

Service Quality in The Real Estate Industry in South Africa

Mariska Serfontein, Tonie Drotsky, Johan de Jager*

Delivering quality service to customers is important for any real estate agency. Service quality has become an important issue to the South African Real Estate industry. Service quality is measured in all industries but lack in the real estate industry and that has aroused considerable interest in how repeat buyers and first time buyers of residential property perceive rendered service quality by estate agents. An Estate Agency need to know what buyers' expectations and perceived performance are regarding various service dimensions. The purpose of this paper is to present the findings of repeat buyers and first time buyers of residential property satisfaction with the rendered quality service by real estate agents in the Tshwane Metropolitan area in Gauteng Province, South Africa. Empirical research was done, using Real Estate Service quality (RESERVE) model, to measure the expectations of repeat buyers and first time buyers regarding selected services provided by estate agents and the perceived performance of those estate agents. Dimensions that were focussed on are availability and professionalism, the additions to the RESERVE model. Regarding the availability dimension, the results revealed amongst others that the highest level of satisfaction were measured amongst first time and repeat buyers for the easiness to contact the real estate agent by telephone. Regarding the professionalism dimension, the highest levels of satisfaction was measured for first time buyers in terms of real estate agents that were instrumental in setting the best price for a residential property. Repeat buyers showed the highest level of satisfaction in terms of knowledgeable agents.

Keywords: Service Quality, South Africa, RESERVE etc.

Introduction

Customer's expectations are connected to satisfaction. If the customer expect good service and the institution meets or exceeds the customers expectation then the customer will be satisfied. If the customer expect good service and the institution does not meet the customers expectations then the customer will be dissatisfied. Therefore it is important for the real estate agents to know what service their customers (buyers and sellers) expect from them and try to exceed the customer's expectations (Omachonu, Johnson & Onyeason (2008:436).

As the customer's perception of the services received is based on the actual performance of the real estate agent it is necessary for the agent to deliver the best quality service that he or she is capable in doing (Seth, Deshmukh & Vrat 2006:82). Seiler, Webb and Whipple (2000:106) define service quality as the way in which employees deliver service to a consumer that is equal to what the consumer expected on a continues basis. Service quality is defined as a feeling which is formed by a long-term general evaluation of performance (Awan, Bukhari & Iqbal; 2011:207).

Meyers and Harmeling (2011:77) have identified that service quality consist out of the following components. The **first** component is reliability, which is the capability to carry out promised services unflinching and correctly. The **second**

component is responsiveness, which is the real estate agents compliance to assist the customer immediately. The **third** component is assurance, which is the knowledge and consideration employees (real estate agents) present when delivering a service. The **fourth** component is empathy, which is the thoughtful and personal consideration given to customers. The **last** component is tangibles, which includes the facilities, equipment, personal, written materials and any other item that can be seen by the customers.

A method to determine service quality is the RESERVE model. Tuzovic (2009:498) describe that in 1995 Nelson and Nelson developed the RESERVE (Real Estate SERVICE quality) model which is an adoption of SERVQUAL and is predominantly used for measuring real estate service quality. RESERVE consists out of 31 items in seven dimensions. The seven dimensions of RESERVE are known as tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, professionalism and availability.

RESERVE service measuring model

Carrillat, Jaramillo and Mulki (2007:472) state that SERVQUAL measures the difference between what the customer expects to receive during the service process and the perception of the actual service encounter. SERVQUAL can be "adapted for the specific research needs of a particular

*Tshwane University of Technology, Pretoria, South Africa

organization.” But other measuring methods have been developed for specific industries or specific data that needs to be obtained.

From the development of SERVQUAL other measuring methods have been developed which include SERVPERF, HEdPERF and RESERVE (Abdullah, 2005:306 and Tuzovic, 2009:498).

According to Abdullah (2005:306-307) **SERVPERF** measuring model was developed by Cronin and Taylor in 1992 and focuses only on the perceptions of service quality. SERVPERF research data has shown that the results are more dependable, have a better convergent, greater explicate variance and a smaller amount of bias than SERVQUAL. According to Carrillat et al. (2007:474) SERVPERF do not measure expectation as it is pointless.

HEdPERV (Higher Education Performance) is a measuring instrument that consists out of 41 items and can use both exploratory and confirmatory analysis. HEdPERV is designed to measure the higher education sector (Abdullah; 2005:306).

Black et al. (2001:400) and Kang (2006:38) describe that **SERVQUAL** consists out of five dimensions which include reliability, assurance, tangibles, empathy and responsiveness and Abdullah (2005: 307) state that SERVQUAL consists out of 22 statements.

Zeithaml, Parasuraman and Berry (1990:21) and Meyers and Harmeling (2011:77) state that **reliability** is the capability of the service provider to execute the services that was guaranteed correctly and consistently. The real estate agent should provide the services that were promised to the customer by the real estate agent and or real estate agency.

Zeithaml et al. (1990:26) and Meyers and Hameling (2011:77) state that **assurance** is the ability of the employee to convey that they have comprehensive knowledge of the industry and should be able to build dependability and assurance with the customer. The real estate agent need to have as much knowledge about the real estate industry as possible, this information will help the real estate agent to build trust with the customer, as the customer will have more confidence in the real estate agents abilities.

Zeithaml et al. (1990: 21) and Meyers and Harmeling (2011:77) state that **tangibles** include the exterior design of the physical offices, the condition of the equipment, the appearance of personnel and all communication materials that is send to the customer. Tuzovic (2009:496) state that intangibility is increasing in the real estate environment which makes it more difficult for the customer to evaluate the service quality from real estate agent and agency; therefore customers are relying more on the experience of the real estate agent and the credibility of real estate agencies. Real estate agents need to know that the way they are dressed and overall look will influence the customers perception, thus the real estate agents need to dress according to what the customer expects. The real

estate agency also need to understand that the way the offices look, the equipment used and the communication materials used will influence the customers perception.

Zeithaml et al. (1990:26) and Meyers and Harmeling (2011:77) state that **empathy** is the feeling that the customer is receiving individualized attention from the institution and their employees. The real estate agents should make the customer feel important and should show that they truly care and has the customer's best interests at heart.

Zeithaml et al. (1990:26); Strombeck and Wakefield (2008:413) and Meyers and Harmeling (2011:77) state that **responsiveness** is the employees or institutions eagerness to assist the customer quickly. The real estate agent and real estate agency should be willing to aid the customer promptly.

Tuzovic (2009:498) describe that in 1995 Nelson and Nelson developed **RESERVE** (Real Estate SERVICE quality) which is an adoption of SERVQUAL and is predominantly used for measuring real estate service quality. RESERVE consists out of 31 statements in seven dimensions appose to SERVQUAL which consists out of 22 items in five dimensions. The seven dimensions of RESERVE are known as tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, professionalism and availability.

The dimensions tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy have been discussed above under SERVQUAL. The remaining two dimensions of RESERVE will be discussed next.

Nelson and Nelson (1995:103) state that **availability** is the openness and effortlessness to contact the institution or employees. The customer should find it easy to communicate with the real estate agent by means of telephone, email or web during business hours. Nelson and Nelson (1995:103) state that all communication should be in a language that the customer can understand, the customer should be kept informed during the purchase process and the employees should listen to the customer. Real estate agents need to communicate with buyers or sellers preferably in their home language or at least a language that they can understand; the real estate agent needs to keep the buyer or seller up to date with the progress of the sale and the real estate agent needs to listen to the customer to make sure that they are showing the right kind of residential properties to a potential buyer or that the potential seller is happy with the times and dates the residential property is being sold.

Nelson and Nelson (1995:103) state that **professionalism** is the process where the employee works together with the customer to achieve the best possible outcome. The real estate agent should build a good partnership with the buyers in order to deliver them the best possible service.

Research Methodology

Zikmund and Babin (2007:5) point out that the marketing

research process enables the researcher to approach the marketing research problem in a scientific manner and also enables researchers to collect, analyse and interpret data about customer satisfaction towards real estate agents service delivery. This author contend that the marketing research process includes specifying what information is needed, design the collection method, organization and executing the collection design, analysing the results and communicating the findings. A literature review was carried out by using secondary sources to establish if any related research had been performed previously. The secondary sources used included articles from newspapers and magazines, internet and library. The author decided to use the convenient sampling to collect the data. The author obtained list of qualified respondents from eleven real estate agents. From the list obtained the fieldworkers contacted the qualified respondents and requested them for their participation. Willing respondents were given a choice between receiving the questionnaire by e-mail or personally receiving the questionnaire. A total number of 170 questionnaires were distributed of which 142 were returned and used for the survey. A structured questionnaire was used to collect the data. The questionnaire consisted out of three sections. The first section was demographic information, the second part dealt with the buyers overall satisfaction and the last section was based on the RESERVE model. The third section used a five point scale to measure two dimensions (expectations and perceived performance) simultaneously. All statements were based on two dimensions of the RESERVE model. Only 14 of the 31 statements were dealt with as only the availability and professionalism dimensions were used for the purpose of this paper. All questions asked in the questionnaire were pre-coded before the questionnaires were distributed. The raw data that was obtained from the questionnaires was edited before it was statistically analysed. The data was captured on Microsoft Excel and analysed using

Statistical software package PSAW version 18. A Cronbach Alpha coefficient of 0.949 was obtained which reflects a high degree of reliability on the questionnaire.

Results And Discussion

The difference between buyer's expectations and perceived performance (gap analysis) was analysed by applying an independent sample t-test and a comparison of the means. The levels of agreement and disagreement between the independent variables (first time buyers and repeat buyers) and the dependent variables (the service quality elements) were analysed. Mean statistics were used to determine the statistical differences between first time and repeat buyers for each variable. The two dimensions not discussed under SERVQUAL is analysed for the purpose of this study.

Data analysis of the availability service dimension

The real estate agent should be **available** for the buyers, on a time and method that suits the buyer. The statements in **Table 1.1** as established by RESERVE were made to compare the expectations in **Figure 1.1** and perceived performance in **Figure 1.2** of the availability characteristics of service delivery by the real estate agent.

The statements on the availability dimension made in **Table 1.1** are applicable to both **Figure 1.1** and **Figure 1.2**. **Figure 1.1** represents the expectations of the first time buyers compared to the repeat buyers and **Figure 1.2** represents the perceived performance of the first time buyers compared to the repeat buyers.

A Cronbach Alpha coefficient of 0.919 was measured for customer expectations and 0.879 was measured for customer perceived performance which reflects a high degree of reliability on the questionnaire.

TABLE 1.1: Availability dimension statements

Statement nr	Statement made for the availability service dimension
1	Real estate agents should always be willing to help the client
2	Real estate agent should respond to client's requests promptly
3	Client should not wait to obtain an appointment with the real estate agent
4	Real estate agent should be available at hours convenient to their clients
5	Real estate agent should be able to contact a senior broker in an agency without difficulty
6	Real estate agent should be easy to contact by telephone
7	Real estate agent should be easy to contact by e-mail

Example of two combined scales used in the structured questionnaire

EXPECTATIONS					PERCEIVED PERFORMANCE				
Very high expectations (VH)	High expectations	Neither high nor low expectations	Low expectations	Very low expectations (VL)	Excellent (E)	Good	Neither good nor bad	Bad	Very Bad (VB)
1	2 X	3	4	5	1	2	3	4X	5

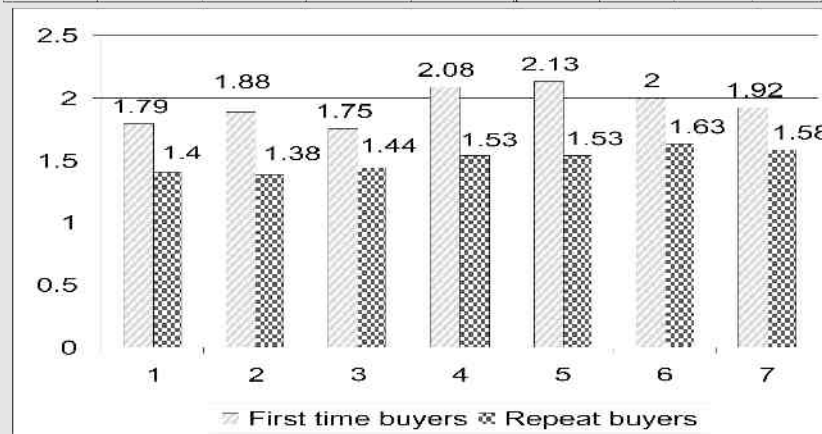


FIGURE 1.1: Expectations of the availability dimension

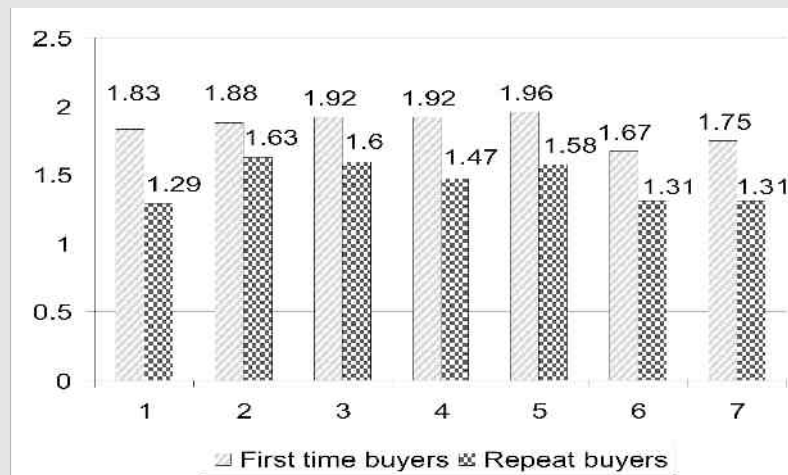


FIGURE 1.2: Perceived performance of the availability dimension

Statement 1: “Real estate agent should always be willing to help the buyer”.

Figure 1.1 illustrates the expectations of the sample for statement 1, the first time buyers $\mu = 1.79$ and the repeat buyers $\mu = 1.40$. Figure 1.2 illustrates the perceived performance of the sample for statement 1, the first time buyers $\mu = 1.83$ and for the repeat buyers $\mu = 1.29$. It is clear after the evaluation of statement 1 that both the first time buyers and repeat buyers have very high expectations and perceived the performance as excellent. Repeat buyers

perceive the performance slightly better than first time buyers.

Statement 2: “Real estate agent should respond to client’s requests promptly”.

Figure 1.1 illustrates the expectations of the sample for statement 2, the first time buyers $\mu = 1.88$ and the repeat buyers $\mu = 1.38$. Figure 1.2 above illustrates the perceived performance of the sample for statement 2, the first time buyers $\mu = 1.88$ and for the repeat buyers $\mu = 1.63$. It is clear after the evaluation of statement 2 that both the first time buyers and repeat buyers have very high expectations and

perceived the performance as excellent. Repeat buyers perceive the performance slightly better than first time buyers.

Statement 3: “Client should not wait to obtain an appointment with the real estate agent”.

Figure 1.1 illustrates the expectations of the sample for statement 3, the first time buyers $\mu = 1.75$ and the repeat buyers $\mu = 1.44$. Figure 1.2 illustrates the perceived performance of the sample for statement 3, the first time buyers $\mu = 1.92$ and for the repeat buyers $\mu = 1.60$. It is clear after the evaluation of statement 3 that both the first time buyers and repeat buyers have very high expectations and perceived the performance as excellent. Repeat buyers perceive the performance slightly better than first time buyers.

Statement 4: “Real estate agent should be available at hours convenient to their clients”.

Figure 1.1 illustrates the expectations of the sample for statement 4, the first time buyers $\mu = 2.08$ and the repeat buyers $\mu = 1.53$. Figure 1.2 illustrates the perceived performance of the sample for statement 4, the first time buyers $\mu = 1.92$ and for the repeat buyers $\mu = 1.47$. It is clear after the evaluation of statement 4 that first time buyers have high expectations and repeat buyers have very high expectations. Both first time buyers and repeat buyers perceived the performance as excellent. Repeat buyers perceive the performance slightly better than first time buyers.

Statement 5: “Real estate agent should be able to contact a senior broker in an agency without difficulty”.

Figure 1.1 illustrates the expectations of the sample for statement 5 the first time buyers $\mu = 2.13$ and the repeat buyers $\mu = 1.53$. Figure 1.2 illustrates the perceived performance of the sample for statement 5 the first time buyers $\mu = 1.96$ and for the repeat buyers $\mu = 1.58$. It is clear after the evaluation of statement 5 that first time buyers have high expectations and repeat buyers have very high expectations. Both first time buyers and repeat buyers perceived the performance as excellent. Repeat buyers perceive the performance slightly better than first time buyers.

Statement 6: “Real estate agent should be easy to contact by telephone”.

Figure 1.1 illustrates the expectations of the sample for statement 6 the first time buyers $\mu = 2.00$ and the repeat buyers $\mu = 1.63$. Figure 1.2 illustrates the perceived performance of the sample for statement 6 the first time buyers $\mu = 1.67$ and for the repeat buyers $\mu = 1.31$. It is clear after the evaluation of statement 6 that first time buyers have high expectations and repeat buyers have very high expectations. Both first time buyers and repeat buyers perceived the performance as excellent. Repeat buyers perceive the performance slightly better than first time buyers.

Statement 7: “Real estate agent should be easy to contact by e-

mail”.

Figure 1.1 illustrates the expectations of the sample for statement 7 the first time buyers $\mu = 1.92$ and the repeat buyers $\mu = 1.58$. Figure 1.2 illustrates the perceived performance of the sample for statement 7 the first time buyers $\mu = 1.75$ and for the repeat buyers $\mu = 1.31$. It is clear after the evaluation of statement 7 that both first time buyers and repeat buyers have very high expectations and perceived the performance as excellent. Repeat buyers perceive the performance slightly better than first time buyers.

Table 1.2 represents the gap analysis between the expectations and perceived performance, which also compares first time buyers with repeat buyers. The biggest negative difference between expectations and perceived performance represents the variable where the highest level of dissatisfaction is measured. On the contrary the highest positive difference represents the highest level of satisfaction (where expectations are exceeded).

The biggest negative difference (ranked as 7) in Table 1.2 between the buyers expectations and perceived performance (implying dissatisfaction) on the availability dimension for first time buyers is statement 3 “The buyer did not wait a long time to obtain an appointment with the real estate agent” and for repeat buyer is statement 2 “Real estate agent responded to the buyers requests promptly”. The first time buyers had a gap score of -0.17 and repeat buyers had a gap score of -0.25. Repeat buyers are slightly more dissatisfied than the first time buyers

The highest positive difference between expectations and perceived performance indicates the variable that represents that highest rate of satisfaction in the availability dimension. The highest positive difference (ranked as 1) between expectations and perceived performance in Table 1.2 for both first time buyers and repeat buyers is on statement 6 “Real estate agent was easy to contact by telephone”. First time buyers had a gap score of 0.33 and repeat buyers had a gap score of 0.32. Repeat buyers are slightly more satisfied than first time buyers. This variable implies a very high level of satisfaction compared to all others measured.

Data analysis of the professionalism service dimension

The real estate agent should act with professionalism when dealing with the buyers. Therefore the real estate agent should have up to date technology, support from real estate agency and deliver on his or her promises, the real estate agent should also have adequate training and knowledge. The statements in Table 1.3 as partially established by RESERVE were used to compare the expectations in Figure 1.3 with the perceived performance in Figure 1.4 of the professionalism characteristics of service delivery by the real estate agent.

TABLE 1.2: Gap analysis of the availability dimension

Statement	Expectations Mean (μ) for first time buyer	Perceived Performance Mean (μ) for first time buyer	Gap score and rank	Expectations Mean (μ) for repeat buyer	Perceived Performance mean (μ) for repeat buyer	Gap score and rank
Real estate agents should always be willing to help the client	1.79 2	1.83 3	-0.04 6	1.40 2	1.29 1	0.11 3
Real estate agent should respond to client's requests promptly	1.88 3	1.88 4	0 5	1.38 1	1.63 7	-0.25 7
Client should not wait to obtain an appointment with the real estate agent	1.75 1	1.92 5	-0.17 7	1.44 3	1.60 6	-0.16 6
Real estate agent should be available at hours convenient to their clients	2.08 6	1.92 5	0.16 4	1.53 4	1.47 4	0.06 4
Real estate agent should be able to contact a senior broker in an agency without difficulty	2.13 7	1.96 7	0.17 2	1.53 4	1.58 5	-0.05 5
Real estate agent should be easy to contact by telephone	2.00 5	1.67 1	0.33 1	1.63 7	1.31 2	0.32 1
Real estate agent should be easy to contact by e-mail	1.92 4	1.75 2	0.17 2	1.58 6	1.31 2	0.27 2

The statements on the professionalism dimension in Table 1.3 are applicable to both Figure 1.3 and Figure 1.4. Figure 1.3 represents the expectations of the first time buyers compared to

the repeat buyers and Figure 1.4 represents the performance of the service provider as perceived by the first time buyers and compared to the repeat buyers.

TABLE 1.3: Professionalism dimension statements

Statement nr	Statement made for the professionalism service dimension
1	Real estate firm should use up-to-date technology
2	The real estate agent should provided the service as promised
3	The property should be well advertised by real estate agent
4	Real estate agent should get adequate support from the real estate agency to do his/her job well
5	Real estate agent should be knowledgeable
6	Real estate agent should have extensive training and education
7	Real estate agent should be instrumental in setting the best price for a residential property

A Cronbach Alpha coefficient of 0.746 was measured for customer expectations and 0.823 was measured for customer

perceived performance which reflects a high degree of reliability on the questionnaire.

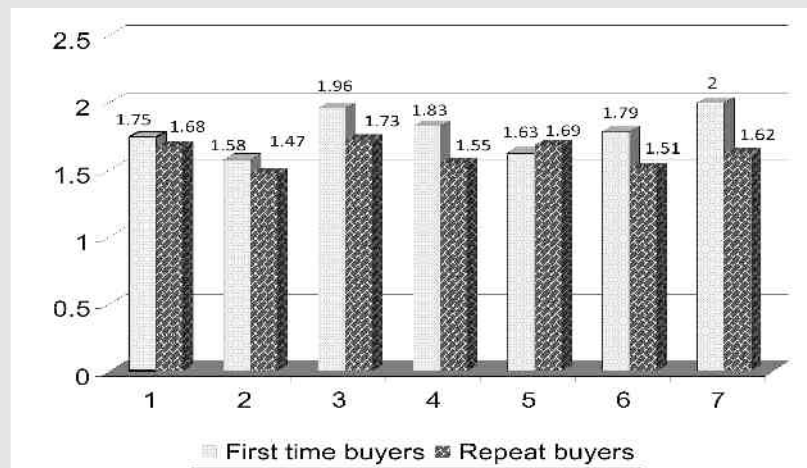


FIGURE 1.3: Expectations of the professionalism dimension

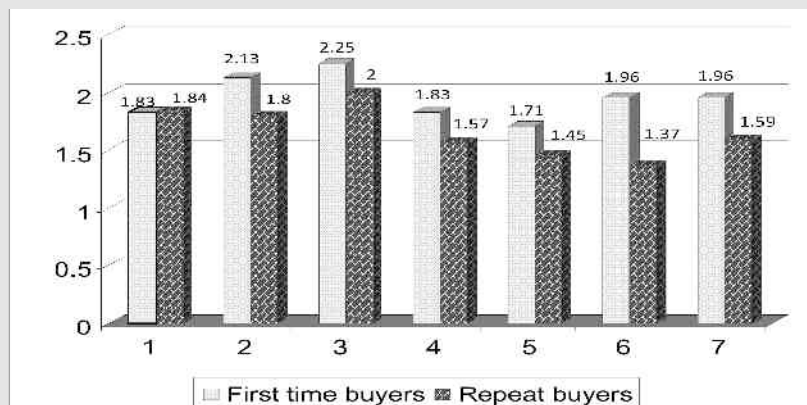


FIGURE 1.4: Perceived performance of the professionalism dimension

Statement 1: “Real estate firm should use up-to-date technology”.

Figure 1.3 illustrates the expectations of the sample for statement 1, the first time buyers $\mu = 1.75$ and the repeat buyers $\mu = 1.68$. Figure 1.4 illustrates the perceived performance of the sample for statement 1, the first time buyers $\mu = 1.83$ and for the repeat buyers $\mu = 1.84$. It is clear after the evaluation of statement 1 that both the first time buyers and repeat buyers have very high expectations and perceived the performance as excellent. First time buyers perceive the performance slightly better than the repeat buyers.

Statement 2: “The real estate agent should provided the service as promised”.

Figure 1.3 illustrates the expectations of the sample for statement 2, the first time buyers $\mu = 1.58$ and the repeat

buyers $\mu = 1.47$. Figure 1.4 illustrates the perceived performance of the sample for statement 2, the first time buyers $\mu = 2.13$ and for the repeat buyers $\mu = 1.80$. It is clear after the evaluation of statement 2 that both the first time buyers and repeat buyers have very high expectations. First time buyers perceived the performance as good and the repeat buyers perceived the performance as excellent. Repeat buyers perceive the performance slightly better than the first time buyers.

Statement 3: “The property should be well advertised by real estate agent”.

Figure 1.3 illustrates the expectations of the sample for statement 3, the first time buyers $\mu = 1.96$ and the repeat buyers $\mu = 1.73$. Figure 1.4 illustrates the perceived performance of the sample for statement 3, the first time buyers $\mu = 2.25$ and for the repeat buyers $\mu = 2.00$. It is clear

after the evaluation of **statement 3** that both the first time buyers and repeat buyers have **very high expectations** and **perceived the performance as good**. Repeat buyers **perceive the performance slightly better** than the first time buyers.

Statement 4: *“Real estate agent should get adequate support from the real estate agency to do his/her job well”.*

Figure 1.3 illustrates the **expectations** of the sample for **statement 4**, the first time buyers $\mu = 1.83$ and the repeat buyers $\mu = 1.55$. **Figure 1.4** illustrates the **perceived performance** of the sample for **statement 4**, the first time buyers $\mu = 1.83$ and for the repeat buyers $\mu = 1.57$. It is clear after the evaluation of **statement 4** that both the first time buyers and repeat buyers have **very high expectations** and **perceived the performance as excellent**. Repeat buyers **perceive the performance slightly better** than the first time buyers.

Statement 5: *“Real estate agent should be knowledgeable”.*

Figure 1.3 illustrates the **expectations** of the sample for **statement 5**, the first time buyers $\mu = 1.63$ and the repeat buyers $\mu = 1.69$. **Figure 1.4** illustrates the **perceived performance** of the sample for **statement 5**, the first time buyers $\mu = 1.71$ and for the repeat buyers $\mu = 1.45$. It is clear after the evaluation of **statement 5** that both the first time buyers and repeat buyers have **very high expectations** and **perceived the performance as excellent**. Repeat buyers **perceive the performance slightly better** than the first time buyers.

Statement 6: *“Real estate agent should have extensive training and education”.*

Figure 1.3 illustrates the **expectations** of the sample for **statement 6**, the first time buyers $\mu = 1.79$ and the repeat buyers $\mu = 1.51$. **Figure 1.4** illustrates the **perceived performance** of the sample for **statement 6**, the first time buyers $\mu = 1.96$ and for the repeat buyers $\mu = 1.37$. It is clear after the evaluation of **statement 6** that both the first time buyers and repeat buyers have **very high expectations** and **perceived the performance as excellent**. Repeat buyers **perceive the performance slightly better** than the first time buyers.

Statement 7: *“Real estate agent should be instrumental in setting the best price for a residential property”.*

Figure 1.3 illustrates the **expectations** of the sample for **statement 7**, the first time buyers $\mu = 2.00$ and the repeat buyers $\mu = 1.62$. **Figure 1.4** illustrates the **perceived performance** of the sample for **statement 7**, the first time buyers $\mu = 1.96$ and for the repeat buyers $\mu = 1.59$. It is clear after the evaluation of **statement 7** that first time buyers have **high expectations** and repeat buyers have **very high expectations**. Both first time buyers and repeat buyers **perceived the performance as excellent**. Repeat buyers

perceive the performance slightly better than the first time buyers.

Table 1.4 represents the gap analysis between the expectations and perceived performance, which also compares first time buyers and repeat buyers. The biggest negative difference between expectations and perceived performance represents the variable where the highest level of dissatisfaction is measured. On the contrary the highest positive difference represents the highest level of satisfaction (where expectations are exceeded).

The biggest negative difference (ranked as 7) in **Table 1.4** between the buyers expectations and perceived performance on the professionalism dimension for first time buyers and repeat buyers is **statement 2** *“The real estate agent provided the services as promised”*. The first time buyers had a gap score of -0.55 and repeat buyers had a gap score of -0.33. First time buyers are more dissatisfied than the repeat buyers.

TABLE 1.4: Gap analysis of the professionalism dimension

Statement	Expectations Mean (μ) for first time buyer	Perceived Performance mean (μ) for first time buyer	Gap score and rank	Expectations Mean (μ) for repeat buyer	Perceived Performance Mean (μ) for repeat buyer	Gap score and rank
Real estate firm should use up-to-date technology	1.75 3	1.83 2	-0.08 3	1.68 5	1.84 6	-0.16 5
The real estate agent should provide the service as promised	1.58 1	2.13 6	-0.55 7	1.47 1	1.80 5	-0.33 7
The property should be well advertised by real estate agent	1.96 6	2.25 7	-0.29 6	1.73 7	2.00 7	-0.27 6
Real estate agent should get adequate support from the real estate agency to do his/her job well	1.83 5	1.83 2	0 2	1.55 3	1.57 3	-0.02 4
Real estate agent should be knowledgeable	1.63 2	1.71 1	-0.08 3	1.69 6	1.45 2	0.24 1
Real estate agent should have extensive training and education	1.79 4	1.96 4	-0.17 5	1.51 2	1.37 1	0.14 2
Real estate agent should be instrumental in setting the best price for a residential property	2.00 7	1.96 4	0.04 1	1.62 4	1.59 4	0.03 3

The highest positive difference between expectations and perceived performance indicates the variable that represents the highest rate of satisfaction in the professionalism dimension. The highest positive difference (ranked at 1) between expectations and perceived performance in Table 1.4 for first time buyers and repeat buyers is on statement 7 “*Real estate agent was instrumental in setting the best price for a residential property*”; and had a gap score of 0.04. The lowest positive difference (ranked at 1) between expectations and perceived performance represented in Table 1.4 for repeat buyers is on statement 5 “*Real estate agent was knowledgeable*”; and had a gap score of 0.24. Repeat buyers are much more satisfied than first time buyers.

Conclusion

Availability service dimension (7 variables)

Both first time buyers and repeat buyers have very high expectations and perceived an excellent service performance regarding the real estate agent's **willingness to help the buyer**. Both first time buyers and repeat buyers have very high expectations and perceived excellent service performance regarding the real estate agent to **assist the buyer on requests**

promptly. Both first time buyers and repeat buyers have very high expectations and perceived excellent service performance with regards to **not waiting too long to obtain an appointment with the real estate agent**. First time buyers have high expectation while repeat buyers have very high expectations while they both have perceived excellent service performance regarding the real estate agent **being available at convenient hours**. First time buyers have high expectation while repeat buyers have very high expectations regarding the real estate agent **being able to contact a senior broker in the real estate agency**. Both first time buyers and repeat buyers have perceived an excellent service performance regarding the same variable. First time buyers have high expectation while repeat buyers have very high expectations regarding their **ability to contact the real estate agent by telephone**. Both the first time buyers and repeat buyers have perceived excellent service performance regarding the same variable. Both first time buyers and repeat buyers had very high expectations and perceived excellent service performance with regards to the **ability to contact the real estate agent by e-mail**. It seems as if the variable that was experienced most satisfied (exceeded expectations) for first time buyers is that real estate agents is

easy to be contacted by phone while the least satisfied (dissatisfied) variable is the the buyer did not wait a long time to obtain an appointment with the real estate agent. Repeat buyers showed the same behaviour regarding the most satisfied variable while the real estate agent responded to the buyers requests promptly was indicated least satisfied (actually dissatisfied).

Professionalism service dimension (7 variables)

Both the first time buyers and repeat buyers had very high expectations and perceived an excellent performance regarding the **technology the real estate agency uses**.

Both first time buyers and repeat buyers had very high expectation, but first time buyers perceived a good performance while repeat buyers perceived an excellent performance regarding the real estate agent **providing the services as promised** to the buyer. Both the first time buyers and repeat buyers had very high expectations and perceived a good performance regarding the real estate agent **advertising the property**. Both the first time buyers and repeat buyers had very high expectations and perceived an excellent performance regarding the real estate agent obtaining **adequate support** from the real estate agency. Both first time buyers and repeat buyers had very high expectations and perceived excellent performance regarding the **knowledge of the real estate agent**. Both first time buyers and repeat buyers had very high expectations and perceived excellent performance regarding the **education and training** of the real estate agent. First time buyers have high expectations but repeat buyers have very high expectations but both first time buyers and repeat buyers perceived an excellent performance regarding the real estate agent **setting the best price for the residential property**. It seems as if the variable that was experienced most satisfied (expectations exceeded) for first time buyers is that the real estate agent was instrumental in setting the best price for residential property why the least satisfied (dissatisfied) variable were that real estate agents provide the services as promised. Regarding repeat buyers the most satisfied variable (expectations were exceeded) is that real estate agents is knowledgeable while the least satisfied variable (dissatisfied) variable is that the real estate agents provided the service as promised.

Recommendations

In terms of the availability dimension, first time buyers were overall satisfied with five of the variables and dissatisfied with only two of the dimensions. Overall first time buyers expressed a higher level of satisfaction compared with the repeat buyers. First time buyers expressed satisfaction with five of the seven variables (where expectations were met or exceeded). First time buyers were less satisfied (actually dissatisfied) with the variable "Client should not wait to obtain an appointment with the real estate agent). The biggest negative deviation between expectations and perceived performance were expressed here. As this variable seems an obvious important ingredient of this

dimension, real estate agents should take notice of this finding, especially for first time buyers and start to investigate what could be the reason for this finding. While repeat buyers showed a similar response, they were most dissatisfied with the variable "Real estate agent should respond to client's requests promptly". As this is related to the previous item, the management of real estate agents should take this into account when training sessions are formulated.

Regarding the professionalism dimension repeat buyers were overall less dissatisfied with the services offered. It should be stated that in both cases overall dissatisfaction was measured as expectations were not met. However repeat buyers were satisfied with three of the seven items under the professional construct, while in the case of first time buyers, two of the items were regarded satisfied (were expectations were at least met). Repeat buyers were mostly satisfied with "Real estate agent should be knowledgeable" (came third in terms of first time buyers). "Real estate agents should be instrumental in setting the best price for a residential property (third in terms of satisfaction for repeat buyers. The item with which the highest level of dissatisfaction was expressed by repeat buyers is "The real estate agent should provide the service as promised while first time buyers supported this perception. By further analysing the findings it is evident that this element was rated first by both first time and repeat buyers in terms of their expectations but came last by both groups in terms of (dis)satisfaction. This fact logically appears to be an obvious obstacle in proper service delivery that needs to be addressed during training sessions in order to enhance the perceived professionalism of estate agents.

References

- ABDULLAH, F. 2005. *HEdPERF versus SERVPERF* Journal of quality assurance in education. [Online], 13(4). Available from: www.emeraldinsight.com [Accessed: 13/02/2010]
- AWAN, H.M., BUKHARI, K.S. & IQBAL, A. 2011. Service quality and customer satisfaction in the banking sector. *Journal of Islamic marketing* [Online], 2(3). Available from: www.emeraldinsight.com [Accessed: 24/10/2011]
- BLACK, S., BRIGGS, S. & KEOGH, W. 2001. *Service quality performance measurement in public/private sectors*. *Journal of managerial auditing*. [Online], 16(7). Available from: www.emeraldinsight.com [Accessed: 05/11/2009]
- CARRILLAT, F.A., JARAMILO, F. & MULKI, J.P. 2007. *The validity of the SERVQUAL and SERVPERF scales*. *International Journal of service industry management*. [Online], 18(5). Available from: www.emeraldinsight.com [Accessed: 13/02/2010]
- KANG, G. 2006. *The hierarchical structure of service quality: integration of technical and functional quality*. *Journal*

- of managing service quality. [Online], 16(1). Available from: www.emeraldinsight.com [Accessed: 13/02/2010]
- MEYERS, Y.J. & HARMELING, S.S. 2011. *Best address: the use of innovative marketing in the real estate industry*. Journal of research in marketing and entrepreneurship. [Online], 13(1). Available from: www.emeraldinsight.com [Accessed: 01/08/2011]
- NELSON, S.L. & NELSON, T.R. 1995. *RESERVE: An instrument for measuring real estate brokerage service quality*. The journal of real estate research. [Online], 10(1). Available from: www.emeraldinsight.com [Accessed: 16/02/2010]
- OMACHONU, V., JOHNSON, W.C. & ONYEASO, G. 2008. *An empirical test of the drivers of overall customer satisfaction: evidence from multivariate granger causality*. [Online], 22(6). Available from: www.emeraldinsight.com [Accessed: 28/10/2009]
- SEILER, V.L., WEBB, J.R. & WHIPPLE, T.W. 2000. *Assessment of Real Estate Brokerage Service Quality with a Practicing Professional's*. Journal of real estate research [Online], 20(1). Available from: www.emeraldinsight.com [Accessed: 28/10/2009]
- SETH, N., DESHMUKH, S.G. & VRAT, P. 2006. *A framework for measuring of quality of service in supply chains*. [Online], 11(1). Available from: www.emeraldinsight.com [Accessed: 28/10/2009]
- STROMBECK, S.D. & WAKEFIELD, K.L. 2008. *Situational influences on service quality evaluations*. Journal of service marketing. [Online], 22(5). Available from: www.emeraldinsight.com [Accessed: 13/02/2010]
- TUZOVIC, S. 2009. *Key determinations of real estate service quality among renters and buyers*. Journal of service marketing. [Online], 23(7). Available from: www.emeraldinsight.com [Accessed: 01/03/2011]
- ZEITHAML, V.A., PARASURUMAN, A. & BERRY, L.L. 1990. *Delivering quality service. Balancing customer perception and expectations*. Free Press.
- ZIKMUND, W.G. & BABIN, B.J. 2007. *Exploring marketing research*. 9th ed. USA: Thomson South Western

TABLE