interview.

Full Name of Participant: Phatoli Leuta

Signature of Participant: P. Leuta Date: 28/02/23

Full Name(s) of Researcher(s): Motlatsi Sekhesa

Signature of Researcher: [Signature] Date: 21/09/2023



Consent to participate in this study

I, the undersigned,

Lekhotso Thabang Liphoto

(participant's full names to be included), (the "Participant")

confirm that I voluntarily agree to participate in the research study referred to as the

_____ (the "Study") in relation to

_____ and which Study is being conducted by

_____ (insert the name of the researcher), (the "Researcher").

I, the undersigned Participant, further confirm that-

1. the Researcher has explained the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of my participation in the Study;
2. I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the Study as explained in the attached information sheet;
3. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the Study;
4. I understand that my participation in the Study is entirely voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable);
5. I voluntarily provide the UFS and the Researcher with my personal information and consent to the UFS and the Researcher collecting, disclosing and processing my personal information in order to conduct the Study and any related activities in relation thereto;
6. I hereby acknowledge and confirm that I understand the purpose for which the UFS and the Researcher may collect, store, use, delete, destroy, outsource, transfer or otherwise process, as the context and circumstances may require and as contemplated in terms of POPIA, my personal information as set out herein;
7. I am aware that the findings of the Study will be anonymously processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings and that my personal information will be aggregated and deidentified at such stage;
8. I also give the UFS permission to share, without notification, the collected data with other researchers at the UFS or other Higher Education Institutions. This permission is dependent on the same principles of ethical research practices, anonymity/confidentiality, safekeeping of information, and other issues listed above applying.

I, the Participant, agree to the recording of the Structured Interview.

Full Name of Participant: Lekhotso Thabang Liphoto

Signature of Participant: K. Liphoto Date: 28/03/2023

Full Name(s) of Researcher(s): Motlatsi Sekhesa

Signature of Researcher: [Signature] Date: 29/09/2023



Consent to participate in this study

I, the undersigned,

Thabo E. Thabane

(participant's full names to be included), (the "Participant")
confirm that I voluntarily agree to participate in the research study referred to as the

Improving Customer Satisfaction at MS Fabrications and Engineering (the "Study") in relation to
improve customer satisfaction at MS Fabrications and Engineering. The reason for the study is that
company may lose its clients if customer satisfaction is not improved.

and which Study is being conducted by

Motlatsi Sekhesa (Mr.)

(insert the name of the researcher), (the "Researcher").

I, the undersigned Participant, further confirm that

1. the Researcher has explained the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of my participation in the Study;
2. I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the Study as explained in the attached information sheet;
3. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the Study;
4. I understand that my participation in the Study is entirely voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable);
5. I voluntarily provide the UFS and the Researcher with my personal information and consent to the UFS and the Researcher collecting, disclosing and processing my personal information in order to conduct the Study and any related activities in relation thereto;
6. I hereby acknowledge and confirm that I understand the purpose for which the UFS and the Researcher may collect, store, use, delete, destroy, outsource, transfer or otherwise process, as the context and circumstances may require and as contemplated in terms of POPIA, my personal information as set out herein;
7. I am aware that the findings of the Study will be anonymously processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings and that my personal information will be aggregated and deidentified at such stage;
8. I also give the UFS permission to share, without notification, the collected data with other researchers at the UFS or other Higher Education Institutions. This permission is dependent on the same principles of ethical research practices, anonymity/confidentiality, safekeeping of information, and other issues listed above applying.

I, the Participant, agree to the recording of the Structured Interview.	
Full Name of Participant: <u>Thabo E. Thabane</u>	
Signature of Participant: <u>[Signature]</u>	Date: <u>27 March 2023</u>
Full Name(s) of Researcher(s): <u>Motlatsi Sekhesa</u>	
Signature of Researcher: <u>[Signature]</u>	Date: <u>27/09/2023</u>



Employees



Consent to participate in this study

I, the undersigned,

PHAILA SELLO

(participant's full names to be included), (the "Participant")

confirm that I voluntarily agree to participate in the research study referred to as the

"IMPROVING CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AT M/S FABRICATIONS AND ENGINEERING" (the "Study") in relation to

MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION QUALIFICATION

and which Study is being conducted by

SEKHESA MOTLATSI

(insert the name of the researcher), (the "Researcher").

I, the undersigned Participant, further confirm that-

1. the Researcher has explained the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of my participation in the Study;
2. I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the Study as explained in the attached information sheet;
3. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the Study;
4. I understand that my participation in the Study is entirely voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable);
5. I voluntarily provide the UFS and the Researcher with my personal information and consent to the UFS and the Researcher collecting, disclosing and processing my personal information in order to conduct the Study and any related activities in relation thereto;
6. I hereby acknowledge and confirm that I understand the purpose for which the UFS and the Researcher may collect, store, use, delete, destroy, outsource, transfer or otherwise process, as the context and circumstances may require and as contemplated in terms of POPIA, my personal information as set out herein;
7. I am aware that the findings of the Study will be anonymously processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings and that my personal information will be aggregated and deidentified at such stage;
8. I also give the UFS permission to share, without notification, the collected data with other researchers at the UFS or other Higher Education Institutions. This permission is dependent on the same principles of ethical research practices, anonymity/confidentiality, safekeeping of information, and other issues listed above applying.

I, the Participant, agree to the recording of the Structured Interview.

Full Name of Participant: PHAILA SELLO

Signature of Participant: Phaila

Date: 29/09/23

Full Name(s) of Researcher(s): Motlatsi Sekhesa

Signature of Researcher: [Signature]

Date: 29/09/23



Consent to participate in this study

I, the undersigned,

Malebese Semelane Violet
(participant's full names to be included), (the "Participant")

confirm that I voluntarily agree to participate in the research study referred to as the
"Improving Customer Satisfaction at ^{M.S.F.E} (the "Study") in relation to
Masters in Business Administration

and which Study is being conducted by

Mr. Mollatsi Sekhesa
(insert the name of the researcher), (the "Researcher").

I, the undersigned Participant, further confirm that-

1. the Researcher has explained the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of my participation in the Study;
2. I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the Study as explained in the attached information sheet;
3. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the Study;
4. I understand that my participation in the Study is entirely voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable);
5. I voluntarily provide the UFS and the Researcher with my personal information and consent to the UFS and the Researcher collecting, disclosing and processing my personal information in order to conduct the Study and any related activities in relation thereto;
6. I hereby acknowledge and confirm that I understand the purpose for which the UFS and the Researcher may collect, store, use, delete, destroy, outsource, transfer or otherwise process, as the context and circumstances may require and as contemplated in terms of POPIA, my personal information as set out herein;
7. I am aware that the findings of the Study will be anonymously processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings and that my personal information will be aggregated and deidentified at such stage;
8. I also give the UFS permission to share, without notification, the collected data with other researchers at the UFS or other Higher Education Institutions. This permission is dependent on the same principles of ethical research practices, anonymity/confidentiality, safekeeping of information, and other issues listed above applying.

I, the Participant, agree to the recording of the Structured Interview.

Full Name of Participant: Malebese Violet Semelane

Signature of Participant:  Date: 16/10/2023

Full Name(s) of Researcher(s): Mollatsi Sekhesa

Signature of Researcher:  Date: 26/10/2023

Consent to participate in this study

I, the undersigned,

MZIWAKHE MAKHAYA

(participant's full names to be included), (the "Participant")

confirm that I voluntarily agree to participate in the research study referred to as the

"IMPROVING CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AT (the "Study") in relation to ^{M.S.FE}

MASTERS IN BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

and which Study is being conducted by

MR. MOTLATSI SEKHESA

(insert the name of the researcher), (the "Researcher").

I, the undersigned Participant, further confirm that-

1. the Researcher has explained the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of my participation in the Study;
2. I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the Study as explained in the attached information sheet;
3. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the Study;
4. I understand that my participation in the Study is entirely voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable);
5. I voluntarily provide the UFS and the Researcher with my personal information and consent to the UFS and the Researcher collecting, disclosing and processing my personal information in order to conduct the Study and any related activities in relation thereto;
6. I hereby acknowledge and confirm that I understand the purpose for which the UFS and the Researcher may collect, store, use, delete, destroy, outsource, transfer or otherwise process, as the context and circumstances may require and as contemplated in terms of POPIA, my personal information as set out herein;
7. I am aware that the findings of the Study will be anonymously processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings and that my personal information will be aggregated and deidentified at such stage;
8. I also give the UFS permission to share, without notification, the collected data with other researchers at the UFS or other Higher Education Institutions. This permission is dependent on the same principles of ethical research practices, anonymity/confidentiality, safekeeping of information, and other issues listed above applying.

I, the Participant, agree to the recording of the Structured Interview.

Full Name of Participant: Mziwakhe Makhaya

Signature of Participant:  Date: 03/10/2023

Full Name(s) of Researcher(s): Motlatsi Sekhesa

Signature of Researcher:  Date: 04/10/2023

Consent to participate in this study

I, the undersigned,

Nthati Leshota

(Participant's full names to be included), (the "Participant")

Confirm that I voluntarily agree to participate in the research study referred to as the Improving Customer Satisfaction at MS Fabrications and Engineering (the "Study") in relation to

and which Study is being conducted by

Motlatsi Sekhesa

(Insert the name of the researcher), (the "Researcher").

I, the undersigned Participant, further confirm that-

1. the Researcher has explained the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of my participation in the Study;
2. I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the Study as explained in the attached information sheet;
3. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the Study;
4. I understand that my participation in the Study is entirely voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable);
5. I voluntarily provide the UFS and the Researcher with my personal information and consent to the UFS and the Researcher collecting, disclosing and processing my personal information in order to conduct the Study and any related activities in relation thereto;
6. I hereby acknowledge and confirm that I understand the purpose for which the UFS and the Researcher may collect, store, use, delete, destroy, outsource, transfer or otherwise process, as the context and circumstances may require and as contemplated in terms of POPIA, my personal information as set out herein;
7. I am aware that the findings of the Study will be anonymously processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings and that my personal information will be aggregated and deidentified at such stage;
8. I also give the UFS permission to share, without notification, the collected data with other researchers at the UFS or other Higher Education Institutions. This permission is dependent on the same principles of ethical research practices, anonymity/confidentiality, safekeeping of information, and other issues listed above applying.

I, the Participant, agree to the recording of the Structured Interview.

Full Name of Participant: Nthati Leshota

Signature of Participant:  Date: 29 September 2023

Full Name(s) of Researcher(s): Motlatsi Sekhesa

Signature of Researcher:  Date: 03/10/2023

Experts



Consent to participate in this study

I, the undersigned,

TLOTLSANG DYNAH LEKHOOA

(participant's full names to be included), (the "Participant")

confirm that I voluntarily agree to participate in the research study referred to as the

Improving Customer satisfaction at Nsifa (the "Study") in relation to
Masters In Business Administration

and which Study is being conducted by

Mr. Motlatsi Sekhese

(insert the name of the researcher), (the "Researcher").

I, the undersigned Participant, further confirm that-

1. the Researcher has explained the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of my participation in the Study;
2. I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the Study as explained in the attached information sheet;
3. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the Study;
4. I understand that my participation in the Study is entirely voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable);
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6. I hereby acknowledge and confirm that I understand the purpose for which the UFS and the Researcher may collect, store, use, delete, destroy, outsource, transfer or otherwise process, as the context and circumstances may require and as contemplated in terms of POPIA, my personal information as set out herein;
7. I am aware that the findings of the Study will be anonymously processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings and that my personal information will be aggregated and deidentified at such stage;
8. I also give the UFS permission to share, without notification, the collected data with other researchers at the UFS or other Higher Education Institutions. This permission is dependent on the same principles of ethical research practices, anonymity/confidentiality, safekeeping of information, and other issues listed above applying.

I, the Participant, agree to the recording of the Structured Interview.	
Full Name of Participant:	<u>TLOTLSANG DYNAH LEKHOOA</u>
Signature of Participant:	<u>[Signature]</u> Date <u>14/10/2023</u>
Full Name(s) of Researcher(s):	<u>Motlatsi Sekhese</u>
Signature of Researcher:	<u>[Signature]</u> Date <u>14/10/2023</u>



Consent to participate in this study

I, the undersigned,

TSITSO RAMAISA

(participant's full names to be included), (the "Participant")

confirm that I voluntarily agree to participate in the research study referred to as the

Improving Customer Satisfaction at (the "Study") in relation to
MS Fabrications and Engineering

and which Study is being conducted by

MOTLATSI SEKHESA

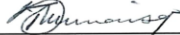
(insert the name of the researcher), (the "Researcher").

I, the undersigned Participant, further confirm that-

1. the Researcher has explained the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of my participation in the Study;
2. I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the Study as explained in the attached information sheet;
3. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the Study;
4. I understand that my participation in the Study is entirely voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable);
5. I voluntarily provide the UFS and the Researcher with my personal information and consent to the UFS and the Researcher collecting, disclosing and processing my personal information in order to conduct the Study and any related activities in relation thereto;
6. I hereby acknowledge and confirm that I understand the purpose for which the UFS and the Researcher may collect, store, use, delete, destroy, outsource, transfer or otherwise process, as the context and circumstances may require and as contemplated in terms of POPIA, my personal information as set out herein;
7. I am aware that the findings of the Study will be anonymously processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings and that my personal information will be aggregated and deidentified at such stage;
8. I also give the UFS permission to share, without notification, the collected data with other researchers at the UFS or other Higher Education Institutions. This permission is dependent on the same principles of ethical research practices, anonymity/confidentiality, safekeeping of information, and other issues listed above applying.

I, the Participant, agree to the recording of the Structured Interview.

Full Name of Participant: TSITSO RAMAISA

Signature of Participant:  Date: 18/10/2023

Full Name(s) of Researcher(s): Motlati Sekhesa

Signature of Researcher:  Date: 19/10/2023

