AN ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPACT OF AIRPORT SERVICE QUALITY ON THE GROWTH OF TOURISM IN ZIMBABWE

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ABSTRACT

Zimbabwe is adorned with tourism growth antecedents such as ample flora and fauna, spectacular scenery and cultural heritage sites yet the country continues to have an underutilized tourism sector. Following years of steady growth, the sector embarked on a downward trend in 1999. The global economic crisis, as well as the negative publicity and political unrest following the Land Reform Programme, have been cited as major causes of Zimbabwe’s tourism slump. The signing of the Global Political Agreement in 2009 restored the country’s economic and political sanity, setting the tourism sector on a recovery path. Zimbabwe’s tourism however, continues to perform below its potential, necessitating the consideration of other factors that could possibly influence the sector’s performance. This study therefore, sought to establish the quality of services at Harare International Airport and ascertain its role in tourists’ decisions to travel to Harare. Basing on the SERVQUAL model, questionnaires were developed and fully completed by 410 passengers and 75 representatives of the various customer service departments at the Airport. To this end, the expectations and perceptions of respondents regarding the SERVQUAL dimensions of reliability, assurance, tangibility, empathy and responsiveness were sought. The study revealed that for all five dimensions, actual services delivered were below the expectations of passengers. Although services were not of a poor standard, there was room for improvement. Airport service quality was however, of significance to those travelling for reasons other than visiting friends and relatives. The Gap analysis suggests that managers were misguided on the service priorities of passengers. It can therefore, be concluded that Zimbabwe is capable of receiving more tourists by improving airport service quality. For that reason, Government investment in airports should be directed toward areas with the potential of raising service quality levels, thereby encouraging the influx of visitors who are sensitive to airport service quality. Investment in the human element of service delivery is also recommended to facilitate excellent customer service at airports.
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DEDICATION

To my parents, Phoebe and Enock.......for giving me the wings to fly
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Abbreviations/Acronyms

CAAZ Civil Aviation Authority of Zimbabwe
UNWTO World Tourism Organization
ZTA Zimbabwe Tourism Authority
pax passenger/s
GDP Gross Domestic Product
SADC Southern African Development Community
RATER Reliability, assurance, tangibility, empathy, responsiveness
VFR Visiting friends and relatives
ZIMASSET Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-economic Transformation
CHAPTER 1 : INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This Chapter sets out to foster an understanding of the underlying problem and motivation of the study. A background to the study is given at the onset, whilst the following section states and explains the problem that has necessitated this study. Aims and objectives of the study are presented, leading to the main research question and subsequent sub questions. The Chapter also entails disclosing the assumptions undertaken by the researcher as well as highlighting the significance of the study, delimitations and limitations encountered in the study. An outline of the methodology adopted by the study is given prior to an overview of the study’s organization. The Chapter concludes by defining special terms, particularly in the context of this study.

1.1 Background to the study

Tourism plays a significant role in the economies of many countries across the globe. It is a key contributor to the GDP of many economies, creates employment and sustains (directly and indirectly) millions of lives across Africa. More importantly, tourism generates much needed foreign currency and contributes positively to the balance of payment in several countries.

Tourism in Zimbabwe, like many other African countries, is a key player in the country’s economy. The country is endowed with abundant attractions encompassing a wide variety of flora and fauna as well as spectacular scenery which are all antecedents of a vibrant
tourism sector. The key attractions include the Victoria Falls, Great Zimbabwe ruins, plentiful wildlife and magnificent scenery in the Eastern Highlands.

Following the attainment of Independence in 1980, Zimbabwe’s tourist arrivals grew rapidly reaching an average growth rate of 17.5% between 1989 and 1999 (ZTA, 2000). This was well above Africa’s average of 6.4% (UNWTO, 2006). This is evidence of the fact that the tourism industry in Zimbabwe was vibrant and performing well above the continent’s average. The turn of the millennium witnessed a drastic change in Zimbabwe’s tourism fortunes. Growth was in the negative with an average decline of 4% between 2000 and 2010. The ZTA also reports that for the year 2014, Zimbabwe’s arrivals grew by 2.6% which was below the average growth rate of 3.3% for sub-Saharan Africa. When these recent statistics are compared with those of the 1980s through to the 1990s, the disparity becomes quite distinct. For instance, this is evident when comparing the 17.4% growth rate for the period 1989-1990 to the 2.6% growth rate for 2013-2014. Figure 1-1 presents a detailed trend analysis of Zimbabwe’s tourist arrivals for the period 1964 to 2012.
Figure 1-1 chronicles the trend in Zimbabwe’s tourism sector. The diagram clearly depicts the uneven trend that effectively commenced in 1998.

The major causes of the decline included:

i) Perceived political instability resulting from the Land Reform Programme in 1999.

ii) Harsh macroeconomic environment

iii) Negative publicity in the major international source markets (ZTA, 2010).

According to Karambakuwa et al. (2011) tourist arrivals in Zimbabwe were influenced by five key factors as illustrated in Figure 1-2.
These factors which were drawn from various stakeholders in the tourism sector indicate that political instability and negative media had the greatest impact on the country’s tourist arrivals. Meanwhile, disease epidemics and fuel shortages influenced the negative growth to a lesser extent.

The establishment of the transitional Government in 2009 had a positive influence on international tourism as relative calm and stability were restored politically and economically. The Government, through the Ministry of Tourism adopted various policies and programmes to improve tourist arrivals. The Government also adopted strategies to develop sectors that support tourism such as transport networks and infrastructure. Important infrastructure such as the country’s primary international airports and some major road networks has also undergone refurbishment in an attempt to improve accessibility. Through its policy framework for economic revival, ZIMASSET,
the Government is still keen on raising the performance of the tourism sector. The framework outlines various strategies to increase the country’s market share of the tourism industry.

Munyeza (2009) posits that air transport is a key vehicle in the growth of Zimbabwe’s tourism sector. Although the majority of arrivals travel by road (86% in 2013), air transportation is key in linking overseas tourists to Zimbabwe (ZTA, 2013). With the increase in airlines coming to Zimbabwe and particularly the introduction of low cost carriers such as Fly Africa and Fastjet, there is even greater potential for the increase in air passenger traffic. Cristureanu and Bobirca (2007) also hold the assertion that good air service connections are vital for the success of tourist destinations. Zimbabwe being a landlocked country depends on air transportation for connecting with overseas travellers. Airports are key infrastructure in air transportation as they provide accessibility which is essential for tourism. This is supported by Cristureanu and Bobirca (2007) who suggest that the most important contribution of airports is the connectivity and accessibility that they provide.

Airports by their nature are essential tourism gateways as they facilitate access to destinations. More importantly, they affect a traveller’s total experience. Cejas and Rendeiro (2006) assert that airports are the first and last point of tourists’ contact in their holiday destinations. They further posit that it is vital to evaluate the quality of airport facilities and services as a factor of tourism services. Airports play a pivotal role in ensuring that tourists’ first and last impressions of a country or destination are positive and supportive of tourism. Cejas and Rendeiro (2006) go on to suggest that international
airports particularly, must provide a service standard which is of sufficient quality to attract airline customers and their passengers.

Whilst international tourist arrivals in Zimbabwe have been improving, the rate of growth has not yet reached full potential. The Government of Zimbabwe is cognisant of this situation and clearly acknowledges the potential that the tourism sector has in contributing toward the country’s GDP. Furthermore, the ZTA continues to make aggressive efforts in enhancing the image of the country and encouraging tourists to come to Zimbabwe.

Albeit the positive change in growth, it has been argued by some authorities that, the rate of growth is still below potential. Given the vast resources and favourable conditions, tourist arrivals are growing below their full capacity. Bloch (2012) posits that the tourism industry has much more potential and is yet to reach the peak growth rate levels of the 1990s. He goes on to assert that an improvement in airport services could contribute towards an increase in international arrivals. Bloch (2012) further highlights that J M Nkomo Airport for instance, has inadequate, dilapidated facilities and that the completion of the new terminal has taken too long whilst upgrading of the Victoria Falls Airport is way overdue.

The Government realizes the importance of airports to the economy and has made considerable investment in the refurbishment and development of these infrastructures. Like many other developing economies, the Zimbabwean Government operates on a highly constrained budget as it is overwhelmed with other financial obligations. It then becomes necessary for the Government to efficiently allocate its resources with particular
attention to areas that support or encourage revenue generation. It has been envisaged that an improvement in airport service quality could enhance tourist arrivals (Bloch, 2012; Cristureanu and Bobirca, 2007; Cejas and Rendeiro, 2006). For instance, Wilkie (2009) underscores the importance of airport service quality in not only influencing overall passenger satisfaction but also in attracting visitors and airlines to the Australian destination. It is therefore, essential to assess the service quality at our international airports.

Furthermore, there is an existing gap in literature on airport service quality in Zimbabwe. Across the world numerous studies have been conducted to assess various aspects of the airline industry (Bogicevic et al., 2013; Fewings, 2012; Lambert and Luiz, 2011; Cristureanu and Bobirca, 2007; Sultan and Simpson, 1987). There however, have been fewer studies conducted on similar aspects in Africa and specifically in Zimbabwe. Several scholars such as Chao et al. (2013), Lubbe et al. (2011) and Gituanja (2006) have adopted the SERVQUAL model in the airline industry. Such similar studies facilitate benchmarking which is an essential aspect in the development of competitive services. It is against this background that this research will be carried out to determine how international visitors perceive the quality of services offered at Harare International Airport.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Since the year 2000, international tourist arrivals in Zimbabwe have mostly been on a decline. This downward trend has been chiefly attributed to political instability and negative publicity. The establishment of the transitional Government in 2009, led to a
more peaceful and economically stable environment and this, coupled with the more positive publicity, has had a progressive impact on the country’s tourism. The Government, through the Ministry of Tourism, has embarked on various programmes and set up policies to encourage international tourist arrivals. These efforts have been fruitful as evidenced by the increase in international tourist arrivals from 2009. However, as has been asserted by some authorities, international tourist arrivals are not growing at full potential. The main factors leading to the decline in tourist arrivals between 1999 and 2009 have since improved yet the country continues to record growth rates that are far below potential. It then becomes necessary to examine other factors that could possibly influence international tourist arrivals. Whilst other factors such as accommodation, scenery and availability of disposable income could also influence the growth of tourism, the role of airport service quality is worth considering. Some scholars have envisaged that an improvement in airport service quality could have a positive influence on the growth of tourist arrivals into the country (Bloch, 2012; Muchapondwa and Pimhidzai, 2011; Cristureanu and Bobirca, 2007).

1.3 Aims of the study

The main aim of this study was to investigate the quality of services at Harare International Airport, and ascertain whether it had any influence on tourist arrivals. The study also aimed at contributing to the existing literature on airport service quality with particular reference to Zimbabwe. The study would achieve this by applying the SERVQUAL model and would therefore, focus on five dimensions namely reliability, assurance, tangibility, empathy and responsiveness (RATER).
1.4 Objectives of the study

The study is guided by the following objectives:

i) To establish passenger expectations on service at the Harare International Airport.

ii) To ascertain the perceptions of passengers regarding airport service quality at Harare International Airport.

iii) To compute the gaps between their expectations and perceptions concerning the quality of service at Harare International Airport.

iv) To obtain feedback from various managers at the Airport regarding customer expectations.

v) To make appropriate recommendations for improvements in service quality.

1.5 Research question

The main question addressed by the study was stated as:

Does airport service quality influence inbound tourism in Zimbabwe?

To provide answers to the research question, the study sought to get answers to the following sub questions:

i) What are the expectations of passengers regarding service at Harare International Airport?

ii) How do passengers perceive service delivery at Harare International Airport?

iii) What gaps, if any, exist in terms of passenger expectations and perceptions on service at the Airport?

iv) How do managers perceive passenger expectations regarding service quality?

v) What recommendations are necessary to improve the inflow of tourists?
1.6 Hypotheses

In order to assess the quality of services at Harare International Airport, hypotheses were tested in relation to:

i) Managers’ perceptions regarding the expectations of passengers and the actual perceptions of passengers on service delivery.

ii) Passenger expectations regarding the quality of services at international airports and their actual perceptions of services at Harare International Airport.

As a result, two sets of hypotheses were generated as follows:

i) \( H_0: \) There is no difference between manager perceptions on passenger expectations and the actual expectations of passengers regarding airport services at Harare International Airport.

\( H_1: \) There is a difference between the perceptions of managers on passenger expectations and the actual expectations of passengers regarding airport services at Harare International Airport.

\( H_0: \) There is no difference between passenger expectations and their actual perceptions on services at Harare International Airport.

\( H_1: \) There is a difference between passenger expectations and their actual perceptions on services at Harare International Airport.

1.7 Assumptions

In carrying out the research, the following assumptions were made:

i) Views of the international airline passengers in the study would represent those of most inbound international tourists.

ii) Departing passengers, rather than those arriving, would have more time and sufficient experiences at the Airport to make meaningful contributions to the study.
iii) Respondents in the study would be willing to participate and would be honest in their responses.

iv) The Civil Aviation Authority of Zimbabwe (CAAZ) would grant the researcher permission to carry out her research at the Harare International Airport.

1.8 Significance of the study

This study was aptly timed, when the Government of Zimbabwe was concentrating on developing the country’s airports as well as boosting international tourist arrivals. A better understanding of passengers’ needs and satisfaction levels would guide the relevant authorities in making relevant developments that could raise service delivery to levels that do not only meet but also surpass passenger expectations.

The results of this study should assist Government to appropriately allocate funding to areas that are of more significance to international tourism and revenue generation. In line with the Government’s economic revival policy framework, ZIMASSET, the study also makes relevant contribution to the strategies set out to increase the country’s tourism market share. More importantly, this study would determine whether airport service quality influences tourism. Such knowledge assists in the development of tourism in Zimbabwe by highlighting areas that need attention and thus facilitating efficient allocation of resources.

Numerous studies in the past have focused on the assessment of air transportation service quality with several of these studies evaluating airline service quality. Examples of such studies include those conducted by Bogicevic et al. (2013), Lambert and Luiz (2011) and Sultan and Simpson (1987). There has however, been less research carried out on the
service quality of African airports (Lubbe et al., 2011; Gituanja, 2006) and in particular, Zimbabwean airports. The present study attempts to fill this gap in the current literature by establishing the perceived service quality at Harare International Airport and ascertaining its significance in tourism growth.

1.9 Delimitation of the study

The research’s focus was on airline passengers departing from the Harare International Airport which is the country’s premier airport. Whilst there are three other significant international airports in Zimbabwe (J.M Nkomo, Victoria Falls and Buffalo Range), this study specifically focused on Harare International Airport as it has the highest volume of airline and passenger traffic. Concentrating on the country’s premier airport would also facilitate a deeper and more significant analysis of the quality of airport services.

The study explicitly sought and analyzed the responses of 410 passengers departing from the Harare International Airport between December 2013 and June 2014. Passengers arriving were excluded mainly because they do not usually have much idle time at the airport and would, therefore, not be able to effectively participate in this study. The period between December 2013 to June 2014 covers both the low and peak periods of passenger traffic volumes at the Harare International Airport. Collecting data during this period would consequently facilitate the generation of more holistic results for the study. Although there are other relevant stakeholders such as the frontline staff who are in direct contact with passengers, this study, in addition to the passenger respondents, also involved 75 managers responsible for the delivery of services to passengers. This is in compliance with the SERVQUAL model which advocates for the inclusion of customer
service managers in the assessment of service quality. A spectrum of services is offered to airline passengers at the airport hence, the managerial respondents in this study were drawn from a cross-section of the various organizations serving passengers at Harare International Airport.

1.10 Limitations of the study

In conducting this study, the researcher encountered the following challenges:-

i) The research was self-funded and therefore, the researcher could not afford to engage assistants. Consequently, the researcher had to administer questionnaires by herself. This was made possible by the fact that the survey was confined to Harare International Airport, making it accessible and cost effective for the researcher. It however, required the researcher, as a full-time employee, to plan for time off work in order to conduct the survey.

ii) Some potential respondents could not participate in the survey due to language barriers. The questionnaire had only been produced in English yet; some passengers could neither read nor write the language. In spite of this challenge, the researcher feels that those respondents who managed to take part in the survey sufficiently represent the general population of tourists travelling to Zimbabwe by air.

iii) The researcher encountered a challenge in implementing probability sampling techniques due to the nature of the civil aviation industry. Probability sampling stipulates that each unit of the population to be studied should be known. It was however, not feasible to know each passenger scheduled to depart from the Harare International Airport prior to their departure. This is in line with the strict
airline security requirements which discourage airlines from disclosing the identities of their passengers to the public prior to flight departure. This challenge was overcome by alternatively adopting the scheduled departing flights as the sampling frame for the study. A list of scheduled flights is readily accessible from the CAAZ and was, therefore, used in the generation of flights to be included in the sample. It is from these flights that passenger respondents were drawn.

1.11 Research methodology

The research adopted the positivist approach which stipulates that reality exists and is waiting to be discovered (Carson et al., 2001). The approach was adopted mainly because of its advocacy for reduced bias and generalization of research findings. Quantitative research was implemented, largely due to its numeric attributes which are in sync with the SERVQUAL model. More specifically, the survey method was adopted. Although this method is also suitable for the SERVQUAL model, it was also selected because of its ability to efficiently collect data from relatively large samples. Simple random sampling was used and self-completed questionnaires were administered to the respondents. The survey was carried out in two phases to cover the peak and off peak seasons at the airport. To this end the survey was conducted between December 2013 and January 2014 as well as during March and June 2014.

1.12 Ethical and legal implications

Airports are highly secured areas as such Harare International Airport is protected by Zimbabwean laws and international regulations. The researcher sought and obtained permission from the CAAZ to conduct her research at the airport. As the study was
conducted within the restricted areas of the terminal, the researcher underwent security vetting for authorization to enter such areas.

Confidentiality is an important aspect of research ethics. Respondents were assured of confidentiality and their anonymity was evident from the questionnaires which did not require them to reveal their names or any other information that could result in exposure of their identities. The researcher also identified herself to the respondents by means of a CAAZ security identity card.

1.13 Organization of the study

This study has been organized in the following manner:

Chapter One: Introduction

The Chapter introduces the fundamental issues pertaining to the study. It gives a background to the study and articulates the main problem addressed by the study. The Chapter presents a concise form of what the study entailed and sets the tone for ensuing chapters.

Chapter Two: Review of related literature

This part of the thesis provides an essential theoretical platform for the study. Key concepts are presented and discussed in the context of this study. Literature from various sources such as books, reports, newspapers and periodicals, is reviewed. Related studies carried out by other researchers are also presented in an attempt to identify gaps and therefore, justify the present study.
Chapter Three: Research methodology and design

This Chapter presents, discusses and justifies methods adopted in the collection of data. Beginning with a declaration of the research paradigm adopted, the Chapter chronologically details the processes involved in generating vital information for the study.

Chapter Four: Data presentation, analysis, discussion and interpretation

Presented in two broad sections, this Chapter is dedicated to reporting on data generated from the data collection process. The first section presents the data obtained from the survey, whilst the second section is dedicated to analyzing, discussing and interpreting the data presented in Section I.

Chapter Five: Summary, findings, conclusions and recommendations

This Chapter winds up the thesis and synthesizes the entire study into a concise presentation. The findings, as presented in Chapter four, are summarized and conclusions are presented, based on these findings. Finally, recommendations drawn from the study are presented.

1.14 Definition of special terms

1.14.1 Service

Regan (1963) defined service as intangible, yielding satisfactions directly or intangibles yielding satisfactions jointly, when purchased with either commodities or other services. This early definition acknowledges the role of satisfaction in service delivery. It also takes note of one of the most fundamental characteristics of services-intangibility.
Another definition from the same era is given by Blois (1974), who views service as an activity offered for sale that leads to benefits and satisfaction without any resultant change in the physical form of the good. In concurrence with the former definition by Regan (1963), this definition recognizes the non-physical nature of service and the importance of satisfying customers. Blois (1974) however, went on to emphasize the unchanging nature of the goods involved in service delivery. In other words, the definition suggests that services might have tangible aspects, which are however not transformed during the process of service delivery.

A more concise definition of service is given by Gronroos (2000) who considers service to be an activity or series of activities which are less tangible than normal, take place in the interaction between the customer and service employees and/or the physical resources or goods and systems of the service provider, which are provided as solutions in response to the problems of customers. In contrast to the definitions given by Regan (1963) and Blois (1974), this definition by Gronroos (2000) encompasses key characteristics of services. The definition is unique in that it spells out the goal of meeting the needs of customers. It implies that services are provided in response to specific needs that arise within customers. This is also in line with the definition of marketing given by Kotler (2007) which suggests that customer needs are the fundamental reason for businesses to exist.

Kotler (2002:2) defines a service as being, ‘any act or performance that one party can offer to another that is essentially intangible and does not result in the ownership of anything’. He goes on to clarify that the production of such can either be associated with a physical component or not. Though similar to Gronroos’ (2000) definition, Kotler’s
(2002) interpretation specifies that the act does not culminate in any form of ownership. He implies that the service is fundamentally an experience. In concurrence with Gronroos (2000), Kotler, (2002) acknowledges the intangible nature of service.

Synthesizing the cited definitions, service in the context of this study, is regarded as a fundamentally intangible product or activity that is offered to satisfy the needs of the buyer, having no resultant change in neither ownership nor material form of associated physical elements.

1.14.2 Service quality

Service quality has been defined in numerous ways by different scholars. John (1992) defines service quality as simply being the sum of customer perceptions regarding the service experience. His definition dwells on the perceptions of customers and according to him; it is these perceptions that define quality. The definition is customer centric and easily comprehensible.

A more encompassing definition of service quality is proposed by Bitner and Hubbert (1994) who view service quality as the overall impression held by consumers regarding the relative inferiority or superiority of the organization and its services. This definition, unlike the former introduces the aspects of inferiority and superiority, implying that service quality is measured in terms of relativity. An element of comparison is implied and thus customers are engaged in a process of comparing the service rendered against a scale to determine the inferiority or superiority of the service. Wilson et al. (1997) concisely define service quality as the subjective measurement of the disparity between
customer expectations and their perceptions regarding actual service delivered to them during the service encounter.

In summing up the mentioned definitions, service quality basically relates to the manner in which a customer assesses the service rendered to them. Inherent in all definitions, is the central role of the customer. The three authorities cited, concur that the service quality notion is customer oriented. The decision on whether a service is of good or bad quality, then, depends on whether the perception has exceeded the expectation or not. Service quality can, therefore, be described as the customers’ judgement on the manner in which service is delivered.

This study however, is grounded on the works of Lewis and Booms (1983) who described service quality as a measure of the level to which delivered services tie with the expectations of customers. Their argument was that, service quality could only be attained if the service delivered consistently met the expectations of customers. This definition incorporates the aspect of comparing customer expectations to the actual service delivered. It is this definition that has further provided a platform for researchers in the field of services marketing such as Gronroos (1984) and later, Parasuraman et al. (1985), to further develop the subject.

1.14.3 Tourism

Tourism is a rather complex concept, hence, rather than having a single standard definition of the term, a host of definitions have been presented in various literature Sharpley and Pender (2005). Some of the definitions of tourism are given:
Goeldner and Ritchie (2006:5) define tourism as “the processes, activities and outcomes that arise from relationships and interactions amongst tourists, tourism suppliers, and host governments.” This definition brings out the complex nature of tourism. It depicts tourism as being multifaceted and thus, highlights the network of relationships it represents.

An almost similar definition is offered by Stickdorn and Frischhut (2012) who assert that tourism is in fact a system encompassing tourists’ natural resources and the environment, the cultural or built environment, government activities, and several operating sectors. This definition differs from that given by Goeldner and Ritchie (2006:5) in that it broadens the components of tourism from just the human elements (suppliers, governments, hosts), to include the environmental aspect as well. The latter definition takes cognisance of the major input of tourism; nature itself. It goes further to acknowledge other important features of tourism such as the built and cultural environments.

Chadwick (1994:66) gives a different perspective as he asserts that “tourism refers to the activities of a person outside their usual environment for less than a stipulated time frame and whose purpose of travel is other than exercise of an activity remunerated from the place visited.” Chadwick’s definition tends to focus more on the human aspect of tourism as it describes tourism from the stand point of the tourist. This definition is rather myopic as, unlike the first two, it does not make any reference to the various components of the tourism system.
An alternative definition of tourism is given by Mill and Morisson (1983). They posit that tourism is “an activity that takes place in international terms, people cross borders for leisure or business and stay for at least 24 hours but less than a year.” This definition distinguishes itself from the first three by specifying the purpose of travel. Mill and Morisson (1983) seem to imply that unless the purpose of travel is for business or leisure, then it is not tourism. They also encompass the aspect of crossing borders, further inferring that tourism is restricted to movement across borders. These additional parameters narrow down tourism, and further restrict it by purpose of travel and the geographical dimension.

The given definitions epitomize the diversity in interpretations of tourism. Each of the cited definitions however, embodies important characteristics of tourism. Although the definitions may differ in perspective, they are all instrumental in understanding tourism.

In coming up with a concise description of tourism, it would be prudent to encompass the different schools of thought. For the purpose of this study, the definition given by the UNWTO is more befitting. The UNWTO is an arm of the United Nations responsible for the development of tourism across the globe.

The UNWTO (2007) has therefore, mandated the following definition of tourism:

‘Tourism is a social, cultural and economic phenomenon which entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business/professional purposes. These people are called visitors (which may be either tourists or excursionists; residents or non-residents) and tourism has to do with their activities, some of which imply tourism expenditure.’

This definition, apart from acknowledging the various dimensions of tourism, encompasses the major characteristics of tourism which are of relevance to this study.
The World Tourism Organization further classifies tourism into six categories:

1. Domestic tourism: residents of a country visiting destinations in their own country.
2. Inbound tourism: visits to a country by non-residents.
3. Outbound tourism: residents of a country visiting destinations in other countries.
4. Internal tourism: the combination of domestic tourism and inbound tourism

This study focuses on international tourism, as it considers the views of travellers passing through the Harare International Airport.

1.14.4 Tourist

While the UNWTO defines a tourist as a type of visitor who specifically spends a night outside of their normal place of residence, this study shall consider the tourist in the general context of a visitor. The definition of a visitor is given by the UNWTO (2008) as, “Any person who travels to a country other than that in which they usually reside but outside their usual environment for a period not exceeding 12 months and whose main purpose of visit is other than the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the country visited.” For the purposes of this study the terms tourist, passenger, traveller and visitor shall be used interchangeably.
1.14.5 Manager

In the context of this study the word manager refers to all levels of customer service supervision and encompasses supervisors, junior managers, middle and senior management.

1.15 Chapter summary

This Chapter has introduced the fundamental concepts of this study. Beginning with a background to the study, major concerns necessitating this study were presented in the problem statement. This was followed by a declaration of the research’s aims and objectives. The main research question and the sub questions developed to address the main question of the research were presented in addition to the significance of carrying out the research. Delimitations and limitations encountered were also highlighted. A concise explanation of the methods adopted was given, also highlighting the ethical considerations for the study. The Chapter wound up by presenting the organization of the thesis and defining special terms in the context of this study.
CHAPTER 2 : REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

The fundamental issues addressed by this study have been explored by other academics and researchers who have made significant contributions to literature. In as much as this study seeks to create new knowledge and subsequently make meaningful contributions to the current body of knowledge, it is necessary to acknowledge the works of the forerunners in the fields of service quality, airport services and tourism. It is this existing literature that has provided a platform for further research, bringing to fore the various issues of concern and, thus, enabling the identification of gaps to be filled. This Chapter therefore, presents the concepts central to the study and also seeks to foster better understanding of the aims of the study.

The Chapter is thematically structured and encompasses various aspects related to the study. Starting with an analysis of the theoretical framework, the Chapter proceeds to illustrate the rationale for conducting the study. This is achieved by referring to relevant literature and relating it to the study. Finally, the Chapter considers studies conducted by other researchers in aspects related to this study, before winding up with a chapter summary.
2.2 Theoretical Framework

2.2.1 The nature of services

Service may be related to tangible or intangible products (Gronroos, 2000; Kotler, 1997). Examples of service include tourism, legal aid, health care and insurance. Albeit being intangible, services provide value to people. Services can also be classified into direct services (to people), such as health care, hair dressing and commercial services (to business) such as auditing, publishing and consultancy. A more profound understanding of the service concept is achieved by separating services from goods. Kotler (1997) seeks to separate services from goods by identifying the distinct characteristics of services.

2.2.2 Characteristics of services

In defining services, renowned Marketing expert, Philip Kotler, identifies four major characteristics of service. These are: intangibility, inseparability, variability and perishability (Kotler, 1997).

Intangibility

This refers to the fact that services cannot be seen, tasted, felt, heard or smelt before they are purchased. Services are considered as intangible because we are unable to see, touch or feel them (Hoffman and Bateson, 2002). Mahapatra (2010) describes services as being largely intangible, although they may exhibit some tangible or physical attributes. Where tangible aspects are inherent in a service, they remain the service provider’s property. The customer does not assume ownership of any tangible aspects of the service. For instance, in airline transportation, the aircraft is a tangible part of the service offered
to passengers, yet passengers do not at any point assume ownership of the aircraft. The aircraft remains the property of the respective airline.

It is also this intangible characteristic of service which makes the measurement of service quality difficult. Unlike goods which can be tested for adherence to specifications, services cannot have their quality tested in a similar manner (Parasuraman et al., 1988). Du Plessis et al. (2014) emphasize on the need for managers to not only consider the tangible elements of services but also the intangibles as these could influence the overall airport experience of travellers. This study takes on the challenge of measuring the quality of services at Harare International Airport. As in the case of airport service, services such as check-in, baggage tracing and passenger aircraft boarding, cannot indeed be felt, tasted, heard or smelt, hence they are intangible.

**Inseparability**

This attribute also differentiates between goods and services. Whereas goods can be manufactured, stored and distributed Gilmore (2003) postulates that services are more often than not produced and consumed simultaneously. The service provider is normally part of that service; hence the service becomes a reflection of the service provider’s personality (Harrington, 2002). Services at airports are provided by (mostly frontline) staff from the various departments and organizations based at the airports. Consequently, immigration and customs officials automatically become part of the services at an international airport. Similarly, customer service agents processing passenger check-in and boarding effectively become part of those services too.
Invariability

Services depend on who provides them as well as where and when they are provided. Mahapatra (2010) and Saura et al. (2008) concur that in the same manner that humans are unique from one other, so are the services they offer. This defines the invariability or heterogeneous characteristic of services. While goods can be uniformly produced to the most minuscule specification, services differ with the individual directly providing the service (Pascu and Orheian, 2012; Kotler, 1997). Uniformity in the production of goods is possible as machines can be programmed to replicate the exact same specifications for each unit produced (Parasuraman et al., 1988). The manner in which various airport services are delivered may differ from one airport to the other, even within the same country. Moreover, at the same airport, service delivery may differ from one company to the other and in a similar manner within the same company; service delivery may also vary with the specific individuals offering the same service at a particular time.

Perishability

In support of Kotler (1997), Mansor and Redhwan (2012) posit that in contrast to goods, services cannot be stored. When demand increases for instance, there are no warehouses to draw from. True to the nature of service, airport services cannot be stored. Check-in for a particular flight is only done during a designated period, after which, when the flight closes it will no longer be possible to check-in any more passengers. Similarly, during periods of low passenger volumes, flights cannot be stored for later use when traffic increases. Pascu and Orheian (2012) further posit that the perishability of services implies a loss in the service delivery process, whenever a discrepancy occurs between the set time of delivery and the availability of frontline staff. Saura et al. (2008) assert that it is
difficult for customers to display their confidence in a service unless they personally experience the service. According to Mansor and Redhwan (2012), the major challenge for modern day organizations is to convince their customers to experience the services they provide.

An understanding of the process through which customers go through before, during and after experiencing a service is essential in helping organizations convince potential customers to experience their services. The following section considers this critical process.

### 2.2.3 The service purchase process

Having acknowledged that this study essentially focuses on services (tourism and airport services), it is only prudent to understand the process that customers go through in selecting, consuming and evaluating services. An appreciation of this process will foster better understanding of the key aspects of this study which relate to the measurement of service quality. Lovelock and Wright (2002) put forward the purchase process for services. This process involves three stages namely, pre-purchase, service encounter and post purchase.

**The pre-purchase stage**

This is the initial stage of the service purchasing process. Customers consider alternatives available to them basing on their expectations and needs. The key factors in this stage include; level of risk associated with the purchase decision, predictability of the outcome and regularity of service usage.
Higher levels of associated risk, unpredictable outcomes and irregular consumption of the service will entail more rigorous search of information and thus, a more involving decision making process. Lovelock and Wright (2002) underscore the role of risk in this first stage of the purchasing process. They assert that customers’ risk perceptions signify their judgement of probable negative outcomes. It is further suggested to educate risk averse customers regarding the service and its outcomes, as a means of reducing their perceived risk. In the aviation industry first time airline travellers are often anxious about making their maiden flights. Airport staff in such instances has an essential role of calming travellers by explaining any uncertainties and reassuring them as much as possible.

**The service encounter stage**

Having made the decision to purchase a service, customers enter the service encounter stage. Shostack (1985) defines a service encounter as that period of time in which a customer interacts with a service. Customers then develop perceptions regarding the quality of services during the service encounter. It is for this reason that the service encounter is regarded as a crucial aspect of service quality. This is the period that has also been termed the “moment of truth” by managers and authorities across the world. The term which was popularized by Carlzon (1987), has been embraced by many organizations as they attempt to conscientize their employees on service excellence.

Rather than focusing on managing the actual service encounter, DiJulius (2008) observes that many companies channel large portions of their earnings into advertising and
branding. DiJulius (2008) considers this to be misguided effort as the true determinants of business success are the customers and their perception on service quality. It has traditionally been considered necessary for the consumer and the producer to meet during a service encounter in order for the consumer to receive the benefits offered by the service provider (Palmer, 2005). However, with the advances in technology the physical meeting of customer and service provider may no longer be as ‘physical’ as suggested by earlier literature. Rather, such meetings may now be occurring virtually on various internet based platforms. For instance, flight bookings, ticket purchases and check-in procedures can now be done virtually on the World Wide Web.

During the service encounter stage customers develop perceptions about the product and often create a differentiation from competitors. The service encounter entails interaction between the customer and various aspects of the service provider including employees, machinery, physical facilities and other physical and/or visible elements of the firm. Customers draw opinions from their interactions with the various service attributes. It is these perceptions that ultimately determine the perceived quality of services. In light of this, the service encounter stage is of much significance in the service quality context.

Lovelock and Wright (2002) identify three key components of the service encounter. These are the service environment, service personnel and support service. The service environment relates to the physical aspects of service whilst service personnel are essentially the human face of the organization (Bollen and Emes, 2008). Support services on the other hand, refer to materials and equipment used by employees in performing their duties. These services also include any other processes that take place in the “back offices” to facilitate the smooth execution of duties by front line staff. For instance at an
airport, support services could take the form of computer system maintenance for check-in computers.

Understanding the service encounter is of much significance to this study as the encounter influences perceptions of customers toward service quality. In other words, service encounters define the quality of the service in customers’ minds (Balachanran, 2004). The fast paced, competitive business environment is increasingly causing the service encounter to be an important facet of business. Organizations need to be wary of and able to manage the service encounter as it can make or break an organization’s relationship with its customers (Bitner, 1990). It is even more crucial in service delivery as services are mostly differentiated in the customer’s mind by promises of what is to come (Bitner, 1992). Managing customer expectations becomes relevant in the creation of favourable moments of truth. Chase and Dasu (2008) assert that the heart of a service is the encounter between the service provider and the customer. According to them, during an encounter, emotions meet economics and it is here that most people judge the quality of a service.

As they go through various processes at the airport, passengers experience several service encounters. When there is a series of encounters, it becomes more complex to manage the quality of services at each point, particularly when these services are being provided by different service providers as in the airport scenario. It is this sequence of service encounters that shall be under the spotlight in this study hence it is necessary to comprehend its nature.
The service encounter cascade

The service encounter cascade relates to a sequence of encounters from the time a customer comes to take the service. The encounter cascade influences customer satisfaction and loyalty yet managers and frontline staff may at times fail to fully appreciate the various service encounters through which customers go (Lovelock and Wright, 2002; Kumar and Meenakshi, 2006). Ramachandra et al. (2010) postulate that illustrating the various steps of the encounter is an effective means of fostering such comprehension. Lovelock and Wright (2002) simply refer to the service encounter cascade as a flow chart. They identify three key benefits of flow charting.

- Facilitation of a more profound understanding of the individual process that eventually forms the customers’ overall service experience.

- Identification of the encounters that customers have with different front line staff and specific physical facilities.

- Relating the behaviour and experience of customers at each stage to the background processes that are required to develop quality service at the frontline.

Initial interactions between a customer and the firm create the first impressions of the quality of service in the customer’s mind (Gilmore, 2003). Naturally, such interactions need to be accorded importance and due care as they influence overall customer perceptions. More positive interactions will result in a positive perception of the quality whilst negative ones will portray a negative image of the organization. It is suggested that not all encounters are equally important in building long-term relations. For every organization, certain encounters can be integral to customer satisfaction (Ruskin-Brown, 2005).
The adage, “one bad apple can ruin the whole basket,” has much relevance in the management of service encounters. One negative encounter can drive the customer away, regardless of several, previous positive encounters. This will adversely affect the perception of the service provider’s service quality.

**The post purchase stage**

Lovelock and Wright (2002) refer to this as the final stage of the service process. The service purchase process is completed by making an evaluation of the service quality as well as the level of satisfaction. Depending on the results of the assessment, customers can decide to obtain the particular service from the same service provider or seek an alternative supplier. In other words, the post purchase stage determines customer loyalty. In assessing the quality of service received, customers consider their expectations prior to receiving the service. These expectations are then compared to customer perceptions of the actual service received. Where the perceptions surpass the expectations of customers, then customers conclude that the service was of good quality. Similarly, if the service received does not live up to customer expectations then the service is considered to be of a bad or poor quality. Good quality service begets repeat visits and loyalty, whilst services of a poor quality repel customers. Liu-Thompkins and Tam (2013) go further too assert that it is necessary to understand the factors that create loyal customers. This will enable organizations to ensure that such factors are well monitored and maintained to retain the loyal customers.

**2.2.4 Service quality**

The past decades have witnessed a growing interest in the study of service quality (Kang and James, 2004). This interest which has emerged from both the academia and the
business world has resulted in numerous studies being conducted to further explain the service quality concept. It probably has been the most researched subject in the field of services marketing. Sachdev and Verma (2004) attribute this emergent interest to customers who are becoming more conscious of their needs and thus elevating standards of the service they demand from service providers.

Parasuraman et al. (1988) assert that the best judges of the quality of service are the customers themselves. Since they are the ultimate consumers of the service, they are the most reliable sources of service quality feedback. In concurrence with this school of thought, Kotler (1997) asserts that the role of marketing is to meet and exceed customer expectations. By getting customers to judge on the quality of services, an organization becomes better positioned to provide and deliver a service that does not only meet but also exceeds customer expectations.

Mansor and Redhwan (2012) take concern with the difficulties associated with measuring the quality of services. Mere inspection is not sufficient; rather, customers are compelled to experience the service before developing perceptions on its quality. In general, customers compare perceived service with expected service in which, if the former falls short of the latter, the customers are disappointed (Lewis and Mitchell, 1990; Parasuraman et al., 1985). Service quality does not only focus on the outcome of the service but also on the processes involved in delivering the service (Cronin and Taylor, 1994). The major outcomes of airport services are accessibility and the smooth transition between air and ground modes of transport (Sherry, 2009). In achieving this outcome, airline passengers are exposed to various service encounters and the manner in which services are delivered at each point contributes to the overall airport service quality.
impression. Human beings, as has been pointed out in previous sections, are the main ‘raw material’ in the provision and delivery of services. They are part of the delivery process and consequently they are a part of the service itself.

To this end, this study focuses on the quality of services with specific reference to Harare International Airport which is Zimbabwe’s premier airport. There is currently not much literature relating to the quality of services at Zimbabwean airports, particularly in the context of tourism growth. Although specifically relating to airports and tourism, this study will also make relevant contributions to literature on the general quality of services in Zimbabwe. In conducting this study, the researcher seeks to obtain the opinions of international airline passengers on the virtual inferiority or superiority of airport services in Zimbabwe. This will involve determining their expectations, comparing these against their actual perceptions regarding the various dimensions of services offered at the airports and determining whether airport service quality has an effect on tourist arrivals in the country. The views of customer service managers at the Airport shall also be considered in an attempt to align their perceptions on customer expectations with the actual expectations of customers. The ultimate goal is to improve service quality at the Harare International Airport and by so doing influence the growth of inbound tourism.

2.2.5 The role of service quality

Service quality plays a pivotal role in business and presents organizations with competitive advantage (Bondzi-Simpson, 2007). Kotler (2000) presents four key benefits of service quality; customer retention, avoidance of price competition, cost reduction and retention of good employees. In the context of tourism and airport services, service quality, therefore, plays a critical role in ensuring that airline customers are satisfied with
the services so much that they develop a positive perception toward not only the airport but the tourist destination as a whole.

Airports also generate a substantial amount of revenue from the various services they offer. They also obtain income from rentals and concessions from the various businesses that operate from airport premises. Graham et al. (2008) submit that satisfied passengers will be willing to spend in the various outlets at the airport if the quality of service is satisfactory to them. For instance, efficient check-in and security procedures will reduce the amount of time passengers spend in queues leaving them with more time to shop around and enjoy other commercial services offered. Businesses at airports can even set premium prices for their products and increase their profits as passengers will be satisfied and willing to spend their money.

Fowder et al. (2006) argue that providing quality airport service helps to improve customer satisfaction which in turn leads to increased international arrivals, customer loyalty and relationship commitment. She goes on to posit that highly satisfied tourists spread positive word of mouth and become ‘living’ advertisements for service providers. Attainment of service excellence is initiated by the measurement of service quality. Measuring service quality provides important feedback regarding the status quo and highlights areas to be improved in order to exceed customer expectations. The measurement of service quality, which is integral to this study, is therefore, considered in the following section.
2.2.6 Measuring service quality

There is an increase in the competitiveness of firms across the globe (Hudson, 2008; Gilmore, 2003). This coupled with the increase in customer knowledge and access to information through the rapidly developing information and technology sector, exerts more pressure on businesses to provide products that do not only meet but also exceed customer expectations. O’Neill (2001) concurs with this view by suggesting that there is need for organizations to produce or provide high quality products. Indeed, the production of high quality products presents a competitive edge in the fiercely competed markets of today’s economies. Markets are also more dynamic than ever forcing organizations to continuously evaluate and improve their offerings to suit the needs and expectations of their customers. In light of the above, it is becoming imperative for organizations to assess their positioning with regards to the quality of their services.

In contrast to the traditional view where the evaluation of quality has been largely associated with the production of goods, service providers are also realizing the importance of assessing the quality of their products. Tazreen (2012) notes the dynamic nature of customer expectations and perceptions and suggests that management should continuously assess service quality in order to avoid losing track of their customers. In the context of airport services, Bogicevic et al. (2013) emphasize the importance of service quality. They underscore the need for providing quality services in the attainment of passenger satisfaction.

The starting point in the delivery of a high quality product that meets customer needs is the measurement of service quality. Before engaging in any developments or improvements to the existing service, organizations need to understand the perceptions
and more importantly, expectations of their customers (Gorgi and Sargozaee, 2011). This follows the notion by Kotler (1997) that only customers can give a reliable assessment on service quality. He further avers that businesses exist to meet the expectations of customers. Customer feedback is thus the major input in achieving good quality.

O'Neill (2001) asserts that measuring service quality facilitates the provision of products that conform to the expectations of customers thus improving service quality. There are a number of institutions that provide service quality measurement consultancy. In the airport industry for instance, the Airports Council International conducts airport service quality surveys for its members across the world (www.aci.aero). As part of the programme, thousands of questionnaires are each year completed by airline passengers at airports all over the world. The Skytrax programme also evaluates the quality of services at airports. Passengers are requested to rate various aspects of services at airports as well as to give their recommendations for improvements in service delivery.

While these airport service quality measurement programmes are well renowned and provide invaluable feedback to airports, this research is unique in that it is grounded on the concepts presented in various literature (Fodness and Murray, 2007). Years of research on the concept of service quality have produced a plethora of notions, assumptions, findings and conclusions, which have been incorporated in this study.

A further distinction between this study and the airport service quality measurement programmes conducted at airports all over the world is the use of the SERVQUAL model. The model has been adopted and used to measure service quality in a broad spectrum of industries all over the world. It therefore, enables benchmarking of its findings on airport service quality, against the quality of services offered in different but
related industries such as tourism and hospitality. This would not be possible with airport service quality programmes that only focus on the quality of airport services.

Whereas most international airport service quality programmes focus on the perceptions of passengers, this study, proceeds to ascertain their specific expectations and analyze the gaps that exist between the two (expectations and perceptions). This is another feature differentiating this study from the other service quality measurement programmes in the airport industry. Establishing expectations of passengers at Harare International Airport will provide some direction for service improvement. Knowing the areas that matter most to passengers and their specific expectations will facilitate efficient allocation of the presumably limited resources. An analysis of the gaps will also reveal the prevailing quality of services as well as point out to areas that require more and urgent attention.

Finally, this study is unique in the sense that it attempts to improve service quality by aligning the perceptions of managers with passengers’ expectation on service delivery. This creates a distinct advantage as it incorporates the decision makers who are responsible for resource allocation. By making managers aware of the actual expectations of customers, service excellence is more achievable because managers will be able to effectively allocate resources.

Measurement of service quality is by no means a simple and standardized exercise. Various models have been developed to provide guidance in the measurement of service quality. These shall be considered in Section 2.2.7.
2.2.7 Service quality models

Due to the complex nature of service quality and its measurement, several scholars have developed models in an effort to better explain the concept of service quality. These models are an integral part of service quality and are discussed in this section. A number of models and tools have been developed for the measurement of service quality. The result has been a plethora of tools for this purpose. Seth et al. (2005) presented and analyzed 19 service quality models. Examples of the models relating to service quality include the Technical and Functional model, The Attribute Service Quality model, the SERVQUAL and the SERVPERF models. With the view to illustrating the various options available to this study, four models of service quality are going to be briefly presented and explained.


A major proponent in the field of service quality, Christian Gronroos sought to enhance understanding of service quality by means of a model centred on customer expectations and perceptions. Gronroos (1984) proposed that service quality was comprised of three elements namely, technical quality, functional quality and image. Technical quality refers to the quality of the service received by the customer; whilst functional quality defines the process entailed in the provision of the service or the technical outcome. Image, on the other hand is concerned with the manner in which the service provider is viewed. The image is built on technical and functional quality.


According to this model, good or high service quality is a result of consistently matching customer perceptions with expectations. In other words, a service provider who
continually provides a service in conformance with the expectations of customers achieves high service quality and the opposite is true. This model, like the Technical and Functional model, noted three key elements of services. These are; physical facilities, peoples’ behaviour and professional judgement. Balancing these three attributes is imperative in the attainment of service quality.

For each attribute, a number of factors are identified. Professional judgement is comprised of factors such as diagnosis, competence, discretion and flexibility. The physical facilities attribute entails aspects such as location, layout, timeliness and speed. Finally, the behavioural aspects are made up of communication, courtesy, friendly behaviour and neatness of dressing. Ensuring a balance of the three dimensions is imperative in the attainment of service quality.

iii) Cronin and Tailor’s SERVPERF Model (1992)

In further pursuit of service excellence, Cronin and Taylor (1992) made their own assessment of previous models and developed their own model, particularly in response to the SERVQUAL model. According to them, service quality is solely customer centred and thus based on customer perceptions. Building on the earlier works of Parasuraman et al. (1985; 1988), Cronin and Taylor (1992) developed the SERVPERF model to measure the quality of services. To ascertain the quality of services, the SERVPERF model considers customer perceptions for each attribute.


Whilst most service quality models were developed during the 1980s through to the 1990s, the Internal Service Quality model is among the few models developed in the 21st
century. Frost and Kumar (2000) developed this model basing on the SERVQUAL model of Parasuraman et al. (1985). Unlike most service quality models that focus on the external customer, the model considers the employees of an organization. The duo analyzed the dimensions influencing service quality among the internal customers and internal suppliers. The internal customers refer to frontline staff whilst internal suppliers denote the support staff.

In concurrence with Parasuraman et al. (1985), Frost and Kumar (2000) proposed a gap analysis to further explain the service quality concept. However, in contrast to the SERVQUAL model the Internal Service Quality model only considers two internal gaps. These are:

i) Internal gap 1 - differences in support staffs’ perceptions of frontline staffs’ expectations.

ii) Internal gap 2 - differences between service quality specifications and the actual service delivered

The first three models on service quality presented in this section are customer centric, implying that customers are the determinants of service quality. Whilst the first two models are centred on customer expectations and perceptions, they differ in the components of service quality with Gronroos (1984) proposing technical quality, functional quality and image. Haywood-Farmer (1988) on the other hand suggests that physical facilities, peoples’ behaviour and professional judgement are the attributes related to service quality. Cronin and Taylor’s model, though developed in response to the SERVQUAL, emphasizes on the perceptions of customers. The model considers only customer perceptions in the determination of service quality. Frost and Kumar’s (2000)
model, takes a different perspective to service quality. The model considers service quality from the employees’ perspective, taking into account factors that could influence the quality of services. By developing this model, its developers acknowledged the integral role of employees in attainment of service quality. Although this study does not implement the Internal Service Quality model, it recognizes the importance of the human element in the service delivery process. By considering the perceptions of customer service managers, the study ultimately attempts to facilitate the attainment of service excellence at Harare International Airport.

### 2.2.8 The SERVQUAL Model (Parasuraman et al., 1985; 1988)

The illustration of the three service quality models epitomizes the various schools of thought that have developed over time. Of note and leading in these studies has been the trio of Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, who have done tremendous work on the subject. Their intensive research, mainly characterized by focus group surveys during the 1980s, culminated in the development of a multi-dimensional tool known as the SERVQUAL model.

The trio, having observed the abundance of literature on the quality of goods with hardly any work relating to the quality of services, delved into the concept of measuring the quality of services. Their studies were centred on three fundamental observations:

i) Service quality is more difficult for customers to evaluate than the quality of goods.

ii) Customers evaluate service quality basing on the process of service delivery as well as the outcome of a service.
iii) The only criteria that count in service evaluation are defined by the customers themselves (Zeithaml et al., 1990).

They then sought to gain further insight into the three concepts, by conducting an exploratory study which comprised of 12 customer focus groups. The focus groups, drawn from the service industry, resulted in a vast amount of customer based knowledge. They concluded that the key to ensuring good service quality is meeting or exceeding customer expectations from a particular service (Zeithaml et al., 1990). Another result of the focus group studies was the establishment of the 10 dimensions used by customers in judging service quality. Each dimension was consistent amongst the focus groups and extended across all the service sectors studied. The ten dimensions were identified as follows: tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, competence, courtesy, credibility, security, access, communication, and understanding the customer (Zeithaml et al., 1990).

Upon completion of the exploratory study, Zeithaml, Parasuraman and Berry undertook a quantitative research to design an instrument for measuring customer perceptions of service quality. It is this project that resulted in the development of the SERVQUAL model.

The SERVQUAL tool comprised of 22 statements to establish the general expectation of customers regarding a service as well as 22 matching questions measuring customer assessments of a specific service organization in the service industry. One statement measured an expectation about service organizations whilst the other measured a perception about the actual service organization under study. Each question was accompanied by a 7 point scale ranging from (strongly agree) to (strongly disagree). Scores were obtained by subtracting the expectation score from the perception score.
The various scores obtained from this stage were analyzed using statistical analyses resulting in the development of five new dimensions: **reliability, assurance, tangibility, empathy and responsiveness.** These dimensions created an alternative name for the model, **RATER** which is an acronym for the five dimensions.

**Reliability** relates to the ability to perform the promised service dependably.

**Assurance** is defined by the knowledge and courteousness of employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence.

**Tangibles** refer to the appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel and communication materials.

**Empathy** considers the provision of caring, individualized attention to customers.

**Responsiveness** expresses the willingness to help customers and provide prompt service (Buttle, 1996).

The SERVQUAL model suggests that consumers’ perceptions on service quality are influenced by three distinct gaps that occur in organizations. Customer perceptions on service quality depend on the nature of the discrepancy between the expected service (ES) and the perceived service (PS). Therefore when:

- Expected service is greater than perceived service (ES>PS), then perceived quality is less than satisfactory.
- Expected service is equal to perceived service (ES=PS), perceived quality is satisfactory
- Expected service is less than perceived service (ES<PS), perceived quality is more than satisfactory (Parasuraman et al., 1985).
This study explicitly adopts the SERVQUAL model developed by Parasuraman, Berry and Zeithaml. Choosing this model from a host of others was chiefly influenced by its relatively comprehensive nature. The model takes into consideration a wider range of attributes than most service quality models. The SERVQUAL’s greatest strength lies in its ability to determine and rank customer priorities in their order of importance. The gap analysis component further elucidates the precise areas that need improvement (Seth et al., 2005).

The use of the model in various industries across the globe is also evidence of its applicability and relevance to the real world. Because of its versatility, the findings from this study can be benchmarked against those of other airports across the world. Furthermore, the quality of services at Harare International Airport can be benchmarked against those of related industries such as hotels, airlines, and tourist destinations. Literature gives evidence of the applicability of the SERVQUAL model to various sectors. Examples of studies that have used the SERVQUAL model in various industries include:

i) Hospitality industry (Yap and Kew, 2007; Bondzi-Simpson, 2007; Walbridge and Delene, 1993)

ii) Aviation industry (Lubbe and Louw, 2010; Cunningham and Clifford E. Young, 2004)

iii) Banking industry (Mels et al., 1997)

iv) Retail industry (Parasuraman et al., 1994)

v) Higher education (Ford et al., 1993)

vi) Accounting firms (Freeman and Dart, 1993)
Health services (Lam, 1997)

The SERVQUAL is not without its own shortcomings and critics. Buttle (1996) has been a major critique of the SERVQUAL model whilst Cronin and Taylor (1992; 1994) have been involved in a series of critiquing and counter critiquing with Parasuraman et al. (1988, 1994).

Some of the major critics levelled against the SERVQUAL are listed as follows;

i) It is not substantially proven that customers assess the quality of services by comparing their expectations to their perceptions of actual services received. In other words, the SERVQUAL’s determination of service quality is not backed by sufficient evidence.

ii) The model focuses on the processes involved in service delivery rather than the outcome of the service.

iii) Service encounters may vary for the same customer experiencing the same service thus misrepresenting the customer’s assessment of service quality.

iv) The repetitive nature of the SEVQUAL questionnaire may prove to be monotonous for the respondents. The customer is required to give two responses for each of the statements.

v) Cronin and Taylor (1992), largely criticize the model for its inability to clearly differentiate between the theoretical aspects of service quality and customer satisfaction. According to them the disconfirmation theory is thus not suitable for measuring service quality, given that service quality is an attitude. Iacobucci et al. (1994) concur with Cronin and Taylor (1992) on the exclusion of customer expectations in measuring service quality. According to them, customers may not
have prior expectations before the service encounter, hence making the inclusion of expectations irrelevant.

In spite of its critics and shortcomings, the model provides a sound platform for service delivery improvement. Asuboteng et al. (1996), whilst acknowledging the model’s shortcomings insist on its applicability in service quality literature. The SERVQUAL model is statistically grounded and therefore, a valid instrument centred on measuring the quality of services across the industrial divide (Shahin and Janatyan, 2011). The tool is therefore, considered highly effective in measuring the quality of services (Donnelly et al., 2006; Sureshcander et al., 2001; Wisniewski and Donnelly, 1996). Adoption of the model by firms in various industries over time indicates its acceptance and relevance (Buttle, 1996).

Furthermore, a simple search of the term ‘SERVQUAL research’ on the Bing search engine generates 1,520,000 results, evidence of the popularity of the model in both academic and professional research. Service improvements based on customers’ inputs are more effective than those based on the service provider’s assumptions. Consequently, the CAAZ could incorporate the findings of this study in improving service quality at Zimbabwe’s premium airport. In assessing the quality of services at Harare International Airport, focus will be on the SERVQUAL models’ five dimensions, which have been described earlier as the key determinants of service quality. These five dimensions are fully explained in Section 2.2.9.
### 2.2.9 The service quality dimensions

According to Parasuraman et al. (1985) the RATER dimensions were common across all industries and moreover, they assumed that they would suffice to ascertain the quality of services. The model entails customers rating services for each of the dimensions. This approach shall be adopted in this study, hence the need to clearly explain each of the dimensions.

**i) Tangibility**

Owing to the largely intangible nature of service, it has been suggested that customers seek clues regarding service quality from the intangible aspects of the service (Bitner, 1990). Wilson et al. (1997) posit that the physical aspects of services merely serve as evidence to support the intangible product. More specifically, Wakefield and Blodgett (1996) assert that in scenarios where customers generally spend considerable time within the service provider’s physical environment, the physical aspects of the servicescape are detrimental in ascertaining service quality. In concurrence, Saha and Theingi (2009) assert that customers derive satisfaction from the physical aspects of services. According to them, where tangible service elements are good, customers tend to spread positive information about the provider thus creating a favourable image. Given that this study specifically focuses on an international airport, where typically passengers can be within the confines of the terminal building for up to three hours or more, the tangibility dimension becomes a crucial aspect of service quality.

Tangibility is a SERVQUAL dimension that refers to the appearance of the physical surroundings and facilities, equipment, personnel and the way of communication (Hudson, 2008; Ruskin-Brown, 2005; Parasuraman et al., 1988). In other words,
tangibility is the physical evidence of the service. It encompasses the physical facilities, appearance of personnel, tools or equipment used to provide the service. Bitner (1990) asserts that the physical appearance of facilities has a pivotal role to play in the delivery of quality service. The tangibility dimension deals with the creation of first impressions that are not only positive but also long lasting and memorable to the clients. Due to the intangible nature of services, customers tend to seek clues in respect of the service experience from the tangible aspects associated with the service. Organizations providing services should aim at developing a favourable, unique and long lasting impression in the minds of their clients (John, 2005). The key benefit lies in the development of a loyal client base that is prepared to remain loyal to the organization in spite of any changes in the environment. The key features of the tangibility dimension can be related to the airport environment to include airport facilities, equipment and communication material.

The tangibles of the SERVQUAL dimension are in sync with Bitner’s (1992) three dimensions of the servicescape. She proposed three dimensions in analyzing the service environment. These are:

i) Ambient conditions

ii) Spatial layout and functionality

iii) Signs, symbols and artefacts

Ambient conditions include elements such as weather, temperature, music and odours. The spatial layout and functionality considers factors such as arrangement of furnishings, and the ability of such arrangements to satisfy customers. Signage and décor are the essential elements of the third dimension—signs, symbols and artefacts.
Airport facilities

Airport facilities play a pivotal role in the airline industry. Like in other sectors, such as manufacturing, clothing and textile production, and hospitality, airport facilities have an impact in the development of the final product (Graham et al., 2008). Well maintained and modern facilities contribute to efficient production of high quality products. Poor facilities often lead to lower quality products as well as time and raw material shortages. Clients often judge a company by the appearance of its facilities (Hudson, 2008; Bitner, 1990). Proceeding with a decision to purchase a product from a particular company can be immediately reversed by the manner in which the prospective client perceives the appearance of the facilities. Mansor and Redhwan (2012) posit that airport facilities enable the attainment of efficient and effective airport systems to facilitate flight operations, airport maintenance, operations and administration.

Airport facilities, include both airside and landside components. They also include facilities directly related to the arrival, departure and ground movement of aircraft, collectively known as the airside. Landside facilities provide an interface between air and ground transportation modes (Caves and Gosling, 1999). These include aircraft hangars, aircraft parking aprons, general aviation terminals and airport support facilities. Passengers on commercial flights are mostly exposed to the land side facilities such as the terminals where a variety of other facilities and services are provided to them.

Facilities play a role in influencing passenger expectations toward the quality of airport services (Chao et al., 2013). As with any other facilities, the better the facilities provided, the higher the expectations of passengers toward their service quality. Examples of such facilities include lifts, restaurants, and toilets, waiting areas, trolleys and conveyor belts.
Airport management should ensure that all facilities at the airport are in good working condition. Poorly managed facilities could easily ruin the good expectations and perceptions of passengers toward the quality of the entire service at the airport, thus damaging the image and reputation of the airport (Doganis, 1992). All other facets of airport service that may be efficient and above standard can be tarnished by poorly maintained airport facilities. For instance, malfunctioning elevators or escalators could greatly inconvenience passengers moving from one part of the airport to the other as they would have to resort to stairs which do not only consume more time but are also strenuous particularly to elderly passengers. If such a scenario occurs during a peak period, then the effects will go beyond tiring passengers and could even lead to delays in flight departures as passengers may take longer to arrive at the boarding gates. This will further inconvenience passengers, adding to the negative perception of service quality at the airport as a whole. It is therefore, imperative for airport management to consistently ensure that facilities at the airport are well maintained and in good working condition.

An important aspect of the tangibility dimension concerns the spatial layout at the airport. Bitner (1992) posits that effective layouts facilitate smooth entry and exit as well as providing access to the host of facilities at the airport. Equipment and tools are also components of the tangibility dimension of the SERVQUAL model. The appearance of equipment and tools creates expectations in the minds of customers, regarding the quality of service they shall receive. Airport authorities should ensure modern, well maintained tools and equipment. This contributes to the development of positive expectations and perceptions in the minds of passengers.
At an airport such equipment and tools would include, baggage conveyor belts, check-in computers, aircraft tow tugs and ramp shuttle buses. Broken trolleys, malfunctioning conveyor belts and inefficient ramp equipment will only serve to create negative impressions of the overall service in the minds of passengers. This has adverse effects on the perceived quality of service at the airport. Ensuring that equipment and tools used in providing services to passengers are always serviced and functioning properly is of importance in service delivery. As part of the assessment of the physical aspects associated with airport service quality, passengers at Harare International Airport shall also be required to rate the extent to which airport equipment appears modern.

**Spatial layout and functionality**

Spatial layout relates to the manner in which furnishings, counters, and equipment are set up (Ryu and Han, 2010). In their works, Wakefield and Blodgett (1996) are of the view that customers are more relaxed and happy in a spacious service environment. This affects their overall experience and subsequently their perceptions on service quality too. Lovelock and Wirtz (2007) concur and go on to suggest that the spatial layout creates a specific image for a firm, positioning it in the eyes of customers.

At an airport this could translate to the layout of seats in the waiting area, security scanning equipment and information display screens among others. As suggested by Ryu and Han (2010), the spatial layout also determines the perceptions developed by customers regarding service quality and as such there is need for management to always ensure that the layout does not constrict customers. Figure 2-1 depicts the interior of Incheon International Airports’ passenger terminal. The award winning airport, has well-spaced furnishings and adequate open spaces to facilitate free movement of passengers.
As implied by Lovelock and Wirtz (2007), furnishings need to be conveniently and strategically set up in a manner that will facilitate the effective delivery of services. Similarly, check-in counters need to be well positioned in a manner that will make the process of passenger check-in practical by, for instance allowing enough space for passengers to form orderly queues.

**Appearance of personnel**

Although the appearance of frontline staff is usually associated with the tangible elements of the SERVQUAL, this study considers it to be more influential in assessing the models’ assurance dimension. This is because of its effect on customers, where the appearance of staff can either build or destroy customers’ confidence in the service provider.
Unlike in the production of goods, an organization’s personnel are synonymous with service delivery. They are a key component of the product itself. Customer service personnel directly in contact with the customer are the core of the service and, according to Parasuraman et al. (1988), have a pivotal role in determining the quality of service delivered by an organization. The manner in which a customer contact employee dresses sends a signal to the customer of what to expect from the service.

What employees wear is highly important, as they are the first people customers interact with. Image communicates significantly about the values, achievements, work ethic, and professionalism associated with an organization. Most first impressions are concluded on overall appearance, and people often decide whether or not to proceed with the service encounter upon observing appearance of customer contact staff.

Since the staff at an international airport are usually the first ‘locals’ that tourists will meet, their appearance is all the more important in creating a positive first impression of the country (Cejas and Rendeiro, 2006). Similarly, the same frontline staff will be the last local people encountered by tourists and their appearance will be part of the final impressions of the country. The dressing of airport staff thus goes beyond creating an image for their particular employer or airport but for the country at large. As such, it is vital for airport staff to dress in a neat, professional manner which will clearly depict a positive image.

Airports, unlike most entities are comprised of various departments, companies and organizations. At an international airport, the various departments or organizations include immigration, customs, airport management, police, security, passenger handling,
cargo handling, airlines, shops, restaurants, banks, car rentals, and travel agents. Passengers come into contact with employees from these various companies and departments each time they travel. The various staff working at the airport need to dress in a manner that clearly depicts their function at the airport. Therefore, staff should not only dress neatly but also professionally enough to clearly show their respective functions at the airport. This also helps passengers to know whom to approach for assistance. This study, in cognisance of the diverse organizations providing services to passengers at the Harare International Airport, strives to include customer services management from various organizations.

**Communication material**

Passenger communication plays a pivotal role at an airport. It is necessary for passengers to be always informed of the various activities and procedures taking place at the airport. Flight arrivals and departures, check-in and boarding, flight delays, reschedules and cancellations are examples of the various issues that need to be communicated to passengers. Furthermore, passengers need visible, accurate and conveniently placed signs directing them to the various facilities and locations at an airport (Fewings, 2012; Caves and Gosling, 1999; Bitner, 1990). Toilet facilities, departure lounges, car parks, security check points, restaurants and boarding gates all need to be clearly marked for the passenger’s convenience. Getting passenger communication right can be a significant aid in improving overall airport efficiency and more importantly, in providing a better passenger experience.

Well thought, clearly designed and conveniently positioned signs and symbols do not only make it easy for passengers to manoeuvre around the airport, but also reduces time
wastage in trying to locate various facilities and service points. Time governs activities around the airport hence there is a strong need to adhere to scheduled times (Widarsyah, 2013). This entails ensuring that passengers avoid wasting time unnecessarily.

The décor at an airport also has an important role of communicating the cultural values of the airports’ location and according to Fodness and Murray (2007), passengers value this aspect greatly. Various physical features at the airport can also communicate with passengers, influencing their emotions and attitudes. Kazda and Caves (2007) support this notion and additionally assert that the physical set up is so crucial to passengers at an airport, to the extent that it can even stress them if not well managed. Figure 2-2 depicts part of the physical features at Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Airport in India. The natural aquatic reflection at the airport could create an essential calming effect on airline travellers especially, nervous first time flyers.

![Figure 2-2 Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Airport](http://www.rediff.com/15.02.2015)
Specific reference is given to the check-in, security and boarding points. Airports can also make use of these ambient conditions to create an excellent service environment for travellers. Good lighting, proper ventilation and suitable sounds at airport terminals will only contribute toward a pleasant environment for passengers. In areas with extreme temperatures, regulating temperatures in the terminals improves passenger comfort and creates a good service environment.

The advent of advanced communication technologies calls for airports to adjust their communication channels with passengers. For example, public display systems could be adapted to suit the changing preferences of customers, thus reflecting modern communication platforms.

Announcements through the use of public address systems are common feature at all international airports. These need to be audible in order to achieve the objective of communication. Noisy, too low or too highly pitched announcements will not only fail to relay the message to the intended audience but will also irritate passengers and create a negative perception of the service. The dissemination of information at the Harare International Airport shall be assessed as part of the tangibility dimension’s analysis.

**Comfortable seating**

Another area of concern, particularly in this study on the quality of airport services, is the availability of comfortable seating. Wakefield and Blodgett (1996) uphold that in services that might entail customers sitting for relatively longer hours, seat comfort is an essential aspect of service quality. They further posit that the comfort of seats is a function of the physical attributes of the seats as well as the space between the rows. Wakefield and
Blodgett (1996) explicitly suggest that the amount of space between seats determines ease of mobility and ultimately the quality of services at the airport. They further argue that seats that are compacted restrict the movement of passengers and therefore, make it difficult for the customer to relax and move freely. Barker and Pearson (1990) go on to propose that closeness of seats determines the comfort of the seats. Customers may easily get annoyed or feel uncomfortable if they are seated too close to each other. In this study, passengers at the Harare International Airport shall be asked to rate their expectations and perceptions regarding the comfort of seats in the terminal. Findings from this attribute will contribute toward the overall assessment of service quality.

**Cleanliness**

In their work to establish the significance of cleanliness in the servicescape quality, Wakefield and Blodgett (1996), concluded that cleanliness was a vital determinant of perceived service quality. Miller (1993) also echoed the same sentiments. Customers tend to associate cleanliness with the quality of service they anticipate to receive. Apart from the health benefits, cleanliness creates a positive image of facilities. As a result, it is prudent for managers to make sure that all facilities especially the toilets are well maintained. The role of cleanliness is reflected in this study as passengers are going to be requested to rate the cleanliness of Harare International Airport.

**ii) Reliability**

Reliability is the ability to perform the promised service in a dependable and accurate manner (Parasuraman et al., 1985). It entails performing the service correctly on the first occasion. Reliability is an extremely important quality to have in the customer service realm. Proving to clients that a company is reliable by always doing what it says, is one
of the most fundamental aspects of customer retention. The more an organization proves its reliability the more difficult it becomes for its customers to be persuaded to try competitors’ products. Parasuraman et al. (1988) profess the importance of reliability. They single out this dimension as being detrimental to the assessment of quality, mainly because it is dependent on all the other dimensions as well as the various processes entailed in service delivery. Failure in any of the other dimensions for instance, could adversely affect the rating of the services’ reliability.

In today’s increasingly competitive business environment it is continuously becoming important for organizations to create positive perceptions in the minds of their customers. There is need for organizations to prove that they are the best and that customers should leave competitors for them. The best way to achieve this is by striving to always perform services as promised.

Airports are no exception in the quest for reliable service delivery. The various departments and organizations serving passengers at the airport should strive to provide services as promised. Airlines and passenger handling agents should adhere to the scheduled times for check-in and boarding. Airlines should also strive to keep to their schedule for takeoff and touchdown. Additionally, it is vital to ensure that all resources such as machinery and equipment used in delivering the service are well maintained and performing well. For instance, if the check-in system goes down and there is no backup system then manual check-in will be done and this will obviously take longer than scheduled. Subsequently service will not be delivered as promised. Precautions such as having a backup system for check in are necessary if an airport aspires to provide reliable services.
Customers expect to be treated in a consistent way and that each time, service providers will do as they say (John, 2005). This will provide the customer with a sense of security and confidence in the company. More importantly, it generates positive perceptions and loyalty from the customers. In order to ensure reliable service delivery, organizations should plan, prepare and organize everything that is needed to deliver the service (Mahapatra, 2010). Where necessary, work should be reorganized in response to varying workloads so that customer needs are always met and exceeded.

Proper planning is a requisite for excellent service at airports (Graham et al., 2008). For instance, there should be plans on how to handle the increased traffic during peak periods. This could mean increasing check-in agents, baggage handlers and security personnel to cover such periods when there is an influx in passengers at the airports. Appropriate measures would also need to be considered to avoid congestion in the car parks and waiting areas. Similarly during off peak periods management ought to prune their workforce accordingly to also avoid unnecessary loitering and redundancy of staff.

In Zimbabwe, where electricity load shedding is common, airport management should always have back up plans to avoid black out situations at the airport. Failure to do this could be detrimental to the provision of quality services at the airport. Computers will go off, check-in and boarding may be disrupted, baggage conveyor belts will be disabled and all these factors will contribute to the development of a negative perception toward overall service at airports.

Bacal (2013) cites an example of McDonald’s fast food outlets, whereby he illustrates the fairly predictable nature of services at the food outlet. According to Bacal (2013), there is uniformity and predictability in service delivery at McDonald’s restaurants across
the world. It is for this reason therefore, that most of the outlet’s customers continue to patron McDonald’s instead of other options. Similarly service delivery at Harare International Airport should be predictable and dependable. There has to be consistency in the services provided to passengers travelling through the country’s airports. This calls for clear instructions and procedures, which are religiously adhered to for the convenience of passengers. Time schedules for instance, need to be adhered to, entry and exit procedures should be well communicated to passengers and observed in such a way that passengers are well informed of what is expected of them.

Proper record keeping also contributes to the delivery of reliable service. Well maintained records facilitate prompt retrieval of information to address customer needs promptly (Hudson, 2008). Reliability also entails accuracy in the provision of promised service. Records relating to customer service should be accurately made and updated. Customers need to be supplied with accurate information all the time and it is necessary to ensure that all records are highly accurate.

Customers are always in need of information (Peppers and Rogers, 2011). This information includes arrival and departure of flights, cancellations, rescheduling and delays of flights. Information ought to be accurately maintained for the convenience of passengers. Records of frequent flyers should also be maintained by passenger handling agents. This will go a long way in improving customer service. For instance, identifying a frequent flyer at the check in point, addressing them by their name and identifying their preferences from the system (such as to be seated in a certain row on the plane or to relax in a particular lounge before departure) will give the passenger a sense of belonging. This will definitely contribute toward a positive perception of overall service at the airport.
iii) Assurance

Assurance, according to Parasuraman et al. (1985) refers to knowledge and courtesy of employees as well as their ability to convey trust and confidence. Service providers are expected to be experts. According to them, if a service provider is highly skilled, yet customers do not see that, their confidence in that provider will be lower and so will be their assessment of that provider’s service quality. As the ‘human face’ of the organization, customer contact staff needs to exude confidence and thus generate trust and loyalty from customers. Frontline staff plays a crucial role in strengthening relations between the organization and its customers (Bollen and Emes, 2008). Dortyol et al. (2014) perceive assurance as the most valuable determinant of service quality. Service providers can communicate their knowledge, expertise and competencies in various ways before they do their work (Gilmore, 2003). For instance, they can display industry certifications on badges worn by employees, include certification logos on emails, letters and reports or display certification on posters, in newsletters, magazines and handouts. By communicating competencies, providers can help manage customer expectations and influence their service quality assessment in advance.

Staff at an airport should be sufficiently knowledgeable about aviation as this will enable them to answer passenger queries confidently. In fact, Sugars (2014) opines that service providers cannot satisfy their customers unless they are fully knowledgeable. Chalofsky et al. (2014) propose that managers invest in the continuous acquisition of knowledge for their staff. Their assertion being that knowledgeable staff is more productive. Passengers often expect any person who works at the airport to be able to satisfactorily respond to their queries. This therefore, implies that regardless of their function at the airport, staff
should at least be able to assist passengers. For example, an employee of a bank situated in the terminal should be able to provide a client with information regarding (who might also be a passenger) check-in opening times, departure of an international flight or the scheduled flight arrivals for a particular day. This can be achieved by team work between the airport authority and the other service providers at the airport. In Zimbabwe, this would imply that the CAAZ would provide its tenants a daily schedule of departures and arrivals for each day. A restaurant employee or immigration official would then know the expected arrivals and departures for that day, even though they may not be strictly required to do so. This will all be in an effort to be knowledgeable and capable of assisting passengers at the airport. As part of the SERVQUAL analysis, passengers at Harare International Airport shall be required to rate and give their expectations regarding the knowledge of frontline staff, their expertise and competencies.

As explained in the section on tangibility, the human element is core in the provision of service. Personnel involved in service delivery form an important part of the service (Dortyol et al., 2014; Chinunda, 2011: Mahapatra. 2010). In addition to knowledge, service providers need to show courtesy when dealing with customers (Chou, 2009). This entails the use of appropriate body language and tone of voice whenever they are delivering service. A key attribute of the assurance dimension is the ability of personnel to interact with clients in a polite, considerate and friendly manner.

It is of great importance for airport personnel to be able to interact with passengers from diverse backgrounds. International airports particularly, host people from different countries and cultures every day. This then makes it necessary for airport staff to be able to interact with these people in a manner that is accommodative and non-offensive. It
may be necessary for airport staff to undergo training on how to interact and deal with people from diverse cultures at the same time. They also need skills to handle irate passengers, who may be infuriated by delayed or cancelled flights among other causes. Such scenarios require personnel to maintain their cool and act diplomatically.

Furthermore, staff may also be trained in foreign languages in a bid to improve interaction with passengers as well as to instil confidence in them. This does not only enable interaction, but also instils confidence in the travellers, as they will have one less hurdle of trying to communicate in English which might be very difficult for some of them. Such efforts by airport staff are more likely to draw positive perceptions from passengers and by so doing enhance service quality.

Peppers and Rogers (2011) underscore the importance of trust in business relationships. They posit that trust ultimately increases sales. In a similar line of thought, Akbar and Parvez (2009) perceive trust to be a prerequisite of stable and collaborative relations between an organization and its’ customers. It emerged from the works of Akbar and Parvez (2009) that trust was an important determinant of customer loyalty. This study will also request airline passengers at Harare International Airport to rate the levels of trustworthiness shown by frontline staff. The ratings on trustworthiness of service personnel shall contribute to the determination of service quality at the Airport.

Adhering to the interests of customers enhances customer relationships. The interests of customers are best obtained from the customers themselves; therefore, it is vital for organizations to consistently ascertain the expectations of their customers. This study, thus, makes a substantial contribution towards the establishment of trust between airport
service providers and airline passengers, by obtaining information regarding passenger expectations.

iv) Responsiveness

Parasuraman et al. (1992) identified responsiveness as one of the dimensions in the SERVQUAL model. According to them, responsiveness relates to the willingness of frontline staff to help customers and provide prompt service. Employees need to be willing to respond promptly to customer enquiries. Kumar and Meenakshi (2006) echo these sentiments and further argue that service related problems tend to escalate swiftly, hence the need to solve these problems at an early stage. However, this can only be possible if the personnel are knowledgeable about the services they are providing and are equipped with the necessary resources with which to assist the clients (Ruskin-Brown, 2005). Willingness alone will not suffice to gain a positive perception from clients, there is always need to act on the willingness and this can only materialize if appropriate resources are at the disposal of customer contact staff. Additionally, it may also be necessary to delegate sufficient decision making authority to frontline staff to make prompt decisions in response to customer requirements. Management needs to empower their customer contact staff to make the appropriate decisions in responding to client needs.

Employees of the different organizations and departments at an airport are faced with several enquiries and complaints from passengers every day. Due to the nature of airport activities, most of these enquiries require prompt responses as all activities at the airport are governed by ‘time’ (Paternoster, 2005; Fojt, 1995). For instance, times for check-in, aircraft boarding, flight take off and baggage collection are all strictly scheduled and
failure to adhere to scheduled times may lead to losses in revenue, stiff penalties and more importantly, disgruntled and unsatisfied passengers. Thus it is essential to ensure that swift responses are always made. The responsiveness dimension is therefore, highly relevant to airport services.

Whilst there is a limit to the amount of decision making authority that is available to frontline staff, organizations providing services at the airport need to empower their customer contact staff with sufficient authority to make lower level decisions. This will reduce waiting time for passengers and facilitate prompt responses. There is also a need to ensure that those members of management with decision making authority are always readily available (Chikwendu et al., 2012). This will accordingly make it easier and faster to respond to passenger needs requiring management decision making authority.

There are three perspectives from which a company’s level of responsiveness can be evaluated. These are speed of service, sensitivity to customer concerns and awareness of changes in the general needs of the target customer. Successful businesses will continually search for ways to improve in all three of these areas.

Chinunda (2011) advocates for the redressing of accessibility and availability in the attainment of responsive services. This could be achieved by adopting more convenient and efficient systems such as short message service (sms), social media and other internet-based live chat platforms. Developing economies have particularly been observed to follow too many bureaucratic practices, often lengthening the service encounter unnecessarily (Hill, 2014; Dwivedi, 1967). It is such bureaucracy that needs to be eradicated in order to provide more responsive service.
Organizations should also develop their customer service staff by recruiting customer oriented staff that have a passion for effectively responding to and resolving customer issues (Dortyol et al., 2014). Companies should also train their staff accordingly, ensuring that all training efforts are directed toward responding to customers’ needs by being sensitive and considerate to their individual circumstances.

Finally, requesting for customer feedback is an effective means of obtaining valuable information (Fojt, 1995). Such information will direct the company on improving levels of responsiveness. There is no better source of information in trying to improve service delivery and responsiveness, than the customer themselves (John, 2005). Feedback can be obtained through various means such as telephone and email questionnaires, or even suggestion boxes. The concept of feedback shall be considered in this study. It is necessary to assess feedback from airport passengers in order to facilitate relevant improvements in service delivery. It will also be interesting to establish the methods that are adopted in obtaining feedback by firms at the airport.

v) Empathy

According to Parasuraman et al. (1988), empathy is concerned with the provision of caring individualized attention. Alern (2008) asserts that employees may carry out their duties perfectly, yet still lack that ability to show care and concern for the customer. According to him, this extra mile may need to be instilled through staff training programmes. Furthermore, overwhelmed staff may not have the ability to go this extra mile as their focus will only be on getting the job done. In their research, Bollen and Emes (2008) learnt that most customers concurred that most companies lack the human
element in dealing with them. Customers desire to be treated as human hence they prefer empathetic rather than mechanical resolution of problems.

Customer service agents are a company’s first contact point when dealing with customer complaints, problems and discontent. Passengers respond differently to the airport environment. At an airport, passengers get their tempers flared up by several causes, from lost baggage, delays and flight cancellations to poor service at restaurants and slow moving queues at immigration. The fatigue and exhaustion of being on a long haul flight alone could also trigger anger and dissatisfaction. First time flyers could also be overwhelmed and intimidated by the busy environment within the passenger terminal. Such passengers may become uptight and anxious. It could imply that airport personnel need to be highly empathetic, understanding passengers’ feelings and being able to deal with their emotions.

Shopping at airports is another aspect of the empathy dimension. This aspect is increasingly becoming popular, with Graham et al. (2008) emphasizing the important role of retailers at the airport. Even African airports such as O.R Tambo International Airport, South Africa are embracing this concept as evidenced by the wide selection of retailers within the terminal (Flanagan, 2014). Narayanan (2012) further explains the benefits of having a wide range of retailers at an airport, chief among them being the generation of revenues from the concession fees paid to the airport authority by the retailers.

Page (2009) asserts that passengers at airports are affected by a host of factors. He lists the key concerns of airline passengers at the airport as:

- Efficiency of check-in
• Efficiency of exit and entry formalities such as security checks and security controls.
• Baggage collection
• Availability of various retail outlets
• Spacious and relaxed environment

Customer service personnel should learn to listen actively to customers when they speak. It is important to pay special attention to the details as to why customers are angry. Often a customer may be angry at the lack of attention displayed by a previous customer service agent and this may be a bigger problem than actually having an issue with the product or service. Apologizing to the customer and expressing a sincere desire to help, often goes a long way in calming and restoring the customer’s loyalty. In the increasingly competitive environment, where stronger relationships with customers are becoming imperative, there is need for organizations to prioritize on improving service quality. This may be effectively achieved by being empathetic to customers. Expressing concern for customers facilitates the development of positive service perceptions in the minds of customers.

Empathy alone does not suffice in creating positive perceptions in customers’ minds. He suggests that there is need to follow up on the empathy by actually resolving the issue at hand. Whilst apologizing, showing concern and understanding the customer is necessary and indeed the first step in addressing a customer complaint or enquiry, an ‘empathy resolution’ statement should be made followed by the actual action of resolving the issue at hand. The empathetic resolution statement is comprised of an apology for the problem and a statement of what is going to be done to resolve it. A simple empathetic resolution
statement provides the customer with a balanced approach that leads to focus on resolution, whilst at the same time not completely ignoring the customer's need for empathy. If both the empathy and resolution portions of the statement are clearly communicated, a successful service experience is set to ensue.

In an airport set up, a tourist may confront a passenger handling agent or airline representative complaining of luggage (containing clothes to be worn during the tourist’s vacation) that was wrongly routed to another destination. In such a scenario the customer service staff approached would need to apologize and offer to resolve the problem as best they can. In such a scenario, an airline could even have to offer the passenger money to at least buy a change of clothes whilst awaiting the arrival of their luggage. Such a gesture would show the airline’s concern for their customer and although the passenger may leave the airport without their luggage, they may be consoled and appreciate the effort by the airline.

The SERVQUAL model holds that perceived service quality is a function of customer expectations and perceptions (Parasuraman et al., 1985). This study having adopted the SERVQUAL model will, for each of the five dimensions, assess the expectations and perceptions of travellers at Harare International Airport. The following section provides an insight into the concepts of customer expectations and customer perceptions.

2.2.10 Customer expectations

Central to the SERVQUAL is the concept of customer expectations. Parasuraman et al. (1985) posit that service quality is a function of customer expectations and perceptions. They define customer expectations as specific beliefs that are held by customers with
regards to a service. It is against these expectations that actual service delivered is measured.

According to Brassington and Pettitt (2000:58) an expectation is an outcome or event that a person anticipates. They view expectations as combinations of attitudes and beliefs. Expectations often dwell on benefits anticipated by a customer from the marketing mix.

**Significance of customer expectations**

Customer satisfaction is a desirable and crucial aspect of any business. Exceeding the expectations of customers is imperative in attaining excellent service. Loyalty and the subsequent survival and growth of firms are key benefits of exceeding customer expectations. For a business to exceed the expectations of its customers it is essential to have full knowledge and understanding with regards to the meaning of these expectations.

In the absence of a profound appreciation of the expectations, it becomes almost impossible to attain service excellence. In concurrence, Krantz (2001) underscores the risk that is associated with failing to clarify and understand the expectations of customers. According to Krantz (2001), this could result in loss of customers to more dedicated competitors.

Etzel et al. (1997) emphasize the need for knowledge of customer expectations and liken the situation of businesses that conduct transactions without considering their customers’ expectations to ‘searching for a needle in a haystack.’ This metaphor illustrates how difficult it is for organizations to satisfy customers when they do not have a clear sense of direction about what is to be achieved.
Etzel et al. (1997) underscore the need for management to ascertain the expectation level of the market served. It should be their goal to consistently provide services that exceed the prevailing levels of expectations in the market. Failure to exceed customer expectations will effectively lead to loss of customers and failure to attract new ones. True expectations of customers can only be reliably obtained from the customers themselves. It is therefore, necessary for organizations to conduct research in order to determine expectations of customers. This study fulfils this requirement by requesting passengers travelling through Harare International Airport to disclose their expectations regarding service delivery.

It is essential to understand the concept of customer expectations of services because they play a pivotal role in the measurement of service quality. Customers compare their perceptions of the actual service against their expectations to determine whether service quality is good or bad (Zeithaml and Bitner, 2013; Parasuraman et al., 1991). Ramachandra et al. (2010) note with concern, the failure by many organizations to provide excellent service. They attribute such failure to the provision of services which the providers believe meet customer expectations rather than providing services that conform to customers’ actual expectations. In other words, service providers make assumptions regarding the expectations of their customers. Requesting customers to reveal their expectations would be the only sure way to ascertain genuine customer expectations (Kotler, 1997). This is the role assumed by this study in asking passengers to rate their expectations regarding service quality at Harare International Airport. Such knowledge will provide the CAAZ with an insight on what their customers really expect.
of them thus facilitating the provision of services that conform to the desires of passengers.

Bondzi-Simpson (2007) specifically highlights the need for a clear understanding of passenger expectations in achieving service excellence. With passengers being detrimental to the existence of airports, airport authorities should always take cognisance of developments in customer expectations. Moreover, managers should have an in depth understanding of what their clients expect from them as it is the only way in which they can be able to provide a product that does not only meet but also exceeds customer expectations. Assessment of customer expectations should not be a once off activity; rather it should be an ongoing process, conducted regularly to keep pace with the dynamic needs of passengers (Zeithaml and Bitner, 1996). Hence, this study should establish a platform for future researches of this nature to facilitate continual attainment of service excellence.

**Levels of Customer Expectations**

Zeithaml and Bitner (2003) assert that there are fundamentally two levels of expectations namely the *desired service* and the *adequate service* expectations. The desired service refers to the hopes and wishes that customers have upon receiving a service. It relates to the customers’ anticipations regarding the service they expect to receive from the provider. For instance, an airline passenger arriving for a flight at an airport hopes to eventually board his flight from the airport. Similarly upon boarding a flight, the passenger hopes that the airline will safely carry him through to his destination.
The adequate service expectation on the other hand is the threshold level of acceptable service. It is the acceptable level of service to customers. Zeithaml et al. (2008) posit that it is the minimum tolerable expectation. For instance a passenger may put up with a delayed flight during periods of bad weather as long as they eventually get to travel and arrive at their destination. It is also worth noting that adequate service expectations are shaped by various factors including; personal needs, situational factors, predicted service and service promises (Zeithaml and Bitner 1996).

Having identified the two levels of expectations, Zeithaml et al. (2013), further define the zone of tolerance. The zone of tolerance is the range through which customers are prepared to accept any variances in service. This range lies between the adequate service level and the desired service level. Figure 2-3 illustrates the concept of the zone of tolerance.

![Figure 2-3 The zone of tolerance](Parasuraman et al., 1991)

When the level of service is within the zone of tolerance, customers may not notice any variations, neither will they take into account the performance of the service (Zeithaml et al., 2013). They further posit that customers only notice service performance when
service levels fall out of range whether positively or negatively. For instance, when a passenger joins a queue for check-in at the airport, they expect to be served within 15 minutes. If they manage to complete the check-in process within five minutes of standing in the queue, then they notice the efficiency, are probably surprised and also happy with the service. Likewise, where service exceeds the desired service of expectations, customers get frustrated and complain. In the airport context, a passenger who stands in the check-in queue for 30 minutes, where they were expecting to stand for 15 minutes only, would become agitated.

In understanding the concept of customer expectations it is also imperative to appreciate the volatile nature of the zone of tolerance. Parasuraman et al. (1991) profess that the zone of tolerance may be affected by various factors.

**Factors Influencing Expectations**

In order to manage the expectations of customers it is necessary to comprehend the factors that influence them. Moreover, the desired service and adequate service level of expectations facilitate a better understanding of the manner in which the factors influence customer expectations. There are various factors that shape expectations in the minds of customers. It is important to understand these factors as they play a pivotal role in the development of expectations which are in turn, critical in the determination of service quality.

- **Personal needs**

These influence the desired service expectations and can be physical, social, psychological or functional. Take for instance, a traveller who after a busy day at work...
heads straight to the airport to catch a flight. She expects to find short queues at the various service points, to relax and probably get a good meal in the business class lounge before departure.

- **Lasting service intensifiers**

Lasting service intensifiers are individual stable factors which lead customers to heightened sensitivity to service (Zeithaml and Bitner, 2013). The derived service expectation is typical of such intensifiers. Derived expectations relate to those expectations that are driven by other people. For instance, a parent choosing seats for her family on a flight.

The personal service philosophy is yet another factor and it refers to the customer’s general attitude with regards to the meaning of service. An airline traveller, who has worked as a customer services agent for a passenger handling company, would have more knowledge of what is entailed in service delivery at the airport. Such a passenger would, therefore, have higher expectations of the service as they know for instance the amount of time it should take for an agent to check in a passenger.

- **Temporary service intensifiers**

Parasuraman et al. (1991) define temporary service intensifiers as short term factors that increase a customer’s awareness of their need for a service. This set of factors also determines the adequate service level of expectations. Typical examples include personal emergencies, and accidents. In these circumstances the level of adequate service expectations is raised, thus reducing the zone of tolerance.
• **Perceived service alternatives**

The perceived availability of alternative suppliers for specific services tends to reduce the zone of tolerance as the adequate service level expectations are raised. Similarly in situations where a customer can alternatively provide the service by themselves, the adequate service expectations also increase. For instance, a passenger who is exposed to only one airline in their area, (such as in the case of Air Zimbabwe being the only scheduled airline for flights between Harare and Kariba) will not have much expectations as they are only limited to their experiences on that single airline. In such cases, passengers will tolerate even lower levels of service simply because they have no alternatives. On the other hand where there are several providers of the same service, the adequate service level expectations are bound to increase as passengers are exposed to various levels of service quality and can easily switch amongst alternatives.

• **Customer’s self-perceived service role**

This describes the degree to which customers exert influence on the service they receive. Overt customers tend to have higher expectations than those who are not. A restaurant patron for example, who has too many specifications on how they want their meal done, will have greater expectations than one who settles for whatever is provided and is not too particular. Another example is of customers who air their views and complain if they are not satisfied. Such customers will have greater expectations than those who will just accept the flaws in the service without complaining to the service provider.

• **Situational factors**

These are service performance conditions that are beyond the control of the service provider. Where customers perceive certain conditions as being beyond the service
provider’s control they tend to lower their expectations (Parasuraman et al., 1991). For instance in the event of bad weather, airline passengers can tolerate delays and flight cancellations. Their expectations on airline flight punctuality and reliability tend to be lowered. In such cases passengers will expect and tolerate lower service performance as they believe that it is beyond the service provider’s control and therefore not their fault.

- **Predicted service**

The level of service that customers believe they are likely to receive is known as predicted service (Zeithaml and Bitner, 2013). Predicted service is influenced by a number of factors namely, explicit and implicit service promises, word of mouth communication and past experiences.

**Explicit service promises**

Zeithaml and Bitner (2013), assert that explicit promises entail both the direct and indirect statements made by service providers regarding their service offerings. Direct statements are those that are made when sales personnel call on customers, whilst the indirect statements refer to advertisements through various media such as radio, television, brochures and the internet. These statements raise customers’ expectations to a certain level. For instance airlines can advertise emphasizing on their reliability and safety automatically raising expectations of passengers in this regard.

**Implicit service promises**

Fundamentally, these refer to other service related cues other than the explicit promises such as price. In general, a highly priced service often elevates customer expectations. For example an airline passenger who purchases a first class ticket which may be thrice
the price of the economy class, will have much higher expectations on the service they will receive from the airline. Similarly a tourist, who pays for a holiday package that is much higher than the standard, will expect to get more services from the package.

**Word of mouth communication**

This refers to the comments about the service from family, friends, colleagues and even experts. Whatever they say about the service, will have an impact on the expectations that form in the potential customer’s mind. They can either raise or lower service expectations.

**Past experience**

Customer expectations are formed from the experiences of customers in the market place. Past experiences with a service provider also shape expectations in the customer’s mind. Whether good or bad, a customer’s past experience will either raise or lower service expectations. For example, if a passenger has previously had to wait in a long queue to be checked in, on their next trip through that same airport they will expect the same. Their expectations on good and efficient service will therefore be lowered.

It is important to note that customer expectations are dynamic and can be influenced by a host of factors at any given time. It then becomes critical for management to monitor the expectations of their customers, and where possible understand the factors shaping them. It is only by doing so that they can be able to provide a relevant service that meets or even exceeds the customer’s expectations.

For purposes of this study, the expectations of airline passenger passing through Harare International Airport are going to be obtained from the passengers themselves by means
of questionnaires. Furthermore they are going to be compared with customer perceptions
of the actual service they receive at the airport in order to determine the quality of airport
services. Customer service expectations are therefore an integral part of this study.

2.2.11 Customer perceptions

The second key feature of the SERVQUAL model is customer perception. According to
Schiffman and Kanuk (2000:147), perception may be defined as “a complex process by
which people select, organize and interpret sensory stimulation into a meaningful picture
of the world”. They further assert that it is necessary to understand the perceptual process
as it relates to a customer’s decision to purchase a product. In their view, customers are
influenced by the way they perceive the product.

A similar definition is given by Etzel et al. (1997:121) who posit that perception is a
“process of receiving, organizing and assigning meaning to information or stimuli
detected by our five senses.” According to them, it is in the way that we interpret or give
meaning to the world around us.

Knowledge of customer perceptions is a requisite for the growth and success of any
business for it is only through this way that a business can be able to know whether or not
it is performing well and satisfying its customers (Aspfors, 2010). Today’s globalized
economy is characterized by immense competition amongst companies. Consequently, as
asserted by Recklies (2006) customer perceptions are also dynamic. This necessitates
regular assessment of customer perceptions. It is also becoming more complicated to
differentiate amongst products. Furthermore, many goods and services are continuously
facing emerging competition from substitutes. This makes it imperative to strengthen the
relations between service providers and their customers. Price differentiation alone is no longer sufficient for companies to create loyalty. Instead, it is the perceived experiences of customers during service encounters that can make or break relationships (Kumar and Meenakshi, 2006). Problems experienced during a single service encounter could ruin their entire relationship, destroy loyalty and cost the business in terms of lost sales and profitability (Recklies, 2006).

Recklies (2006) further asserts that in making buying decisions, customers evaluate the benefits they perceive from a particular product and compare with the cost. The customer’s perceived value when buying and using a product goes beyond usability and encompasses a set of emotional values. These values include social status, exclusivity, friendliness and responsiveness. Likewise, perceived costs are not limited to price but also encompass costs of usage, the lost opportunity to use another offering and potential switching costs. Customers therefore, establish an equation between perceived benefits and perceived costs of one product and compare these to similar equations of other products. It is important to note that just as expectations are dynamic, so are customer perceptions. The factors contributing to the dynamism of customer perceptions are varied.

In the case of passenger perceptions on airport service quality, Fodness and Murray (2007) observe that there has not been much work done. This is more so for perceptions on the Harare International Airport’s services. Through this study, it is hoped that the body of knowledge with regards to passenger perceptions on airport service quality can be enhanced, particularly for the Zimbabwean case where no significant work has been done in this regard.
The perception process

Belch and Belch (2004:117) view perception as a process depending on internal factors that include experiences, needs, beliefs, moods and expectations. They present perception as a process involving three distinct phases. The three stages are: sensation, selecting information, and interpreting the information.

a) Sensation

This relates to the immediate and direct response of the five senses to a stimulus. Examples of such stimuli include advertisements and brand names. Customers use the five senses in the development of a representation of the stimulus. Organizations recognize the importance of understanding the psychological reactions of customers to marketing stimuli.

b) Selecting information

Although sensory inputs are an integral part of the perceptual process, there are other factors that determine whether marketing stimuli will be responded to and how they will be interpreted. These include psychological factors such as the personality needs of consumers, their motives, experiences and expectations. These factors explain why customers decide to concentrate on some things and not others. Two people may have different opinions regarding the stimuli as a result of their differences in selection, attention and comprehension.
c) **Interpreting the information**

Having selected and attended to the stimulus, organizing, categorizing and interpreting the incoming information ensues. This phase of the process is influenced by internal psychological factors. It is also a highly personalized stage.

d) **Significance of customer perceptions**

Albrecht (2005) asserts that businesses are mainly established to satisfy customer at a profit. To this end, the key role of marketing is to ensure that customers are satisfied and retained. Firms, according to Albrecht (2005), should assess customer satisfaction by ascertaining customer perceptions regarding the product offering. Assessment of customer perceptions therefore, provides important information on the positioning of the service provider in the minds of customers. Etzel et al. (1997) opine that customers engage in a decision process as they attempt to deal with the marketing environment. All consumers go through this process, hence the need to comprehend it. The consumer buying process according to Etzel et al. (1997) is depicted in Table 2-1.

**Table 2-1 Consumer buying process**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Need recognition</td>
<td>Consumer is moved to action by a need</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative identification</td>
<td>Consumers identify alternative products, brands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative evaluation</td>
<td>Consumers weigh the advantages and disadvantages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision</td>
<td>Consumers decide on whether or not to proceed with the purchase of the product.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post purchase Behaviour</td>
<td>Customers seek reassurance regarding the correct Decision</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Etzel et al. (1997)*
There are several factors influencing the buying decision process. Perceptions play a pivotal role in the third stage of the process – consumer weighs the pros and cons of the alternatives. During this stage, customers assess all alternatives identified. This assessment is usually based on various criteria. Perceptions usually determine the decisions made by customers. If customers continually opt for the service provider’s product amongst others, business sales are likely to increase. In concurrence, Etzel et al. (1997:105) assert that it is desirable for the target market to have a positive perception for a product as it translates into customers opting to buy, rather than not to buy. This ultimately leads to increased loyalty and customer retention. It is therefore evident that customer perceptions are an essential aspect in the attainment of service excellence. Consequently, managers need to be consistently aware of the perceptions of the service. Hellriegel et al. (2005) emphasize the importance of customer perceptions. In their opinion firms offer products to customers in the hope that the customers develop a favourable perception toward the specific offering.

Factors influencing customer perceptions

a) Experience

John (2005) affirms that customer perceptions are prone to change with the progression of their relationships with service providers. As customers encounter more experiences with the service provider, their relationship also develops. As a result, Recklies (2006) posits that the initial fact based perceptions gradually evolve into generalized opinions.

b) Changes in customers’ circumstances

Changes in the customer’s circumstances, needs and preferences influence their
perceptions (Bitner and Zeithaml, 1996). Given the dynamic nature of customer needs and situations, customers’ perceptions regarding services are also bound to change.

c) **Competitors’ products**

Competitor offerings and public opinions about specific offerings also determine the perceptions of customers. Recklies (2006) asserts that where the competitors’ offering is altered, perceptions of customers also change. If competitors offer better products, it may lead to customers shifting their positive perceptions from their current supplier to the competitor’s products.

### 2.2.12 The SERVQUAL Gap Analysis

A distinct feature of the SERVQUAL model is the Gap Analysis. The model considers various aspects of services and indicates 5 gaps in relation to the attainment of service quality. Figure 2-4 illustrates the gaps that are analyzed by the model.
Although this study concentrates on Gap 1 and Gap 5, the SERVQUAL Gap Analysis comprises of five gaps. The five gaps and their possible causes are presented in Table 2-2.
This study concentrates on two gaps, specifically, the difference between manager perceptions on customer expectations and the actual expectations of the customers (Gap 1) and the difference between customer expectations and perceptions (Gap 5). Most organizations and scholars have concentrated on Gap 5, disregarding the other gaps. In analyzing the quality of services at Harare International Airport, an analysis of Gap 1 shall also be made. Managers, being the ultimate decision makers and custodians of the resources are an integral part of the service delivery process (Ruskin-Brown, 2005). In recognition of the important role of managers, Kazda and Caves (2007) consider all efforts to attain service quality to be fruitless unless properly managed. The two gaps under this study’s spotlight shall be further explained.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gap</th>
<th>Causes of gaps</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1   | - Insufficient marketing research  
     - Misinterpretation of information regarding customer expectations  
     - Research not focused on demand quality  
     - Too many layers between the front line personnel and the top level management |
| 2   | - Insufficient planning procedures  
     - Lack of management commitment  
     - Service design that is not clear  
     - Unsystematic new service development process |
| 3   | - Deficiencies in human resource policies  
     - Ineffective internal marketing  
     - Inability to match demand and supply  
     - Lack of proper customer education and training |
| 4   | - Failure in matching performance to promises made  
     - External communication campaigns that over promise the service offer  
     - Failure to manage customer expectations |
| 5   | - Misinterpretation of service quality by customer |

Table 2-2 Causes of the five SERVQUAL gaps
2.2.13 Gap 1: The difference between customer expectations and management perceptions

The first gap of the Gap analysis considers the difference between what managers believe customers want and what customers actually expect of service delivery (Lambert and Luiz, 2011). The gap recognizes the fact that managers do not always understand their customers’ expectations. John (2005) highlights the need for managers to device relevant strategies to lower customers’ perceived risk. One way of achieving this goal may be to align management’s perceptions of the expectations of customers with the actual customer perceptions.

According to Parasuraman et al. (1988), there are three determinants of Gap 1. These are marketing research, upward communication and the layers of management. Where firms regularly research on the needs and other aspects of their customers, the gap is likely to be smaller. Whilst this is a logical assumption, it is the standpoint of this study that; the volume of customer related information acquired is not the key issue instead; it is what managers decide to do with the research findings that is more crucial. Market research may indeed, be conducted, yet failure to effectively use the information will not yield any positive results for service quality. In terms of upward communication, customer contact staff often know the customers better than managers. As a result, the frequency and modes of upward communication tend to influence the size of Gap 1. The more frontline staff provides management with feedback on customers, the more knowledgeable management is thus lowering the service quality gap.

The contribution of frontline staff in customer related decision making is paramount. This study is cognisant of this conception hence, it seeks to ascertain the frequency with which
managers of different organizations at Harare Airport, incorporate the input of customer service personnel. Findings on this aspect of the study should help in explaining the Gap analysis results.

Finally, Parasuraman et al. (1988) posit that the hierarchical levels between management and lower level contact sales staff determine the frequency and effectiveness of communication. The more the number of layers, the greater the risk of barriers to communication and consequently the size of Gap 1. Lambert and Luiz (2011) highlight the need for managers to control the heterogeneous nature of services. Such control can be achieved by conducting training programmes for customer contact staff. They further suggest the implementation of evaluation programmes in order to monitor and ensure alignment of frontline staff performance with the expectations of customers.

In carrying out this study, managers from the different organizations at the airport shall be requested to highlight what they believe customers expect of their services. Similarly, customers shall also indicate their expectations on service quality. A comparison of these two aspects shall then be matched in order to ascertain the existence of any gaps and ultimately the quality of services.

2.2.14 Gap 5: The difference between customer expectations and perceptions

Whilst Gaps 1 through to 4 focus on the service provider, Gap 5 concentrates on the customer, hence its relevance to this study. The gap is basically computed basing what customers generally expect from firms offering a similar service, for instance from airlines in general or in this case, airports. These expectations are then compared to their perceptions regarding services received from a specific player in the scene such as Air
The determination of service quality (SQ) as proposed by Parasuraman et al. (1985) can be summarized and expressed by the following computation:

\[ SQ = \sum_{i=1}^{n} P_i - E_i \]

where \( P \) = perception scores and, \( E \) = expectation scores

The formula above basically translates into the summation of the individual scores for differences between customer perceptions and expectations. Negative scores depict failure to provide services to the satisfaction of customers as expectations will be higher than the perception on actual performance. Similarly, a positive score will reflect exceeding of customer expectations as the actual performance surpasses customer expectations. Gilmore (2003) suggests a set of factors influencing Gap 5. Figure 2-5 illustrates the gaps concept and the factors influencing them.

![Customer Expectations](image_url)  
Customer Expectations  
Influenced by advertising, sales people, word of mouth and pricing

![Customer Perceptions](image_url)  
Customer Perceptions  
Influenced by actual experience, shared experience with other customers

Figure 2-5 Determinants of Gap 5 (Gilmore, 2003)
2.3 Rationale of the study

This section of the Chapter considers the fundamental issues of the study and highlights the significance of conducting this research. The keys aspects shall be introduced and clearly explained to expose their relevance to the study.

2.3.1 The role of tourism

The consistent under-performance of Zimbabwe’s tourism sector has been the key motivation for this study. Like most African countries, Zimbabwe’s tourism potential remains underutilized (Naude and Saayman, 2004). As the key driver of this study it is therefore, imperative to consider the tourism aspect in this section. The complex nature of tourism further necessitates an overview of the sector which will also facilitate a better understanding of this research’s significance.

More countries are harnessing the tourism sector towards economic development. Globally, the sector continues to record positive growth rates annually (UNWTO, 2014; Al-Ababneh, 2013). Whilst the developed world appears to reap more significant benefits, most developing economies have underutilized tourism sectors and their tourism receipts are substantially lower than in the developed countries (Naude and Saayman, 2004; Christie and Crompton, 2001). In spite of this disparity, tourism still plays an important role in developing economies (Goeldner and Ritchie, 2006; Irandu, 2004; Youell, 1997). This study will not only contribute to the current literature on tourism and service quality in Zimbabwe; it also seeks to provide practical factors that can enhance the performance of the country’s tourism sector.
Whilst tourism has been known to provide economic, social, environmental and cultural benefits, this study will solely focus on the economic benefits of tourism. Stynes (1997) professes that the economic impacts of tourism are of greater significance as they are regarded as key indicators in planning and development by governments and other international organizations. He further asserts that marketers and managers often base their decisions on the economic impacts of tourism rather than the cultural, environmental and social aspects.

2.3.2 The economic significance of tourism

According to Mirbabayev and Shagazatova (2011) tourism is now amongst the largest and most rapidly developing sectors of economic activities. Several developed economies bear witness to the immense contributions of the tourism sector to economic growth.

a) Foreign currency generation

Foreign currency generation is the major contribution from tourism, particularly in the economies of developing nations (Irandu, 2004; Naude and Saayman, 2004; Youell, 1997; Williams and Shaw, 1992). Inbound tourists bring along with them foreign currency for their expenditure, which ideally contributes to the host country’s reserves. This foreign currency is used to import the various products which the country does not have, subsequently improving the lives of the host country’s citizens. Whilst Zimbabwe has adopted a multi-currency regime since 2009, the country requires more foreign currency to boost its reserves. The country’s traditional foreign currency earners such as gold and platinum have generated less revenue in recent years. A boost in inbound tourism would considerably contribute toward the building up of foreign currency reserves. It is anticipated that the findings of this study would ultimately make a
contribution toward increasing inbound tourists and consequently boosting the country’s foreign currency reserves.

b) Creation of employment

In addition to generating revenue for the economy, tourism also creates employment. In fact, Anand and Mallik (2013) consider tourism to be one of the leading global sources of employment. Stynes (1997) is of the view that employment can be used as a measure of the impacts of tourism. It is therefore, a critical aspect in determining the effects of tourism in a country or region. Tourism has often been described as a labour intensive industry (Samimi et al., 2011). As a result, several opportunities are available for employment seekers and particularly young people for part time or casual work. Whilst some of the employment is skilled, less skilled people without much formal qualifications also stand to benefit. Hotels, restaurants, night clubs, taxis, and souvenir sales are direct sources of tourism-based employment, whilst indirectly the supply of goods and services needed by tourism related businesses also creates jobs. In Uganda for instance, the Bwindi Impenetrable Forest sustains the livelihoods of hundreds of people by employing several people in the forest which offers gorilla viewing.

Benefits derived from the tourism sector’s employment opportunities can be enhanced if the companies offer more reasonable wages, working hours and job security. For instance the Serena hotels group has further improved the livelihoods of its employees and their dependents by paying wages that are above minimum wage and offering various financial services to their employees. The World Tourism Organization (2014) indicates that tourism supports 7 percent of the world’s economy. It has been reported that an estimated excess of 10 000 graduates are produced annually from Zimbabwe’s universities, yet, the
industrial operations are on a decline with several companies downsizing or closing down (Masekesa and Chibaya, 2014; Moyo, 2013). An upturn in the volume of international tourists into the country would obviously have a positive effect on the labour market. This further justifies efforts to increase the flow of international tourists into the country and necessitates a study of this nature.

c) **Productivity enhancement**

In addition to foreign currency generation and employment creation, tourism also supports various industries in the host country. Stynes (1997) avers that by procuring various amenities from firms in other sectors, tourism indirectly benefits more businesses and people. For instance, stationery, food supplies, furniture and linen used by hotels at tourist resorts can be procured from local individual and corporate suppliers. Continued demand of their products by the tourism sector necessitates production and thus securing the jobs of those involved.

### 2.3.3 The tourism product

Tourism by its nature is classified as a service as it exhibits the characteristics of services as defined by Kotler (1997). These are intangibility, inseparability, perishability and heterogeneity. These features have been defined and explained in Section 2.2.2. Muhcina (2008) concurs with Ma and Law (2006) regarding the complex nature of the tourism product. The complexity arises from the several elements comprising the tourism product. Accommodation, transportation, retailing and the attractions themselves are examples of the components of tourism.
Mohammed (2006) and Youell (1997) view the tourism product as a destination and proceed to give a diagrammatic illustration of the various components of the tourism destination. Their view of the tourism product is illustrated in Figure 2-6. In concurrence, Christie and Crompton (2001) assert that the tourism product entails more than just the destinations’ tourist attraction(s). Although each of the elements is of significance, this study will concentrate on the transport sector.

![Diagram of the tourism product](image)

**Figure 2-6 The tourism product (Youell, 1997)**

The integrated nature of the service product has implications in the attainment of service quality. Because the product is a composite of several elements, it is vital to monitor service delivery and ensure service quality of the individual components. Haghkhah et al. (2011) concluded from their studies, that service quality of the individual elements of tourism has a direct impact on overall tourist satisfaction, and their willingness to return to the destination.

In ensuring the quality of services, Yorke (2013) highlights the importance of understanding tourists’ motives for travel. Such knowledge makes it possible to
effectively plan for various aspects of tourism. Services can also be delivered to better suit the needs of visitors travelling for various purposes. For instance, where business travellers dominate arrivals, airport and hotel accommodation can be tailor made to include facilities best suited for business travellers such as conference rooms and business related television channels. In recognition of this important aspect, this study sought to determine the usual motives of travel for the passengers travelling through the Harare International Airport.

In a study on the tourism service quality in Egypt, Mohammed (2006), in concurrence with Wylie (2000), underscores the role of quality as a source of competitive advantage for the various dimensions of tourism. Al-Ababneh (2013) also concluded that the quality of tourism services influences tourist satisfaction. Improving facilities, accessibility and attractions of the destination could therefore, increase levels of tourist satisfaction.

It is therefore, evident that service quality of each dimension of the tourism product is the cornerstone of the overall tourist experience. This study seeks to ascertain the applicability of this notion to the Zimbabwean situation.

**Determinants of tourism growth**

Tourism growth has been attributed to various factors. Patil (2013) proposes five factors that influence the growth of tourism.

**i) Environmental factors**

The climate, scenery, flora and fauna are integral in determining the expansion of tourism. A pleasant climate draws tourists; particularly warmer climates, such as
Zimbabwe’s, attract visitors from cooler parts of the world. Beautiful scenery such as mountain ranges, various water bodies and opportunities to view rare scenery contribute to a destination’s attractiveness, hence increasing the potential for growth.

ii) Socio-economic factors

Patil (2013) singles out accessibility as the most important factor in this category of factors. According to him tourist destinations ought to be highly accessible. Where major source markets are overseas, air transportation becomes significant in providing accessibility to destinations such as Zimbabwe. Considering the importance of air transport, it is also necessary to ensure that infrastructure related to accessibility is well serviced and capable of providing smooth access to the tourist attractions. As such, road networks and airports should be a top priority in infrastructural development.

Other socio-economic factors include the availability of good lodging and dining facilities. Reliable ancillary services such as telecommunications, banking and healthcare are also crucial in the development of tourism. Where ancillary services are well provided visitors are enticed to stay longer.

Chapinit and Phetranoon (2011) further suggest that the levels of education of the population also influence tourism. Education enlightens people on the existence of certain tourist attractions, creating an urge to visit and experience such facilities. The more people develop such a need for particular tourist attractions, the higher the number of arrivals likely to visit, thus increasing growth. Altbach et al. (2009) highlight the increasing access to education across the world. Such trends tend to encourage tourism as posited by Chapinit and Phetranoon (2011).
Understanding the various source markets of a country’s tourism products is also critical in the development of tourism. According to Pearce (2005) the origin of tourists is a crucial factor in the study of tourist behaviour. Major changes in the countries of origin can have a significant impact on tourism growth. For example, when Western Governments discouraged their citizens from travelling to Zimbabwe during the years 1999 and 2000, a sharp decline in the growth of tourism in Zimbabwe followed.

**iii) Historical/cultural factors**

Historical sites are often a major tourist attraction. Where such facilities are present, tourists can continue to visit the destination thus increasing chances of tourism growth. Patil (2013) cites the Egyptian pyramids and the Great Wall of China as typical examples of historical factors that draw tourists continuously. In Zimbabwe sites such as the Great Zimbabwe ruins typify historical facilities that have a potential to enhance tourist arrivals.

**2.3.4 Recent trends in Zimbabwe’s tourism**

This study is largely based on the trends of tourism growth in Zimbabwe. It is therefore, necessary to consider recent trends in the country’s tourism. Following the years of the recession and downward trend in tourism arrivals, Zimbabwe’s tourism seemed to be on a recovery path after the signing of the Global Political Agreement in 2009. Tourism has however, not been growing at its full potential, and this has been the main motivation for this study. The Zimbabwe Tourism Report (2014) notes a 2% growth in tourist arrivals for the year 2013. Although the growth was positive it still fell below the global rate of 5%. Table 2-3 shows the trend of tourist arrivals to Zimbabwe by source market.
Table 2-3 International tourist arrivals to Zimbabwe by region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>% share</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>1,600,496</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>137,456</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Americas</td>
<td>66,826</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>42,798</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oceania</td>
<td>26,031</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East</td>
<td>45,876</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,919,483</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ZTA (2014)

Africa is clearly the largest source market for Zimbabwe’s tourist arrivals. In 2013, the region accounted for 83% of total arrivals into the country. The Americas contributed 3% whilst Asia and the Middle East accounted for 2%. The least contribution was from the Oceanic region at 1% of total arrivals.

Albeit recording a low growth rate, individual rates of growth from the major source markets were positive. The ZTA (2014) reveals that after Africa, Europe is the next major contributor to Zimbabwe’s tourist arrivals. This makes Europe, Zimbabwe’s largest overseas market. A summarized analysis of the number of arrivals from the European continent is presented in Figure 2-7.
Britain and Ireland recorded the greatest number of tourists into Zimbabwe accounting for a total of 40,000 tourists for the year 2013. Germany and France also had relatively significant volumes of tourists into the country when compared to the rest of the European countries.

Youell (1997) indicates various motivations for travel. People travel from one country to the other for a number of different causes. Classifying tourist arrivals by motive of travel is useful for purposes of planning, particularly within the tourism context. The tourism market can be segmented to better address the needs of the different groups. The motives for travelling to Zimbabwe can be split into five distinct groups; business, education, shopping, visiting friends and relatives and other reasons (ZTA, 2014). Table 2-4 shows the profile of tourists to Zimbabwe classified according to their motive of travel.
Table 2-4 Tourist arrivals by purpose of travel 2012/2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivation of travel</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>349,996</td>
<td>220,822</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>19,748</td>
<td>16,569</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopping</td>
<td>128,378</td>
<td>152,948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holiday and VFR</td>
<td>1,244,441</td>
<td>1,381,160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>52,667</td>
<td>61,070</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,794,230</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,832,570</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ZTA (2014)

Table 2-4 segments Zimbabwe’s tourist arrivals by motive or purpose of travel. The table compares the 2013 arrivals for each segment with those who arrived in 2012. The greatest proportion of arrivals was travelling for holiday and visiting friends and relatives. These visitors were mostly from within the African continent and specifically from the SADC region.

According to the ZTA (2014), the high number of shoppers is a result of mostly Zambians, Mozambicans and Malawians passing through Zimbabwe on their way to South Africa for shopping. Although they will be travelling to and from South Africa, they technically appear as shoppers in Zimbabwe’s tourist arrival statistics because they often spend one night in Zimbabwe.

In spite of the general increases in arrivals from the other categories of motivation, business tourists declined by 37% between 2012 and 2013. This decline is attributable to the general economic slump experienced in the country. This study will also ascertain the reasons for travel of the passengers at Harare International Airport. Such segmentation will assist the CAAZ in planning for the satisfaction of customer needs in each category of travellers.
It is also of interest to consider the recent trends regarding the modes of transport used by tourists to Zimbabwe. Table 2-5 depicts the modes of transport for tourists.

Table 2-5 Mode of travel used by tourist arrivals 2012/2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode of travel</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>% change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Air</td>
<td>227,663</td>
<td>222,818</td>
<td>-2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road</td>
<td>1,566,567</td>
<td>1,610,052</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,794,230</td>
<td>1,832,870</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ZTA (2014)

The majority of tourists travel to Zimbabwe by road and there has been a 3% growth in road transport users to Zimbabwe from 2012 to 2013. The trend is in sync with the trend shown for tourist arrivals by source market. The fact that the majority of visitors travel to Zimbabwe by road supports the notion that most visitors into the country come from within the Southern African region. Although air transportation accounts for less than half of those who travel by road, it is still an essential mode of transport for further growth of the tourism sector. Air transport remains an important mode of travel for visitors from overseas markets. Following the introduction of low cost airlines such as Fastjet and Fly Africa to the Zimbabwean airline industry in 2014, it is possible that some road users will divert to the cheaper versions of air travel. The low cost carriers which currently operate flights within the region, specifically to South Africa and Tanzania have the potential to make a positive contribution to the growth of air transportation in Zimbabwe. Furthermore, the growing importance of aviation globally is likely to enhance growth in the Zimbabwean aviation industry.

In spite of the recorded decline in users of air transportation to Zimbabwe, it is necessary to assess the recent trends regarding the airlines operating flights into the country. Given
that this study focuses on the aviation sector, knowledge of the airlines within the industry fosters better understanding of the sector.

Table 2-6 Market share of airlines operating to Zimbabwe

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Airline</th>
<th>Market share</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>South African Airways</td>
<td>32.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA Comair</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emirates</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air Zimbabwe</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South African Airlink</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopian Airlines</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya Airways</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KLM</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air Namibia</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South African Express</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air Botswana</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt Air</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air Mozambique</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angolan Airlines</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ZTA (2014)

Table 2-6 clearly shows that South African Airways dominates the airline industry in Zimbabwe. BA Comair and Emirates also command relatively larger shares than most airlines. Although KLM and Egypt Air were operating flights to Zimbabwe during the year 2013, both airlines have since withdrawn their services from Zimbabwe. This negatively affects tourism as it reduces the number of potential tourist arrivals using air transport. Relevant authorities need to implement measures that encourage foreign airlines to fly to Zimbabwe in order to boost tourist arrivals.

Tourist arrivals into Zimbabwe are largely from within the African continent, specifically the sub-Saharan African region. Table 2-7 gives an analysis of the arrivals from sub-Saharan Africa for the years 2012 and 2013.
Table 2-7 Arrivals from sub-Saharan Africa 2012/2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source country</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>% change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>719,637</td>
<td>715,260</td>
<td>(1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malawi</td>
<td>241,344</td>
<td>286,510</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zambia</td>
<td>278,856</td>
<td>233,721</td>
<td>(16%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mozambique</td>
<td>146,922</td>
<td>174,137</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Botswana</td>
<td>64,926</td>
<td>59,441</td>
<td>(8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>14,740</td>
<td>27,285</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRC</td>
<td>23,584</td>
<td>23,164</td>
<td>(2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Namibia</td>
<td>11,487</td>
<td>11,037</td>
<td>(4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>7,273</td>
<td>8,230</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swaziland</td>
<td>9,338</td>
<td>5,117</td>
<td>(45%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesotho</td>
<td>20,051</td>
<td>4,942</td>
<td>(75%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>3,914</td>
<td>4,598</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mauritius</td>
<td>1,191</td>
<td>2,960</td>
<td>149%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angola</td>
<td>1,437</td>
<td>1,796</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>1,274</td>
<td>1,426</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>428</td>
<td>1,033</td>
<td>141%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>861</td>
<td>467</td>
<td>(46%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seychelles</td>
<td>2,352</td>
<td>383</td>
<td>(84%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other countries</td>
<td>13,007</td>
<td>9,292</td>
<td>(29%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

South Africa is the main source of inbound tourists, accounting for 46% of all arrivals from the African continent. In spite of the marginal decline of 1% South Africa still has the greatest number of arrivals into Zimbabwe. Malawi and Zambia also have a significantly high number people visiting Zimbabwe. In terms of growth, Malawi Mozambique and Tanzania recorded positive rates. These increases are a result of the cross border business trips within the SADC region. The majority of these arrivals are transits travellers, passing through Zimbabwe on their way to their destinations within the region. A notable increase of 141% was recorded for Egyptian arrivals. This was attributable to the introduction of the Egypt Air flights to Harare in June 2013. The airline has however, since withdrawn its services from Harare, citing operational challenges.
Overall, tourist arrivals from within the African continent recorded a marginal 1% growth from 2012 to 2013.

2.3.5 The significance of the air transport industry

Technological advancements, evolving preferences of travellers and the fast paced globalization are contributing to the increasing demand for air travel. When compared to other modes of transport such as road, rail and sea, air travel is increasingly becoming popular. The Air Transport Action Group attributes this popularity to its unique network which offers worldwide connectivity (ATAG, 2005). For this reason, the air transport sector plays a vital role in tourism growth and the ultimate advancement of economies. Whilst aviation has long been a part of social and economic development in developed countries, the developing world is yet to fully appreciate and exploit the concept of air travel. With the setting in of globalization, the mode of transport is gradually gaining popularity in Africa.

As an African country, Zimbabwe is no exception to the general trend in the adoption of air travel in Africa. Although the majority of international visitors travel to Zimbabwe by road (ZTA, 2013), the dynamic nature of the globalized world, will eventually catalyze the growth of the country’s aviation sector. For instance, 2014 witnessed the introduction of the low cost airline concept in the Zimbabwean airline industry. This concept had long since been introduced in Europe and other developed parts of the world. An understanding of the role of air transportation is therefore, essential in the progression of this study.
A number of benefits are derived from the aviation industry. The Aviation Transport Action Group (2005) classifies these benefits into social and economic. These benefits are summarized and presented in Table 2-8.

### Table 2-8 Benefits of air transportation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Economic Benefits</th>
<th>Social Benefits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Employment creation</td>
<td>• Broadens leisure, cultural experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Facilitates world trade</td>
<td>• Widens choice of holiday destinations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provides accessibility to tourist destinations</td>
<td>• Facilitates accessibility to remote areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Increases productivity through market expansion</td>
<td>• Reduces poverty through the creation of jobs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Improves efficiency of supply chain</td>
<td>• Facilitates efficient delivery of human aid</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Air transport is not only faster, but also cheaper and safer over long haul routes (Nissalke, 2013; ATAG, 2006). The growing demand and relevance of air travel has significant implications to the aviation sector as a whole. Of particular interest would be the effect on airports which are an integral part of the industry. Kupfer and Lagneaux (2009) accentuate the significant role of aviation. They further acknowledge the role of airports in economic development.

### 2.3.6 Importance of air transport in tourism

Transportation is a significant component of the tourism product. As illustrated in Figure 2-6, the tourism product is comprised of various attributes which include transportation (Youell, 1997). Page (2009) posits that the importance of transport lies in its ability to provide access to the tourist destination. Sorupia (2005:1767) concisely describes the relationship between tourism and transportation by stating that, ‘transport and travel can
be discussed without tourism but tourism cannot thrive without travel.’ As such, this study, without disregarding the significance of the other aspects of tourism illustrated in Figure 2-6, concentrates on the transport sector. However, within the transport sector, the research specifically focuses on air transportation. This section therefore, reviews existing literature on the significance of air transportation in tourism with particular reference to airport services.

Whilst the main role of transportation is to facilitate the movement of travellers to and from the origin and the destination, it is now being acknowledged that transportation is actually part of the overall tourism experience (Page and Lumsdon, 2004). With 51% of international tourists travelling by air, there is need to seriously consider the nature of the relationship between air transport and tourism. The key attributes of the tourism and air transport sectors are highly dependent on each other. The type of aircraft operated for a particular route is determined by the business model (low cost or full cost) of the respective airline. Airport structures also influence the type of aircraft operated. For instance, some wide bodied aircraft such as the Boeing 787 cannot land or take off from airports that have shorter or smaller runways. Similarly, larger airports can accommodate more and larger aircraft types. The type of aircraft operated also depends on the quantity and quality of passengers, with larger capacity aircraft being operated on routes with large volumes of traffic. Smaller aircraft on the other hand can efficiently serve smaller groups of travellers. In fostering better understanding of the role of airports in tourism, it is prudent to appreciate the nature of airports and their subsequent contribution to the sector. The following section provides an insight into the nature of airports.
2.3.7 The nature of airports

The Harare International Airport is the focal point of this study, chiefly because it is the main gateway for international travellers in to Zimbabwe. An appreciation of airports, their structure and the services they offer is crucial in embracing the key concepts of this study.

The role of airports has evolved over the years, from being mere facilities for passenger processing to being multi-service providers of both aeronautical and non-aeronautical services (Kazda and Caves, 2007). Significant developments in aviation commenced after the end of World War 2 (Zografos et al., 2013; Sherry, 2009). Excess and larger aircraft that had been developed during the war prompted the construction of larger and paved runways. These developments subsequently influenced the renovation and redesigning of airports. Today airports are multifaceted structures housing a plethora of service providers. In addition to their traditional services, modern airports now house restaurants, spas, lounges, chapels, nurseries, supermarkets, salons and banks among other services.

The focus of early literature on airports was on aspects of designing, planning and engineering. Chao et al. (2013) profess that prior studies largely dwelt on the operational standards entailing the physical facilities of airports. However, upon the realization of the fact that the role of airports was no longer restricted to being an interface between air and ground, researchers began to focus on the service aspect. The growing literature on airport service quality is evidence of the pivotal role of modern day airports.

One of the key contributions of airport service is its influence on the overall perception of a destination and ultimately determining repeat visits to that particular destination (Cejas and Rendeiro, 2006). The first impressions that a traveller has upon arriving at their
destination’s airport could give them a perception of the entire destination, be it a town, city or even country. The intricacy of the airport system manifests in the wide variety of service providers serving passengers under one roof. Whereas the overall airport experience is a summation of all the individual encounters with the different service providers, the ultimate responsibility for service quality lies with the airport authority (Paternoster, 2005).

This study seeks to address this challenge by involving managers from the customer service departments of various service providers at the Harare International Airport. Smith (2014) argues that unless management is committed and driven to achieve service excellence, initiatives to improve the quality of service will not bear fruit. In order to achieve the ultimate goal of enhancing the performance of the tourism sector in Zimbabwe, there is a strong need to involve various managers at the airport. To foster better understanding of the service delivery process and thus the need for service quality, at the airport, it is prudent to describe the nature of airports, their structure and key features.

2.3.8 The structure of airports

The definition of an airport is concisely given by Sherry (2009), who defines an airport as infrastructure that facilitates the connectivity of passengers between the ground and air modes of transport and vice versa. Paternoster (2005) on the other hand, defines airports from the stand point of customers. She therefore, describes an airport as a place from which aircraft take off and land, which also has various services and facilities required for the maintenance and servicing of aircraft, passengers and cargo.”
By design, airports are essentially comprised of two key features, the *airside* and the *landside* areas. Although this study will not dwell on the airside of the airport, differentiating it from the landside assists in appreciating the landside which will be the focus of this study. The airside is that part of the airport where aircraft operate from (Caves and Gosling, 1999). It is therefore, mostly an operational part of the airport comprising of the ramp, taxiway and the runway. Human activity on the airside is limited to maintenance personnel who ensure that the runway is safe for the aircraft and staff servicing aircraft on the ramp (Sherry, 2009). Access to this section of the airport is usually tightly secured and highly controlled. Passengers access the airside through the terminal building and it is mainly for purposes of boarding flights.

The runway is the surface from which aircraft take off. Runways vary in length and this often determines the type of aircraft that can land and take off at a particular airport. For instance, larger aircraft require wider and longer runways than smaller ones. Human activity is limited to maintenance personnel who ensure that the runway is safe for the aircraft.

That part of the airside which connects the ramp to the runway is known as the taxiway, whilst the ramp can be likened to the parking bay, where arriving and departing aircraft are attended to. It is a relatively busy area and there is significant human activity, though limited to operations staff servicing the aircraft. The airside is however, beyond the scope of this study as the services under study are offered on the landside section of the airport. Sherry (2009) describes the landside as that area of an airport through which passengers enter or leave the airport, enplane and deplane, as well as incur necessary processes for departure or arrival. The landside area includes car parks, access roads, public
transportation, terminal buildings and all utilities that support the operations of the terminals. This section of the airport has the largest volume of human activity as it is accessed by passengers, those meeting arrivals and accompanying departures as well as frontline staff from the various organizations at the airport. The facilities on the landside are associated with the movement of passengers and baggage. The landside is the focal area for this research as it is the section from which passenger services relevant to this study are offered.

2.3.9 The airport industry in Zimbabwe

The CAAZ is the regulator and manager of the aviation sector specifically relating to the travel of civilians in Zimbabwe. Of the over 200 airports and aerodromes located in different parts of the country, the CAAZ owns and manages 11 airports. At the major airports the CAAZ provides the following services:

- Aircraft parking
- Ground handling
- Fuelling services for aircraft
- Fire and rescue services
- Airside shuttle buses
- Security
- Customs and immigration

This study is mostly concerned about the quality of services at Zimbabwe’s international airports. Although the focus shall be on Harare International Airport, the country has
three other international airports. These airports are J. M Nkomo (Bulawayo), Victoria Falls (Victoria Falls) and Buffalo Range (Chiredzi) International Airports.

i) Buffalo Range International Airport

According to www.caaz.co.zw, Buffalo Range Airport was developed from a family owned air strip. Initially commissioned in 1965, the airport was mainly developed to cater for the Mauritians working on the sugar cane fields in the South Eastern part of the country. With the capacity to handle up to 200,000 passengers annually, Buffalo Range Airport is of significance in tourism. The airport provides an important linkage for tourists travelling to and from the various game ranges in Zimbabwe’s south eastern region. The airport caters for the high profile tourists and hunters visiting the region. Although the national carrier, Air Zimbabwe has previously operated scheduled flights to the airport, there are currently no commercially scheduled flights operating at the Buffalo Range International Airport. Instead, the airport serves private charter flights. If well developed, the airport has the potential to become the main access point to the Great Limpopo Trans-Frontier Park as it caters mostly for hunters travelling to and from the various game ranches located in that part of the country.

ii) Victoria Falls International Airport

This airport mainly serves as a gateway to Zimbabwe’s major tourist destination, the Victoria Falls. Currently going through an upgrading phase, the airport has a capacity of 500,000 passengers per year. The airport currently serves five commercial scheduled passenger airlines. These are South African Airways, British Airways operated by Comair (BA Comair), Air Namibia, Fly Africa and Air Zimbabwe.
iii) Joshua M Nkomo International Airport

Originally known as Bulawayo International Airport, this airport is located in Zimbabwe’s second largest city and links the world to various cultural heritage and historic sites such as the Matopo Hills. The airport presently serves 3 scheduled commercial flights namely, South African Airlink, Fly Africa and Air Zimbabwe.

iv) Harare International Airport

Known as Salisbury Airport at its inception, this is the country’s premier airport and is thus the busiest and largest airport in the country. The airport officially began its operations in 1957, in the Belvedere area of Salisbury. The airport was however, relocated 15 kilometres to the south of the capital city’s central business district due to the need for more space. Apart from being the main gateway into Zimbabwe, the Harare International Airport is also an alternative entry point into the central and southern part of the African continent (www.caaz.co.zw). The airport’s modernization project was completed in 2001 and the airport now has a capacity of 2.5 million passengers per year. In terms of flight handling, Harare International Airport currently handles 13 scheduled commercial flights. The airport however, previously handled some of the world’s leading airlines such as Quantas, KLM Royal Dutch Airlines and Lufthansa. However, following the political disturbances driven by the Land Reform Programme in 1999, most of these airlines withdrew their services from the Zimbabwean skies. Although 2012/2013 witnessed the return of KLM and Egyptair, these two airlines have since withdrawn their services yet again citing operational reasons.

The major airlines operating through the airport, apart from Air Zimbabwe, the country’s flag carrier, are South African Airways, Kenya Airways, Ethiopian Airlines, Emirates
and BA Comair. The airport also serves other regional based airlines such as Air Botswana, Malawian Airlines, Air Mozambique, South African Airlink, South African Express and Air Namibia. Recently Zimbabwean skies opened up to low cost carrier airlines and Harare Airport serves the two low cost airlines operating in the country, Fly Africa and Fastjet. Even though South African Airways, BA Comair and Air Namibia all operate at more than one airport, South African Airways has the largest market share as it operates three daily flights to Harare as well as daily flights to Victoria Falls.

Generally, Zimbabwean airports are underutilized. This can be attributed to the fact that air transport has not been a part of the Zimbabwean socio-economic culture. Typical of most African countries, air travel is quite expensive and regarded as an elite form of transport which is not accessible to the majority of Zimbabweans. The Aviation Benefits Report (2014) concurs with this notion but proceeds to forecast a gradual paradigm shift as low cost carriers are slowly gaining momentum in Africa’s aviation industry. Indeed, over the past year, Zimbabwe has witnessed the introduction of two low cost air lines, Fly Africa plying the Harare/Johannesburg/Victoria Falls and Bulawayo routes whilst Fastjet operates flights between Harare and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The ZTA Tourism Trends and Statistics Report (2014) establishes that the greater proportion of Zimbabwe’s tourists come from within Sub Saharan Africa and travel to Zimbabwe by road, the introduction of the low cost carriers could actually convert some road users to airline transportation. Basing on such forecasts, it is imperative for studies like this one to be done in order to facilitate improvements in the delivery of service. Air transportation and subsequently airport services could become more significant as the country has the potential to handle more visitors at its airports.
2.3.10 Airport services

Following the September 11 attacks of the World Trade Centre twin towers in New York, America in 2001, the concept of service at airports took on a whole new meaning. Airports were requested to give emergency support to passengers who were stranded (Kramer et al., 2013:8). Furthermore, there were a host of changes that were implemented in terms of security and various airport protocols. The role of airport managers evolved as airport operations become more customer centric.

Another catalyst of airport service quality is the increasing need for airports to generate revenues from non-aviation activities. Coupled with the need for passengers to spend more time at the airport to cater for the more intense security checks, the need for increased revenues has resulted in airports housing various retail outlets.

According to Anand and Mallik (2013:74), as the main gateway for inbound travellers, airports form an integral part of the entire tourism system. The terminal building is the most critical part of this study. Passenger processes such as check-in, aircraft boarding and security checks are all performed within the confines of the terminal. The structure of terminals has evolved over the years. Nissalke (2013) actually posits that traditionally, airports exuded monotony and dullness. With the progression in passenger needs and the generally dynamic environment, terminals are now a hive of activity as varied facilities are now accommodated in the buildings (Sherry, 2009). In addition to the increased variety of services, terminals have also harnessed the fast paced technological advancements and incorporated them into passenger processes. Electronic systems are now in place for check-in and security screening among others. This description of the
key features of the airport has provided a platform upon which to discuss the service aspect of airports and therefore bring to light the significance of this study.

Although airline passengers are not often faced with an alternative in terms of airport choice, Doganis (1992) emphasizes the need for service excellence in creating positive impressions for inbound tourists. This assertion supports the notion put forward by Cejas and Rendeiro (2006) on the important role of airports in creating lasting impressions of tourist destinations. The complex nature of airports is reflected in the number of customer groups served. Unlike most organizations that specifically serve a single well defined group of customers (such as shoppers, patients, students), airports provide services to various groups of customers. The complex nature of airport services culminated in the establishment of the Journal of Airport Management, with the objective of disseminating best practices and understanding the growing complexity of managing airports and the services they offer (Page, 2009:284).

At an airport the following groups of customers can be identified:-

- Airlines
- Air cargo users
- Other airports
- Airline passengers
- Visitors
- Tenants
Kramer et al. (2013), lists the various customers that are served by airports as illustrated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internal Customers</th>
<th>External Customers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parking</td>
<td>Passengers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fuel</td>
<td>Meeters and greeters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance</td>
<td>General Aviation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-terminal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concessions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airlines (pax, cargo)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aircraft owners</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ground transportation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law enforcement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rental car companies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Brihla (2008) proposes a further classification of passengers into business and leisure travellers. Such a classification is particularly important in the tourism context as it facilitates segmentation of the travellers. Given the significant differences that may exist between the needs of business travellers and those of passengers travelling for leisure purposes, such a classification is imperative. For instance, business travellers tend to be more particular about their demands whilst the leisure travellers may not be so articulate. Because they will be travelling for business purposes where time is highly regarded and schedules are closely adhered to, business travellers are often price insensitive. This implies that if for example, the only available fares on a particular day are much higher than usual; an executive travelling to attend an extra ordinary general meeting will be prepared to pay for the higher priced fare as his presence at the meeting will be highly required. Faced with a similar scenario, a holiday maker would opt to catch the cheaper flight a day later, in order to cut costs.
Differences also exist in terms of the type of products that either of the two types of airline passengers would purchase at the airport. Whilst a holiday maker would easily expend on souvenirs for instance, a business traveller would not be much concerned about purchasing souvenirs. In fact, business travellers would not do much shopping around as they would probably be working from their mobile electronic gadgets as they await flight boarding. Given the differences between business and leisure travellers, this study will also ascertain the travellers’ purposes of travel. However, in addition to the two groups as suggested by Brihla (2008), this study will also consider other motivations for travel. These will include education and medical reasons. This shall be done to get a better understanding of the exact reasons why tourists come to Zimbabwe.

The evolvement of airport services has seen a shift from having the internal customers as the key customers of airports to the incorporation of the external customers into the customer profile of airports. In essence airports now place much emphasis on customer service; hence this study is in sync with the trends of modern airports. The study acknowledges the significance of customers’ expectations and perceptions of service in the attainment of service excellence. An important contribution to airport service literature is made by Kramer et al. (2013) who came up with interesting findings regarding the significance of delivering service that conforms to customer expectations. By assessing customer experiences at the airport, management is better informed of the specific improvements that are required by passengers. As these suggestions will have come from the passengers themselves, they will surely meet the expectations of the passengers. Exceeding expectations also becomes possible as the basic requirements would have been communicated to the airport managers.
In light of the various customer groups, airports provide a wide range of services to suit the specific needs of each group of customers. Although this study shall not concentrate on all the customer groups, it is necessary to appreciate the various services offered at airports. Doganis (1992) groups airport services into 3 classes as illustrated in Table 2-9

### Table 2-9 Classification of services offered at airports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essential operational Services</th>
<th>Traffic handling services</th>
<th>Commercial activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>police and security</em></td>
<td><em>power supply, loading unloading of baggage / freight</em></td>
<td><em>car parking</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>fire and ambulance</em></td>
<td><em>passenger processing e.g. check in and boarding</em></td>
<td><em>car rentals</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>runway</em></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>banks</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>building maintenance</em></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>hotels</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Immigration and Customs</em></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>lounges</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Provided by: airport, local government, government department | Provided by: airlines, handling agents, airport authorities | Provided by: concessionaries, airport authorities |

(Doganis, 1992)

**a) Essential operational services**

These services are offered directly by the airport authority. In Zimbabwe, the CAAZ is mandated to ensure the provision of such services. The CAAZ has departments responsible for the different services such as air traffic control, maintenance as well as fire and ambulance services. Other organizations such as the Zimbabwe Revenue Authority (ZIMRA) and the Governments’ Department of Immigration also provide essential services at the airports. The Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) is also stationed at the airports in Zimbabwe to provide policing services to both the travelling public and the rest of the airport community. The CAAZ also provides security details comprised of
the authority’s own aviation security personnel as well as outsourced security firms. By their nature, airports are high security areas. Following the September 11 attacks, airport security across the world has tightened in an effort to prevent the recurrence of such catastrophes.

b) Traffic handling services

Passenger traffic goes through various procedures and formalities at airports. Check-in, security checks and aircraft boarding are key procedures for passengers at the airport. Each service point represents a service encounter for the passenger and it is these encounters that are summed up to give the overall airport experience. Graham et al. (2008) aver that the wide range of services offered to passengers contribute toward the fulfilment of airports’ mandate to provide aviation services to passengers. Thus, it is necessary for the airport authority to ensure overall attainment of service excellence in order to create positive perceptions of its service delivery.

Whilst the customers of an airport can be categorized in to various groups, Park and Se-Yeon (2011) suggest that passengers at an airport can also be further divided into three different groups. These subcategories are:

i) Arriving passengers

ii) Departing passengers

iii) Transfer passengers

The needs of these three groups of passengers differ. Subsequently they prioritize different dimensions of service. For instance, departing passengers are highly concerned with being in time for check-in, completing exit formalities and departing on time. These
passengers also have more time at the airport and when they complete their exit formalities, they are more exposed to the tangible attributes of the airport service. Service encounters that are crucial to departing passengers include the check-in process and security screening. Departures could easily get frustrated by long check-in queues and tedious security screening procedures.

Passengers who have just arrived at an airport are usually exhausted and their focus is on collecting their baggage, completing immigration and customs formalities and then proceeding with their journeys. They typically have someone waiting for them and do not want to waste much time. Critical areas of concern to arriving passengers include customs clearing and baggage collection. Long queues for immigration and customs as well as delayed delivery of baggage from the aircraft are possible sources of dissatisfaction amongst arrivals.

Transfer or transiting passengers, are a unique set of passengers and they comprise of those passengers who make connections from one flight to the other at the same airport. These passengers also have a different set of needs and priorities with regards to the dimensions of service. Their major concern is to have a smooth transition from one flight to the other. Depending on their itineraries, transfer passengers have discretionary time at the airport. The time between connecting flights can range from minutes to more than six hours. In the event that there is a relatively longer time frame between the connecting flights, then transfer passengers have more time to experience the physical environment of the airport. It is thus imperative for service providers to ensure that specific needs of the different groups of passengers are satisfactorily met.
At most airports, passenger handling agents provide handling services for and on behalf of airline companies operating from the airports. Harare International Airport is no exception as all flights are handled by a passenger handling company, National Handling Services (NHS) which acts on behalf of the different airlines operating from that airport. Passenger procedures such as check-in, aircraft boarding and baggage tracing are all performed by ground handling agents. Sometimes airlines provide these services directly to their passengers. This means that an airline’s own employees perform the services. However, since ground handling is not really the core business of airline companies, airlines often contract agents to provide ground handling services on their behalf.

The services provided by ground handling companies are an important and mandatory part of the overall airport service experience for passengers. Traffic (passenger) handling services are particularly important to this study because they are mandatory and also play a critical role in air travel. It is mandatory for passengers to go through the check-in process before being accepted and boarded on a flight. It will therefore, be interesting to get feedback on how passengers view and what they expect from the handling agent.

In Zimbabwe, airlines do not have the liberty to perform ground handling services by themselves. Instead, the Government controls the provision of such services and the granting of handling licenses through the CAAZ. NHS is the sole company licensed to offer passenger ground handling services for and on behalf of airlines passing through the country’s airports.
c) **Commercial activities**

Airports are fundamentally public facilities where people meet, interact and also pass time awaiting departure as well as arrival of flights (Kazda and Caves, 2007). As such, there is need for amenities that cater for people’s needs such as restaurants, retail shops, banks and car parking. Duty free shops are also a common feature at international airports, allowing airline passengers an opportunity to purchase goods exempt from national or local taxes and duties.

The provision of retail facilities has recently become a major source of non-aeronautical revenues. Graham et al. (2008) posit that leisure passengers in particular, are fond of shopping at the airport. To this end some of the world’s leading airports have transformed their once dull and monotonous terminals to enhance travellers’ shopping experience. Figure 2-8 depicts a modern shopping mall within Dubai International Airport. Many similar leading airports have adopted the concept of introducing large malls within passenger terminal buildings.
In a study conducted by Fodness and Murray (2007), airline passengers indicated their need for shopping and thus requested for the establishment of international, known retail outlets and restaurants within the terminal.

The manner in which these services are delivered to the passengers will have a bearing on the overall service experience. The present study will also consider passenger expectations and perceptions on commercial services provided at airports in Zimbabwe. More importantly, the study will seek to determine whether or not passengers consider
the quality of such services in making decisions on whether or not to visit a particular destination.

It is important to note that although various organizations and companies provide different services to passengers at airports, the ultimate responsibility lies with the airport authority (Graham et al., 2008). The authority ‘owns’ the airport and is therefore, obliged to ensure that services provided to passengers are not only good but meet and exceed customer expectations.

As explained earlier, the airport does not serve a single class of customers. This study is mainly concerned with the airline passengers who in the context of this study, are also referred to as tourists. They form the largest group of individual customers and their perceptions on quality have a substantial impact on the overall assessment of services at the airport. As this study has narrowed down its focus to airline passengers, it is essential to understand the various services that they receive as they pass through the airport. It is from these various services that this study will obtain its findings and conclusions. The following gives an insight into the services offered to travellers passing through the airports.

2.3.11 The airport service encounter

Researchers such as Czipiel et al. (1985) perceive the interaction between customers and service providers as an important aspect of the service delivery process. Their assertion is based on the premise that customers judge the services provided to them at this point.
In generating a profound understanding of the services experienced by airline passengers at airports, Freathy and O Connell (1999) present a service encounter cascade. This is illustrated in Figure 2-9.

![Service Encounter Cascade](image)

**Figure 2-9 Airport passenger processing system – A Service Encounter Cascade (Freathy and O’Connel, 1999)**

Figure 2-9 depicts the basic services to which every passenger departing from an international airport is exposed. Basing on the airport passenger processing system illustrated by Freathy and O’Connel (1999), the typical service encounter of a passenger at a Harare International Airport is illustrated in Figure 2-10.
Figure 2-10 Typical Service Encounter Cascade - Harare International Airport

Figure 2-10, derived from Freathy and O’Connel (1999) highlights the various services offered at Harare International which are all important in analyzing overall airport service quality. It is also necessary to note that whilst services are offered by different companies or departments at the airport, it is the airport authority or management that has the full
responsibility of activities at the airport. It is therefore, their duty to ensure that all services are offered in a manner that not only meets passenger expectations but also exceeds them in order to create a positive perception within the minds of customers. John (2005) is of the assertion that, regardless of efforts made in service delivery improvement, management of the process is critical in ensuring service excellence. Having presented and reviewed various service related literature, it is therefore, prudent to consider the managers’ responsibility for service delivery at the Harare International Airport.

2.3.12 Management of services

Grover (1997) concedes that humans are central to the service product and that their management is even more critical in attaining service excellence. Literature has in the past dwelt much on defining services, measuring service quality and strategies for attaining service excellence. Although some ground is slowly being gained in relation to the management of the human element of services, more still needs to be done. It is anticipated that this study will make its own input in this agenda. Moreover, there is significantly less literature addressing the management of service quality in the Zimbabwean context. By conducting this study the researcher yearns to make a meaningful contribution in building such knowledge.

Parasuraman et al. (1988) acknowledge the indispensable role of people in the delivery of services by incorporating them in their SERVQUAL model’s Gap analysis. The inclusion of managers in the model shows their relevance in service delivery. Dave (2013) argues that managers of customer services are actually internal customers of organizations and should not be overlooked in strategic issues relating to customer service. This study also
incorporates customer service managers from various organizations at the airport in assessment of service quality.

In studying the management of services, it is necessary to consider and understand aspects such as age, gender, educational qualifications and the working experience of managers. Age for instance, often signifies the knowledge and experience of an individual (Wyse, 2012; Horn and Cattell, 1967). Chalofsky et al. (2014) further argue that older managers are more capable of solving problems than their younger counterparts.

A topical issue in relation to managerial positions in the workplace is with regards to gender. Whereas men have traditionally occupied managerial positions with women being restricted to lower positions, women are becoming more educated and hired for higher level positions than previously. However, Morna and Rama (2013) concur with Wirth (2000) that men are still dominant in senior leadership positions. Randherma et al. (1996) share similar sentiments that in spite of the higher levels of education amongst women, the number of women in top management is still overshadowed by their male counterparts. It would be of interest to ascertain the validity of this assertion at Harare International Airport; hence this study shall as part of its analysis, consider the gender of managerial respondents.

In their theory of Experience-Concentration, Horn and Cattell (1967) further analyze the aspect of working experience by identifying two types of experience; concentration and variation. Whereas concentration experience relates to the volume of experience and is associated with the older managers, variation experience refers to the diversity of
experience and is prevalent in the younger managers. This theory is useful in analyzing the working experience of managers at Harare International Airport, mainly because it determines the capabilities of managers and how best their experiences can be synchronized in improving service quality. The theory fundamentally states that with increasing age, the volume of experience increases (concentration experience), whilst the diversity of experience (variation experience) diminishes (Horn and Cattel, 1967).

In terms of education and working experience, Saiki (2008) posits that whilst levels of education are not necessarily an indication of professionalism, tertiary qualifications often indicate the possession of minimal knowledge of a certain field. In as much as educational qualifications are desirable or requisite, working experience is also crucial in the effective management of services. In order to better assess and understand the managers of customer services at Harare International Airport, the study considers the age, gender, educational qualifications and working experience of the study’s managerial respondents.

2.3.13 Management functions

Organizations reflect the efforts of management, who are in turn appraised against the performance of the organizations they manage. Across various industries, managers perform similar functions. Management is centred on making decisions regarding the performance of the firm. Through their various functions, managers are continually engaged in the decision making process. To establish better understanding of the nature of decisions made by managers, it is necessary to consider the different functions of management. Literature generally agrees on the five functions of management namely; planning, organizing, directing, staffing and controlling.
Planning entails the making of futuristic decisions. In other words, managers plan ahead of time and such decisions culminate in strategies and long term objectives of the firm. Parasuraman et al. (1985) reflect on the managerial function of planning. According to them, goal setting is a prerequisite for service excellence. Setting goals entails breaking down the long term service quality key organizational aims into short term, logical goals, which can be understood and interpreted by frontline staff. Planning also serves as an input for the control function. Planning provides guidelines and goals against which actual service may be measured and improved (Parasuraman et al., 1988). Page (2009) affirms that the key contribution for tourism in the context of airport services is to establish the needs of travellers and ensure that they are met. This is achieved by careful planning for the delivery of services in a manner that conforms to the expectations of passengers.

Organizing is built upon the results of planning. In organizing, managers basically determine the nature and network of relationships within the organization. These relationships are amongst the human and other resources such as financial and equipment. Directing fundamentally entails initiating work in the organization. Managers in performing this function give guidance and take the lead in efforts to meet the objectives of the firm.

Control is an integral management function, especially in the delivery of services. Fuller and Smith (1991) profess the challenging nature of the controlling function in the service sector. They cite the high subjectivity associated with the assessment of service quality amongst customers. Customers may have divergent views regarding the quality of a particular service. Ensuring that employees consistently deliver services that conform to
customers’ expectations, therefore, becomes quite difficult given the possibility of varied customer perceptions. Moreover, the intangible nature of services further complicates the measurement of quality.

In their works, Fuller and Smith (1991:3) advocate for what they term ‘consumer control’ or ‘management by customers’. This mode of controlling is based on feedback from customers regarding the service rendered to them by a specific employee. In achieving this, customers identify the staff serving them by their name badges, for instance. Customers then rate and give feedback on the service. Such feedback becomes part of the employees’ evaluation. The major benefit derived from customer control is its focus on the customer. Employee performance is measured against the perceptions of the customer hence relevant adjustments can be made in line with customer perceptions. This facilitates the narrowing or closure of Gap 5, and subsequently advancement toward service excellence.

In one of their studies, Fuller and Smith (1991:8) observed a manager who discarded all pleasant comments and instead, concentrated on the negative ones. By focusing on negative feedback organizations are better enabled to rectify the grey areas of their service offering. More importantly, they provide valuable input for the improvement of service delivery. Inasmuch as customer feedback can be used to evaluate the performance of customer contact staff, it may also be used to appraise the performance of the immediate supervisors. Having noted the concerns of customers, immediate supervisors would then be assessed on their actions to rectify the issues. This obviously encourages direct supervisors of contact staff to take swift action in addressing customer complaints.
This study although not individualized as in the customer control method of controlling, will also provide valuable input which can be used in evaluating the general performance of airport frontline staff. For instance, this research will request passengers to rate the courteousness and trustworthiness of customer service personnel. Findings regarding these attributes would then be incorporated in the managers’ decision making.

The staffing function is responsible for the acquisition, maintenance and retention of workers. It is of much significance in customer service and the attainment of service excellence. Decisions made by managers in the recruitment of personnel can have a significant bearing on the quality of services. As noted earlier, inseparability is a characteristic of services; hence, customer contact staff is automatically a part of the service. Appannaiah et al. (2010) emphasize on the need for managers to hire frontline staff that are passionate about customer service. They argue that trainings only serve to enhance the relevant skills for service excellence. Recruiting staff that have a natural flare for serving can give a competitive advantage to firms. This can be achieved by including role plays and scenario based questions during the selection process.

Maintaining and retaining staff is part of managements’ staffing function. Motivation of staff is essential in achieving both maintenance and retention of employees (Schneider, 1991). Managers need to consistently motivate frontline staff. Dave (2013) refers to frontline staff as the internal customers of an organization, and maintains that, they too, just like the external clients need to be treated well. He argues that well treated contact staff is better able to provide excellent service to external customers. Gilmore (2003) and Kumar and Meenakshi (2006) concur with this assertion and recommend that
management consistently consider means of motivating and encouraging frontline staff. Schneider (1991) further suggests a positive correlation between customer satisfaction and employee satisfaction. His suggestion implies that where frontline staff is satisfied, they are more likely to deliver service that conforms to customer expectations thus achieving customer satisfaction. In concurrence with Schneider (1991), Bollen and Emes (2008) aver that happy employees are essential in the development of happy and loyal customers. Furthermore, the manner in which customers are treated by customer contact staff has a bearing on the repurchasing (re-patronage) decisions of customers.

A well trained and knowledgeable customer service team is invaluable. Literature supports this notion and various scholars emphasize on the need for continuous development of staff (Chalofsky et al., 2014; Chinunda, 2011; Fojt, 1995). Managers should ensure that customer contact staff is well updated in terms of knowledge and skills. Chalofsky et al. (2014) point out to the reduced capability of working productively as one of the risks of not having knowledgeable and updated employees. Apart from frustrating customers, failure to update the knowledge and skills of frontline staff could also prove to be costly to the employer. As staff will not be aware of more efficient ways of performing their work, losses in productive time and lost sales will be imminent. Furthermore, in competitive industries, customers could easily switch to competitors who have more effective and capable staff.

The knowledge of staff is pivotal in service quality as it is an indicator of the assurance dimension of the SERVQUAL model (Parasuraman et al., 1988). Because of its clear relevance to the study of services, this research shall ascertain the expectations and
perceptions of airport passengers regarding the levels of knowledge for service personnel at Harare International Airport.

An important role of managers in the attainment of service excellence is the empowerment of their subordinates on the shop floor. Empowering a well-trained, knowledgeable and motivated service delivery team is key in surpassing the expectations of customers. Firstly, empowerment motivates the staff and gives them a sense of responsibility (Kumar and Meenakshi, 2006). Secondly, empowering employees to make certain decisions improves efficiency, reduces waiting time for passengers and paves the way for service excellence. Yeno (2009) however, underscores on education and training as prerequisites for empowerment.

Whilst employee empowerment entails the provision of tools and relevant authority to employees, employee involvement recognizes the uniqueness of individual employees by soliciting their input for decision making purposes (Apostolou, 2000). Kuye and Sulaimon (2011) refer to employee involvement as participative decision making and assert that levels of employee involvement can be measured in terms of degrees, that is; high degree and low degree of involvement. A high degree of involvement would, therefore, be characterized by the involvement of all workers. Decision making in low degree areas is dominated by managers. In simple terms employees participate and make relevant contributions to problem solve. Customer contact staff is better positioned to understand customers better than their superiors. Interactions between frontline staff and customers can be an important source of feedback. As a result, involving employees in the decision making process will facilitate the making of well informed decisions. Because the customer contact staff knows the customers so well, they can also come up
with effective remedies to solve customers’ complaints. Customer service staff can also make invaluable contributions in forecasting future trends and product development, for instance.

In assessing the quality of service at Harare International Airport, this study shall seek to ascertain the levels of employee involvement. Such an understanding will also serve to assess the involvement of frontline staff in making service delivery decisions. The study will require managers to reveal the extent to which they involve frontline staff in making customer service related decisions.

A study conducted by Kuye and Sulaimon (2011) revealed the existence of a significant relationship between employment involvement in decision making and the performance of firms in Nigeria. Whereas their study focused on manufacturing firms, their findings can only be more profound for companies in the services sector. Basing on these findings, firms need to embrace employee involvement to enhance performance.

Managers are the custodians of an organization’s resources and as such determine the allocation of these resources. It is necessary to support the efforts of frontline staff by availing to them all the resources required in carrying out their work (Ruskin-Brown, 2005). Failure to provide sufficient, relevant resources can dampen the passion for service within the staff. At an airport, for instance, outdated check-in computers can be very slow and end up reducing the speed of the check-in agent consequently resulting in a long queue of passengers waiting to be checked in. This will not only frustrate the passengers but the check-in agent as well. The staff could eventually resent their work and this would not be good for service quality attainment.
As alluded to earlier, a key characteristic of service is its inseparability, implying that the human element cannot be detached from the service itself. Humans are thus, an integral part of services. Gilmore (2003) further posits that services are delivered to people, by people who are managed by people. This underscores the intertwined relationship between people and services. Ruskin-Brown (2005: 167) concurs with Gilmore (2003) on the inseparability of services in his assertion that “the service is the person and the person is the service.” Managing customer service employees is therefore, central to service excellence.

2.3.14 Customer feedback in management of services

Customer feedback is an integral element in the management of services (Wirtz and Johnston, 2003; Wirtz and Tambyah, 2010). It facilitates the detection of both well performing and grey areas. More importantly, it provides invaluable input for service improvements and subsequently the attainment of service excellence (Williams and Buswell, 2003). Shaw (2011) underscores the importance of customer knowledge in the successful marketing efforts of any organization. Obtaining as much knowledge as possible is not only necessary for existing customers but also for potential customers. Customer feedback is a reliable and effective way of obtaining knowledge of the market; hence this study considers the feedback of passengers passing through Harare International Airport.

Morgan et al. (2005) distinguish two forms of feedback; solicited or active feedback and unsolicited or passive feedback. Solicited feedback comprises of deliberate efforts by management to obtain the views of both internal and external customers. To this end,
formal methods are adopted and these include suggestion boxes as well as customer and employee surveys.

According to Wirtz and Tambyah (2010), most unsolicited feedback from customers is obtained through customer contact staff. During their interactions with customers, frontline staff can deduce both the expectations and perceptions of customers, thus obtaining invaluable input for attaining service excellence. Apart from facilitating service excellence, customer feedback also provides an important tool for appraising the performance of both employees and managers. By considering customer comments regarding their service encounters, organizations can evaluate the performance of frontline staff. They can also assess the direct supervisors of frontline staff by assessing the corrective action taken in rectifying customer complaints.

In recognition of the critical role of feedback in the management of services, this study shall establish the extent to which passenger suggestions are incorporated in service related decisions by various companies at the airport. There shall also be an assessment of the levels to which employees are involved in such decision making processes.

In light of the managerial functions that have been presented, this study shall consider managers of the various organizations offering diverse services to travellers at the Harare International Airport. Being the ultimate decision makers, it is necessary for managers to be aware of what customers expect in terms of service delivery. It is therefore, imperative to ascertain whether managers at the airport are fully aware of passenger expectations. This shall be achieved by requesting managers to give their opinions on customer expectations, which shall in turn, be measured against the actual expectations of
customers. The ultimate goal is to enhance airport service quality by aligning managers’ perceptions with the expectations of customers.

Whilst the significance of customer feedback cannot be over emphasized, it has been noted that most organizations do not make use of the feedback they obtain. According to the results of a Gartner Group survey conducted in 2001, 90% of businesses that collected feedback did not make use of it. This study also sought to determine whether managers at the airport considered the feedback from passengers and frontline staff in making customer related decisions.

2.4 Empirical research findings

This study is built upon the works of other scholars who have studied various aspects related to this topic. An overview of the existing works by other scholars is necessary to establish the significance of this study and make comparisons.

2.4.1 Service quality in tourism (India)

Anand and Mallik (2013) conducted a study to assess the impact of service quality on Indian tourism. Their research, just like this one, adopted the SERVQUAL model in measuring the levels of service quality. Responsiveness and assurance recorded the highest and lowest scores respectively. Whilst their study focused on the impact of general quality of services on tourism, this study specifically seeks to ascertain the role of airport service quality on the growth of tourism in Zimbabwe.
2.4.2 Airline passenger satisfaction (United States of America).

Bogicevic et al. (2013) conducted a study to identify factors of air transportation that (i) enhanced and (ii) distracted passenger satisfaction. More specifically they sought to ascertain the key attributes of airport service quality as well as establish the major drivers of passenger satisfaction at airports. The researchers conducted their research in the United States of America between 2010 and 2013. Their study revealed that cleanliness and pleasant environment were the main enhancers, whilst security checks, confusing signage and poor dining facilities were prominent sources of dissatisfaction.

2.4.3 Airport service quality (South Korea)

In a study carried out at Incheon International Airport, Park and Se-Yeon (2011), sought to assess the perceptions of transfer passengers on airport service quality. The research was conducted at the airside of Incheon International Airport in November 2009 and was based on the SERVQUAL model. To this end, data was collected by means of questionnaires comprising of 22 measurement items on a 5-point Likert scale. Responses from 331 passengers were incorporated in the analysis of data.

Park and Se-Yeon’s (2011) major findings were that airport service quality is a key determinant of transfer passengers’ value perception, satisfaction levels and the overall image of the airport. It also emerged from the study, that the quality of airport service also affects the reuse intentions of passengers as well as their ‘word of mouth’ to other transfer passengers. Passengers who had developed positive perceptions regarding the quality of services at the airport were thus more likely to travel through the airport again as well as to recommend the airport to other travellers.
2.4.4 Service quality at Kaohsiung International Airport (Taiwan)

Chao et al. (2013) analyzed the importance and satisfaction of tourists with regards to the quality of services at Kaohsiung International Airport in Taiwan. In the same manner that this study seeks to identify specific areas requiring improvements, Chao et al. (2013) established the same for Kaohsiung International Airport. Although their study adopted a different service quality model, they concluded that passengers were most satisfied with the airport’s cleanliness, courteousness of frontline staff and willingness of customer service personnel to assist them. Dissatisfaction was noted for the variety of food and beverage outlets and complaint handling efficiency. In a bid to increase knowledge on the behaviour of airline passengers at airports the findings from this study will enlarge the body of knowledge in this regard.

Whilst this study adopts a different model, it will also add new knowledge to the existing literature on aviation services in the Southern African Region and more specifically the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

2.4.5 Service quality at Gran Caneira International Airport (Spain)

Cejas and Rendeiro (2006) studied the impact of airport service quality on tourism. From their studies it emerged that tourism service quality begins at the airport. The first and last perceptions of quality in tourist destinations take place at airports. Their major recommendation was that airport services ought to be of reasonable standards to avoid lowering the destinations’ perceived quality. The study also revealed that passengers were mostly concerned with the waiting time and crowding at the airport. Another
important finding was that additional revenue could be generated by developing commercial and leisure facilities at airports.

Cejas and Rendeiro’s (2006) works are of much significance to this study. In the same way that the duo focused on Gran Caneira International Airport in Spain, this study shall also focus on Harare International Airport. It is the aim of this study to also come up with relevant findings that can ultimately raise the standards of service quality at the Airport.

2.4.6 Passenger satisfaction at airports in the United Arab Emirates (United Arab Emirates)

A study of customer services at airports in the United Arab Emirates was conducted by Taliah (2007). The study specifically sought to ascertain customer satisfaction regarding services at three airports in the country. The study established that great strides were being made in raising the levels of service delivery to customers at the airports. However, customers still had concerns that had to be addressed. Firstly, passengers registered dissatisfaction with the waiting time they had to endure at the immigration points. Apparently immigration officers were not capable of making well informed decisions and had to consistently consult their supervisors, leaving passengers waiting for considerable periods of time.

Passengers also expressed their need for a wider range of food outlets to cater for the various tastes of passengers from diverse backgrounds. Overall, there was a need for the airports to create a more hospitable environment for passengers particularly those in transit.
2.4.7 Determinants of tourist arrivals (Africa)

A total of 43 African countries were incorporated in Naude and Saayman’s (2004) study to identify the determinants of tourist arrivals in Africa. The study carried out against a background of underutilized tourism potential in Africa, made use of cross section and panel data relating to the periods 1996 to 2000. A total of seven categorical variables were used and these were; income, relative prices, air travel cost, infrastructure information as well as the destination’s level of development. Consequently, Naude and Saayman (2004) recommended that African nations ought to improve overall stability of the continent and ultimately the availability and quantity of tourism infrastructure.

The study carried out by Naude and Saayman (2004) provides an important platform for studies similar to this particular research. Their conclusion regarding the need for improvements to be made in tourism infrastructure makes it necessary to not only consider the structural aspects of Zimbabwe’s premier airport, but to further analyze the quality of services rendered to airline passengers.

The study concluded that although different variables explained the demand from different countries, overall, political stability, tourism infrastructure, marketing, political stability and personal safety, geography and health were important determinants across the seven countries.

2.4.8 Service quality at Murtala Muhammed International Airport (Nigeria)

The perceptions of airport users on the quality of services at Nigeria’s Murtala Muhammed International Airport were evaluated in a study by Ojo (2014). Ojo’s (2014) study makes a relevant contribution to the literature on the quality of services in Africa.
Although this study did not make use of the SERVQUAL model, it gives an insight into airport service quality in Africa. As was observed by Chikwendu et al. (2012), in many African institutions, the quality of services at Murtala Muhammed Airport was characterized by various operational and financial challenges. Notable sources of passenger dissatisfaction were malfunctioning elevators, inadequate seats and overcrowding in the departure lounge. Just as Ojo (2014) contributed to airport service quality literature, this study also intends to achieve the same. However, unlike the study of Murtala Muhammed International Airport, which only considers passenger perceptions, this study takes on a holistic approach by also ascertaining passenger expectations. An analysis of the SERVQUAL gaps will also facilitate ranking of passenger priorities. The adoption of the SERVQUAL model, thus, further distinguishes these two studies.

2.4.9 Service quality in the tourism sector (Ghana)

The SERVQUAL model was used by Bondzi-Simpson in assessing the expectations of customers on the quality of services in Ghana’s hospitality sector. She also conducted an analysis of Gap 1 and observed that management perceptions regarding customer expectations were higher than the actual expectations of customers. These findings were also noted by Gourdin and Kloppenberg (1991).

In contrast to this study which focuses on the airport sector, Bondzi-Simpson’s research was based on the hospitality sector. In spite of the different focal areas, both studies relate to aspects of the tourism product as proposed by Youell (1997). Results from both studies
add to the existing literature on the use of the SERVQUAL model and aspects of the tourism sector in Africa.

2.4.10 SERVQUAL assessment of retail service quality (South Africa)

This study will also contribute to the existing literature on the use of the SERVQUAL model in Southern African. In 2013, Phiri and Mcwabe added their works to the SERVQUAL literature in Africa, through their study of customer expectations and perceptions in South Africa. Although their study specifically referred to the retail sector, it supported the use of the SERVQUAL model in this region of the African continent and indeed the world. Phiri and Mcwabe (2013) concluded that customers had the highest expectations for tangible aspects of services. They also established that reliability had the largest gap score indicating the greatest dissatisfaction for customers.

2.4.11 Service elements at South African airports (South Africa)

Du Plessis et al. (2014) sought to determine elements of the service environment which are likely to influence visitors at South African international airports. The study was quantitative in nature and obtained data from passengers by means of questionnaires distributed to 560 visitors at a South African international airport. The study revealed that there were five fundamental elements that influenced passenger experiences at the airport. These five elements were; physical comfort, amenities, visitor facilities, passenger services and accessibility. It also emerged that generally, travellers at the airport experienced more positive emotions than negative ones. Furthermore, the study showed that the prevailing service environment at the international airport contributed toward the positive airport experience for passengers.
The study therefore, concluded that managers had to focus on the five elements and maintain the prevailing levels of service which were satisfactory to passengers. Although this study shall adopt predetermined elements of service, it shall also seek to determine the influence of these elements on the overall service quality perception of passengers travelling through the Harare International Airport. The predetermined elements of service used in this study are those stipulated by Parasuraman et al. (1985) in their SERVQUAL model. These are namely; reliability, assurance, tangibility, empathy and responsiveness.

2.4.12 SERVQUAL Gap 1 analysis of the airline industry (South Africa)

Whilst most SERVQUAL based studies have focused on analyzing Gap 5, there are fewer studies that have had an in depth analysis of Gap 1. This study will thus make a significant contribution toward the building of literature relating to the analysis of this gap, particularly in relation to airport service quality.

Lambert and Luiz (2011) are some of the few scholars who have delved into the analysis of the gap that exists between managers’ perception of customer expectations and the actual expectations of customers regarding the quality of services. The study conducted face to face interviews to obtain data from middle and senior level managers in South Africa’s airline industry. The expectations of passengers were derived from existing literature and specifically the SERVQUAL model’s five dimensions of service quality. The five dimensions (reliability, assurance, tangibility, empathy and responsiveness) were then ranked in order of priority as per (i) passenger expectations and (ii) managers’ perceptions regarding the expectations of airline passengers. The findings revealed a striking similarity in the ranking of the five dimensions by both the managers and the
passengers. Managers and passengers both regarded reliability as the most important dimension. This was in line with the findings of Parasuraman et al. (1988), who also established that reliability was the most important dimension of service quality. However, in terms of the least important dimension, airport managers felt that tangibles were the least important to airline passengers whilst the passengers considered empathy as the least important dimension.

In concluding their study, Lambert and Luiz (2011) professed that passengers felt airlines could put more effort in building their relations with passengers. This therefore, implied that airlines that were not showing much commitment to strengthening relations with their passengers were at a risk of losing these passengers to competitors who prioritized customer relations.

2.4.13 Service quality at O.R Tambo International Airport (South Africa)

In a study to assess passenger perceptions on the importance of airport service quality dimensions at OR Tambo International Airport in South Africa, Lubbe et al. (2011) concluded that the human element was more critical in defining service quality. When compared with other facets of service, passengers were more concerned about the manner in which frontline staff delivered the service. Although their study adopted the Importance-Analysis model, the major findings can be equated to the assurance dimension of the SERVQUAL model.

The study is also of significance to the present study because O.R Tambo International Airport is in the same geographical region as Harare International Airport. Consequently, the two airports share some of their customers as there are several direct flights between
them. It would be interesting therefore, to compare the findings from this current study to those of Lubbe et al. (2011).

2.5 Chapter summary

This Chapter has considered various aspects of the study in relation to existing literature. The conceptual framework was presented to give an insight into the study and its direction. The concepts of service and service quality were analyzed. Various models of service quality were also highlighted before giving a detailed discussion on the SERVQUAL model. In bringing to the fore key issues necessitating this study, the nature and role of tourism were analyzed. Having been identified as a component of the tourist destination, air transportation was discussed and its role was specifically considered within the context of this study. Considering that this study will also focus on the managers of various organizations at the airport, their role in attainment of service quality was also presented. Finally an overview of the works done by other scholars was given.
CHAPTER 3 : RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The objective of this Chapter is to present, discuss and justify the choice of methods used in collecting relevant data for assessing airport service quality at Harare International Airport and ascertaining its influence on the growth of tourism in Zimbabwe. The Chapter is divided into three main sections. The first section provides the underlying assumptions or guiding principles of the study. This is necessary to foster better understanding of the choices of methods adopted. The second section focuses on the research strategy and design. The following section gives a detailed account of the data collection procedures implemented. Finally, a conclusion of the Chapter is given.

3.2 Research paradigm

An understanding and clear statement of philosophy is important in research as it provides guidelines for the study to be undertaken (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012; Rubin and Rubin, 2005; Deshphande, 1983). The philosophical aspects of ontology (the nature of reality) and epistemology (how it can be known) provide the foundations of a research since the methods adopted are shaped around these philosophical aspects. In this study, the researcher was faced with two options in terms of research philosophy - the positivist and the interpretivist paradigms. The positivist philosophy was adopted for this study and the following sections highlight and discuss the appropriateness of the positivist philosophy for this research.
3.2.1 The Positivist approach

The research adopted a positivist approach. The essence of positivism lies in its stance that ‘a reality exists and is waiting to be discovered’ (Carson et al., 2001). The key assumptions in positivism are that reality is fixed, directly measurable and can be unearthed. They further posit that the adoption of the positivist paradigm in research has the following implications:

i) The role of the researcher is to unearth the existing reality.

ii) The researcher is detached from the subjects; hence there is minimal interaction and influence of the researcher on the subjects under study.

iii) Hard and secure knowledge can be obtained.

iv) Results and conclusions of the study should be generalizable to the rest of the population.

v) The use of statistical and mathematical methods is recommended.

3.2.2 Ontological assumptions of Positivism

Ontology refers to the nature of reality and being (Ponterotto, 2005; Crotty, 2003). The nature of reality can either be objective (external) or subjective to the individual. The assumptions held regarding the nature of reality shape up the methodology adopted in research.

The positivist view on reality is that it does exist, is out there and just waiting to be discovered. The role of the researcher is therefore, to simply unearth the reality that is already in existence. This study is thrust on obtaining the perceptions and expectations of airline passengers passing through the Harare International Airport. It is the researcher’s
assertion that customer service and service quality are real and in existence not only in the researcher’s mind but in the real world. The existence of this reality is evident from the fact that several organizations across the world invest in ensuring that customer needs and expectations are met (and exceeded). Bestmark, a leading research company in customer service, reports that over 90% of the customers they surveyed indicated they would switch brands if they were to receive service below their expectations. Furthermore, 93% of executives in the same study had vowed to increase their investment in ensuring good quality of services for their clients (Bestmark, 2013).

Airline passengers do have expectations and perceptions regarding services rendered at airports. These just need to be unearthed through research. Various institutions (profit and non-profit making) realize the importance of customer satisfaction and loyalty and therefore invest large amounts in customer service.

Positivism assumes that the existing knowledge pertaining to the nature of reality is obtainable. This research conforms to this notion as it acknowledges that the success of any business lies in satisfying the expectations of customers. The only logical way to ensure that expectations are met is to obtain information on what the expectations are. It is therefore, not only possible but also imperative to obtain relevant knowledge regarding the expectations of customers. Of similar importance, is the need to obtain feedback on how customers perceive services rendered to them. Such knowledge can be obtained by various means and in this study; both expectations and perceptions were investigated. In further ensuring service excellence, it is imperative for managers to have a clear understanding of customer expectations. This study therefore, goes further to ascertain management’s opinions regarding the expectations of passengers at the Harare
International Airport. By aligning the actual perceptions of passengers against the perceived expectations obtained from managers, necessary adjustments can be made to improve service quality.

3.2.3 Epistemological assumptions of Positivism

Krauss (2005) asserts that epistemology relates to how reality is known. It is therefore, the study of knowledge. Positivists advocate for separation of the researcher from the respondent. According to them, it is possible to carry out a research without having influence from the researcher’s beliefs, interests and values (Holden and Lynche, 2009). This study concurs with this principle as influence and interaction between the researcher and the respondents could lead to bias and inaccurate conclusions. Bias had to be avoided at all costs to facilitate objectivity. This is in agreement with Scotland (2012:10) who suggests that “the researcher and the researched are independent entities, whereby the truth is only existent within the respondents and not the researcher.”

Objectivity is highly valued by positivists. This study emphasizes on the responses from airline passengers. Drawing from the marketing concept which emphasizes the need to focus on the buyer rather than the seller (sales concept) (Kotler, 2000), this research was inclined on obtaining solely, expectations and perceptions of airline passengers. The pure opinion of customers is the main component in the development of a product that not only satisfies the buyer, but is consequently marketable and profitable.

Positivism also entails the attainment of knowledge through objective measurement (Berinyuy and Daniel, 2010). The SERVQUAL model adopted in this research has been used in several studies for various industries all over the world (Musaba et al., 2014). The
model involves the systematic and structured measurement of customer expectations and perceptions.

Positivists are proponents of empiricism (Krauss, 2005). This study was based on the SERVQUAL model which involves the measurement of customer perceptions and expectations. It also goes further to measure the gaps that exist between customer expectations and those of customer service personnel in congruence with the empiricist norm of positivism.

Under the positivist paradigm, knowledge is deductively generated from a theory or hypothesis. The study sought to carry out investigations by collecting data from passengers and airport personnel regarding service quality, in order to ascertain whether airport service quality impacts on tourism growth. The theory on service quality (SERVQUAL) precedes the collection of data, hence the adoption of the deductive approach. The collection of data was based on the SERVQUAL model which is grounded on measuring the gap between customer expectations and perceptions. This was done and the findings from the collated data facilitated answering of the research question via the sub-questions.

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be generalized to all tourists travelling by air into Zimbabwe and that the findings of the study could contribute towards the development of tourism in Zimbabwe. Better still, it is the researcher’s aspiration to have neighbouring countries using this study in their endeavours to boost tourism growth in Southern Africa as a whole. The results of this study should be able to explain similar
trends relating to tourism as well as facilitate a better understanding of the relationship between service quality and tourism growth.

3.3 Research methods

3.3.1 Quantitative research

Quantitative research involves the generation of data in a quantitative nature which can then be analyzed formally and systematically (Kothari, 2009). Creswell (1994) defines quantitative research as a type of research which explains certain phenomena by gathering numerical data before analyzing it by mathematical methods particularly statistics.

Leedy and Ormorod (2001) identify three types of quantitative research, namely; descriptive, experimental and causal. Thomas and Nelson (2001) posit that descriptive research is a study of status. It is based on the premise that problems can be solved and practices improved. This study sought to determine the views of passengers on the quality of services with the aim of improving service delivery. The most common descriptive method is the survey and it was adopted in this study. Apart from being guided by the positivist epistemological and ontological assumptions, the following considerations were also made in the adoption of the quantitative research strategy:

a) Numerical attributes

The numerical attributes of quantitative research befit the SERVQUAL model as this facilitates measurement of SERVQUAL dimensions. The SERVQUAL model involves calculating the difference between scores for expectations and perceptions. Such calculations would be difficult to perform with non-numeric characteristics. Quantitative
research therefore, becomes ideal for the SERVQUAL model because of its association with numbers.

b) Consistency

Consistent procedures and clear adherence to set rules associated with quantitative research enables replications and further research to be carried out. This is in contrast to qualitative research which is highly subjective as qualitative researchers often use varied means to obtain relevant information. Quantitative research therefore, facilitates continuous measurement of the phenomenon under investigation. Service quality measurement is critical for organizations as it facilitates assessment of customer satisfaction. It is an ongoing process because customer needs and expectations are dynamic and need continuous assessment to ensure that organizations continue to be aligned with the needs of customers. Since business success lies in the satisfaction of customers, it is necessary for further studies of this nature to be undertaken. Quantitative research was thus found to be more suitable for this study as replications can be made in future thereby facilitating benchmarking and reliable assessment of business performance and growth.

c) Low costs

The relatively low costs involved in conducting quantitative research as compared to qualitative research made it more appealing for this study. The research was self-funded and the ability to cover a large sample with limited resources proved valuable.

d) Ability to cover large samples efficiently

The study sought to obtain perceptions and expectations of a large number of passengers. The relatively large sample was necessitated by the large volumes of traffic that pass
through Harare International Airport as well as the need to improve on external validity. The quantitative strategy was consequently more appropriate especially when compared to the qualitative strategy which is time consuming and rather expensive when collecting data from large samples.

The researcher was also aware of the shortcomings of the quantitative design, in spite of its merits. Quantitative research is rather rigid in terms of the tools used in extracting information. For instance, the exact same questionnaire would be used for all the respondents. Whilst this facilitates logical and easier analyses, it may not be best suited for all respondents and their different circumstances. It could also mean that some relevant data could be left out. In order to mitigate the effects of this limitation, the researcher included open-ended items on the questionnaire to give respondents an opportunity to share other views related to this study. The open-ended questions were however, kept to a minimum as they could be difficult to analyze considering the relatively large number of respondents involved in the survey. To this effect, both questionnaires (for passengers and management) included three open ended questions apiece (Appendix 2 and Appendix 3).

3.3.2 Research design

Research design is a fundamental component of the research process. It facilitates the smooth flow of different procedures involved in the process. It enables researchers to plan ahead in relation to data collection methods and techniques for data analysis (Kothari, 2009). Amongst other designs that could be adopted, such as exploratory and experimental designs, this study adopted the descriptive survey.
3.3.3 Descriptive survey

The descriptive research design is a scientific method entailing the observation and description of a subject’s behaviour without influencing it in any way. Survey research therefore, uses scientific sampling and questionnaire designs to measure characteristics of the population with statistical precision.

The survey design which entails gathering data by means of questions regarding people’s thoughts, feelings and actions was adopted. The survey method is widely used for market research and this study, being a market-based research, also adopted the survey design.

The descriptive survey was selected mainly because of the following advantages:-

i) Minimized bias and increased reliability as a result of its highly structured and formalized nature.

ii) It tends to adopt probability sampling which reduces bias as well as facilitating generalizations.

iii) The use of structured data collection instruments enables future replications of the study.

iv) Operational procedures are selected and clearly laid out in advance, facilitating proper and effective planning.

These characteristics of the descriptive study are in conformance with the positivist paradigm and also facilitate effective implementation of the SERVQUAL model. The descriptive research design, although focused on describing characteristics of a subject, is also associated with predictions. The same is expected of this study as it should generate conclusions that will determine how changes in airport service quality will impact the
growth of tourism. Such predictions should then be able to assist in planning and management of the country’s tourism sector.

3.3.4 Hand-back intercept (Airport) survey

Biggs et al. (2009) assert that surveys are carried out at airports in order to obtain necessary information regarding the characteristics or opinions of various airport users which include passengers, airport tenants and employees. They further posit that there are different types of airport surveys including the passenger survey, which was adopted in this study. Airport passenger surveys play a crucial role as they provide important input for airport planning and management. This study sought to provide useful information, not only beneficial to the airport authorities, but to Zimbabwe as a whole since tourism is a major source of revenue for the economy. It is therefore; in line with this reasoning that the study adopted the airport survey as a means of collecting relevant data.

Airport passenger surveys are often conducted by means of intercepting the respondents (passengers) and are hence termed intercept surveys. The intercept survey entails approaching prospective respondents as they pass a particular location, such as when they enter the terminal building or leave security screening points (Biggs et al., 2009). This is the method that was used in this survey. The researcher approached passengers entering the departure lounge upon completion of exit formalities and security screening. At this stage, passengers will have completed all formalities and will be awaiting aircraft boarding for departure. Intercept surveys can either be conducted by means of interviews or self-completed questionnaires (hand-back intercept survey) to gather data from the passengers. The latter method was chosen because of its ability to facilitate the collection of relevant information spontaneously. In addition, intercepting respondents ensures a
higher response rate as compared to mail, internet or telephone surveys. Furthermore, respondents are better able to give relevant information as they will be in the process of experiencing the airport services. This is in contrast to telephone or mail surveys which often require respondents to recall some of their experiences, thereby increasing the risk of forgetfulness and leaving out of relevant details. The choice of the hand-back over the interview method was further necessitated by the need to reach more passengers in a shorter period of time. Interviews whilst providing higher quality responses would be more costly and time consuming for the researcher, considering the time and financial constraints involved. Given the size of samples in the study an intercept survey was more conducive and convenient.

### 3.3.5 The population

This study sought to determine the impact of airport service quality on tourism growth; hence the respondents of this study were tourists travelling to Zimbabwe by air and passing through the country’s premier international airport. A major assumption in this study is that airline passengers passing through the Harare International Airport represent tourists travelling to Zimbabwe by air transport. Moreover, it is assumed that the results obtained from this study can be generalized to all international passengers travelling to Zimbabwe by air. However, the target population narrowed down to those passengers departing from Harare International Airport. There are four international airports in Zimbabwe; Harare, Victoria Falls, J.M Nkomo and Buffalo Range.

For the purposes of this study, focus was on Harare International Airport as it is the busiest of the four. This is in concurrence with Biggs et al. (2009), who assert that the busiest periods are the most critical for researching on airport facilities. Whilst Harare
and Victoria Falls handled 14 and 5 scheduled airlines respectively, J.M Nkomo handled only 2 whilst Buffalo Range airport currently did not handle any scheduled flights. The target population for airline passengers was based on the estimated number of flights scheduled to depart from the airport daily during the period of the survey.

3.3.6 The sample and sampling procedure

This study had two groups of respondents; airline passengers and customer services managers from the various organizations providing services to passengers at the airport. The sample for passengers was drawn from scheduled flights departing from Harare International Airport during each period of the survey. Passengers arriving were excluded from the survey as they seldom have time to spare. These passengers are often in a hurry to collect their baggage and leave the airport or proceed with their journey. Departing passengers, on the other hand, often have time to spare after completing exit formalities as they await aircraft boarding. Furthermore, it is assumed that most departing passengers would have had prior experience at the airport, especially if they had travelled into the country by means of air transportation. This would give them more exposure to services at the airport, enabling them to give more informed responses. The researcher was positioned at the entrance of the departure lounge, after the final security check point. It is from this point that passengers travelling on the selected flights were approached and all those who were willing to participate in the study were given questionnaires to complete. Given that two or more flights may check in at the same time, the researcher had to first confirm the specific flight being used by each passenger prior to administering the questionnaires.
Customer service managers were selected from 12 organizations that directly provide services to passengers at the airport. Due to the nature of airport operations where work is mostly organized into shifts, questionnaires were administered to all shifts in order to ensure that the results were representative of all managers at the airport.

3.3.7 Random sampling

In studies where the population is small, it is possible to obtain responses from each unit of the population. However, in instances where the population is large, a study of the entire population ceases to be feasible and only a fraction of the population is selected. This is known as sampling and there are two broad categories of sampling methods – probability (random) and non-probability. Probability sampling entails the selection of a sample whereby each unit of the population has an equal chance of selection. This is in contrast to non-probability sampling techniques which involve the deliberate selection of sample constituents by the researcher, thereby introducing bias and subjectivity.

This study adopted the simple random sampling procedure. Also known as random sampling, this sampling procedure was adopted mainly because of its conformance to positivist ideology. Unlike non-probability sampling methods which are highly prone to bias, random sampling facilitates generalizations of the findings and conclusions of the study to the entire population, as each element of the population has an equal chance of selection.

Random sampling requires that the entire population be known unit by unit. This enables the probability of selection (into the sample) to be known. Ideally therefore, the population of this study would comprise all airline passengers, and there would be need
to list all passengers in the sampling frame. The sample would then be randomly selected from the list of passengers in the sampling frame (Biggs et al., 2009). However, this ideal situation was not feasible, posing a challenge in the random selection of passengers. Following the stringent security measures (especially after the September 11 terrorist attacks of 2001, in New York City) adopted by airlines across the world, it was not possible to obtain the actual population of passengers travelling on these flights before flight departure (Biggs et al., 2009). Airlines, for security reasons, are no longer at liberty to publicly reveal the list of passengers travelling on a flight prior to the flight’s departure. As a result, the sampling frame was alternatively comprised of the total number of flights departing from the airport during the survey periods. The total number of flights scheduled to depart from the airport during the survey periods (sampling frame) was obtained from aircraft flight movement schedules available at the airport. An aircraft movement schedule is a list of all flights scheduled to depart and arrive at an airport each day. Issued daily, the schedule includes information such as aircraft type, flight number, as well as the departure and arrival times for each flight.

A total of 109 flights were scheduled to depart from Harare International Airport on the survey days selected between December 23, 2013 and January 3, 2014 (peak period). Additionally, 88 flights would depart on selected days during the off peak period (1 to 4 March, 2014 and 5 to 10 June, 2014). The flights were listed and chronologically numbered from 1 to 109 (peak) and 1 to 88 (off peak) respectively. Online computerized random sampling was then implemented via the Research Randomizer tool (found on www.researchrandomizer.org) to generate respective samples for the peak and off peak periods. The sample size was based on Krejcie and Morgan’s (1970) table for sample size
determination which computes that sample sizes of 86 and 73 are sufficient for population sizes of 109 and 88 respectively. The online randomizer generated a set of random numbers from the sampling frame to make up the sample for the study. Accordingly, a set of 86 numbers was randomly generated from the sampling frame of 109 for the peak period whilst 73 numbers were selected out of the 88 for the off peak period. The flights corresponding to the numbers randomly generated online subsequently became the sample of flights for the study. There were therefore, 86 flights to be surveyed during the peak period and 73 during the off peak.

Table 3-1, illustrates the total number of flights, sample size and passengers who took part in the survey. The table further shows the number of incomplete questionnaires as well as those that were well completed and therefore, used in the analysis of data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Peak</th>
<th>Off peak</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scheduled flights</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample size (flights)</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of passengers</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>437</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incomplete questionnaires</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fully completed questionnaires</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>410</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The researcher’s aim in administering the questionnaires was to obtain as many responses as possible since the population to be generalized to is relatively large. The researcher then resorted to distributing questionnaires to all passengers willing to undertake the survey on the randomly selected flights. This approach was also random in the sense that no particular format was adopted in selecting the respondents, in line with the positivist
concept of eliminating bias. Questionnaires were then distributed to passengers on these flights.

Passengers arrive at the check-in point in no particular order; hence they are already randomly ordered. Mehri et al. (2006) assert that arrivals are taken to be random when they are independent of each other and their pattern of arrival cannot be exactly pre-determined. This is the manner in which airline passengers arrive at the airport check-in points. As a result, the passengers are already in a random distribution. The element of human bias was thus greatly minimized in the selection of respondents. This was in spite of the absence of a systematic method of randomly selecting the individual passengers to be surveyed. The researcher went on to distribute questionnaires to all passengers who were willing to participate in the survey. This method of questionnaire distribution is used in various institutions involved in surveying airline passengers at airports across the world. Well acclaimed programs such as the Airport Service Quality Program and the SKYTRAX World Airport Quality Audit have successfully adopted this method. The results they produce have been accepted and used by various stakeholders in aviation management and planning. Passengers were approached upon completion of exit formalities, as they entered the departure lounge. The composition of the survey sample is illustrated in Table 3-1.

Management from customer service departments at the airport were selected for the survey in line with the SERVQUAL model which also purports to measure the gap between management perceptions and customer expectations. Questionnaires were distributed to 12 companies at the Harare International Airport. The companies include, the CAAZ, the handling agent, airlines, immigration department, restaurants and other
service providers at the airport. A total of seventy five responses were obtained from customer service personnel.

3.4 Data collection

3.4.1 Instrumentation

Research instruments are an important component of the research process because they facilitate collection of data from respondents. Interviews, questionnaires and observation are amongst the most common instruments for data gathering. For this study, the questionnaire was adopted.

3.4.2 The questionnaire

Questionnaires can be administered via postal mail, electronic mail or in the form of interviews, with the researcher orally asking the respondent questions from the questionnaire. Biggs et al. (2009) assert that in conducting air passenger surveys at the airport, the researcher can either adopt the interview approach or self-completed questionnaires.

The self-completed questionnaire was adopted mainly because of its ability to efficiently obtain data from a large number of respondents. Bryman and Bell (2007) concur with Biggs et al. (2009) that the self-completed questionnaire is a cheaper and faster method of collecting data. It limits the bias of the researcher unlike in the case of interviews where the researcher’s tone and facial expressions may influence the respondent (Hill et al. 2002). This is congruent to the positivist paradigm which insists on limited bias from the researcher onto the respondent. In spite of these strengths, the major weakness associated
with self-completed questionnaires is the limited control over the response rate and time. In order to mitigate this limitation the researcher collected all completed questionnaires as soon as they had been completed and as flight boarding commenced.

3.4.3 Questionnaire design

Two sets of questionnaires were used in this study; one for airline passengers (Appendix 2), and the other for customer services managers (Appendix 3). The design of the two questionnaires was similar, in line with the SERVQUAL model which involves measuring similar aspects between the two sets of respondents to facilitate measurement of the gaps. It is these gaps that then determine the quality of services. The questionnaire followed the original SERVQUAL model questionnaire but was modified to suit the airport scenario. This is in concurrence with Stafford (1999) who prescribes that the SERVQUAL questionnaire should be adjusted to suit the industry under study. The questionnaires included both closed and open-ended questions, with a 5 point Likert scale being used to measure perceptions and expectations for passengers and perceptions for the managers.

Questionnaire for passengers (Appendix 2)

The first section (Section A) of this questionnaire sought to obtain respondents’ demographic information. Both closed and open-ended questions were used in Section A. Closed questions in Section A provided categorized alternative responses for aspects such as gender, age and level of education. In this instance, passengers were asked to select and mark the appropriate category.
Age for instance, was categorized as follows:

Section A also included open-ended questions for example:

Given the wide range of travellers’ nationalities, it was not feasible to list all the nationalities for the respondents’ selection, hence the adoption of the open-ended format.

A combination of closed and open-ended questions was also adopted in Section A. This was done to attain more clarity from the passengers. For example:

In line with the SERVQUAL model, Section B comprised of the 5 point Likert scale questions ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Respondents were then requested to indicate their level of agreement with each statement on the relevant response option. The levels of agreement which were based on passengers’ opinions on various aspects of service quality were classified as follows:
A total of 21 statements were presented for the respondents to rate. The statements addressed the five dimensions of the SERVQUAL model (reliability, assurance, tangibility, empathy, and responsiveness). Each question was double throned with the first (a), relating to expectations on airports in general and the second (b), dealing with perceptions on the actual service aspects at Harare International Airport for example:

Section B therefore, generated a total of 42 responses from each respondent.

Section C of the passenger questionnaire related to additional information regarding service quality and comprised of 3 questions. The questions in this section sought to establish the link between service quality and tourism. As in Section A, the questions were both closed and open-ended. Questions in this section required passengers to rate the level of importance they attached to service quality as well as stating other factors influencing their decisions to travel to Zimbabwe. The latter also gave passengers the opportunity to further clarify their responses as necessary as follows:
In addition, passengers were requested to make recommendations for the improvement of airport service quality. This was an open-ended question which permitted respondents to freely express themselves in highlighting areas they felt needed attention so as to improve their service experience.

**Questionnaire for managers (Appendix 3)**

The questionnaire for management followed a similar format to that of passengers. As with the passenger questionnaire, *Section A* required respondents to indicate their gender, age and highest level of education attained. Whereas passengers were required to indicate their frequency and usual purpose of travel through Harare Airport, managers were asked to indicate the organization they worked for.

Unlike in Appendix 2 where both expectations and perceptions were required, this questionnaire only sought the respondents’ perceptions. Managers were requested to indicate what they thought passengers expected with regards to airport services. Therefore, they only had to rate their perceptions of passenger expectations. For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATEMENT</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>SA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. An airport should have modern equipment and facilities.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The questionnaire for managers therefore, comprised of 21 statements in *Section B*. *Section C* sought to determine the methods of customer feedback employed by service providers at the airport as well as to ascertain the involvement of frontline staff in
customer service decision making. The section concluded by requesting managers to make their own recommendations for the improvement of airport service quality.

The closed questions made it easier to quantify and analyze data. Since service quality is defined as the gap between expectations and perceptions, the closed questions facilitate clear calculations because the responses are easily quantifiable. Open ended questions, on the other hand, facilitate free expression of passenger opinions and capture other relevant information which may not be included in the closed questions.

The questionnaires were in one language - English, which proved to be a limitation as potential, non-English speaking passenger respondents could not respond to the questions. A total of 17 passengers indicated that they could not comprehend and communicate the English language well enough to participate in the survey. This is an issue to note for similar future researches. It would be necessary to translate questionnaires into other international languages as international airports host passengers from different nationalities. However, due to the relatively large sample used, the responses obtained from those who managed to respond to the questionnaires were sufficient to meet the objectives of this study.

3.4.4 Pre-test of instruments

Biggs et al. (2009) assert that pre-tests of instrumentation are a necessary part of the research process as they help to ensure clarity of the instrument and its ability to produce the desired information. In concurrence, Berinyuy and Daniel (2010) emphasize the need for pre-testing questionnaires to ensure that they capture relevant data. Saunders et al. (2007) further assert that this exercise is carried out in order to test the reliability and validity of the instruments prior to the actual survey.
Pre-tests of the questionnaires were carried out on December 15 and 16, 2013 at Harare International Airport, where the questionnaire was given to 25 passengers. The pre-test resulted in changes being made to the layout of Section B as most respondents felt that the initial layout seemed lengthy and not visually stimulating. The initial layout presented the 21 statements relating to expectations first and then went on to present the 21 statements on perceptions. This resulted in the initial questionnaire having four pages which proved to be too lengthy for the passenger respondents. The researcher rectified this by presenting the statements in a double thronged manner such that the expectations and perception of each statement were addressed simultaneously, thus reducing the number of pages to three.

In Section C, Question 2 which relates to other factors influencing passenger’s decisions to travel to Harare had to be reconstructed. The question had initially been open ended as shown:

For what other purposes do you travel to Harare?

Whilst the pre-test respondents indicated that the question was too broad for them and they had to write lengthy responses, the researcher also noted that the responses would be cumbersome to consolidate and analyze given the relatively large sample involved. As a result the question became closed with a narrower option for an open-ended response as illustrated:
The questionnaire for customer service management was pre-tested on 10 employees from two companies at Harare International Airport. The pre-test resulted in changes being made to the classification of educational qualifications. The initial questionnaire had distinguished between the various levels of qualifications specifically, 

*Ordinary level, Advanced level, Diploma, Bachelors and Masters Degrees.*

Following the pre-test, it was noted that such classification was lengthy and reclassifying the qualifications would serve the same purpose with a relatively neater presentation and analysis. As a result the classes were reorganized into three categories namely, 

*Secondary, Tertiary and Other* where respondents would specify the qualifications they had other than those provided as options.

### 3.4.6 Survey timing

The survey was conducted during the period December 2013 to June 2014. In order to obtain a more representative result, the survey was conducted over two periods. This was meant to cater for the variations in passenger traffic that occur during the peak and off peak seasons. Such variations could have an effect on the quality of services at the airport and were therefore, factored in by dividing the survey into two periods. The study also took into account variations that could result from the different seasons (winter and summer), as some services would be required in other seasons and not in others. As a result questionnaires were also distributed at Harare International Airport in June.
In order to get a balanced result, some of the questionnaires were administered during the peak season whilst the others were distributed during the off peak period as illustrated in Table 3-1. Passengers were approached upon completion of exit formalities (check-in, immigration, customs clearing as well as security screening) as they awaited aircraft boarding. The passengers were approached as they entered the departure lounge. Upon receiving the questionnaires passengers were requested to complete the forms and leave them on the lounge seats before boarding. Those who completed earlier would place the questionnaires on the tables in the lounge for collection. To ensure accountability, questionnaires were numbered before being distributed to respondents and reconciled on collection.

For management, questionnaires were distributed to customer service management from 12 companies operating at the airport. The questionnaires were distributed individually by the researcher as she had a list of the various organizations and their customer service management. Overall, 75 questionnaires were distributed and collected from the customer service personnel of various companies at the Harare International Airport. The questionnaires were distributed to the managers and collected upon completing.

3.4.7 Data generation procedures

At the end of each questionnaire administration session, all questionnaires were collected and reconciled to ensure that all had been returned. This task was possible as all questionnaires had been numbered before distribution. Collected questionnaires were then dated and sorted according to completion, with those that had been partially completed being filed separately from those that had been fully completed. Responses obtained were immediately entered on Microsoft Excel. Since the study involved a fairly
large number of questionnaires, it was necessary to enter the responses into the computer as soon as possible, lest the questionnaires were damaged or misplaced. Once entered in the computer, the data was ready for analysis by means of SPSS and Microsoft Excel. Data collected from the study was intended to answer the research question by addressing each of the five sub-questions. The last part of this section highlights how the collected data answered each sub-question.

i) **What are the expectations of passengers regarding service at Harare International Airport?**

This question was addressed by the responses given by passengers in *Section B* of Appendix 2. Ratings of their expectations for airport service quality were entered in Microsoft Excel as scores from 1 to 5 in correspondence to the Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The aspects relating to each RATER dimension were then summed and averaged to obtain the overall score for each dimension.

ii) **How do passengers perceive service delivery at Harare International Airport?**

Data in *Section B* of the passengers’ questionnaire was used to answer the second sub-question. Perceptions of passengers on airport services were derived from the scores for each of the 21 statements on the questionnaire. In a similar manner to the responses of passenger expectations, perception scores on the 5 point Likert scale were computed in Microsoft Excel for each dimension of RATER.
iii) What gaps, if any, exist in terms of passenger expectations and perceptions on service at the Airport?

As with the first two sub-questions, the gaps in passenger expectations and perceptions were also derived from Section B of the passenger questionnaire. The scores for expectations were subtracted from those of perceptions to establish the respective gaps.

iv) How do managers perceive passenger expectations regarding service quality?

The fourth objective was addressed by the responses in Section B of the managers’ questionnaire. The responses from the managers in this section were entered in Microsoft Excel on a scale of 1 to 5.

v) What recommendations are necessary to improve the inflow of tourists?

In addressing this sub-question, responses in Section C of both questionnaires were used. Both questionnaires had an open ended question requesting the respective respondents to indicate any recommendations they deemed necessary for the improvement of services at Harare International Airport. Responses from passengers and managers were compiled to provide an answer to this question. In order to fully understand the importance of feedback to the various service providers, the managerial respondents were asked in Section C, to indicate the methods they adopted in collecting feedback from passengers. The question was closed, with an option to specify methods used to collect customer feedback. Managers were also requested to indicate the extent to which they involved frontline staff in the making of decisions related to passenger services. This information was obtained from the alternatives ranging from Always to Never. A similar question addressed the extent to which managers incorporated passenger feedback in their decision making. Responses to both questions were used to ascertain the importance of customer
feedback to service providers and thus provide an understanding on the usefulness of recommendations for service delivery improvements at the Airport.

Finally, the decision on whether the quality of airport services influenced tourist arrivals was based on passenger responses to the Section C questions:

1. How important is airport service quality in your decision to travel to Harare?
2. What other factors influence your decision to travel to Zimbabwe?

3.5 Data presentation, analysis and interpretation procedures

Upon completion of the data gathering process and capturing of data into Microsoft Excel, data was ready for processing. The researcher analyzed the data by means of Microsoft Excel and SPSS. The tables and charts presenting the various data in this study were developed and generated through Microsoft Excel Pivot tables. Furthermore, calculations of the scores for service quality would be done in accordance with the SERVQUAL model. The model stipulates that service quality is determined by the gap between customer expectations and perceptions on RATER.

Parasuraman, et al. (1985) propose three major ways of analyzing SERVQUAL data, where: $SQ = Service \ quality, \ P=Perception \ scores \ and \ E=Expectation \ scores$

i) Item by item analysis, translating to an analysis of each set of statements. This would therefore, result in the following computation to determine service quality:

$$SQ = \sum_{i=1}^{n} P_i - E_i$$
ii) **Dimension by dimension analysis**, with the computation for service quality being made for each dimension. All attributes of a single dimension are summed up to come up with a single measure of quality for the whole dimension.

The following formula illustrates the calculation of the service quality score:

\[
SQ = \frac{P_1 + P_2 + P_3 + P_4}{4} - \frac{E_1 + E_2 + E + E_4}{4}
\]

In this instance, \(P_1\) to \(P_4\) represent the perceptions relating to a particular dimension, such as tangibility, whilst \(E_1\) to \(E_4\) refer to the expectations of the same dimension. Adding up similar scores for all the five dimensions gives the overall service quality score.

iii) **Single SERVQUAL measure**, comprising the summations of all the individual ratings to give a single measure as shown.

\[
SQ = \frac{P_1 + P_2 + P_3 \ldots + P_n}{n} - \frac{E_1 + E_2 + E_3 \ldots + E_n}{n}
\]

This computation disregards the individual attributes of the model and simply makes a single calculation for all dimensions. Whilst the method achieves the ultimate result of ascertaining the levels of service quality, it does not consider the quality levels for individual dimensions.

This study adopted the dimension by dimension approach. The approach was preferred for its ability to establish the service quality levels for individual dimensions. An overall service quality score can be achieved by summing up the scores from each dimension, thus achieving the ultimate objective of assessing the overall quality of services at the airport.
Each response on the 5 point Likert scale was assigned a score value of between 1 and 5 as illustrated:

![Likert Scale Table]

The main purpose of collecting data was to answer the main research question by addressing each of the 5 sub-questions derived from the research objectives. The following sections describe how the data collected was analyzed in order to answer each of the research questions.

**a) What are the expectations of passengers regarding service at airports?**

Expectation scores from the passengers were entered on Microsoft Excel in tabular form. All expectation scores for each aspect of the 5 dimensions were then summed and averaged in order to obtain a mean score for each aspect using the following formula.

\[
\text{Expectation of each dimension} = \frac{E_1 + E_2 + E_3 + E_4}{4}
\]

\(E_1 \ldots E_4\) represent the expectation scores within each dimension of RATER. Expectation scores for each dimension ranged between 1 and 5, with 1 being the least score, indicating low expectations and 5 reflecting the highest level of expectations. The results of the data collected in respect of passenger expectations were presented in tabular form, clearly showing scores for the various aspects of each RATER dimension.
b) How do passengers perceive service delivery at Harare International Airport?

Customer perceptions are an integral part of service quality measurement in the SERVQUAL model. The responses of passengers regarding their perceptions of the actual services were recorded in Microsoft Excel for each of the 21 statements. As was done for expectations, the sum of perception scores for each aspect of the service quality dimensions was obtained and the overall score was computed using the following equation:

\[
Perception\ of\ each\ dimension = \frac{P_1 + P_2 + P_3 + P_4}{4}
\]

\(P_1\ldots P_4\) signify the perception scores within each dimension of RATER, with scores ranging from 1 to 5. As with the expectation scores, the least score is 1 and the highest score is 5. A low score therefore, implied low perceptions whilst a score closer to 5 depicted that passengers highly rated service delivery for a particular service dimension at the airport. The perception scores of passengers were tabulated and presented concurrently with the respective expectation scores for all dimensions.

c) What gaps if any, exist in terms of passenger expectations and perceptions on service at the Airport?

The SERVQUAL model determines the quality of services by computing the gap score between customer expectations and perceptions.
Once the expectations and perceptions of customers had been derived, the quality of services was then calculated by the formula:

\[ SQ = \frac{P_1 + P_2 + P_3 + P_4}{4} - \frac{E_1 + E_2 + E + E_4}{4} \]

*SQ* - service quality

*E_1*...*E_4* - expectation scores for each dimension

*P_1*...*P_4* - perception scores for each dimension

The gaps were initially calculated in Microsoft Excel by making use of the above formula. The respective descriptive statistics were then generated through SPSS. Linear graphs and tables were used to present the data on the gaps between passenger expectations and perceptions. In ascertaining the significance of the gaps between customer expectations and perceptions, a Two-sample t-test was performed via SPSS.

d) **How do managers perceive passenger expectations regarding service quality?**

This study considered Gap 1 of the SERVQUAL model which in addition to ascertaining customers’ expectations and perceptions on services, seeks to determine the views of managers regarding customer expectations. In other words, the model sets to establish what managers perceive as customer expectations. This was achieved by asking the managers to rate what they thought passengers expected from airport services. These scores were tabulated in Microsoft Excel, basing on the same scoring principles as for the passenger responses. As a result, perceptions of managers regarding customer expectations were computed by the following equation,

\[ Perception \text{ of each dimension} = \frac{P_1 + P_2 + P_3 + P_4}{4} \]
$P_1...P_4$ represent the perception scores within each dimension of RATER, with scores ranging from 1 to 5. Scores closer to 1 implied that managers felt that customers had very low expectations for that particular aspect of service, whilst a high score closer to 5 meant that managers thought passengers had very high expectations regarding a particular service dimension. The responses of managers in relation to their perceptions of passenger expectations were presented in tabular form and also in the form of a clustered column graph. A Two-sample t-test was computed to ascertain the statistical significance between customer expectations and the perceptions held by managers regarding the same. SPSS was used to compute the t-test.

**e) What recommendations are necessary to improve the inflow of tourists?**

Data relating to recommendations for improvements to airport services at Harare International Airport was also collected during the survey. Both passengers and customer service managers at the airport were requested to make recommendations for improvement. These recommendations were collected as open ended questions so as to allow respondents to freely express themselves. All recommendations generated from this part of the survey were entered in Microsoft Excel. For ease of analysis, the recommendations were each classified and entered under one of the five SERVQUAL dimensions of RATER. Microsoft Excel Pivot tables were then used to draw up the descriptive statistics for the recommendations. It was therefore, possible to analyze and ascertain the recommendations relating to each dimension of RATER. Recommendations obtained from both passengers and managers were presented in the form of a clustered column graph. A table was also used to depict a detailed description of the recommendations from respondents in each dimension.
To further understand the usefulness of recommendations, responses regarding the incorporation of frontline staff and passenger recommendations in improving service quality were analyzed. The analysis was achieved by entering each response in tabular form in Microsoft Excel. Pivot tables were used to compute the statistics for these responses and thus determine the frequency of each response.

3.6 Triangulation, validity, reliability and credibility

Prior to proceeding with the distribution of questionnaires, there was need to ensure that the questionnaires were capable of measuring what they were meant to (validity) as well as being consistent (reliability). Validity and reliability are particularly important for ensuring credibility and facilitating the generalization of research findings. These two aspects were of particular importance to this study as it sought to make a meaningful contribution toward the development of aviation and tourism not only in Zimbabwe but throughout the SADC region. Accordingly, sections 3.6.1 and 3.6.2 describe how reliability and content validity were ensured in this study respectively.

3.6.1 Reliability

The internal consistency (reliability) of the questionnaire was estimated using Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient. This is a well-established and acceptable method of estimating reliability. Responses obtained from the 25 questionnaires administered and completed during the pre-test were used in estimating reliability. Each of the five SERVQUAL dimensions was tested and the results are shown in Table 3-2. Values of the Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient range from 0 to 1. Netemeyer et al. (2003) concur with Nunnally and Bernstein (1994), that a coefficient of at least 0.7 is acceptable. Basing on this standard,
the reliability of the instrument, as evident from the results in Table 3-2, was acceptable and the researcher proceeded to administer the instrument.

Table 3-2 Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SERVQUAL Dimension</th>
<th>Alpha coefficient</th>
<th>No. of items for dimension</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assurance</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tangibility</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsiveness</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.6.2 Validity

Content validity was considered in the development of the instrument. This relates to the ability of the instrument to measure what it is set out to measure. Content validity in this study was ensured by obtaining analytical input from experts in the field of service quality and airport services. They went through the questionnaires and made necessary contributions to ensure that all necessary aspects relating to airport service quality were covered.

3.7 Ethical considerations

In conducting the study the following ethical issues were considered.

a) Obtaining the consent of respondents was a key issue in this study. In addition to verbally introducing herself and explaining the purpose of the study, the researcher incorporated this information at the onset of the questionnaire. This was done to ensure that respondents were well informed about the study prior to participating in the survey.
b) International airports are high security areas protected by the laws of the country as well as international standards and regulations. The researcher had to get authorization from the CAAZ to conduct her research at the airport. This authorization was granted and an access pass valid for 6 months (December 2013 to June 2014) was obtained permitting access to the departure lounges which are restricted areas. The researcher also undertook to keep the research academic and submit a copy of the completed thesis to the CAAZ as per their requirements. Moreover, she undertook to abide by the rules and regulations governing the airport.

c) Confidentiality is a key ethical concern in research. The researcher reassured respondents of the purely academic nature of this research and the maintenance of anonymity. This information was evident from the questionnaires which did not require respondents to reveal their names or any other information that could result in their identity being exposed. Furthermore, the researcher identified herself to the respondents by means of the CAAZ access identity card, which identified her as a Zimbabwe Open University student conducting an academic research. This served to instil confidence in the respondents and to assure them that the research was purely for academic purposes.

3.8 Chapter summary

This chapter has given a detailed discussion of the underlying principles and assumptions governing this study. The design and strategies adopted for the study were highlighted, justified and discussed. A clear description of the instrumentation, sampling and data
gathering procedure was also given. The limitations and mitigating measures involved in
the study were also presented. Finally, key ethical issues were highlighted.
CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

This Chapter presents, analyzes and interprets data from a total of 485 questionnaires completed by 410 airline passengers and 75 customer service managers at the Harare International Airport, between December 2013 and June 2014. The main purpose of conducting the survey was to assess airport service quality and determine whether it impacted on tourism growth in Zimbabwe. As suggested by Cejas and Rendeiro (2006), evaluation of airport service quality is necessary in tourism as airports are the first and last contact points for tourists. The objectives of the study are:-

i) To establish passenger expectations on service at the Harare International Airport.

ii) To ascertain the perceptions of passengers regarding airport service quality at Harare International Airport.

iii) To compute the gaps between their expectations and perceptions concerning the quality of service at Harare International Airport.

iv) To obtain feedback from various managers at the Airport regarding customer expectations.

v) To make appropriate recommendations for the improvement of airport services.

In line with the SERVQUAL model, data was also obtained from managers in the customer service sections of the various organizations at the airport. The objective is to improve service quality by aligning management perceptions with customer expectation on service quality.
The Chapter is classified into two main sections. Section I presents data obtained from the survey, whilst Section II focuses on the analysis and interpretation of the findings presented in Section I. Given that there are two groups of respondents, namely airline passengers and managers, the presentation of data in Section I shall initially consider the data obtained from the passengers’ responses before proceeding to the presentation of the data obtained from manager respondents. A discussion of the respondents’ personal information is made in Section I. The discussion on the demographic profile of both passengers and managers shall also be done separately, beginning with a discussion on passengers (sub section 4.2) and then for the managers (sub section 4.3). Tables, pie charts, linear and column graphs have been adopted for the presentation of data. Microsoft Excel Pivot tables were used in the generation of tables and charts for data presentation. Computations of expectation and perception scores as well as the resultant gap scores were also done in Microsoft Excel. The statistical package SPSS was used in performing the Two-sample t-tests of significance as well as in the generation of descriptive statistics for the SERVQUAL scores.

The Two-sample t-tests were performed to determine the significance of the differences between:

i) Passenger expectations and perceptions

ii) Managers’ perceptions of the expectations of passengers and the actual expectations of passengers
SECTION I: DATA PRESENTATION

4.2 Demographic profile of passenger respondents

As highlighted in section 4.1, there were two groups of respondents in this study; airline passengers and customer service managers. Whilst passengers are part of the external customers of airports, customer service managers are part of the airport’s internal customers (Dave, 2013). This section specifically presents data on the demographic profile of passenger respondents.

Shaw (2011) avers that any successful marketing effort is based on full knowledge of both current and potential customers. In line with his contention, demographic information for respondents was sought at the onset of this study. To this end, respondents were requested to provide personal information such as gender, age and highest level of education attained. Knowledge of such information fosters better understanding of the passengers who comprise the market for airport and tourism services. In turn, relevant stakeholders can tailor their product offerings to suit the respective characteristics of visitors travelling to Zimbabwe by means of air transport.

4.2.1 Age and gender of passengers

Age and gender do not only influence the quality of time for tourism and leisure but also the quality of activities and services to be experienced (Youell, 1997). Table 4-1 shows the age and gender profiles of the respondents.
As illustrated in Table 4-1, there was no significant disparity between male and female travellers. Most female passengers were aged between 25 and 35 years, whilst the majority of male passengers were in the 36 to 45 year age group. The least number of both male and female passengers was below 25 years and above 55 years.

### 4.2.2 Educational profile of passengers

The level of education plays a pivotal role in tourism behaviour. Understanding tourists’ different levels of education helps in the development of tailored tourist products for the respective segments (Chapinit and Phetranoon, 2011). Table 4-2 summarizes the educational profile of passenger respondents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Primary</th>
<th>Secondary</th>
<th>Tertiary</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below 25</td>
<td>0(0%)</td>
<td>4(1%)</td>
<td>43(10%)</td>
<td>0(0%)</td>
<td>47(11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-35</td>
<td>0(0%)</td>
<td>6(1%)</td>
<td>125(30%)</td>
<td>0(0%)</td>
<td>131(32%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-45</td>
<td>0(0%)</td>
<td>9(2%)</td>
<td>122(30%)</td>
<td>5(1%)</td>
<td>136(33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46-55</td>
<td>7(2%)</td>
<td>16(4%)</td>
<td>49(12%)</td>
<td>0(0%)</td>
<td>72(18%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above 55</td>
<td>3(1%)</td>
<td>2(0%)</td>
<td>14(3%)</td>
<td>5(1%)</td>
<td>24(6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand total</td>
<td>10(2%)</td>
<td>37(10%)</td>
<td>353(86%)</td>
<td>10(2%)</td>
<td>410(100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Of the total travellers who responded, 86 percent claimed to have attained a tertiary qualification. Travellers in the 25 to 45 year age group were the most holders of tertiary qualifications. It is also interesting to note that from the below 25 age group to the 45 year age group; all respondents had at least obtained a secondary education. At least 96 percent obtained a secondary education, whilst 2 percent were educated up to primary school level. Quite understandably, there were some passengers aged 46 and above who had only obtained primary education. Table 4-2 also shows holders of other qualifications totalling 2 percent, whilst those that had only reached secondary level made up 10 percent.

4.2.3 Country of origin

Tourists’ country of origin (nationality) is a common demographic indicator, particularly used when studying the behaviour of tourists (Pearce, 2005). An in-depth understanding of factors such as the nationality of tourists can assist governments in tourist retention. This study considered ‘the country of origin’ in order to gain a better understanding of the passengers travelling through Harare International Airport.

Figure 4-1 depicts respondents by their respective nationalities. A total of 45 nationalities were represented in this study.
British and South African passengers had the most number of respondents with each contributing 11 percent of the total respondents. Foreign nationals constituted 90 percent of the respondents. It is also interesting to note that only 40 percent of the respondents were Africans, whilst the remaining 60 percent was dominated by Europeans who made up 40 percent, whilst Americans and Asians comprised 10 percent each.
4.2.4 Frequency of travel through Harare International Airport

Repeated patronization is desirable in any business venture as it brings financial gains amongst other benefits. It is however, more important to identify the drivers of such behavioural loyalty (Liu-Thompkins and Tam, 2013). Obtaining feedback from customers is one key way of not only keeping them satisfied but also ensuring repeat visits. For that reason, this study had to classify passenger respondents by the number of times they had been at the Harare International Airport. Table 4-3 illustrates these frequencies.

Table 4-3 Frequency of travel through Harare International Airport

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency of travel</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 time</td>
<td>92 (22%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 times</td>
<td>136(33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 times</td>
<td>91(22%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 times</td>
<td>46(11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 times</td>
<td>10(2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 times</td>
<td>2(0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 6 times</td>
<td>33(8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>410(100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Over the previous 12 months, the majority (88%) of passengers had travelled more than once through the airport, with 33 percent having travelled through the airport twice.

4.2.5 Purpose of travel

This study classified respondents by purpose of travel mainly because such classification facilitates the identification of tourist demands, planning and marketing promotions (Yorke, 2013). Results of the classification are presented in Figure 4-2, which illustrates that the greatest number of respondents were holiday makers who made up 52 percent of the sample.
Passengers travelling for business and educational purposes comprised 38 percent and 8 percent of the sample respectively. The least common reasons for travelling through the airport were medical and other reasons at 1 percent apiece. Most of the holiday makers were from Europe, particularly from Britain (10 percent). Australian nationals made up 9 percent of the holiday makers whilst American respondents comprised 8 percent. Business travellers were mostly from within the African continent, with South Africans making up 5 percent of the total business travellers. Asians travelling for business purposes were also significant at 8 percent, whilst Americans and Europeans had the least number of respondents travelling on business.

4.2.6 Airline travelled on

International airports serve a variety of airlines which differ in aircraft capacity, reliability, and convenience, volumes of passengers and frequency of flights operated. Harare International Airport is no exception. Such disparities often translate to differences in the services experienced by passengers which may in turn have a
significant impact on the results of this study. There was therefore, a need for passengers to identify the airline on which they were travelling at the time of the survey.

As depicted in Figure 4-3, South African Airways had the largest number of passenger respondents making up 33 percent of the total respondents.

Figure 4-3 Respondents by airline travelled on

Kenya Airways passengers made up 16 percent whilst those travelling on Emirates were 13 percent of the total airline passenger respondents. Meanwhile, Angolan Airlines, Mozambican Airlines and Air Namibia recorded the least number of passenger respondents.

4.3 Demographic profile of managerial respondents

In their SERVQUAL Gap analysis model Parasuraman et al. (1985) considered among other gaps, the gap between the expectations of customers and what managers thought customers expected from service. This was in order to ensure alignment of managers’
perceptions with the actual needs of customers. The gap known as Gap 1 is an integral part of this study hence a separate questionnaire was designed for the managers involved in the delivery of service to passengers at the Harare International Airport. This subsection presents the demographic data of the managers.

### 4.3.1 Age and gender profile of managers

It was essential to categorize the managers according to age and gender as age often reflects a person’s knowledge and experience (Wyse, 2012). Chalofsky et al. (2014) also note the influence of age on problem solving abilities of employees, further necessitating the need to establish the ages of management in this study. Table 4-4 illustrates the age and gender profile of the manager respondents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below 25</td>
<td>1(1%)</td>
<td>3(4%)</td>
<td>4(5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-35</td>
<td>11(15%)</td>
<td>25(33%)</td>
<td>36(48%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-45</td>
<td>3(4%)</td>
<td>17(23%)</td>
<td>20(27%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46-55</td>
<td>2(3%)</td>
<td>9(12%)</td>
<td>11(15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above 55</td>
<td>2(3%)</td>
<td>2(3%)</td>
<td>4(5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grand Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>19(25%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>56(75%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>75(100%)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unlike in the case of the travellers, where there was a generally fair gender distribution, a clear disparity was noted for managers, with males being more dominant by 50 percent. Despite the significant difference in gender representation, both female and male managers followed a similar age distribution. Most of the respondents were aged between 25 and 45 years, with the remaining few being either below 25 years or above 46 years.
4.3.2 Educational profile of managers

Saiki (2008) opines that a tertiary education reflects that one has at least got minimal knowledge of a specific aspect or area. Although it may not necessarily indicate professionalism, it serves as an indication of basic knowledge. Table 4-5 further illustrates the highest levels of qualifications for managerial respondents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Secondary</th>
<th>Tertiary</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below 25</td>
<td>0(0%)</td>
<td>0(0%)</td>
<td>4(5%)</td>
<td>4(5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-35</td>
<td>4(5%)</td>
<td>2(2%)</td>
<td>30(41%)</td>
<td>36(48%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-45</td>
<td>2(3%)</td>
<td>5(7%)</td>
<td>13(17%)</td>
<td>20(27%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46-55</td>
<td>0(0%)</td>
<td>2(3%)</td>
<td>9(12%)</td>
<td>11(15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above 55</td>
<td>0(0%)</td>
<td>2(3%)</td>
<td>2(3%)</td>
<td>4(6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grand Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>6(8%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>11(16%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>58(77%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>75(100%)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most managers were in possession of a tertiary qualification and it can therefore, be assumed that they at least had basic relevant knowledge of customer and airport services.

4.3.3 Managers’ working experience at Harare International Airport

Work experience in addition to educational qualifications affirms the possession of relevant skills by members of staff (Saiki, 2008). In this study, it was not only necessary to know the years of working experience for the managers, more specifically, it was crucial for managers to indicate the period for which they had been working at the Airport. This was to ascertain their knowledge and appreciation of the airport’s services. Table 4-6 presents the managers’ years of working experience at the Harare International Airport.
Table 4-6 Managers’ years of experience at the Airport

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below 1 year</td>
<td>5 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 to 4 years</td>
<td>14 (19%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 to 10 years</td>
<td>18 (51%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 years and above</td>
<td>38 (24%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grand Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>75 (100%)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4-6 shows that only 7 percent of the staff had been working at the airport for less than 12 months. This leaves 93 percent of the respondents having been at the airport for at least 1 year. The greater percentage of these had been working at the airport for between 5 and 10 years. This implies that the majority of managers had been working at the airport long enough to make well informed contributions to the study.

4.3.4 Organizations employing managerial respondents

Airports are enterprises that are comprised of several organizations rendering a host of services to airline passengers amongst other customers (Graham et al., 2008). The overall assessment of an airport’s services is therefore the totality of services from the individual service providers. As a result, it was essential for this study to incorporate managers from the various organizations providing services to passengers at the airport. Table 4-7 classifies the managerial respondents according to the types of organization they worked for.
### Table 4-7 Airport managers by organization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Organization</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Airlines</td>
<td>16(21%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airport authority</td>
<td>11(15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurants</td>
<td>5(7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duty-free retailers</td>
<td>4(5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telecoms service providers</td>
<td>2(3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration</td>
<td>2(3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passenger handling agents</td>
<td>28(37%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customs</td>
<td>5(7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grand Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>75(100%)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The passenger handling agents had the highest number of respondents totalling 37 percent. Representatives from various airlines constituted 21 percent of total managers, whilst the Airport authority contributed 15 percent of managerial respondents. The managers were generally representative of the various service providers at the airport as evidenced by the diversity in organizations which were represented in the study.

### 4.4 Discussion on the personal profiles of respondents

In light of the data presented regarding the demographics of the passenger and managerial respondents, this section analyzes and discusses the profiles of the respondents. The first sub-section, 4.4.1 considers the demographic profile of passengers whilst the following sub-section focuses on the managerial respondents.

#### 4.4.1 Discussion on passengers’ demographic profile

**Age-gender profile of passengers**

Passengers were generally well distributed in terms of gender, with males and females having a fairly equal representation. There was therefore, minimal gender related bias with regards to the findings of this study. The economically active age group (25-55
years) dominated the study. This age group comprised of the working class, business people, tertiary students and holiday makers. This distribution is in concurrence with Moutinho (2000) who asserts that active middle aged persons and senior citizens (50-65 years) are amongst the tourist segments that are gaining relative importance and above average growth rates.

**Educational profile of passengers**

The sample of passengers was mostly well educated as most of the respondents had achieved a tertiary qualification. All of them had at least gone through primary school education, with 10 percent having been educated only up to this level. This 10 percent was comprised of passengers aged between 46 and 55 years. All travellers aged between 25 and 36 years had at least obtained a secondary qualification. Overall, 86 percent of passenger respondents had obtained a tertiary qualification. This trend can be explained by the increased access in education globally, where more and more people are reaching higher levels of education than in the past (Altbach et al., 2009).

The fact that the majority (86%) of passengers were holders of tertiary qualifications justifies the assumption that most respondents were capable of fully comprehending the questionnaire and making logical contributions to the study. The remaining 14% had all attained primary education and were therefore capable of reading and writing, thus enabling them to respond to the questionnaire.

**Frequency of travel through Harare International Airport**

Most passengers involved in the survey had obtained sufficient and recent experience at the airport thus enabling them to make well informed contributions. This is deduced from Table 4-3 which depicts that over three quarters of passengers had travelled through the
Airport more than once during the previous year. Without disqualifying responses from those who had only been at the Airport once over the previous 12 months, responses from the majority of passengers could be authenticated by the fact that they had more experience at the airport over the same period of time. Responses from the 22 percent, who had travelled once, are also important as these passengers could also have travelled more times in previous years. Furthermore, Wilson et al. (1997) assert that once-off customer experiences are vital as they provide a fresh perspective and new feedback which could have otherwise been over looked by regular customers.

**Passengers’ countries of origin**

Service providers often make assumptions about tourist clients basing on their nationalities. This is because certain trends or behaviours are believed to be grounded in the origins of tourists (Moutinho, 2000). This study thus set out to determine the countries of origin of the travellers. Figure 4-1 shows that foreigners made up the greater number of respondents, with Zimbabweans only comprising 10 percent of the total respondents. Some potential respondents were not able to take part in the survey due to the language barrier as all questionnaires were in English. For example, there could have been more respondents, particularly from the Asian countries, if the questionnaire had been translated into other languages such as Chinese Mandarin, and Arabic. In spite of this drawback, those passengers who managed to respond still provided sufficient information for the study.

Britain and South Africa recorded the highest number of respondents, with most of the British travelling on holiday and the majority of South Africans being business travellers. Overall, holiday makers were the majority of respondents in this survey. This trend is in
sync with statistics from the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority, which show the bulk of visitors to Zimbabwe, as travelling on holiday, followed by business and education (ZTA, 2014). Globally, the distribution is also a reflection of trends in tourism as reported by the UNWTO, whereby 79 percent of the world’s international tourists were travelling for leisure, visiting family and friends and religious purposes. Business and professional travellers, on the other hand comprised 14 percent, with the remaining 7 percent travelling for other unspecified reasons (UNWTO, 2014). The sample of respondents can, therefore, be regarded as being representative of the tourists travelling to Zimbabwe for various reasons.

**Airlines travelled on**

Most respondents were travelling on South African Airways followed by Kenya Airways and Emirates. This composition projects the general market shares of these airlines, with South African Airways, Emirates and Kenya Airways having the larger market shares of the Zimbabwean airline industry for the year 2013 (ZTA, 2014). Likewise, airlines with lower market shares such as Angolan Airlines, Air Botswana and Mozambican Airlines had fewer respondents. As such, it can be concluded that the sample was truly representative of the airline industry in Zimbabwe and thus capable of presenting credible findings.

It is highly likely from these results that most of the respondents (particularly from overseas) had passed through international airports in other countries on their way to Harare. At the time of the study, there were no direct flights between Zimbabwe and overseas source markets, as a result, passengers travelling to Zimbabwe had to obtain connecting flights at other international airports. This should have exposed them to
various services from other international airports. Such exposure greatly contributes to the quality of results obtained from the survey as the respondents were well informed and experienced in international airport services.

4.4.2 Discussion on managers’ demographic profile

Age and gender profile of managers

The disparity in the gender of managerial respondents is evidence of the fact that women still occupy fewer managerial positions than men. Whilst women are achieving similar levels of education to their male counterparts and also getting hired more often, fewer women are in positions of senior leadership (Morna and Rama, 2013; Wirth, 2000; Randerma et al., 1996).

Much research has been done pertaining to the impact of age on the intelligence, effectiveness and problem solving abilities of workers. For instance, in their studies, Horn and Cattell (1967) concluded that younger people were more capable of solving formal problems which require swiftness in the combination of new information. In contrast, they profess that older people recorded more marks on ‘crystallized intelligence’, which simply entails solving complicated practical problems.

Basing on the conclusions of Horn and Cattel (1967), it can be assumed that the majority of managers at Harare International Airport had the capability of efficiently solving formal problems pertaining to service delivery. It may therefore, be essential to empower, particularly the lower level managers (for example, check-in supervisors) thus enabling them to utilize their problem solving capabilities for service delivery improvements. It would then be necessary to ensure that sufficient resources are availed to facilitate the fruition of decisions made by these managers.
Educational profile of managers

The highest level of education for most managers was a tertiary qualification. As has been noted earlier, tertiary education signifies basic knowledge. In this instance, it can be assumed that the majority of managers had at least minimal knowledge about customer services. However, those managers who had not attained tertiary qualifications still had some education.

In as much as the managers appear to be generally well educated, there is need for continual updating of knowledge as well as overall development. Chalofsky et al. (2014), urge employers to invest in the continuous learning of their staff. He further asserts that employees who are not updated in terms of knowledge and skills tend to have lower productive performance than those who are.

The distribution in levels of education was very significant to this study as it implied that the majority of respondents were able to comprehend the questionnaire and make logical contributions to the study. Furthermore, because of their generally high level of education, these respondents had an appreciation of academic research and were therefore, more willing to take part in the survey. More importantly, the high levels of education amongst managers imply that they are also capable of comprehending training programmes that may be considered necessary in pursuit of improving airport services.

Managers’ working experience at Harare International Airport

The majority of managers had been working at the Airport for over a year. Hence their experiences would sufficiently enable them to make relevant and well informed contributions to the study. The distribution of ages and years of experience at the Airport for managers at Harare International Airport support the Experience Concentration
Theory. The theory fundamentally states that with increasing age, the volume of experience increases (concentration experience), whilst the diversity of experience (variation experience) diminishes (Horn and Cattel, 1967). It therefore, implies that variation experience is more dominant in the youthful managers. Table 4-4 reveals that most of the managerial respondents were relatively young with only 20 percent being above 46 years old. Their years of experience as shown in Table 4-6, also show that most managers had been working at the airport for 10 years or less. Merely 24 percent of the managers had been working at the airport for more than 10 years. This could be taken to imply that most managers had more variation experience as there were more youthful managers. The composition of youthful and older managers creates a competitive advantage for the improvement of airport services. The nature of business at airports is mostly hands on, real time and thus more suitable for youthful and energetic leadership.

The diversity in experience rather than the volume, likely to be possessed by the majority of managers could be nurtured to develop strategies that enhance overall customer experience at the airport. There is therefore, need to encourage the younger managers to use their ingenuity for the improving airport service delivery. On the other hand, the older managers who according to Horn and Cattel (19867) are likely to possess concentration experience, should be encouraged to impart their intensive knowledge of the industry to the younger crop of managers. It is through such impartations that strategies for improving service can be identified and developed. The compliment of managers at Harare Airport is therefore, healthy and capable of successfully implementing strategies to improve the quality of services.
**Organizations employing managerial respondents**

Considering the diversity of organizations providing services at the airport, the respondents of this study were representative of the airport customer services managers. In as much as overall satisfaction of passengers is based on the totality of the various services at the airport, coordination of individual service providers is vital in achieving a common culture of excellent service (Paternoster, 2005). It is against this background that this study sought to include representation from as many service providers as possible.

### 4.5 SERVQUAL data presentation

In order to ascertain the quality of services at Harare International Airport, responses regarding the expectations and perceptions on the five dimensions of the SERVQUAL model were collected and the results are presented in the following sections. Results are presented for each dimension, indicating the perceptions, expectations and mean gap scores simultaneously.

#### 4.5.1 Tangibility

In view of the fact that services are intangible, it is important to ensure that the physical aspects relating to service are well presented (Zografos et al., 2013). Scores obtained for the tangibility dimension are given in Table 4-8.
Table 4-8 Passenger expectations (E) and perceptions (P) on tangibility

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspects of tangibility</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>P-E</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Modern equipment and facilities</td>
<td>3.241</td>
<td>4.598</td>
<td>(1.357)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical layout should enable passengers to easily locate facilities</td>
<td>3.510</td>
<td>4.412</td>
<td>(0.902)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airport should be clean</td>
<td>3.749</td>
<td>4.590</td>
<td>(0.841)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airport should have plenty of space to avoid overcrowding</td>
<td>3.720</td>
<td>4.480</td>
<td>(0.760)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airport's waiting area should provide comfortable seating</td>
<td>3.605</td>
<td>4.600</td>
<td>(0.995)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With regards to the physical aspects of services at Harare International Airport, passengers were least satisfied with the equipment and facilities. The largest gap of (1.357) was in relation to modern equipment and facilities. The general cleanliness of the airport, clear physical layout and comfortable seating also fell below passenger expectations. Although passengers indicated poor service quality for the physical aspects as a whole, the level of dissatisfaction with regards to availability of space was much lower than for the other aspects. Passengers tended to have the highest expectations for comfortable seating and their highest perception was for the cleanliness of the airport.

4.5.2 Assurance

Assurance considers the frontline staff in direct contact with passengers. It is thus a good indication of service quality (Dortyol et al., 2014). As part of the requirements of the SERVQUAL model, passengers were required to rate four aspects relating to assurance. Their responses are tabled in Table 4-9.

Table 4-9 Passenger expectations (E) and perceptions (P) on assurance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspects of assurance</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>P-E</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Airport staff should be neatly dressed</td>
<td>3.700</td>
<td>4.556</td>
<td>(0.856)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airport personnel should be courteous</td>
<td>3.724</td>
<td>4.478</td>
<td>(0.754)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airport staff must be trustworthy</td>
<td>3.561</td>
<td>4.554</td>
<td>(0.993)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airport staff should be knowledgeable</td>
<td>3.554</td>
<td>4.463</td>
<td>(0.909)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As with tangibility, overall perceived service quality was low in terms of the manner in which airport staff made efforts to assure and make travellers feel safe at the airport. It is important to however, note that passengers perceived the assurance aspects to be generally above standard although their expectations were not fully met. The results in Table 4-8, suggest that the most dissatisfaction was in terms of trustworthiness of staff at the airport. Expectations on the neatness of staff in terms of dressing were the highest with a mean of 4.556.

Perceptions on staff courteousness were the highest at 3.724. The gap between expectations and perceptions for staff courteousness was consequently the narrowest when compared to the other 3 aspects of assurance. Passenger perceptions were lowest for the levels of knowledge displayed by staff at the airport (3.554).

**4.5.3 Responsiveness**

Responsiveness refers to the willingness of frontline staff to assist customers and their ability to deliver service punctually (Berry et al., 1994). In the context of airport services, this dimension is important as most activities at airports are governed by time. Passengers rated the responsiveness of staff at Harare International Airport and the results are illustrated in Table 4-10.
Table 4-10 Passenger expectations (E) and perceptions (P) on responsiveness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspects of responsiveness</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>P-E</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There should always be staff to provide service at the Airport</td>
<td>3.534</td>
<td>4.605</td>
<td>(1.071)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airport staff should be willing to provide assistance Promptly</td>
<td>3.600</td>
<td>4.551</td>
<td>(0.951)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baggage collection should be done efficiently</td>
<td>3.251</td>
<td>4.593</td>
<td>(1.342)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecting between flights should be easy</td>
<td>3.241</td>
<td>4.910</td>
<td>(1.669)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Passengers expressed their greatest expectations for easy connectivity between flights. Baggage collection could also be done more efficiently as shown by perceptions being lower than expectations for this aspect. These expectations are acknowledged by Nying (2012) who in reference to Gambia’s International Airport, posits that upon disembarking from flights, passengers expect swift movement with minimal waiting periods and sufficient resources to facilitate efficiency. Even though expectations exceeded perceptions regarding the provision of prompt assistance, respondents were least dissatisfied with this factor. This is evidenced by the gap score of (0.951), which was the smallest in this dimension. As a whole, responsiveness recorded expectations that exceeded perceptions.

4.5.4 Reliability

Reliability relates to consistency in performance and Chinunda (2011) further asserts that it is associated with prioritizing customer wants. Airline passengers were required to rate reliability by scoring marks for aspects pertaining to the dimension. Results of the perception and expectation scores are summarized in Table 4-11.
Table 4-11 Passenger expectations (E) and perceptions (P) on reliability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspects of reliability</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>P-E</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flight related information should be disseminated accurately</td>
<td>3.478</td>
<td>4.532</td>
<td>(1.054)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airport facilities should be well maintained</td>
<td>3.600</td>
<td>4.634</td>
<td>(1.034)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airport staff should perform the service right first time</td>
<td>3.527</td>
<td>4.512</td>
<td>(0.985)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airport staff should provide service as promised</td>
<td>3.517</td>
<td>4.524</td>
<td>(1.007)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The general view on reliability was that passenger expectations were greater than their opinions on the actual service. Despite recording the smallest gap, customer service personnel should always strive to exceed customer perceptions when it comes to getting things done correctly at the first attempt.

Maintenance and serviceability of various facilities at the airport is a key concern to passengers at Harare International Airport. This is deduced from Table 4-11, which shows that passengers had the highest expectations for this element than any other under the reliability dimension. The widest gap was noted for the accurate dissemination of flight related announcements. Although expectations were quite high for this aspect, the perceptions were very low, being the lowest for the whole dimension. This could be a result of the poor sound quality of the public address system. Customers were not entirely happy with the quality of announcements, as they were mostly inaudible, difficult to comprehend and thus compromising the accuracy of the messages being communicated.

It is also worth revisiting the ability of customer service staff to deliver service as promised. It emerged from the passengers that they were not impressed with the *status quo*. Passenger perceptions fell below expectations with regards to promised services. This suggests that there was either an over promise of service or there was room for improvement in delivering the service correctly. Passenger expectations can also be
derived from promises made by the service providers. If the service delivered fails to conform to promises made then passengers perceptions fall below their expectations resulting in dissatisfaction.

4.5.5 Empathy

According to Dale (1994), customers value humane dimensions more than tangibles. This implies that those aspects that are more personal and directly affecting the customer tend to be more important to them. Passengers rated their expectations as well as their opinions on the extent to which service was individualized at Harare International Airport. The responses they gave are summed up and presented in Table 4-12.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspects of empathy</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>P-E</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Airport staff should show special attention to passengers</td>
<td>3.516</td>
<td>4.478</td>
<td>0.962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airport staff should know the specific needs of customers</td>
<td>3.866</td>
<td>4.717</td>
<td>0.851</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Various service providers should have convenient working Hours</td>
<td>3.107</td>
<td>4.400</td>
<td>1.293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well-known retail outlets should be available at airports</td>
<td>1.898</td>
<td>4.373</td>
<td>2.475</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents indicated that their greatest expectations were for airport staff to know their specific needs. This is shown in Table 4-12, where the highest record of expectations (4.717) related to frontline staffs’ knowledge of specific customer needs. In as much as the perceptions on this aspect were lower than expectations, passengers recorded the highest perception (3.866) of the prevailing level of knowledge by airport staff. The table also shows that passengers had the lowest rating for the availability of well-known retail outlets at the airport. This was also the least ranked aspect for all five dimensions. Generally, all aspects of empathy recorded an excess of expectations over perceptions.
4.5.6 Gap 1 Scores: Management expectations versus customer perceptions

Gap 1 of the SERVQUAL model relates to the differences that exist in what managers think customers expect and what customers actually expect. Where these two aspects do not align, a gap results and needs to be corrected. To enable identification of these gaps, this study requested managerial respondents to rate their perceptions of customer expectations on similar aspects as those rated by customers. A comparison of these perceptions and expectations is shown in Figure 4-4.

![Figure 4-4 Gap 1 scores: Management perceptions vs. passenger expectations](image)

Save for tangibility, managerial perceptions were higher than actual expectations of passengers across all dimensions. The largest gap was for reliability, where manager perceptions surpassed passenger expectations by 0.422. The smallest gap was recorded
for responsiveness whereby manager expectations were marginally higher than customer expectations by 0.05.

In order to ascertain whether the gap scores were of much significance a t-test was performed at the 0.05 level of significance for the following hypotheses:

\( H_0: \) There is no difference between manager perceptions on passenger expectations and the actual expectations of passengers regarding airport services at Harare International Airport.

\( H_1: \) There is a difference between the perceptions of managers on passenger expectations and the actual expectations of passengers regarding airport services at Harare International Airport.

The decision rule to reject \( H_0 \) if \( p < 0.05 \) was set and the results of the test are presented in Table 4-13.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Mean score (P-E)</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>t-score</th>
<th>Degrees of Freedom</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tangibility</td>
<td>(0.140)</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>(0.900)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.417</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assurance</td>
<td>0.198</td>
<td>0.222</td>
<td>1.783</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>0.052</td>
<td>0.138</td>
<td>0.751</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.507</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsiveness</td>
<td>0.423</td>
<td>0.274</td>
<td>3.086</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.054</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>0.198</td>
<td>0.212</td>
<td>1.872</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.158</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results in Table 4-13 indicate that the differences between manager perceptions and customer expectations were not statistically significant. This is deduced from the p-values which were all above the 0.05 level of significance and hence the decision to not reject the null hypothesis. This therefore, signifies that these differences are not considerable enough for us to conclude that managers’ perceptions are indeed different from passenger
expectations. The t-score results are fairly small, indicating that the two sets of data are almost similar. The p-values, by virtue of being low signify that to a greater extent, the data did not occur by chance as the probability of such is generally less than 5 percent across the five dimensions.

4.5.7 Gap 5 scores: Customer expectations and perceptions

Gap 5 relates to the differences between customer expectations and perceptions. The ultimate aim in analyzing this gap is to improve customer service by closing or narrowing the gap. Gap 5 scores for the five dimensions were obtained by using the following formula:

\[
\text{Customer perceptions} - \text{Customer expectations} = \text{Gap Score}
\]

Analysis of the gaps was then carried out using SPSS. Descriptive statistics summarize the data and are presented in Table 4-14. When customer expectations are not met and therefore exceed customer perceptions, customers are disappointed. If instead, expectations are met then customers are impartial. However, when the expectations of customers are exceeded, customers tend to be delighted (Chinunda, 2011). Table 4-14 illustrates that passenger expectations generally exceeded perceptions, as the average gap score for all the dimensions was negative indicating that expectations were higher than expectations.
Table 4-14  Descriptive statistics for the five dimensions’ scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Gap Score Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tangibility</td>
<td>(0.760)</td>
<td>(1.357)</td>
<td>(0.963)</td>
<td>0.236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assurance</td>
<td>(0.754)</td>
<td>(0.993)</td>
<td>(0.878)</td>
<td>0.100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsiveness</td>
<td>(0.951)</td>
<td>(1.669)</td>
<td>(1.258)</td>
<td>0.319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>(0.985)</td>
<td>(1.054)</td>
<td>(1.020)</td>
<td>0.030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>(0.851)</td>
<td>(2.475)</td>
<td>(1.396)</td>
<td>0.744</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall service quality</td>
<td></td>
<td>(1.103)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The smallest gap existed in the assurance dimension at (0.754), whilst the largest gap was noted in terms of empathy (2.475). Generally, the respondents noted similar differences between expectations and perceptions as evidenced by the standard deviations which depicted closeness to the mean. Overall, Table 4-8 shows that the expectations of passengers surpassed their perceptions. This is shown by the negative scores for all the five dimensions. Figure 4-5 gives a clearer, graphical presentation.

Figure 4-5 Gap between customer expectations and perceptions on airport service quality
From Figure 4-5 it is evident that the largest gap was for the empathy dimension which also recorded the lowest overall perception and expectation scores. In order to test for the significance of the differences between expectations and perceptions, the Paired sample t-test was carried out via SPSS.

The test was carried out for the hypotheses:

**Ho:** There is no difference between passenger expectations and their actual perceptions on services at Harare International Airport.

**H1:** There is a difference between passenger expectations and their actual perceptions.

The decision rule to: Reject $H_0$ if $p < 0.05$, was set and the results of the tests which were performed at the 0.05 level of significance are presented in Table 4-15.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Mean score (P-E)</th>
<th>Standard deviation</th>
<th>t-score</th>
<th>Degrees of Freedom</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tangibility</td>
<td>(0.971)</td>
<td>0.232</td>
<td>(9.349)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assurance</td>
<td>(0.878)</td>
<td>0.100</td>
<td>(17.547)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsiveness</td>
<td>(1.258)</td>
<td>0.319</td>
<td>(7.890)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>(1.020)</td>
<td>0.030</td>
<td>(67.428)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>(1.395)</td>
<td>0.744</td>
<td>(3.751)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.033</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From Table 4-15 it is evident that the differences between passenger expectations and perceptions were statistically significant. This is deduced from the fact that all five p-values were below the 0.05 level of significance. The gap scores were therefore, substantial and of value to the study. The difference between expectations and perceptions is not just in terms of basic calculation but of real value. Furthermore, the t-scores are generally large for all dimensions indicating that passenger expectations were
indeed different from their perceptions. On the other hand, the p-values are very low denoting very low probability of the results having occurred by chance. The results are thus highly likely to be a true reflection of the status quo.

4.6 Importance of airport service quality in decision to travel to Harare

Passengers indicated the level of importance they attached to airport service quality in their decisions to travel to Zimbabwe, whilst managers were asked to record the level of importance that they thought passengers attached to airport service quality in decision making. The range of responses was from ‘very important’ to ‘not important at all’.

Table 4-16 shows the responses that were given for each level of importance by both groups of respondents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of importance</th>
<th>Passengers' responses</th>
<th>Managers' responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very important</td>
<td>12 (3%)</td>
<td>14 (19%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important</td>
<td>36 (9%)</td>
<td>21 (28%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not very important</td>
<td>41 (10%)</td>
<td>12 (16%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not important</td>
<td>130 (32%)</td>
<td>9 (12%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not important at all</td>
<td>191 (46%)</td>
<td>19 (25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>410 (100%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>75 (100%)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4-16 depicts that 78 percent of the travellers did not regard airport service quality as of any importance in their decisions to travel to Harare. In contrast, 9 percent of the passengers revealed that airport service quality was important to them, 10 percent claimed it was not very important and only 3 percent considered it to be very important.

Managers on the other hand felt that airport service quality was of importance to travellers’ decisions to visit Harare. In contrast to the 22 percent of passengers who attached some level of importance, 56 percent of managers felt that airport service quality
was of some importance. Generally, the survey findings revealed that airport service quality was not of much importance in travellers’ decisions to travel to Harare although the managers thought it was of more importance.

4.7 Other factors influencing passengers’ decision to travel to Harare

Purpose of travel is just one way of classifying tourists. There are various motivations for travelling and it is necessary to understand these factors (Youell, 1997). Such knowledge facilitates effective planning and efficient allocation of resources, which are mostly scarce in developing economies such as Zimbabwe’s. An analysis of other motivations for travel to Harare is presented in Figure 4-6.

![Figure 4-6 Other factors influencing travel to Harare](image)

From the study, it emerged that in addition to the various purposes of travel on the respective days of the survey, passengers were mostly influenced by tourist attractions and family ties. These accounted for 23 percent and 31 percent respectively whilst
affordability was cited by 12 percent of the travellers. Business interests (30 percent) and other reasons (4 percent) were also indicated as other factors that influenced passengers to travel to Harare.

4.8 Recommendations for improving service quality at Harare International Airport

Feedback from customers and staff is an important tool in the generation of new ideas for service delivery improvement (Wirtz and Johnston, 2003). Service providers are encouraged to continuously obtain feedback and recommendations from their customers. Passengers were asked to recommend areas that required improvements and their responses, categorized into the five dimensions of the SERVQUAL model are presented in Figure 4-7.

![Figure 4-7 Passenger recommendations for improvements categorized by dimension](image)

Whilst passengers noted that all 5 dimensions needed attention, airport authorities had to focus more on the tangibility and empathy dimensions in order to improve customer
satisfaction. This is deduced from Figure 4-7, which depicts that 40 percent of the recommendations made by passengers were related to the physical aspects of service quality. A more detailed illustration of the specific recommendations made in each dimension is given in Table 4-17.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Aspect of Dimension</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assurance</td>
<td>Courteousness of staff</td>
<td>7(3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Knowledgeable staff</td>
<td>2(1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>Entertainment</td>
<td>25(11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Internet service/Wi-Fi</td>
<td>8(4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More retail outlets/international brands/banks/restaurants</td>
<td>24(11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TV channel variety/DSTV</td>
<td>10(4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>Baggage delivery system</td>
<td>11(5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Check in and boarding</td>
<td>6(3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Electricity back up</td>
<td>3(1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Integrity</td>
<td>1(0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsiveness</td>
<td>Information screens</td>
<td>15(7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PA system/information dissemination/communications with pax</td>
<td>21(9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shuttle service/information on shuttle service</td>
<td>2(1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tangibility</td>
<td>Air conditioning/ventilation</td>
<td>44(20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comfortable seats</td>
<td>4(2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Departure lounge environment</td>
<td>8(4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Equipment upgrade</td>
<td>5(2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lightings</td>
<td>6(3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Signage</td>
<td>2(1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Staff dressing, grooming, etiquette</td>
<td>7(3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Toilets upgrading, increase in number, smartness</td>
<td>14(6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grand Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>225(100%)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

More specifically, there was room for improvement with regards to ventilation and air conditioning as indicated by 20 percent of the respondents. There was also clear concern regarding the number of well-known international retail outlets at the airport, with 11
percent of the respondents recommending a wider variety of retailers. Entertainment also needed to be spruced up as noted by 11 percent of the passengers. Integrity of customer service personnel appeared to have been rather satisfactory as only one respondent raised a concern over it.

4.9 Perceived importance of airport service quality by customer service managers

Most managers as depicted in Table 4-18, felt that airport service quality was not of much importance to passengers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of importance</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Important</td>
<td>14(19%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Important</td>
<td>21(28%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Important at All</td>
<td>12(16%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Very Important</td>
<td>9(12%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Important</td>
<td>19(25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grand Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>75(100%)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Only 25 percent believed airport service quality was very important in passengers’ decisions making. On the other hand 28 percent thought it was not important, whilst 16 percent felt it was not important at all.

Managers also made their own recommendations for improvements at the airport. For comparison purposes these recommendations were also classified into the five dimensions of the SERVQUAL model and are presented graphically in Figure 4-8.
Managerial recommendations pertaining to responsiveness were the most prevalent amongst the five dimensions. Interestingly, there were not any assurance related recommendations. Tangibility, empathy and reliability related recommendations comprised 19 percent each of the total responses.

4.10 Methods of obtaining feedback from passengers

There are various methods of obtaining feedback from customers. This study sought to determine the methods, if any, that were being employed by service providers at the airport. A graphical presentation of the managers’ responses is given in Figure 4-9.
Of the total respondents, 25 percent obtained feedback through meetings with airline representatives, 30 percent through interactions with passengers, 22 percent via feedback forms and 19 percent used suggestion boxes. Of the total managers in the survey, 4 percent revealed that they did not employ any methods of generating feedback from travellers.

### 4.11 Extent to which service delivery decisions are based on passenger suggestions

Customer service is more about what the customer wants rather than the organizations’ own needs. This according to Williams and Buswell (2003), is reflected in an organization’s efforts to incorporate customer suggestions and complaints. Managers were requested to disclose the extent to which passenger suggestions were incorporated in decision making. Figure 4-10 shows the responses that were obtained.
Passenger suggestions were often incorporated in service delivery decisions by 26 percent of the respondents. In addition, 43 percent occasionally considered passenger suggestions, whilst 8 percent never incorporated these suggestions in decision making. Those managers who claimed to have always incorporated passenger suggestions in service delivery decisions totalled 19 percent of respondents.

4.12 Involvement of customer services employees in service related decision making

Frontline staff is in direct contact with the customers. As such, Dale (1994) asserts that there is need to involve them in decision making. Coupled with empowerment to solve problems, including frontline staff in decision making for customer related issues contributes immensely toward service excellence. It was therefore, necessary for this
study to ascertain the levels of involvement of frontline staff in service related decisions. The findings regarding this aspect were compiled and presented in Figure 4-11.

![Figure 4-11 Involvement of customer service employees in service related decision making](image)

The study revealed that 59 percent of management respondents never included customer service employees in decision making for service delivery related issues. Only 1 percent of the total respondents always involved the lower level staff in such decisions. The remaining 40 percent was split between those who occasionally involved customer service employees (31 percent) and the 9 percent who involved them often.
SECTION II: ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.13 The research question

This section attempts to address the research question. It is necessary to recap on the main research question and the sub-questions that build up to answering it. The main problem stated in this study was the inability of the country’s tourism sector to perform to its full potential. The main research question therefore, was “Does airport service quality influence international tourism in Zimbabwe?” The major task of the study was to assess the quality of services at the country’s main international airport, Harare International Airport and determine whether airport service quality was an important factor influencing tourism growth in Zimbabwe.

Data was collected by means of questionnaires, which were distributed to airline passengers and customer service managers at the airport. The objective of this section therefore, is to analyze and interpret the findings from the survey. This analysis has been done with reference to the sub-questions of this study, with an ultimate goal of addressing the main research question. Consequently, focus was on the research’s sub-questions which are:

i) What are the expectations of passengers regarding service at Harare International Airport?

ii) How do passengers perceive service delivery at Harare International Airport?

iii) What gaps, if any, exist in terms of passenger expectations and perceptions on service at the Airport?

iv) How do managers perceive passenger expectations regarding service quality?
v) What recommendations are necessary to improve the inflow of tourists?

4.14 Passenger expectations and perceptions of airport service quality

The findings of this study revealed that there was generally low perceived service quality at Harare international Airport. This was deduced from the negative scores for expectations and perceptions, across all five dimensions. This scenario is not unusual as evidenced by similar researches that recorded comparable results (Chikwendu et al., 2012; Lubbe et al., 2011).

4.15 Passenger rating of physical evidence at the Airport

Essentially, airport authorities need to be aware of passenger expectations regarding the appearance of physical facilities. The physical presentation of facilities is very crucial in service delivery as it creates vital first impressions of a service (Bitner, 1990; Zografos et al., 2013). These impressions may be long lasting, hence the need to ensure that they are positive. From the study, it emerged that in terms of the physical aspects of airport services, passengers generally had higher expectations than actual service quality perceived.

Passenger expectations were highest for modern equipment and facilities at the airport, yet their perceptions fell below these expectations. Yap and Kew (2007) revealed similar findings in their study of service quality in the hospitality industry. They concluded that the ambience and atmosphere could be improved by ensuring a clean and favourable ambience through incorporating music and lighting. Considering that the survey was targeted at passengers on international flights, it can be assumed that most passengers had ample time to observe and/or use some of the airport’s facilities. This is in concurrence
with Fodness and Murray (2007) who also indicate that passengers travelling through an airport spend substantial time within the airport, giving them plenty of time to experience the airport’s various facilities. In this study where the majority of tourists were travelling for leisure purposes, the possibility of passengers having enough time to move around the airport was even greater. Graham et al. (2008) support this assertion by positing that leisure passengers often have more idle time at the airport as they are not under any business related pressures. Hence it can be assumed that responses from most of the passengers were well informed after having had sufficient exposure to the airport facilities.

As highlighted in section 4.2, it is highly likely that passengers passing through Harare International Airport had travelled through other international airports. This presumption is based on the fact that at the time of the study; there were no direct flights between Zimbabwe and overseas international airports. Consequently, travellers at Harare International Airport could have been exposed to modern facilities and equipment at other international airports. Such exposure may have influenced the expectations of passengers, resulting in high expectations for modern equipment and facilities at Harare International Airport. This is supported by Wilson, et al. (1997) who assert that customers’ past experiences also influence their expectations of services. It is therefore, reasonable to assume that access to other international airports in the world has exposed Zimbabwe’s visitors to modern equipment and facilities which surpass those at our local airport thus creating higher expectations and much lower perceptions.

When compared to other aspects of the tangibility dimension, ‘the availability of plenty of space to avoid overcrowding’ was rated quite highly in terms of perceptions. Although
this is commendable, the fact that passenger expectations surpassed their perceptions means that there is room for improvement. Whilst the airport is not consistently busy, especially considering that they do not operate on a 24 hour basis, this gap could be attributed to the differing periods of passenger traffic at the airport. During off-peak periods, there are lower volumes of passengers travelling through the airport and therefore, overcrowding is minimal. However, during peak periods passenger traffic increases and it is possible that overcrowding can occur. It is during such times that airport authorities may consider measures to create space in order to avoid overcrowding.

It is also evident from the study, that passenger expectations surpassed perceptions with regard to general standards of cleanliness and physical layout. This means that more could be done to improve the status quo. Though generally acknowledging the cleanliness and availability of space at the airport (evidenced by the fairly well ranked perceptions), passengers had higher expectations for these two aspects.

Passengers revealed that the seating provided at the Airport was comfortable. They however, expressed higher expectations and thus lower perceived service quality. This could also imply that these passengers had been on more comfortable airport seats and thus expected the same at Harare International Airport. Zografos et al. (2013) actually suggest that where airport lounges are not adorned with a wide variety of shopping and restaurant facilities (such as at the Harare International Airport), airport authorities need to ensure that adequate, comfortable seats are provided.

Overall, passengers had high expectations regarding the physical evidence of services, yet their perceptions of the same fell below expectations. Service quality could therefore, be regarded as low for this dimension. It is also important to note that, in spite of the low
ranking of service quality, passengers generally acknowledged the prevailing status of physical evidence at the airport. This is derived from the fact that perceptions for all five aspects of this dimension were generally above average the 5 point Likert-scale rating of 2.500. Tangibility aspects generate satisfaction and encourage customers to speak positively about the service provider (Saha and Theingi, 2009). Given the importance attached to these tangible features of service, it is worth considering strategies to narrow the existing gap between passenger expectations and their perceptions.

4.16 Knowledge and courteousness of airport staff

Zeithaml et al. (1990) posit that service providers are expected to be experts in their jobs. This is true and reflected in Table 4-9 which depicts high passenger expectations for all aspects of assurance. Apparently, passengers at the airport anticipated that the staff serving them was knowledgeable and capable of assisting them. They subsequently expected to confide and trust in them with their travel related concerns.

Of notable concern is the fact that passengers registered discontent with the levels of trustworthiness shown by airport staff. Amongst the four elements in this dimension, issues of trustworthiness recorded the highest gap (0.993). The lower perception score indicates that more effort needs to be exerted in building trust within travellers.

Pilferage, mishandled baggage, inconsistent service delivery and corrupt employee tendencies are examples of factors that could reduce the trustworthiness of airport staff. More importantly, the lower perception as shown in this survey does not necessarily imply that all respondents had an unpleasant experience to warrant their expression of lack of trust. Instead, it could also be a result of the sharing of experiences amongst passengers with those that had negative experiences detailing to fellow travellers, friends,
colleagues or family (Tudor, 2006). By sharing their unpleasant encounters at the airports with other (potential) passengers, negative expectations and perceptions are instilled and spread. The importance of trust cannot be over emphasized as it builds loyalty and facilitates business growth. It is therefore crucial for airport authorities to take necessary action to rectify this situation.

The lowest scores for passenger perceptions were registered for ‘knowledgeable staff’. The negative gap score implies that expectations were still higher than perceptions. There are various service providers offering an array of services to travellers at an airport. As a result, passengers are served by employees of various organizations during their service encounter at the airport. In spite of the different organizations served and services offered, passengers expect all staff to have answers to their enquiries. There is therefore, a need for all employees regardless of organization or nature of services provided, to have basic knowledge of the airport. For instance, information such as the location of various facilities at the airport, standard check-in times and basic travel regulations should be at the fingertips of frontline staff. Consequently, this gap could be a result of some service personnel failing to give helpful responses to passengers, or simply acknowledging and displaying their lack of knowledge.

Knowledgeable frontline staff is invaluable. A key benefit of having such is the increased customer satisfaction which results from better understanding of customers and their requirements. Sugars (2014) asserts that knowledge is an antecedent for acquiring satisfied customers. It is therefore, imperative for strategies to be put in place to improve levels of knowledge for customer service staff. It is also evident that even though passengers expressed dissatisfaction with the courteousness of customer service staff,
they ranked it highest amongst the other three aspects of the dimension. Dissatisfaction with the courteousness of particularly immigration staff was also recorded in a similar study by Chou (2009) at a Taiwanese airport. It may possibly imply that the staff is generally courteous although there might be some outlying cases where discourtesy was displayed.

It is also worth considering the diverse origins of passengers involved in this study (and at the airport in general). The differences in backgrounds might also have an impact on the definitions, levels and perceptions of courteous behaviour. What is considered courteous in one culture may be totally discourteous in another. This becomes more complicated when frontline staff have to interact with and satisfactorily serve people from diverse backgrounds. Whilst the respondents of this study were from 45 nationalities, it is possible that people of more nationalities approach the check-in counters and security check points daily.

Dressing of airport staff is also in need of improvement. Molloy (1975) asserts that clothing plays an essential role in our environment which in turn pre-conditions us as human beings. He further argues that the way people dress has a remarkable effect on the people that they meet. This tends to have implications on the appearance and dressing of service personnel. Dressing of frontline staff should assure passengers of their professionalism and also exude expertise and competence. Consequently, customers will be confident of the services being rendered to them. This is in concurrence with (Arlen, 2008), who is of the opinion that service providers should communicate their expertise and competencies to their clientele, even before service delivery. One important way of achieving this is through the appearance of customer service personnel. If neatly and
professionally dressed, they can communicate high levels of professionalism and competencies to the customer.

In terms of the actual perception regarding the appearance of airport staff, passengers indicated that there was room for improvement, as their expectations surpassed the actual perceptions. The high levels of expectations could also be a result of comparisons being made with airport staff from other international airports. It would therefore, be prudent to revisit dress codes and guidelines for staff grooming.

4.17 Reliability of airport services

Reliability refers to the ability to provide service as per promise. This is a fundamental factor in business success and more so for customer retention. Unlike the other dimensions which are prone to subjectivity, reliability generally knows no boundaries and is a universal language which needs to be mastered by all service providers.

Developers of the SERVQUAL model argue that reliability is the most important dimension as it is a function of all other elements in the chain of service delivery (Parasuraman, et al., 1994). The overall negative gap score for reliability was consistent with the findings of Phiri and Mcwabe (2013) who used the SERVQUAL model in South Africa and revealed that customer expectations exceeded perceptions for all aspects relating to reliability. In spite of recording the smallest gap, customer service personnel should always strive to exceed customer perceptions when it comes to getting things done correctly at the first attempt.

Failure to achieve this has detrimental effects at the airport and can lead to much dissatisfaction amongst passengers. For instance, errors in check-in procedures could result in delays which often involve financial costs to the airlines (which are also
customers of the airports). A delay in aircraft take off could mean that a passenger intending to connect at another airport may fail to do so and have to reschedule their ensuing flights. Apart from having financial implications, getting the job correctly done the first time also instils confidence in passengers. It assures them of the professional capabilities of service providers. The existing gap should be closed and efforts aimed at increasing levels of accuracy must be considered.

Maintenance and serviceability of airport facilities is a key concern to passengers passing through Harare International Airport. This is deduced from Table 4-11, which shows that passengers’ expectations for this element were higher than any other under the reliability dimension. It could also imply that for instance, passengers expected to turn on a hot water tap and have hot water running. They do not expect to be de toured to the stairs because the escalators are out of order or to be sweating in a clammy lounge because the air conditioner is not working.

Well-maintained facilities provide convenience and comfort to passengers. This contributes to their overall experience and perception of service quality. Although the results show that passenger expectations exceeded perceptions, they did not poorly rate the existing facilities per se. They felt that the facilities were somehow well maintained. However, they still expected more to be done. The gap could also be an indicator that some of the airport’s facilities were not functioning as per passenger expectations. This is evident from Table 4-17 which highlights some facilities that needed attention.

Malfunctioning baggage conveyor belts, unserviceable air conditioners and information screens that were not working are evidence of low maintenance at the airport. For instance, numerous concerns were raised by passengers, recommending improvements in
ventilation, air conditioning, efficient baggage conveyor belts and information screens amongst other facilities.

The lowest perception score in terms of reliability was for the accurate dissemination of flight related announcements. This might have largely been a result of the poor quality of sound from the public address system. It appears that passengers were not happy with the quality of announcements as they were mostly inaudible, difficult to comprehend and thus compromising the accuracy of the messages being communicated. Table 4-17 illustrates that, of all the recommendations for improving service delivery, 9 percent related specifically to the public address system. As explained earlier, announcements guide and control passengers thereby playing a pivotal role at airports. More recently, announcements via the public address system have become a very important tool for safety and security at airports (Fischer, 2011). As a result, appropriate measures should be taken to ensure that announcements are audible and all noise related to announcements is eradicated.

The ability of customer service staff to deliver service as promised is yet another aspect that needs to be revisited. Passengers revealed that their expectations were not being fully met as their perceptions fell below expectations with regards to promised services. This suggests that there was either an over promise of service or there was room for improvement in delivering the service correctly. Passenger expectations can also be derived from the promises made by the service providers either via advertisements or other implicit means. If the service delivered fails to conform to the promises made, then passenger perceptions fall below their expectations, resulting in dissatisfaction.
4.18 Responsiveness to passenger needs

In most African service encounters, customers fall prey to the disjointed nature of the African perspective of customer service (Chinunda, 2011). Service is usually slow and frontline staff displays a lack of urgency in assisting customers. Responsiveness is centred on efficiency in responding to customers yet, most Africans have a disregard for time.

The overall findings on responsiveness are a reflection of the assertions made by Chinunda (2011), as expectations exceeded perceptions for all four aspects relating to responsiveness. Whilst an overall negative score was noted for responsiveness, Zografos, et al. (2013) assert that it is particularly critical at security screening points. Although passenger perceptions fell below their expectations for all responsiveness aspects, the largest gap was for ease in connectivity. There are not many flights that connect at Harare International Airport, making it highly likely that the large gap emanated from the few responses regarding the actual experience of connecting flights. However, it is clear that passengers expect a smooth transition from one flight to the other. In fact, the expectations for ease of connectivity were the highest in this dimension. As passengers who had mostly been exposed to connecting flights at some point in their travelling experiences, they had developed high expectations in this aspect. According to Zografos, et al. (2013), one way of curbing delays at key points is by providing more resources and channels for passenger processing. This will have a positive impact on overall connectivity at the airport.

Baggage collection is according to the findings in Table 4-9, not as efficient as the passengers would want it to be. Similar sentiments were echoed by passengers at O.R
Tambo International Airport, South Africa, in a research conducted by Lubbe et al. (2010). Passengers indicated that they placed high importance on baggage waiting time yet they were not satisfied with the time they spent waiting for baggage delivery. In fact, issues pertaining to the efficient collection of baggage are not uncommon at airports. More interestingly, such issues are not only peculiar to airports in Africa or the developing world, but they spread across the globe to even the most developed countries.

Page, (2009) cites an example of London Heathrow’s Terminal 5, where passengers registered great discontent with the baggage delivery system when the terminal commenced operations in 2008. The baggage delivery problem was so grave that 23,205 bags had to be removed from the terminal’s baggage sorting halls. The bags were then manually sorted off the premises and then returned for collection by their respective owners. This is not the only example of inefficient baggage delivery at airports in the developed world, similar situations occurred at Hong Kong International Airport (1998), Kualar Lumpur Airport (1997) and Denver Airport (1995).

Passengers expect baggage delivery to be well coordinated, enabling them to collect their baggage in the shortest possible time. Upon arrival, passengers are usually exhausted and mostly concerned with completing or proceeding to the next stage of their journeys. With the majority of passengers having travelled through Harare International Airport at least twice in the previous twelve months, their contributions were presumably based on recent experiences. The problem of inefficient baggage delivery proved to be of great concern judging by the recommendations illustrated in Table 4-17.

The nature of airport services often requires staff to promptly respond to passenger needs. This as has previously been highlighted, is mainly a result of the manner in which airport
activities are highly governed by time. A delayed response may be obsolete and have repurcations to customers. Customers generally believe that airport staff could be quicker and more efficient in responding to their needs. A possible cause for the delay in responses could be the bureaucratic practices characteristic of many organizations in the developing economies (Hill, 2014; Dwivedi, 1967). Sometimes frontline staff is not totally empowered to make certain decisions and have to seek multiple authorizations and approvals from their superiors. This might also be a cause of the delay in responding to customer needs.

It is also evident from Table 4-10 that some passengers may have spent much time waiting to be served simply because the frontline member of staff responsible for doing so was not present. With the various challenges currently facing organizations in Zimbabwe, staff shortages could be a contributing factor toward the inconsistent availability of staff to attend to customers. Although the airport does not operate on a 24 hour basis like most international airports, the shift work system is still adopted by most organizations at the airport. This system needs to be well planned and monitored to ensure consistent availability of frontline staff.

Furthermore, as suggested by Chinunda (2011), the unproductive system of conducting business in some African economies prohibits smooth provision of services. If the person assigned to perform a particular role is not available then nobody else will be able to do the required task and the customer is forced to either wait or return another time. This could also explain the negative gap score for consistent availability of staff to assist passengers. Overall, passengers expected more effort in ensuring responsiveness of customer services personnel to passenger needs.
4.19 The extent to which airport service is empathetic to passengers

Empathy entails the provision of individualized, caring services to customers. It is an additional effort by frontline staff to express concern and create a sense of belonging for the customer. Service providers often violate the interests and specific needs of customers by shifting the blame back to the customers (Sultan and Simpson, 1987). In an effort to reduce gaps relating to the empathy dimension, passengers rated the extent to which airport staff was empathetic to their needs.

Passengers yearn for customer service staff to know their specific needs as shown in Table 4-12. Passenger expectations were highest for this aspect of empathy. Paradoxically, their perceptions were also highest for the same. Whilst they relatively appreciate efforts by staff to know their specific needs, more could be done to raise passenger perceptions thereby reducing the existing gap. As Alern (2008) points out, empathy is a skill that is over and above the employees’ ability to efficiently execute their duties. He further suggests that it might take some training to instil this capability of being empathetic to customers. The existing gap needs to be reduced and training frontline staff could assist in achieving this.

In addition to frontline staff knowing their specific needs, passengers also appreciate having their special needs attended to. Passengers in this study felt that more attention should be given to their special needs; hence their perceptions fell below expectations. Passengers at an airport could be experiencing various emotions. Their circumstances and specific needs are also diverse. Such circumstances may lead to emotions such as anger, sadness, and even violence. This is because these people can be exposed to situations that
stir up different needs and emotions. For instance, a flight may be rescheduled, cancelled or delayed.

Baggage may be mishandled and other misunderstandings may occur. Sometimes these emotions may not even be related to their travelling logistics but could be personal, such as sadness at leaving loved ones or the excitement and anxiety of first time travellers. Some passengers naturally have special needs, such as the handicapped, sick, elderly and unaccompanied minors. Frontline staff should be trained to embrace these various situations and pay attention to the unique needs of passengers. It is evident from the results in Table 4-14 that customer service staff at Harare International Airport needs to be more attentive to the needs of passengers.

The least ranked item, not only for this dimension but the entire study, is the availability of well-known retail outlets at the airport. With a perception score of 1.898 and a gap score of 2.475, there is need to focus attention on this aspect. In a comparable study, Chao et al. (2013) also observed passenger dissatisfaction with the variety of facilities at Kaohsiung International Airport in Taiwan.

The gap may have widened because of the exposure and knowledge that most of these travellers may have had. For instance, considering that South African Airways had the most passengers travelling through the airport during the survey, a comparison of the variety of well-known brands at O. R Tambo International Airport (which is the departure point for all South African Airways flights to Harare), reveals that Harare International Airport lags behind in terms of variety (Flanagan, 2014). Passengers expect the presence of international retail outlets at international airports (Graham, et al., 2008). Apart from broadening the shopping options for passengers, it also enables passengers to access their
favourite brands locally, making them feel at home whilst away from home. Moreover, airports stand to benefit from increased revenues, which may ultimately lead to a reduction in other service charges, such as landing fees for airlines (Narayanan, 2012). This will make airports more attractive and further increase traffic to Zimbabwe. Although there is variety in terms of the types of outlets at the airport, ranging from banks, mobile phone network providers, restaurants and bars, well-known brands are not available.

The majority of respondents in this study were holiday makers (Figure 4-2), and as such, they probably wanted to indulge in shopping. This follows the assertion by Graham et al. (2008) that leisure passengers tend to have more time at the airport and can therefore enhance their leisure time by doing some shopping at the airport. Their total airport experience may, therefore, be enhanced by the presence of a wide variety of well-known brands. Considering too, the diversity in the back grounds of passengers at the airport, it is necessary to cater for their different tastes by having internationally acclaimed retail brands at the airport. Apart from improving the total airport experience of passengers at the airport, having established international brands would also lead to an increase in revenues for the airport through rentals and concessions. The overall rating of the airport would improve thereby enhancing the image of Zimbabwe’s premier airport. Graham et al. (2008) posit that globally, airports are investing more in retail strategies as a means of enhancing revenues. They further argue that airport shopping plays a pivotal role in the overall airport experience for passengers.
4.20 Importance of airport service quality in passenger decision making

Having analyzed all the dimensions of the SERVQUAL model individually, the overall results reveal that passengers felt that more could be done to improve airport service quality. Perceptions were well below expectations and this implies that the gap needs to be greatly narrowed by coming up with relevant strategies. In spite of the general dissatisfaction, it is also clear from Table 4-16, that visitors travelling to Zimbabwe do not necessarily consider the quality of services at Harare International Airport in their travel decisions. In other words, they would still travel to Zimbabwe regardless of the prevailing quality of services at the airport. Figure 4-6, gives a distinct indication that family ties and business interests compel most travellers to travel to Zimbabwe. Tourist attractions, affordability and educational purposes also influence tourists to travel to Zimbabwe.

Although the majority of tourists revealed that they were not really influenced by the quality of services at the Airport, 35 percent held that it was somewhat important to them. This minority, although smaller in representation, forms a very important part of this study. Their consideration of airport service quality in their decisions to travel to Zimbabwe implies that an improvement in the quality of airport services could actually have a positive impact on the growth of tourism. They would be willing to return to Zimbabwe, and in the process they could also influence other people to travel to the country.

Views of managers with regards to customer expectations are integral in the attainment of excellent service (Gourdin and Kloppenberg, 1991). Managers are responsible for
resource allocation and strategic planning. Ensuring that their perceptions are aligned with those of customers facilitates efficient allocation of resources as they will know the particular areas that require specific resources. Managerial respondents, as part of the survey were also requested to give their views on how important airport service quality was to passengers’ decisions to travel to Harare.

Most managers, as depicted in Table 4-18, were of the view that airport service quality was of some importance to passengers. A quarter of the managers thought airport service quality was very important to passengers, 19 percent felt it was important whilst 12 percent believed it was not very important. On the other hand, 44 percent of the managers opined that travellers did not attach any importance to airport service quality when making decisions to travel to Harare. These responses from the managers indicate that they are aware of the importance of airport service quality to passengers. The missing link is for them to obtain the more specific details on the particular aspects of service quality that are most crucial to the passengers. This is based on the data presented in Figure 4-4, illustrating the differences that exist between the perceptions of managers and the actual expectations of passengers.

4.21 Feedback from airline passengers

With regards to feedback, most managers revealed that they sought feedback from passengers. Feedback is an important tool for obtaining customer expectations, and it is important for organizations to continuously obtain customer feedback (Nash, 2008. It is also worth noting that although feedback may be obtained, it is what management does with the available information that matters the most. In a study conducted by the Gartner Group in 2001, it emerged that 95 percent of all businesses collected some form of
customer feedback, yet only 10 percent of the businesses actually made use of the feedback (Kolsey and Moaz, 2003). Airport authorities are therefore encouraged to also consider the feedback obtained from this study, when planning for improvements at Harare International Airport.

Most feedback was obtained through interactions with passengers. Feedback forms, suggestion boxes and meetings with airline representatives were also used to obtain feedback on service delivery. Other methods included customer surveys and observing the disposition of passengers after service delivery.

The study also showed that most organizations by some means, considered employee suggestions in making customer service related decisions. However, 8 percent of the managers did not incorporate these suggestions at all and this is a cause for concern as suggestions from frontline staff assist service providers in meeting customer expectations. This is because frontline employees are consistently in direct contact with customers and better informed than their superiors, particularly top level management. Involving frontline staff in decision making increases their productivity, motivation, creativity and commitment (Apostolou, 2000).

4.22 Recommendations to improve service quality and customer satisfaction

In order to continuously improve on services, it is always necessary to obtain feedback from customers. In the current study, almost all managers in the customer services departments claimed that they sought feedback from airline passengers. Only 4 percent revealed that they did not employ any deliberate methods of obtaining customer feedback. Customer feedback is an important tool in customer relationship management.
and organizations that continuously obtain feedback are better positioned to meet and exceed customer expectations. Whilst organizations can improve their services through their own knowledge and innovation, improvements that are based on customer feedback tend to be more rewarding.

As most managers are not involved in the frontline activities, it is vital for them to incorporate frontline employees in decision making. It is a major concern that nearly half of the managers in this study indicated that they never involved frontline workers in making customer service related decisions. Only 1 percent of the managers claimed they always included the customer services staff in decision making. This scenario could also serve as an explanation for the wide gaps that between customer expectations and perceptions. Thus, there is a need to revisit this area in order to rectify the status quo.

Although feedback and recommendations from customers are integral to customer service, employees of firms delivering service are also an important source of input for service delivery improvement (Wirtz and Johnston, 2003). In an attempt to ultimately improve service delivery at Harare International Airport, managerial respondents were asked to highlight suggestions which they felt could help improve customer service. Their responses have been summarized in Section I and are discussed together with the recommendations from passengers in the following sections. The recommendations have been classified into the 5 SERVQUAL dimensions.

a) Tangibility

Most recommendations were targeted at the tangibility dimension, with particular emphasis on ventilation within the terminal buildings. Passenger responses indicate that the waiting areas, departure lounge and restaurants were not well ventilated and the air
conditioners were malfunctioning. Managers echoed similar sentiments as they also recommended that the air conditioning of the terminal buildings be attended to. This calls for airport authorities to ensure serviceability of the air conditioners in order to create a pleasant ambience for passengers.

Toilet upgrading was also highlighted, with specific reference to the male toilets, which some passengers felt were not spacious enough and lacked modern facilities. Other passengers also raised concern on the cleanliness of these toilets, although others pointed out that the toilets were clean and only needed to be upgraded. This disparity could be a result of the different periods of travel in which the questionnaires were administered to passengers. It could be that, due to lower volumes of passenger traffic during the off peak period, toilets were easier to maintain. During peak periods, the cleaning staff may be overwhelmed, hence the complaints on cleanliness.

Some areas of the airport seemed to have poor lighting and passengers recommended that the airport authorities rectify this issue. The provision of comfortable seats in the waiting area and departure lounges was also recommended by a number of passengers. Managerial respondents further suggested that there be an improvement in the general signage at the. Their recommendations are in concurrence with Fewings (2012) and Bitner (1990) who highlight the need for clear, visible and accurate signage to guide customers accordingly. According to them, proper and well labelled signage is an integral part of communication and helps to enhance the service experience.

b) Assurance

There is room for improvement in terms of knowledge and courteousness of airport staff. This was highlighted by passengers who felt that frontline staff ought to be more friendly
and cognisant of the fact that the ‘customer is king’. Some passengers went on to recommend an improvement in the grooming of staff that serve them, particularly from immigration and security. Managers did not seem to have any recommendations targeted at the assurance dimension. Chinunda (2011) and Mahapatra (2010) agree on the importance of the human element in service delivery. They posit that in addition to the product, frontline staff is critical in attaining service excellence. There is therefore, need to take heed of these recommendations from passengers if service quality levels are to improve at the airport.

c) Responsiveness

Passengers recommended that all information screens be functional and display relevant and accurate information. The public address system needed to be upgraded or repaired in order for it to produce audible sounds for announcements. There was also a request by passengers for the airport to arrange for a shuttle bus that ferries passengers to and from town. In addition, they recommended that information regarding transport and a general guide to getting around the city of Harare be availed to passengers on arrival. This could either be in the form of printed material or digital media. Managers felt that in order to improve customer service the airport authority had to acquire additional buses at the ramp. This would facilitate swifter movement of passengers between the aircrafts and the terminal.

d) Reliability

In terms of reliability, passengers felt that the authorities needed to put more effort in ensuring consistent serviceability of baggage conveyor belts to facilitate efficient and speedy baggage delivery. Managers echoed similar sentiments with regards to efficiency
in the handling of passenger baggage. They however, went on to recommend the adoption of a baggage drop off facility for passengers who check-in online.

Passengers also recommended the availability of an efficient electricity backup system so as to avoid ‘black out moments’ within the terminal. Graham et al. (2008) underscore the need for proper planning in pursuit of excellent airport service. Planning ahead for such occurrences as electricity cuts is crucial as it prevents disruption of normal service to passengers. The stringent security requirements at airports further necessitate appropriate planning for periods of electricity load shedding. This was particularly noted with reference to the electricity load shedding in the country. Improvements in the public address system were also highlighted by both managers and passengers.

e) Empathy

Generally, passengers expected more well-known retail outlets to be located at the airport. International brands such as McDonalds and KFC were amongst those suggested by respondents. More entertainment is needed within the terminal and passengers specifically requested for a wider selection of channels to be broadcast on the screens. Passengers’ requests for more retail outlets substantiate Page’s (2008) assertion that airline passengers are deeply concerned about the availability of various retail outlets at airports. Some passengers also made mention of additional news channels to be aired on the screens.

It was also recommended that relaxing music be played in the back ground in order to boost the atmosphere at the airport. Passengers felt that the lounges were at times too dull and quiet and some background music would liven up the departure lounges. Meanwhile, a number of passengers registered their discontent at some noisy staff manning retail
outlets in the departure lounge. It was recommended that they be more professional and speak just loud enough to hear each other, without necessarily being noisy and distracting passengers seated in the lounge. Managers further recommended that the authorities establish a chapel, passenger repacking zone and a play area for children. Both managers and travellers highlighted the need for free Wi-Fi at the airport.

4.23 Gap analysis

4.23.1 Analysis of Gap 1: Passenger expectations and management perceptions

Section 4.5.7 clearly illustrated the nature of the gap between the expectations and perceptions of passengers regarding service quality at Harare International Airport. The illustration simply describes the results of subtracting the expectation scores from those of perceptions. While these scores determine the perceived quality of services, conclusions cannot be confidently drawn from the findings based on the descriptive statistics alone. It was necessary to test for the significance of the respective scores to establish whether or not the gaps were notable and therefore, generalizable. This exercise was guided by the positivist philosophy which emphasizes on generalizability of findings, hence the need to further use inferential statistics in analyzing the findings of this study.

A key output of the SERVQUAL instrument is improved quality of services. This is achieved by analyzing various gaps existing in terms of service delivery. In addition to studying the gaps between customer expectations and perceptions, this study also considered the gaps that exist between customer expectations and the perceptions that managers had regarding these expectations. This is known as Gap 1 and it seeks to facilitate improvement in service quality by rectifying the discrepancies that exist
between customer expectations and management perceptions. Chinunda (2011) posits that seamless customer service can only be achieved when leaders are not only effective but also committed to customer services. Assessing the perceptions of managers with regards to customer expectations is an initial step in achieving effective customer oriented service. This study sought to improve service quality by aligning managers’ beliefs regarding customer expectations and the actual expectations of customers with regards to service quality. These results are similar to Bondzi-Simpsons’ findings in a 2009 study, where managerial perceptions were higher than actual customer expectations.

At face value, it would appear that managers’ perceptions on customer expectations far exceeded customer expectations. Basing on the descriptive statistics alone, it could easily be assumed that customer service managers are well aware of passenger expectations. A t-test of significance was carried out to assess the statistical significance of the differences between manager perceptions and customer expectations. Results of the t-test conducted at the 0.05 level of significance are presented in Table 4-12.

Whilst managers felt that passenger expectations were highest for reliability, passengers actually expected more in terms of responsiveness. This could account for the large Gap 1 scores for responsiveness as managers could have been exerting more effort on reliability than responsiveness, for instance. A closer analysis reveals that managerial perceptions and actual customer expectations were not aligned. Table 4-19 compares the rankings of passenger expectations according to managers and the actual expectations of passengers.
It is clear from Table 4-19, that managers risk allocating resources to dimensions that are less important to passengers rather than to those for which passengers have higher expectations. For instance, whilst managers think that passengers have the least expectations for tangibles, passengers actually rank tangibles third after responsiveness and reliability. Managers therefore, need to carefully study and appreciate the importance attached to each dimension by the passengers. This would ensure efficient allocation of resources for improvements in airport service quality. These variations in ranking of passenger expectations could be a possible explanation for the low service quality (negative gap scores) recorded across all the five dimensions.

It is essential for managers to consider the actual expectations of passengers as failure to do so may result in misguided efforts, improving areas that are not as important to customers and not helping reduce the gaps (Fodness and Murray, 2007). Zeithaml et al. (1985) assert that the existence of Gap 1 is an indication that managers may at times fail to understand the expectations of their customers. In rectifying this scenario it is necessary to establish causes of the gap. Parasuraman et al. (1988) identify possible causes of Gap 1 as; insufficient marketing research, misinterpretation of customer expectations, and too many layers between frontline staff and top level management. Although it is beyond the scope of this study, it is worthwhile to establish the underlying

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ranking</th>
<th>Managers’ perceptions</th>
<th>Passengers’ expectations</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>Responsiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Responsiveness</td>
<td>Reliability</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Assurance</td>
<td>Tangibility</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>Assurance</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Tangibility</td>
<td>Empathy</td>
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</table>

Table 4-19 Manager perceptions vs. customer expectations-rankings
causes of the existence of Gap 1 at Harare International Airport. Such a study would facilitate rectification of the discrepancy that exists between the expectations of passengers and what managers believe passengers expect.

On the whole, managers are aware of the high levels of expectations that passengers have regarding service quality. For most of the elements in the five dimensions, managers’ perceptions of customer expectations exceeded the actual expectations of customers. Since the results of this study indicate that managers are well aware of the expectations of passengers passing through the Harare International Airport, it becomes necessary to further investigate into the causes of the disparities that exist between customer expectations and perceptions. Various factors could be identified for the service quality gaps that exist. These may include inadequate resources, undertrained staff or inappropriate management styles. Further research needs to be carried out to establish the causes of the gaps in an effort to improve levels of service quality at Zimbabwean airports.

4.23.2 Analysis of Gap 5: Passenger expectations and perceptions

Parasuraman et al. (1985) posit that it is possible for customer expectations to exceed perceptions. In fact, they argue that it is more common for expectations to surpass perceptions as there is always room for improvement in service delivery.

Passenger expectations were highest for responsiveness followed by reliability. This was in contrast with similar studies in which customers had highest expectations for reliability such as Mensah (2009). Although all perception scores were below expectations, passenger perceptions were above the average 5-point Likert scale ranking of 2.500. This shows that passengers consider airport services as being acceptable and of an above
average standard. While this above average standard suggests that the services are not poorly rated, there is room for improvement as they fall below expectations of passengers. Considering that the majority of passengers had been exposed to other international airports by virtue of travelling on airlines that make connections at other airports, their responses can be regarded as well informed and thus a true reflection of the prevailing state of affairs. It is their frequency of travel that probably exposed them to airports that offer better levels of service quality thus raising their expectations.

4.24 Chapter summary

This Chapter has presented the findings of this study. The Chapter was presented in two sections, with Section I focusing on the presentation of data, whilst Section II was dedicated to the interpretation and analysis of data presented in the first section. Tables, charts and graphs were used in the illustration of research findings. Section I began by presenting the demographic profile of respondents starting with the passengers and then the managers. Following the presentation of respondent demographics, discussions on the profile data was done for the passengers and managers respectively. Thereafter, SERVQUAL data was presented highlighting the results for each of the five RATER dimension. Scores for Gap 1 and Gap 5 were also presented. Data collected from open ended questions was then presented for both passengers and managers. The Chapter, in Section II, went on to analyze and interpret the results that were presented in Section I. Discussion and acknowledgement of relevant literature was also carried out in Section II.
CHAPTER 5 : SUMMARY, FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND 
RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This research primarily set out to investigate the quality of services at Harare International Airport and to ascertain whether it had any influence on tourist arrivals. At the onset, the study sought to accomplish the following objectives:

i) To establish passenger expectations on service at the Harare International Airport.

ii) To ascertain the perceptions of passengers regarding airport service quality at Harare International Airport.

iii) To compute the gaps between their expectations and perceptions concerning the quality of service at Harare International Airport.

iv) To obtain feedback from various managers at the Airport regarding customer expectations.

v) To make appropriate recommendations for improvements in service quality.

In answering the main question “Does airport service quality influence inbound tourism in Zimbabwe?” the following sub-questions were developed and addressed:

i) What are the expectations of passengers regarding service at Harare International Airport?

ii) How do passengers perceive service delivery at Harare International Airport?

iii) What gaps, if any, exist in terms of passenger expectations and perceptions on service at the Airport?

iv) How do managers perceive passenger expectations regarding service quality?
v) What recommendations are necessary to improve the inflow of tourists?

Whereas the previous chapter presented, analyzed and discussed results of the data collection process as outlined in Chapter 3, this final chapter presents the major findings, conclusions and recommendations from the research. More importantly, the Chapter highlights the new knowledge generated by the study and also indicates the implications for future research.

5.1 Research summary

Zimbabwe’s tourism sector had been growing steadily from 1980, when the country gained independence, through to the late 1990s. The dawn of the new millennium, witnessed a downturn in the sector’s performance as the number of international arrivals began to dwindle. This decline has been chiefly attributed to the land reform programme which was not well received by the international community. Consequently, Zimbabwe’s key source markets discouraged their citizens from travelling to the country. Furthermore, the economic, social and political instability that prevailed in the country resulted in an environment that was not conducive for tourism. The global economic recession also contributed toward the decline in tourist arrivals.

The signing of the Global Political Agreement in between the country’s two key political parties in 2009 culminated in the restoration of economic, social and political stability. Travel bans imposed by the West were lifted and the trend of arrivals once again took an upward trend. The Government implemented various programmes and policies to enhance inbound tourism. In spite of these positive developments, Zimbabwe’s tourism continues to perform below its full potential. This necessitated an investigation into other factors that could possibly influence the growth of tourism. The quality of airport services
is one such aspect and this study sought to assess the significance of airport service quality in tourist arrivals.

The assessment was conducted by means of the SERVQUAL model. This model is based on the premise that service quality is a function of customer expectations and customer perceptions. Passengers at Harare International Airport were required to rate their expectations and perceptions regarding the five dimensions of the model namely, reliability, assurance, tangibility, empathy and responsiveness.

In conducting this research, the positivist paradigm was adopted. In line with positivism, quantitative research was implemented. Random sampling of flights departing from the airport was implemented. A total of 410 questionnaires for passenger and 75 for managers at the Harare International Airport were analyzed. Data was analyzed by Microsoft Excel and the SPSS package. Results of the research were presented by means of charts, graphs and tables.

5.2 Findings

This study has been guided by the aims, objectives and hypotheses set out in Chapter 1. Accordingly the major findings of the study shall be presented in this section with particular reference to the aims, objectives and hypothesis.

5.2.1 Passenger expectations on service at the Harare International Airport

Passengers passing through Harare International Airport generally have very high expectations with regards to all aspects of service delivery. The majority of passengers who passed through the airport were travelling on South African Airways, Kenya Airways and Emirates. Furthermore, most passengers had passed through the airport
more than once over the previous year. This tends to suggest that most passengers had been exposed to other leading international airports such as O.R Tambo, Jomo Kenyatta, and Dubai International Airport which are the direct destinations of the dominant flights from Harare. Such exposure could possibly influence the high expectations for services at Harare International Airport.

Although all expectations were highly rated, it emerged that the highest expectations were for ease in flight connectivity. Passengers also strongly felt that airport staff should know their specific needs. Consistent availability of staff to attend to passengers also proved to be another aspect for which passengers had very high expectations at the airport.

5.2.2 Perceptions of passengers regarding airport service quality at Harare International Airport

In terms of their actual perceptions, the study revealed that passengers consider the services to be of a fairly above average standard. Across the five dimensions of service quality, passengers generally gave the services an above average rating. The fact that most passengers had travelled through the airport more than once over the previous year, suggests that the perception ratings were based on well-informed assessments. Regardless of the generally fair ratings, passengers indicated their greatest displeasure with the availability and variety of well-known retail outlets at the airport. Passengers also strongly opined that flight related announcements were not always disseminated accurately. The public address system was a major factor in the low rating of this aspect as it emerged that announcements were for the most part, barely audible and unclear.
5.2.3 The gaps between passenger expectations and perceptions concerning the quality of service at Harare International Airport

Albeit the above average ratings for the various aspects of service, negative gaps were noted across all five dimensions of service quality. The gaps were computed by subtracting expectation scores from perception scores; hence negative gaps implied that passenger expectations exceeded their perceptions. This in turn, implied that although airport services were above the average standard, they fell below passenger expectations for airport services in general.

The largest gap was in terms of the availability of well-known retail outlets at the airport, indicating that passengers expect more renowned retailers at the airport. The gap relating to convenience of service providers’ operating times was also larger than most of the other gaps.

The least gaps were recorded for courteousness of staff and for the availability of space to avoid overcrowding. Even though these gaps were negative, their relative narrowness suggests that these aspects of service quality were being provided in a manner closer to their respective expectations. The study further revealed that providers sought feedback from airline passengers although only 1 percent of the service providers always incorporated passenger suggestions in their decision making. Furthermore, the majority of service providers did not involve their customer contact staff in making customer service related decisions.
5.2.4 Feedback from various managers at the Airport regarding customer expectations.

Although managers generally over-estimated passengers’ expectations, they were misguided on the priorities placed on various dimensions. Whereas managers felt that reliability was a top priority for travellers, it emerged that responsiveness was in fact the major concern for travellers.

Most service providers collected feedback from airline passengers although only 1 percent of the service providers incorporated passenger suggestions in decision making. Furthermore, the majority of service providers did not involve their customer contact staff in making service related decisions.

5.2.5 Recommendations for improvements in service quality

Improvements based on customer feedback tend to produce more significant and longer lasting results. The recommendations as put forth by airline passengers include:

1) Enhancement of entertainment options within the terminal by specifically airing more channels and playing serene background music.

2) Establishment of a wide range of well-known retail outlets at the airport.

3) Replacement or repairing of the air conditioning system within the terminal.

4) Updating of all information screens and ensuring they are always functional.

5) Improvements in the baggage delivery system by ensuring that relevant machinery is consistently operating efficiently.

6) Upgrading of toilet facilities, especially the ones for males.

Recommendations from customer service managers are also worth considering. The main recommendations to be adopted include:
i) Establishment of additional facilities for passengers specifically a chapel, children’s play area, self-check-in booths and baggage drop-off facilities for self check-in passengers.

ii) Continuous motivation of staff.

iii) Training of frontline staff from all the service providers on customer service as well as on the general operations at the airport to avoid unnecessary ‘referring’ of passengers.

5.3 Conclusions

Considering the findings presented in the previous section, the following conclusions can be drawn in line with the objectives of the study.

Travellers generally have high expectations regarding all aspects of service at airports. They however, strongly feel that flight connections should be hassle free and airport staff should be fully aware of their (passengers’) expectations. The actual services delivered at Harare International Airport are mostly above average and of an acceptable standard to tourists passing through the airport. There is however, significant discontent regarding the availability and variety of renowned retail outlets within the terminal. The public address system is also a point of concern as announcements made through the system are often inaudible and unclear.

There is room for improvement across all aspects of service at the airport as the actual services delivered fall below passenger expectations for airport services. Although services at Harare International Airport are not poorly rated per se, they do not fully meet the expectations of passengers. It is therefore, essential for the CAAZ to seriously
consider recommendations from both passengers and managers for the improvement of service quality.

Managers are fully aware of the expectations of passengers; however they are misguided on the priorities of passengers regarding service quality. Although most service providers collect feedback from passengers, only a few of them incorporate that information in decision making. Additionally, frontline staff is seldom involved in the making of customer related decisions.

Service quality is an important factor in the travel decisions of visitors travelling for purposes other than visiting family and friends and holiday making. An improvement in the quality of service could however, retain existing passengers as well as attract new visitors. However, for those travelling for holidays especially to visit friends and relations, the quality of services does not necessarily influence their decisions to come to Zimbabwe. Such travellers will travel to Zimbabwe and pass through Harare International Airport, regardless of prevailing service quality.

5.4 Recommendations

In light of the findings from this study, the researcher recommends the following:

i) Airport authorities should continuously assess service quality and align with the dynamic expectations of airline passengers.

ii) Given the limited financial resources available from the national budget, Government investment in airports should be guided by passenger recommendations. This should ensure effective resource allocation to areas that have the potential of raising levels of service quality, thus encouraging the influx of those visitors who are sensitive to airport service quality.
iii) Overall, there is need for investment in the human element of service to warrant that frontline staff are able to provide services that do not only meet but also exceed the expectations of customers. For instance, training programmes, employee involvement and empowerment should be considered as means of attaining service excellence.

5.5 Implications for future research

In as much as this study has managed to answer certain questions, it has also unearthed other issues that need to be considered in future researches. These include the following:-

i) Whilst it has been established that an improvement in the quality of services at Harare International Airport is essential, there is need for further research in the assessment of the service quality of other facets of the tourism product such as accommodation facilities, retail outlets, catering and recreational facilities. Such research will help to improve the overall tourist experience.

ii) The study has established that passengers are deeply concerned about the absence of well-known retailers at Harare International Airport. Before engaging in the establishment of various retailers, it is necessary to conduct a market based study in order to ascertain the specific preferences and needs of travellers at the airport. This will facilitate the provision of retail services that meet the needs of customers thereby increasing revenue generation at the airport.

iii) Research focusing on the other gaps of the SERVQUAL model is also necessary to holistically address the pertinent issues relating to service quality at the airport.
iv) Future airport studies of a similar nature should ensure that questionnaires for passengers are translated into other common languages such as Chinese Mandarin, French and Portuguese.

5.6 Lessons learnt and contributions to knowledge

This research process did not only manage to achieve its set objective, it also made the following notable contributions.

- Whereas the SERVQUAL model had previously been used in the assessment of airport service quality across the world, it had not been used in the Zimbabwean context. The results of this study will facilitate benchmarking of services at Harare International Airport against other renowned airports that have also used this model such as Incheon and Jomo Kenyatta in South Korea and Kenya respectively.

- The SERVQUAL scores obtained in this study are vital for service improvement at Harare International Airport. Future SERVQUAL studies can be conducted and compared against these scores to assess progress in the attainment of service quality. The study has therefore, provided base-line data for the assessment of service quality improvements at Harare International Airport.

- The study has provided additional literature in the field of airport service quality particularly for African airports. Whilst there is relatively more literature on the quality of services at European, Asian, Australian and American airports, fewer studies have focused on the services at African airports.

- This study has established that although service quality is crucial in the overall airport experience, it does not necessarily influence travel decisions for all
travellers. Visitors travelling to visit family and friends will come to Zimbabwe via the Harare International Airport regardless of the prevailing quality of services. However, for travel purposes other than family ties and holiday making there is need to ensure an improvement in service delivery as travellers are sensitive to the quality of airport services. An improvement in services could potentially retain existing visitors as well as attract potential ones.

5.7 Chapter summary

This final Chapter summarized the research, highlighting key aspects of the study. Major findings were presented prior to presenting conclusions drawn from the study. Recommendations from passengers, managers and the researcher were also given in concluding this Chapter.
References


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Bibliography


Appendices

Appendix 1

CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY OF ZIMBABWE
P.O. BOX 7716, CAUSEWAY, HARARE

Tel: 263-4-685073-89
Fax: 263-4-685112
E-mail: hr@caaz.co.zw
3 December 2013

Ms C P Nyirenda
7 Goodnesten Close
Sawosha
Marbelreign
Harare

Dear Madam

SUBJECT: AUTHORITY TO CARRY OUT A RESEARCH PROJECT AT CIVIL
AVIATION AUTHORITY OF ZIMBABWE

I refer to the above matter.

Please be advised that authority for you to carry out research on “The Impact of Airport Services
Quality on Tourism in Zimbabwe” has been granted.

The approval has been granted on condition that a copy of the research will be submitted to the
Authority through the Human Resources Director.

Yours sincerely

Civil Aviation Authority of Zimbabwe

M. Maiti (Mrs)

Director: Adv. J F Mudzengeri (Chairman), Comm. Gen. G T Pasi (Vice-Chairperson), D Chivasa (General
Manager)* P Ziimbe (Mrs), D Popewo, D Chiwanda (Mrs), T Mudzimire (Mrs), K Hungwe (Mrs)

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QUESTIONNAIRE ON AIRPORT SERVICE QUALITY FOR AIRPORT PASSENGERS

The purpose of this academic study is to determine airport service quality and its impact on tourism in Zimbabwe. The results will be anonymous and used in strict confidence.

SECTION A
Please complete this section by placing a tick ✓ in the most appropriate box.

1. Gender: Female □ Male □


3. What is your nationality? .................................................................

4. How many times have you passed through this airport over the past 12 months?
   Once □ Twice □ 3 times □ 4 times □ more than 4 times □

5. What is your highest level of education?
   Primary □ Secondary □ Tertiary □ Other (specify) ...........................................

6. What is your usual purpose of air travel through Harare airport?
   Business □ Education □ Holiday □ Medical □
   Other (specify) ..............................................................................
SECTION B

This section deals with your expectations on airports in general, as well as your opinions on the prevailing services at Harare International airport. For each statement please indicate the extent to which you agree/disagree by placing a tick in the relevant column. The first statement on each aspect, marked with an (E) refers to your expectations from airports in general whilst the second, marked with a (P), relates to your perceptions/views on each aspect of airport service at Harare International Airport specifically.

Key
SD - Strongly disagree
D - Disagree
N - Neutral
A - Agree
SA - Strongly agree

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATEMENT</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>SA</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 (E) Airports should have modern equipment and facilities.</td>
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<td>(P) Harare airport has modern equipment and facilities.</td>
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<td>2 (E) The physical layout should enable passengers to easily locate facilities</td>
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<td>(P) The physical layout at Harare airport enables easy location of facilities</td>
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<td>3 (E) Airports should be clean.</td>
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<td>(P) Harare airport is clean</td>
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<td>4 (E) Airports should have plenty of open space to avoid overcrowding.</td>
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<td>(P) Harare airport has plenty of open space.</td>
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<td>5 (E) An airport's waiting area should provide comfortable seating.</td>
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<td>(P) The waiting area at Harare airport has comfortable seating.</td>
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<td>6 (E) Airport staff should be neatly dressed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>(P) Staff at Harare airport is generally neatly dressed.</td>
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<td>7 (E) Airport personnel should be courteous.</td>
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<td>(P) Personnel at the airport are courteous.</td>
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<td>8 (E) Airport staff must be trust worthy.</td>
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<tr>
<td>(P) The staff at Harare airport is trustworthy.</td>
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<td>9 (E) Airport staff should be knowledgeable enough to answer passenger questions.</td>
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<td>(P) Harare airport staff is knowledgeable in answering passenger questions.</td>
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<td>10 (E) Airport staff should be willing to provide assistance promptly.</td>
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<td>(P) Harare airport staff is willing to provide assistance promptly.</td>
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<td>11 (E) There should always be staff available at the airport to assist.</td>
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<tr>
<td>(P) There is always staff available at Harare airport to assist passengers.</td>
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<td>12 (E) Baggage collection should be done efficiently.</td>
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<td>(P) Baggage collection at Harare airport is done efficiently.</td>
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<td>13 (E) Connecting between flights should be easy.</td>
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<td>(P)</td>
<td>It is easy to connect between flights at Harare airport.</td>
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<td>14(E)</td>
<td>Flight related information should be disseminated accurately.</td>
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<td>(P)</td>
<td>Flight related information is disseminated accurately at Harare airport.</td>
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<td>15(E)</td>
<td>Airport facilities should be well maintained.</td>
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<td>(P)</td>
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<td>16(E)</td>
<td>Airport staff should perform the service right at the first time</td>
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<td>(P)</td>
<td>Staff at Harare airport perform the service right at the first time</td>
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<td>17(E)</td>
<td>Airport staff should provide services as promised.</td>
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<td>(P)</td>
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<td>18(E)</td>
<td>Airport staff should show special attention to passengers.</td>
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<td>19(E)</td>
<td>Airport staff should know the specific needs of passengers.</td>
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<td>Harare airport staff knows the specific needs of passengers.</td>
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<td>20(E)</td>
<td>Various service providers should have convenient operating hours.</td>
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<td>(P)</td>
<td>Service providers at Harare airport have convenient operating hours.</td>
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<td>21(E)</td>
<td>Well known retail outlets should be available at airports.</td>
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<tr>
<td>(P)</td>
<td>Well known retail outlets are available at Harare airport.</td>
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</table>

SECTION C
Please complete the following section by ticking in the most appropriate box and writing in the space provided accordingly.

1. How important is airport service quality in your decision to travel to Harare?
   Very important [ ] Important [ ] Not very important [ ] Not important at all [ ]

2. What other factors influence your decision to travel to Zimbabwe?
   Family ties [ ] Business interests [ ] Tourist attractions [ ] Affordability [ ]
   Other (specify)........................................................................................................

3. What recommendations, if any, do you have for improvement on airport service quality in Zimbabwe?
   .....................................................................................................................................
   .....................................................................................................................................
   .....................................................................................................................................

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND INPUT
QUESTIONNAIRE ON AIRPORT SERVICE QUALITY FOR MANAGEMENT

The purpose of this academic study is to determine airport service quality and its impact on tourism in Zimbabwe. The results will be anonymous and used in strict confidence.

SECTION A

Please complete this section by placing a tick \( \checkmark \) in the most appropriate box.

1. Gender: \( \square \) Female \( \square \) Male

2. Age: \( \square \) Below 25 \( \square \) 25-35 \( \square \) 36-45 \( \square \) 46-55 \( \square \) above 55

4. For how long have you worked at the airport?

   \( \square \) Less than 12 months \( \square \) 1 to 4 years \( \square \) 5 to 10 years \( \square \) 10 years and above

5. What is your highest level of education?

   \( \square \) Primary \( \square \) Secondary \( \square \) Tertiary \( \square \) Other (specify) .................................................................

6. Which company do you work for? .................................................................
SECTION B
This section deals with *what you believe passengers expect* from airport services in general. For each statement please indicate the extent to which *you think* passengers agree/disagree by placing a tick in the relevant column.

**Key**
SD-Strongly disagree
D- Disagree
N- Neutral
A- Agree
SA – Strongly agree

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATEMENT</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>SA</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 An airport should have modern equipment and facilities</td>
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<td>2 An airport’s physical layout should enable passengers to locate facilities easily.</td>
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<td>3 An airport should be clean</td>
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<td>4 An airport should have plenty of space</td>
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<td>5 An airport waiting area should have comfortable seats</td>
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<td>6 Airport staff should be neatly dressed</td>
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<td>7 Airport personnel should be courteous</td>
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<td>8 Airport staff should be trustworthy</td>
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<td>9 Airport staff should be knowledgeable enough to answer passenger questions</td>
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<td>10 Airport staff should be willing to provide assistance promptly</td>
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<tr>
<td>11 There should always be staff available at the airport to assist passengers.</td>
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SECTION C

Please complete the following section by ticking in the most appropriate box and writing your suggestions in the space provided accordingly.

1. How important do you think airport service quality is in passengers' decision to travel to Harare?
   Very important [ ]  Important [ ]  Not very important [ ]  Not important at all [ ]

2. Do you use any methods for determining satisfaction of passengers?  Yes [ ]  No [ ]
   If your answer is yes, please indicate how you determine if passengers are satisfied with your service:
   ........................................................................................................................................
   ........................................................................................................................................
   ........................................................................................................................................

3. To what extent do you make service delivery improvements basing on the suggestions of passengers?
   Always [ ]  Very often [ ]  Occasionally [ ]  Never [ ]

4. To what extent are customer service employees involved in service related decision making in your organization?
   Always [ ]  Very often [ ]  Occasionally [ ]  Never [ ]

5. What recommendations, if any, do you have for improvement on airport service quality at Harare Airport?
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THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND INPUT.