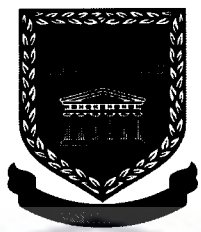
SERVICE QUALITY IN LEISURE PROGRAM DELIVERY: A CASE OF THE SALOMON PUFFER ENDURANCE TRAIL RUN



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WESTERN CAPE

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A Mini-Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Magister Sport, Recreation and Exercise Science (MA SRES) in the Department of Sport, Recreation and Exercise Science, University of the Western Cape

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KEYWORDS

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SERVQUAL

Leisure

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Recreation

Participant

Consumer

ABSTRACT

In a demanding and diverse corporate market any organization wanting to make a profit should adhere to certain business principles in order to stay economically competitive. The product of the leisure service organization consisting of tangible and intangible factors makes it difficult to market and sell their product as compared to organizations in the manufacturing industry. The quality of the product or service, made up of tangible and intangible factors therefore becomes the benchmark for the leisure service organization to ensure prolonged economic participation in an ever changing business environment. A service of high quality will therefore ensure higher profit and more opportunities for the leisure organization. This study assessed the service quality of the SALOMON PUFFER (hereafter called the PUFFER) Endurance Trail Run in Table Mountain Nature Reserve in Cape Town as a leisure event. Service quality of the PUFFER was assessed through 33 participants from South Africa of both male and female and ranging in the ages of 21 and 70 completing the SERVQUAL questionnaire specially adapted to an endurance event like the PUFFER. Questions addressed issues on five SERVQUAL dimensions namely: Responsiveness, Reliability, Tangibles, Assurance and Empathy as well as the awareness and usage ratings of certain tangible and intangible aspects not necessarily part of the five dimensions mentioned. Questions were answered on a five point Likert style scales ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". Data was analyzed using the STATISTICA package of data analysis. The organizers were rated as excellent on all five dimensions with ratings of over 60% on average with only physical facilities as tangible factor receiving a lower score of 33% in terms of excellence. The conclusion of the study is that both tangible and intangible factors plays a role in the overall impression participants have on the leisure event. It indicates therefore that the participants in the PUFFER perceived the service delivered at the event to be of acceptable quality.

Service; Service Quality; SERVQUAL; Leisure; Leisure programming; Recreation; Participant; Consumer

DECLARATION

I, Etienne Joubert declare that SERVICE QUALITY IN LEISURE PROGRAM DELIVERY: A CASE OF THE SALOMON PUFFER ENDURANCE TRAIL RUN is my own work, that it has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university and that all the sources I have quoted have been indicated and acknowledged as complete references.

Etienne Joubert September 2009

Signed.....

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Chapter One provides a background into the study of service quality as perceived by the participants of the Salomon PUFFER endurance trail run event (hereafter called the PUFFER). The chapter explains the PUFFER as a leisure activity and why the event can be defined as a leisure program. The chapter further explains the purpose and rationale of the study while defining the research problem, the aim of the study as well as the specific objectives of the study.

1.2 Leisure programming as a service orientation

According to Smit and Cronje (2000:47) in a demanding and diverse corporate market, any modern organization wanting to make a profit should adhere to specific business principles. This is even more relevant to the modern leisure service organization wanting to compete with organizations in the manufacturing industries. The service organization has to compete for market share with intangible products called services against the manufacturing company selling tangible goods.

Edginton, Hudson, Dieser and Edginton (2004:21) drew a parallel between the manufacturing and service industry in that the product being sold by the service industry is the service being consumed by the customer. The manufacturing industry transforms raw materials or refined

resources into finished goods for resale; the agriculture industry produces food commodities, the information industry exchanges knowledge and facts while the service industry focuses on transactions between people. It is therefore clear that for the service organization to succeed in business, the product, or in this case the "organized program or leisure event", should satisfy the needs of the customer thereby securing repeat, as well as inviting new business.

According to Edginton, *et al.* (2004:21) most people view the delivery of leisure experiences as a service. They state further that "...service industries, including leisure services, have grown dramatically during the past several decades." Further to this Davies, Baron, Gear and Read, (1999:33) noted that services are today the dominant form of economic activity. According to Smit and Cronje (2000:23) economic principles require any organization to satisfy the needs of society by implementing scarce resources. Organizations that understand their clients' needs are therefore more likely to succeed in achieving the organization's goals and objectives in this regard. Leisure organizations, as part of the service industry are no exception to this principle. Similar to any manufacturing organization, a leisure organization must deliver and sustain its services in a profitable manner.

This gives credibility to Murray and Howat's (2002:26) opinion that a clearer understanding of how to meet customers' satisfaction in a sports and/or leisure context will help managers to better predict the return or repatronage of customers. The quality of the event as hosted by the service organization should be of competitive standard and the more specific the delivery, the more satisfied the consumer would be. This management process is the same process any business would apply in order to develop the competitive edge in the marketplace.

Torkildson (2003:403) believed that service delivery is the single most important function of a leisure service and recreation organization. Depending on the nature of the service organization, the service or event can consist of an ongoing activity or a once-off activity. Rossman as cited in Edginton *et al.* (2004:32) supported this point by stating that "a program is a designed opportunity for a leisure experience to occur." One can then accept that everything a service organization is concerned with such as, facilities, supplies, personnel, budgets, marketing, public relations, activities, timetabling and administration is collectively aimed at ensuring that opportunities exist for people to enjoy or experience leisure in ways that are satisfying to them. In addition to service quality, the leisure organization should ensure that the service or event such as the PUFFER is affordable for participation by the target market.

According to Thwaites as cited in Tseane (2006:25) the general discretionary income, which people use to buy products and services, has increased over the last decade. The growth in the economy potentially provides leisure seekers with more leisure opportunities given the additional money they have to their disposal. The impact of economic growth and the resultant increase in the discretionary income of the population therefore provides the customer with a wider choice of options from which to satisfy his / her leisure needs and expectations. Kraus and Curtis (2000:21) agreed with this statement indicating that in the twentieth century there was an emergence of a growing class of wealthy persons in the United States of America that moved into city centres needing recreation facilities to satisfy their leisure needs. A similar trend was evident in South Africa at the time of collecting data for this study. Evidence of the economic growth is provided by Roux (2005:37) indicating that the total production of goods and services in South Africa, measured in real terms, increased from R102 043 million in 1946

to R676 384 million in 2003. According to Roux (2005:37) this translates into an average growth rate of 3.4% per year over a period of 57 years. Subsequently not only are there more potential customers for any one leisure organization but these customers are also more economically enabled to demand a certain level of customer satisfaction. As improved income and availability of free time allows for a larger leisure service market, the consumer tends to support the leisure organization which provides the highest level of satisfaction. Since this study was conducted the cost of living in South African has increased due to rising interest rates and increased fuel and food prices. This has placed even more emphasis on the level of service delivered by leisure organizations as customers are more aware of spending their money with organizations where they expect to receive the best level of service. This understanding will therefore enable a leisure service organization such as the organizers of the PUFFER to apply available resources to secure customer satisfaction which in this case are the participants of the PUFFER.

1.3 Background to the study

The PUFFER is an endurance trail run which is held in the Western Cape, South Africa. This is an annual sporting event taking place towards the end of August. The PUFFER is a one day race and participants have 12 hours in which to officially finish the race (refer to Appendix A for the rules and regulations of the PUFFER). The nature of endurance trail running is to follow a route that is not marked between start and finish. The route of the PUFFER takes participants off-road from Cape Point Nature Reserve over Table Mountain Nature Reserve, ending at the Victoria and Alfred Waterfront (hereafter referred to as the V&A Waterfront), a

distance of approximately 80 kilometers (refer to Appendix B for a route description of the PUFFER.)

All participants must be over the age of 18 years. Runners can compete in different categories based on gender and age groups. The race is voluntary with participants assuming responsibility for their own actions and survival as signed and agreed to in the rules and regulations pertaining to the event (refer to Appendix A for the rules and regulations of the PUFFER). Due to the remote nature of the race, participants carry their own survival equipment and food. The organizers provide facilities, refreshments and medical support at the start and finish of the race and along the route wherever suitable terrain permits.

Edginton *et al.* (2004:224) categorized a sport as an activity that demands a combination of physical skill, endurance, alertness, purpose and enthusiasm. Athletes taking part in this event need to exhibit all these attributes in order to successfully participate in the PUFFER. As an endurance sport event, the PUFFER can be classified as a leisure activity under the leisure program area of sport as classified by Edginton *et al.* (2005:225). Similarly Torkildson (2003:223) defined sport as all forms of physical activity which, through casual or organized participation, aim at expressing or improving physical fitness and well being, forming social relationships or obtaining results in competition at all levels. Therefore according to the aforementioned definitions one can conclude that the PUFFER can be classified as an endurance sport event. Participants enter the event to fulfill different types of expectations they wish to satisfy, through the leisure service provider. These expectations can range from pleasure, pure recreation to high competition.

From the researcher's personal experience as a participant in the PUFFER, reasons for participating in the event could include the following:

- Increasing fitness by participating in the event
- Contributing to a healthy lifestyle through preparing for and participating in the event
- Experiencing the satisfaction of completing the event and overcoming the challenge the event provides
- Experiencing the event with and socializing with likeminded people who most often are personal friends

The success of the PUFFER is therefore dependent on satisfying the entrant's various reasons for entering the event. The results of this study could provide the organizers with valuable information for improving their service quality of the PUFFER and thereby assist in expanding the event as well as developing an interest in trail running as a sport. Therefore the significance for this study can extend beyond the PUFFER to other trail events.

1.4 Statement of the problem

It would appear that considerable research has been done on service quality in the leisure service industry in general as indicated by Tian-Cole, Crompton and Willson (2002:1) Murray and Howat (2002:26). While acknowledging this, they also highlight the fact that limited research has been done with a focus on sporting events as leisure experiences as in the case of the PUFFER. It is this scarcity of research which was a motivating factor for conducting this study on service quality of the PUFFER.

The studies of Murray and Howard (2002) and Tian-Cole *et al.* (2002) focus on the tangible aspect of service quality such as facilities, products, equipment and communication materials. Whereas Tseane (2006:40) who researched service quality at the South African Berg River Canoe Marathon, showed that there is also a need to assess the intangible aspects of a leisure service. Burns, Greafe and Absher (2003:365) highlighted the difficulty leisure organizations face when assessing service quality delivery due to the fact that leisure is a unique and highly intangible activity which relies on the provision of quality services from recreation providers. The difficulty lies in the fact that the leisure program or activity is in fact intangible and the quality of the program is based on the perceptions of the person participating in the activity. It is therefore necessary for the organizers of the PUFFER, in aiming to deliver a high quality service, to be mindful of the uniqueness of the PUFFER as an event run over a distance of 80 kilometers. Therefore any conventional way of delivering quality service, such as in banks and restaurants, will not be sufficient to ensure customer satisfaction in an endurance sports event like the PUFFER. Burns *et al.* (2002:377) supported the view by indicating that excellent services, superior facilities and effective information alone are not enough to satisfy leisure consumers. This is particularly true of the PUFFER because its uniqueness lies in the fact that it is run over 80km of mountainous terrain and therefore relies less on tangible aspects of service delivery such as facilities and communication materials. Consequently, in this event, the assessment of intangible aspects such as empathy, responsiveness, assurance and reliability play a vital role as measures of participants' satisfaction.

Further to this Kraus and Curtis (2000:187) stated that quality should be an attribute of everything involved in delivering the service and that leisure organizations cannot rely on the

diversity of their program alone. In this regard Torkildson (2003:402) created a link between participants' satisfaction, their leisure needs, related expectations of a leisure service and the goals of the organization delivering the service. What Torkildson (2003) could possibly be implying is that if participants' expectations of the service are not met, this could possibly be attributed to poor service quality. In other words, client satisfaction and meeting customer expectations play a role in ensuring quality service delivery.

This study assessed selected tangible aspects, and the perceived level of satisfaction of physical facilities, start and finish venue, marketing material and shelter. It also assessed the intangible aspects, such as reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy, as determined by Tseane (2006:4) in the study of the Berg River Canoe Marathon.

The focus of this study was therefore on the perception of those who participated in the PUFFER endurance event of the quality of service delivery. To this end, certain tangibles and intangible aspects of service quality were assessed as included by Tseane's (2006) questionnaire, but adapted for this study (for more detail on the adaptations made, refer to Chapter Three). Perceptions were based on the participants' experiences of the tangible and intangible aspects of the PUFFER. The level of satisfaction of these service attributes is also explored.

1.5 Research Question

The research question is: "To what extent do the participants in the PUFFER perceive the delivery of quality service by the organizers to be satisfactory?"

1.6 Aim of the study

The aim of the study was to assess the extent of satisfaction of quality of service delivery of the organizers of the PUFFER as perceived by the participants.

1.7 Specific objectives of the study

- To assess the participants' level of satisfaction with the quality of the service they received from the organizers.
- To explore ways in which the service delivery of a popular event such as the PUFFER can be improved.

1.8 Definition of keywords

Service: Kotler (1997:467) defined a service as any act or performance that one party can offer to another that is essentially intangible and does not result in the ownership of anything. The production of a service may or may not be tied to a physical product.

SERVQUAL: According to Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1985:41) the SERVQUAL is a 22- item scale developed to measure customer perceptions of service quality. It conceptualizes service quality as the gap between customer's perceptions and expectations and identifies five dimensions of service quality namely reliability, responsiveness, tangibles, assurance and empathy.

Service Quality: Palkar (1994:3) believed that service quality is the customer's judgement of an entity's overall excellence and superiority. Parasuraman, *et al.* (1985:2) further defined service quality as the measure of how well the service level delivered matches customer expectations.

Leisure: Leisure is traditionally the term for those activities one performs and takes part in when one is free of any obligation. Cordes and Ibrahim (2003:3) interpreted leisure as the permission to do as one pleases at one's own pace, to participate in an activity of one's choice and to abandon the activity at will.

Leisure programming: The leisure program is the equivalent of a product in industry. It is also the service the leisure organization develops to sell to the leisure client. Edginton *et al.* (2004:6) described leisure programs as the vehicles that professionals use to deliver benefits to customers.

Recreation: The White Paper on Sport and Recreation, South Africa. Department of Sport and Recreation (1998:2) defined recreation as a guided process of voluntary participation in any

activity which contributes to the improvement of general health, well-being and the skills of both the individual and society.

Participant: The participant would be the person taking part in the service being delivered. According to Henderson *et al.* (2001:19) participants are those individuals participating in the recreation experience regardless of whether the public, not for profit or private commercial sectors are addressed.

Consumer: Edginton *et al.* (2004:101) defined the consumer as an individual who uses services. In economic terms a consumer is the person who buys and consumes a service in order to satisfy a specific need.

The UWC Thesis Guide for the Post-Graduate Enrolment and Throughput Project (PET) has guided the technical aspects of this study while the Harvard method for bibliographical citation was used for referencing. All sources which have been directly quoted or referenced in this study are listed in the References. Additional sources which were consulted to gain a more comprehensive understanding regarding the issues related to service quality, but which have not been directly quoted, are listed in the Bibliography.

1.9 Overview of chapters

This chapter provided an introduction to the study, the motivation thereof and outlined the research aim and objective as well as the significance of the study. It highlighted the fact that

leisure service organizers should view their leisure program as the product which they sell, and that the same business principles which apply to the manufacturing industry, should be implemented for leisure organizations to remain economically sustainable. This chapter also highlighted that the quality of the service delivered by a leisure organization should be of high standard in order for the organization to outperform their competitors. In this chapter the PUFFER was described and it was indicated why the event is classified as a leisure event. It was also pointed out that service quality of leisure events should be measured even though such events are difficult to assess as the perceived level of service quality is dependent on the participants' expectations. An interpretation of key terms was given to provide the reader with an understanding of the issues related to this study.

Chapter Two, which follows, provides a literature review explaining that there was a shift in contemporary business practice from traditional business practices towards that of delivering services of high standard which should have a customer focus. The chapter further defines service and service quality and describes the importance of hosting leisure events with a view of delivering services of high quality. Chapter Two also provides an overview of service quality in different types of businesses within a global context. Finally the chapter introduces the SERVQUAL method of measuring service delivery and describes the relevance of measuring service quality using the SERVQUAL method.

Chapter Three describes the methodological considerations used in this study. It outlines the research approach followed by an explanation of the SERVQUAL conceptual model as the preferred method of data collection for this study as compared to other models. This chapter

also discusses the selection of participants for this study and how the SERVQUAL questionnaires were administered as well as the process of data analysis. Chapter Three further discusses the validity and reliability of the study and finally, ethical considerations are mentioned.

Chapter Four is a presentation of the results and findings of this research study in table form followed by a discussion of each table as it relates to the perception of the participants. It discusses the participants' perception of the quality of the five service dimensions namely; tangibles, responsiveness, reliability, assurance and empathy. The chapter further presents the usage ratings of the tangible aspects of the PUFFER, the length of stay at the event and problems experienced by the participants. Chapter Four concludes with the Five-Gap model and its' relevance in ascertaining gaps between actual and expected service delivery.

Chapter Five offers conclusions and recommendations with regards to the perception of the service quality delivered at the PUFFER. Based on the findings of this study it was found that the quality of services delivered at leisure events influence the participants' satisfaction and in this regard emphasizes that leisure organizations should pay special consideration to the quality of the service they deliver. Furthermore it suggests recommendations for future studies while providing recommendations to the organizers of the PUFFER on how to improve the services of the organization for future events.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter includes a literature review focusing on the role of service quality in establishing customer satisfaction of endurance events as an aspect of service delivery. The importance of service delivery and service quality is outlined. This chapter also provides an explanation of why it is important for the leisure service organization to focus on quality service. Topics covered in the literature review as they relate to service quality includes the following:

2.2 Shifts in service delivery towards service quality

2.3 Defining service and service quality

2.4 Importance of service quality in hosting leisure events

2.5 Service quality in a global context

2.6 Measurement of service quality using SERVQUAL

2.2 Shifts in service delivery towards service quality

According to Smit and Cronje (2000:47) World War 2 brought about significant changes in the business environment. They argued that to cope with changes in the external environment, management had to shift its emphasis from internal issues, shaped predominantly by bureaucrats, to external variables, such as the role of the customer in meeting organizational goals. The result of this external focus enabled the business environment to look at their

business as a system where the customer is as important as any other part of the organization in achieving organizational objectives. This means that leisure organizations should regard all their actions in a manner which will bring about customer satisfaction. Given that the business environment has changed over time, an organization wanting to improve the quality of their services should somehow be able to ascertain if the customer rated the service as acceptable quality. The fact that quality of service is a perceived opinion makes it difficult for the service organization to measure the level of consumer satisfaction and the experiences of the customer.

The quality of a service is a subjective and often individualistic evaluation of the quality and can be impacted upon by many other things not related to the service, such as a disappointment at work or experiencing bad service elsewhere. According to Davies, Baron, Gear and Read (1999:33-40) questions of quality are difficult for a number of reasons. In some areas it is possible to link observable characteristics and ideas of quality. Davies *et al.* (1999:33-40) further explained that the long-standing presence of hallmarks, the wide use of standards of purity for precious metals or beer such as Reinheitsgebot which dates from 1516 for the Bavarian Beer Purity laws, or the detailed regulation of trade in medieval markets, are all examples of this. In many early and current standards, the key criterion seems to be conformity to a measurable standard proving the necessity of improving quality in all types of industries.

Chelluderai and Chang (2000:14) stated: "Irrespective of whether quality initiatives are seen as innovators or a distillation of established models, service quality has become the staple current thought". This is supported by Reynoso and Moores (1995) and also Kelly and Turley as cited in Dhurup, Singh and Surujlal (2006:1) who claimed that the notion of quality, which has been

of interest to marketing academics and managers, has received considerable attention from service marketing researchers in the last 15 years.

The changes in business behaviour can be attributed to factors such as equipment development, globalization, the information technology boom and creative thinking. These changes and the effects thereof can be identified in both the service agency as well as the user of the service. According to Davies *et al.* (1999:33-40) in the area of mass manufacture and mass consumption, there has been an additional concern with the notion of "conformity to customer requirement". When individuals can be seen to have a range of available choices, there is a need for providers to endeavor to deliver a product that meets the needs, wants and desires of customers. This is the basis of the definition of quality offered by Blythe (2006:375) who defined a quality product "a product that exceeds customer expectation."

Historically organizations focused mainly on revenues and operating costs with minimal attention given to generating customer satisfaction and quality service. However, Thwaites (1999:375) mentioned "...in order to ensure returning customers, contemporary organizations should focus on all aspects of the business, placing an emphasis on customer satisfaction." This approach amplifies mostly the intangible aspect of service delivery such as friendly staff at registration or the way that complaints are handled. Customers these days are generally more educated and informed as to what they want and expect from an organization or event.

While considering the shifts in delivering and expecting quality service, Asher (1996:23) as cited in Tseane (2006:5) mentioned that underlying these changes and reasons for quality

service management approach are several key challenges to both the service organization and the user of the service:

1. **Customers** have realized their power and have taken charge ensuring they achieve the satisfaction they expect from their purchase. In the private sector, customers have demanded mass-market products that are at the same time customized for them and have demanded to be treated as individuals. In community-based tourism, tourists are given the opportunity to interact with the host community and to feel at home through traditional welcoming. Changes in the South African business environment according to Smit and Cronje (2000:47) provide the customer with a wider variety of products to choose from. This is especially evident in the growth of local leisure events such as the Cape Epic, Spec Saver Iron man and Cape Argus Pick 'n Pay Cycle Tour (Experience Sport and Recreation in Beautiful South Africa: 2007).

2. **Competition** has intensified. Competitors have taken advantage of changes in technology to attract niche markets and improve their quality of service.

3. **Technology** was developed and introduced. Changes in information technology (IT), in particular, have made the interchange of data easier and faster.

4. **Change** has become the only constant. The nature of change has itself changed. The lifecycle of tourism and leisure products and services has been reduced dramatically and organizations need to move faster to keep up.

If the above mentioned challenges were to be overcome by leisure organizations it is important for such organizations, as indicated by Hoffman and Bateson (2001:18) to implement a management model which focuses all the components of the organization to facilitate the firm's service delivery system. A comparative approach as part of the management model can easily be adopted where services of different leisure organizations are compared in order to improve the services of a particular organization, Edginton *et al.* (2004:148).

Any business and management approach adopted by a leisure service organization should take cognizance of what defines a service, and more importantly service quality, in the context of their specific business environment. It is therefore important for the organizers of the PUFFER to understand, foresee and incorporate any trends and shifts in general business conducts in order to ensure quality events in future.

2.3 Service and service quality defined

According to Zeithaml as cited in Imrie, Cadagon and Mcnaught (2002:10) service quality is an important antecedent of consumer assessments of value. Service and quality of service mean different things to different people, although they are both important in ensuring a satisfied customer. An individual's definition of service and the quality thereof will differ from time to

time as well as from application to application e.g. paying for an airline ticket or having repairs done to your home.

On the subject of comparing leisure service delivery and quality of service in the leisure context, Wagner (1966:12) noted that, "quality is a human concept based on highly subjective criteria… and it seems a highly personal matter." Dhurup *et al.* (2006:40) argued that "service is a focus for many corporate and marketing strategies and high levels of services rendered are seen as a means for an organization to achieve competitive advantage and differentiation." They add that health organizations, as leisure organizations, wanting to achieve competitiveness and differentiation, require management of health and fitness centers to understand consumer needs and promote services in an efficient and coordinated way that satisfies these needs.

In an attempt to define a service, Kotler and Armstrong (2004:276) stated: "Services are a form of product that consists of activities, benefits or satisfactions offered for sale that are essentially intangible and do not result in ownership of anything." As in the case of the PUFFER the participants pay to take part in the race and are therefore requesting a service from the organizers. The delivery of the service will therefore determine the satisfaction of the "purchase" as mentioned by Kotler (1997:289). It is clear that any service will consist of different aspects ranging from tangible and intangible contributions that will add to the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of the customer for the purchase. Hoffman and Bateson (2001:4) claimed that the distinction between goods and services is not always clear. Subsequently Hoffman and Bateson (2001:4) argued that: "In reality many services contain at least some

touchable elements thus adding to the tangible aspect of a service." Services are therefore comprised of both tangible and intangible aspects.

In defining service quality Robinson (1999:23) wrote: "It is generally agreed that service quality is an attitude or global judgment about the superiority of a service." In the case of the PUFFER the attitude of the organization, when organizing the event, will determine the attitude of participants to their experiences of the event. Not withstanding the above viewpoint, Teas as cited in Robinson (1999:23) argues that service quality is not just an overall attitude, but that it is also transaction specific. The result of this argument is that the participants in the PUFFER expect something of value in return from the organizers. Therefore, the better the quality of the service, the more value the runners will receive from participating in the event thereby increasing the perception of quality of service.

Considering these definitions one can ask why the understanding and specific measurement of service and service quality is so difficult. According to Kasper, Helsdingen and de Vries (1999:8) the answer lies in the intangibility of services. They claim that the "demarcation line between tangibility and intangibility will not always be easy to draw" because sometimes a particular intangible service activity e.g. teaching can also be part of a tangible product such as teaching employees to operate a specific piece of office equipment. Further to this is the view by Hoffman and Bateson (2001:6) that the understanding of services is further obscured by organizations and companies doing business on both sides of the fence such as hotels, restaurants, banks and tourism centres. The authors all agree that the inclusion of both tangible and intangible factors and the delivery thereof with regards to the service, will result in a

service of high quality. In the following section service and service quality will be discussed with specific reference to the leisure service industry and the hosting of quality leisure events.

2.4 The importance of service quality in hosting leisure events

The success of any leisure organization depends on how the event offered by the organization can ensure value for money to the participant or client paying for the event. This will ensure repeat business for the organization. The measure of success is most often a subjective opinion on the side of the person buying the service. The participant pays for an expected experience and depending on the value attached to the monetary amount; the participant will decide whether or not the experience was worth it.

The importance of quality services lies in the value it can add to the leisure organization. According to Tian-Cole, Crompton and Willson (2002:1) the primary goal of recreation agencies is to provide opportunities from which users may derive satisfaction. Tian-Cole *et al.* (2002:3) further indicated that this goal of the leisure agency stems from a belief that users who are highly satisfied with their leisure experience are likely to be repeat-visitors to the leisure agency, to disseminate positive word of mouth communications to others and to be supporters of the leisure agency. Similarly Williams (2000:2) acknowledged the importance of viewing service quality in the leisure industry from an economic perspective. Williams (2000:4) further indicated that improved quality leads to increased demand for services, which should have a positive net effect on the service provider's income. Murray and Howat (2002: 26) supported this statement declaring that satisfaction is a consequence of service quality. Over time, the

result of excellent service delivery by the organizers of the PUFFER, should therefore be measurable in monetary terms. The aim of leisure program delivery, in this case the PUFFER, should therefore be to retain old customers, in this case runners, as well as generate new customers. As indicated by Kouthouris and Alexandris (2005:103), increasing customer retention rates is an important task for service organizations, because it is usually associated with financial benefits for the organization. This supports Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman's (1985:3) claim that "service quality is one of the many components that affect the profits of an organization." An unhappy customer will not only be unlikely to return, but will more readily communicate the bad experience to other people. A customer that believes the organization can deliver on the promise of service quality would therefore be likely to be a repeat-customer. According to Blythe (2006:382) it is therefore critically important for an organization to deliver on its promises to the customer. He mentioned further that the starting block for building trust is to keep promises made to the customer. In support of the claim by Zeithaml *et al.* (1988) that service quality affects the profits of an organization, Kouthouris and Alexandris (2005:102) mentioned that "it is widely accepted today that service quality has a direct effect on consumer satisfaction and that a customer with positive perceptions about service quality is likely to report high levels of satisfaction". It is therefore clear that poor service will have a negative impact on the future of the business with a possible decrease in customer numbers.

Edginton *et al.* (2004:388) believed that connecting with the customer to provide fulfilling, rewarding leisure experiences is the primary purpose of any leisure service organization. Satisfied customers are central to the well being of an organization.

In delivering services, leisure service programmers must be responsive, courteous and concerned about their customer's welfare.

Service quality refers to all situations or areas where there is a relationship between the consumers, or in the case of the PUFFER, the participants receiving a service and the person or organization delivering that service. "Service quality refers to customer's appraisal of the services, the entire service organization" (Duffy and Ketcland as cited in Edginton *et al.* 2004:388).

The leisure service organization needs to be able to measure and motivate their service in order to gain the competitive edge in a constant changing environment. The dilemma that the leisure service organization faces is that they do not always have control over the environment and all aspects of the environment where the service should be delivered. This makes it even more difficult for them to ensure a service of high quality. Kraus and Curtis (2000:186) elaborated by saying: "...at every level of service today, recreation managers must aim at providing facilities and activities that are up to date, attractively maintained and directed, efficiently supervised and highly responsive to participant reactions and suggestions."

The leisure service organization should therefore ensure that it provides quality in the aspects they do have control over which forms part of the organization and not only rely on the program to run itself and assume that the customer will be satisfied. Kraus and Curtis (2000:186) supported this statement by arguing that the program diversity is not enough to ensure customer satisfaction.

Wakefield and Blodgett (1996:53) found that while the attractiveness and cleanliness of the physical environment at sport venues is less important, the appearance of the physical facilities does nonetheless influence the duration of stay at the event. This will impact on the retention rate of the event as indicated by Kouthouris and Alexandris (2005:103). In this regard Wakefield and Blodgett (1996:45) are of the view that event organizers have control over service attributes such as aesthetics, layout, seating and cleanliness, while the temperature, air, noise and music may not, depending on the specific environment, be easily controllable. They stated that elements, such as seating comfort, could be more important in the perception of quality service than temperature, air, noise and music. Therefore, sport organizers should consider the improvement of seating even at the cost of ground capacity if this means more regular attendance. Wakefield and Blodgett (1996:55) further asserted that attention should be given to the physical environment in which the service is to be consumed because many event organizers regard the physical environment where the event will take place as part of what they sell rather than see them as part of the business's marketing effort. This is especially true for endurance events such as the PUFFER where participants would require comfortable seating after completion of the race.

While emphasizing the contribution of all aspects of the leisure organization and its role in ensuring quality service, Wuest as cited in Edginton *et al.* (2004:388) mentioned three time dimensions participants in a leisure event will make use of:

1. Services experienced before entering a leisure organization;
2. Services encountered during the leisure experience;
3. Services encountered after departing a leisure organization.

In terms of the effective use of available time when designing and delivering leisure services, Mull, Bayless, Ross, and Jamieson (1997:8) agreed that the primary purpose for the professional in the leisure industry is to provide the highest quality event within the setting where he or she works and within the available time of the participant. It can therefore be concluded that the effective use of time by the organizers of a leisure event will contribute to the perception of quality service. Once again, this re-iterates that service quality must be considered in the design of sustainable leisure programs, especially since service quality, as will be discussed in the following section, is a global concept.

2.5 Service quality in a global context

It is important for any sport and leisure event programmer to understand service quality as it is seen and understood in other countries. The understanding of services and service quality from other countries will not only provide leisure event organizers with information against which to measure the success of their own event, but will also highlight any new global trends in leisure event management. It is vitally important that the organizer of any event realizes that business is accomplished on a global scale and for the organizer of any event to attract international participants they should adhere to global expectations of service quality. Most authors have identified a link between service quality, productivity and satisfied customers and the relevance thereof in different countries. Zeithaml *et al.* (1988) further indicated that value assessments in turn have been found to influence consumer satisfaction and motivate behavioural intentions. Resulting behaviour will depend on and be influenced by the particular culture the consumer

finds himself or herself in. In this regard Imrie *et al.* (2002:11) stated: "a more complete understanding of the processes with which consumers in different (cultural) markets evaluate service quality clearly has tangible benefits for marketing practitioners."

While looking at the global issue of service quality, McMahon-Beattie and Yoeman (2004:108) mentioned that high productivity is generally regarded as an advantage by nations, companies and employees that can lead to an increase in national tax income, company profits and employee wages. They reported that according to the Best Practice Forum of 2002, countries such as United States of America, France and Germany are generally seen as countries of high productivity while these countries demonstrate significantly high levels of customer satisfaction. Tonks (2006:1) claimed that the manufacturing productivity is 55% higher in the United States than in the United Kingdom, with France and Germany also higher than the United Kingdom by 32% and 29% respectively. Inzerillo (2002:3) confirmed the high productivity in the United States by claiming that in 2000 with a Gross Domestic Product growth at 4.1% hourly productivity in the United States rose 2.4% whereas the European Union hourly productivity grew by 2%. According to General Industries Sector Industrial Report written by Tonks (2006:1) most of the productivity gaps between these countries are due to global competition, technological change and shifts in the demographic mix of the workforce which means that every effort should be made to improve and retain skills within the manufacturing work force.

This is also true in the South African manufacturing industry. In this regard Roux (2005:60) mentioned that an increase in productivity is the only way to guarantee a growth cycle in the

local market. Roux (2005:24) does however warn against the constant loss of skills to other countries and mentioned unemployment as the biggest challenge in the growing South African economy. Interestingly Roux (2005:25) claimed that in future the responsibility for creating employment will fall more on the shoulders of the small business enterprises rather than big corporations. This is an important consideration especially for leisure event organizers. According to Edginton *et al.* (2004:37) leisure service organizers also apply a level of manufacturing in delivering their service to the customer. Edginton *et al.* (2004:37) however warned against the loss of productivity of the leisure service due to the labour intensity of delivering the service.

McMahon-Beattie and Yeoman (2004:114) reported that understanding the link between productivity and service quality and the need to perform at the same level than the mentioned countries, the British Hospitality Association (the principle trade association for the tourism, hospitality and leisure sector) took the initiative in creating the Best Practice Forum. This is a strategic alliance in which six leading trade associations, including business in sport and leisure, are represented. While understanding the influence and importance of quality service delivery, The Pan African Conference of Ministers of Civil Service (2001) through the Charter for the Public Service in Africa adopted a framework of service delivery that stated: "the Charter defines a framework to guide public services in Africa in taking such legislative, regulatory, technical and practical measures as may be required to create favourable conditions for the proper functioning of the public service and improve the quality of its services."

According to Solis, Rao, Raghu-Nathan, Chen and Pan (1998:46), while realizing the economic growth in both the manufacturing and service industries in Europe the Taiwanese government adopted a series of measures to liberalize the domestic finance and insurance sectors. They also indicated the link between service quality in both the manufacturing and the service industry. Further to this, Solis *et al.* (1998:46) stated: "to respond effectively to the challenge of foreign service competition, service companies in Taiwan need to rapidly develop new levels of service quality capabilities in order to deliver higher value-added services to satisfy their customers better." With this in mind the leisure service organization, such as the PUFFER, should therefore learn from organizations in other business sectors and industries if they wish to be sustainable in future business developments and generating new business opportunities through their programs. Leisure service organizations should not only rely on the novelty of their programs and services but on sound business principles and improved delivery of quality services.

It is clear that a successful leisure event organization should understand and organize their event in the global context of event organizing by implementing the international trends and demands of the participant. Many methods of measuring service quality of services exist but this study focused on the use of the SERVQUAL questionnaire as an appropriate tool for measuring quality of services as discussed in the following section.

2.6 Measurement of service quality using SERVQUAL

Referring to the necessity of service quality in all sectors of business, Booth (2003:4) wrote: "The use of standard instruments such as SERVQUAL within the health sector and across sectors is establishing an increasing evidence base."

Tseane (2006:3) stated: "several studies on service quality have been conducted using different models such as the Service Quality Model for Professional Sport Events by Tsan and Maguire (1998:41) and the Generic Service Quality Instrument." However the SERVQUAL questionnaire which was developed by Parasuraman *et al.* (1985) has proven to be a popular research tool and has been applied directly or in modified form to a variety of leisure based sectors such as tourism, hotels and health clubs as well as various sporting events according to Thwaites as cited in Tseane (2006:2).

In order to ensure quality service delivery to generate satisfied returning customers in the leisure industry Kouthouris and Alexandris (2005:102) applied the SERVQUAL model to study the effect of service quality on the local sport and outdoor recreation industry programs in Greece. They identified people participating in the mentioned activities as active tourists with the intention of participating in activities such as outdoor activities, water related activities and various sport activities.

Grove and Fisk as cited in Rose, Johnson, Tsiros and Lancioni (1995:5) argue that, owing to the unique characteristics of services (intangibility, perish ability, heterogeneity and simultaneity), the use of observational methods in service marketing may be most appropriate. Emphasizing the systems approach to service delivery and measurement, they therefore

advocated that the general systems theory suggests that service process can be described in terms of inputs, throughputs (the service experience itself) as well as outcomes.

While developing a Framework for Determining and Prioritizing Critical Factors in delivering Quality Services, Shahin (2003:1) made use of the SERVQUAL measuring instrument in order to ascertain any actual or perceived gaps between customer expectations and perceptions of the services offered. He concluded that future research should seek to examine the use of SERVQUAL to close other service quality gaps.

While assessing the service quality in call centers Staples, Dalrymple and Bryar (2003:4) made use of the SERVQUAL questionnaire to assess the quality of call centers. The SERVQUAL model was conducive to assessing call centres because they comprise both tangible and intangible aspects of service delivery such as the reliability of the call centre operator and the equipment used when logging a call. According to Staples *et al.* (2003:1) the Call Center Association (1999) defines call centers as a physical or virtual operation within an organization in which a managed group of people spend most of their time doing business by telephone, usually working on a computer. Gilmore (2001) as cited by Staples *et al.* (2003:1) identifies a call centre as an automated environment where a service gets delivered. The above definition of call centers clearly identifies that call centers exist with both tangible and intangible factors influencing the quality of the service. According to Staples *et al.* (2003:1) the issues regarding the managing of service quality in call centers prompted their investigation into service quality in call centers as it relates to the expectations of the customer. SERVQUAL was initially used

to analyze the service encounter with a virtual organization and then how a call center's management had tried to deliver a quality "call" to the customer.

In measuring service quality of extranets Cody and Hope (1999:207) used SERVQUAL to develop an instrument of service quality measurement. Parasuraman *et al.* cited in Cody and Hope (1999:211) identified reliability, assurance, responsiveness, empathy and tangibles such as sufficient computer equipment as the service dimensions and based them on their study of developing an instrument to measure service quality of Extranets. According to Cody and Hope (1999:214) SERVQUAL was able to identify gaps in service delivery across five service quality dimensions relating to extranet business.

While searching for the impact of service quality and customer satisfaction the 1994 study conducted by Palkar (1994:8) looked at the service quality aspect of service delivery in the cellular delivery industry. By implementing SERVQUAL Palkar (1994:4) ascertained that "service quality, usage pattern and service support" were all contributing factors for service quality in the cellular service industry. He concluded that the quality attribute influences both customer satisfaction and payment equity in the cellular industry. Palkar (1994:1) in support of Parasuraman *et al.* (1985:3) characterized and distinguished service by intangibility, inseparability of production and consumption while mentioning the importance to look at both tangible and intangible factors of service quality.

In measuring quality in the Scottish Library services, Booth (2003:4) highlighted several benefits in an article in Interim, a publication of the Scottish Health Information Network (2003), to having a customer focused service using SERVQUAL as a measurement instrument.

These benefits include:

- being customer focused;
- heightened profile of the service;
- motivation and team building for library staff and, above all the;
- quest for ongoing improvement.

According to Booth (2003:4) this move from measuring what you can count to measuring what counts, parallels the evolution of clinical quality from audit to evidence based practice assisting in the quest for delivering quality services and in the case of the PUFFER a quality event made up of quality services.

If the organizers of the PUFFER implement lessons learnt by other industries such as the Scottish library service and the cellular industry of measuring the quality of their services they should be able to satisfy the needs and expectations of most participants which will ensure, not only more participants for future events but also help distinguish the PUFFER from other similar leisure events. This is in line with the conclusion of Tseane (2006:130) on the study of the Berg River canoe Marathon that there should be an increased level of service at events. She

also concluded that event organizers should ensure that all the service quality dimensions are considered in order to improve the level of service quality at sport events.

By learning from other types of industries and organizations on how to measure and improve service delivery, any leisure service organization will be able to adapt and implement such methods and lessons in delivering their own events. This approach will ensure the leisure service organization adapts their own leisure events according to what the customer wants to experience and not according to what the organizers assume they must deliver.

2.7 Summary of the chapter

This chapter highlighted the fact that the business environment has changed over the past few decades, especially since World War Two. Contemporary business is understood to have a customer focused approach where an emphasis is placed on the satisfaction of the customer with the product purchased and the quality of the service delivered. The chapter also indicated that there is a clear difference between businesses in the service industry and those in the manufacturing industry and they each have their own demands on the way they conduct their business. Furthermore an overview of services and quality services has been provided with special mention as to how it refers to the leisure service industry. The chapter further indicated that service quality is a global issue and that businesses globally are impacted on by the quality of their services and how it relates to the profits made by the organization. Finally the chapter discussed the importance of measuring the quality of the service delivered. Although many tools of measurement exist the use of the SERVQUAL questionnaire was promoted as a

preferred method for measuring service quality due to the ability of SERVQUAL to address both the tangible and intangible aspects of a service such as the PUFFER.

Chapter Three explains the study design and outlines the reason for adopting a quantitative approach for the study, with the collection of data by means of a questionnaire. The chapter further describes the SERVQUAL conceptual model as well as the Service Quality Assessment Scale (SQAS) and motivates the decision for using SERVQUAL as the method of data collection. Chapter Three details the population and sample group for the study, the applied method of data analysis and confirms the validity of the data collected both in terms of the questionnaire as well as the size of the sample group. Finally the chapter discusses the reliability of the study and mention is made of the relevant ethical considerations.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes a plan for the study. It gives a profile of the participants and outlines the method of data collection and analysis of the results of the questionnaire. In order to investigate the extent of quality of service delivery in an endurance event, a questionnaire was distributed at the Salomon Puffer endurance trail run which took place in August 2006. The PUFFER begins at Cape Point Nature Reserve and ends at the V&A Waterfront in Cape Town, covering a distance of 80kms over mountainous terrain. The purpose of this study was to assess the quality of service delivery of the organizers of the PUFFER. The PUFFER was originally organized by a single person by the name of Jean Paul van Belle. With the race growing in numbers, and a corresponding increase in the size of the logistics, the Fish Hoek Athletics club in Cape Town, with a committee focusing on the PUFFER, took over the responsibility of organizing the event.

3.2 Study design

This study adopted a quantitative approach and used a questionnaire to collect data. A quantitative approach was used because of its ability to generate and present data in a numerical format. As indicated by Mouton (2001:152) the aim of surveys, in this case a questionnaire is to provide an overview of a representative sample of a population. In this case all the runners in the PUFFER were asked to complete a questionnaire. Information will

normally be gathered in a numerical way. Mouton (2001:153) also stated: "surveys have the potential to generalize a ... population with a high measure of reliability and high validity if proper control has been implemented".

The intention of the study was not to test a hypothesis, but to assess the extent of participants' satisfaction with regards to the quality of service delivery of the organizers of the PUFFER. The following section will describe the method of data collection by comparing the SERVQUAL questionnaire with that of the Service Quality Assessment Scale (SQAS). The section further explains the use of SERVQUAL as the appropriate method for data collection for the purpose of this study.

3.3 Method of data collection

3.3.1 Service quality assessment models

Models for assessing quality of service have been used in businesses to determine the extent of customer satisfaction, for example, the Consumption System Approach of Mittal, Kumar and Tsiros (1999). This model was used to assess customer satisfaction in the motor industry in the United States of America. The leisure industry has adopted, and where necessary adapted such models to assess quality service delivery, as perceived by participants and spectators, in the fields of leisure and tourism. An example is the use of the SERVQUAL models of Parasuraman *et al.* (1985) in endurance events such as canoeing in South Africa (Tseane, 2006).

3.3.2 SERVQUAL conceptual model

According to Zeithaml and Parasuraman (1988) the SERVQUAL conceptual model is an empirically derived method that may be used by a service organization to improve service quality. Gratton and Jones (2004:97) cited SERVQUAL as a method of measuring service quality in the service industry. In addition, Kouthouris and Alexandris (2005:102) claimed that SERVQUAL is one of the most widely used service assessment models. Emphasizing the relevance of using SERVQUAL as a measurement tool for assessing service quality in leisure services Thwaites (1999:1) mentioned that the SERVQUAL questionnaire has been used in service quality measurement in a variety of leisure sectors including tourism, hotels and sport clubs.

The SERVQUAL allows the service organization to identify services to be assessed and it can be used effectively in the form of a survey or questionnaire. The five dimensions of SERVQUAL were particularly useful in assessing quality service delivery in the PUFFER event due to the differentiation between the different service dimensions and the allocation and focus of the service in terms of the tangible and intangible attributes of the service delivered by the organizers of the PUFFER. The relevance of the SERVQUAL lies particularly in its ability to take into account the perceptions of customers of the relative importance of service attributes of a delivered service, in this case the PUFFER and the customers' perception of the quality of the service.

The data for this study was collected using a questionnaire adapted from the questionnaire designed by Tseane (2006). A Likert type of scale was used in order to assess the perceptions of the participants. This method of scaling in a questionnaire is generally used to assess attitudes and perceptions. According to Gratton and Jones (2004:121) a Likert scale allows respondents to indicate the extent to which they agree with a certain comment e.g. the perception that the organizers of the PUFFER are able to provide a safe environment in which the participants compete.

The questionnaire was essentially divided into four sections with the first section focusing on the use and quality of specific aspects of the event such as information, parking security electronic displays and accessibility. A sliding scale of 1-4 was used with 1 being excellent; 2 – good; 3 – satisfactory and 4 – poor. The main focus of the questionnaire was on questions related to the five dimensions of service quality and how they were perceived to be of quality by the participants. As indicated above, the Likert scale was implemented consisting of a sliding scale between options one to five, with 1 being strongly agree; 2 – agree; 3 – neutral; 4 – disagree and 5 – strongly disagree. The last section of the questionnaire concentrated on questions related to the demographics of the participants.

The original five dimensions of the SERVQUAL model as indicated by Zeithaml *et al.* (1988:1) are namely: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. It is important to keep in mind that each event or service being measured will differ due to the context and environment relevant to that event. The SERVQUAL is therefore a perfect conceptual model to adapt to the nature of the event being assessed. Tseane (2006) made use of

the model to develop her own questionnaire ensuring its relevance to the Berg River Canoe Marathon. The nature of the Berg River Canoe Marathon and the PUFFER, both being endurance sport events makes the SERVQUAL a useful tool to assess the service quality of both events. Although both events exhibit the same characteristics as an endurance sport event, it is important to keep in mind that the difference between the events was that the Berg River Canoe Marathon is a water based event taking place on a river over a number of days while the PUFFER is a running event taking place over one day.

In both studies the SERVQUAL conceptual model compares the service quality delivered to the customer service quality needs, while looking at both the tangible and intangible factors influencing the delivery of service quality. It is important, however, to clarify that although both questionnaires are based on the dimensions of service quality, the study by Tseane (2006) assessed the perception of the service attributes of both the participants as well as the spectators of the event while the study on the PUFFER concentrated on the perception of only the participants and their expectations of the service attributes as delivered by the organizers (refer to Appendix C for the Information Sheet and Questionnaire.) The reason being that the PUFFER covers a distance of 80kms of mountainous terrain which makes it difficult for spectators to be as involved as one might find in the Comrades Marathon, Argus Cycle Tour, Two Oceans Marathon or Berg River Canoe Marathon.

In the SERVQUAL conceptual model service quality is addressed by making a comparison between customer expectations and their perceptions of service. The comparisons related to this study were in terms of how participants viewed the organizing of the PUFFER and how this related to their personal expectations and satisfaction.

It is therefore evident from the SERVQUAL model that expectations and perceptions of the user serve as standards with which subsequent experiences are compared resulting in evaluations of satisfaction or quality. Such evaluation of participant satisfaction provides a high level of reliability in the use of the questionnaire which is the foundation of the SERVQUAL conceptual model.

The SERVQUAL model enables the researcher to make the distinction between customer satisfaction and service quality assessment through the specification of three different levels of customer expectations: desired service, adequate service and predicted service, (Zeithaml *et al:* 1988).

The SERVQUAL model includes the following five dimensions of service delivery:

1. **Reliability** – ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately.
2. **Responsiveness** – willingness to help customers and provide prompt service.
3. **Tangibles** – appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel and communication materials.
4. **Assurance** – knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence.
5. **Empathy** – the organization provides care and individualized attention to its customers.

In addition, any questionnaire, such as the one designed for the PUFFER, using the SERVQUAL model will be divided into two main sections namely:

- Tangible factors which are things that one can touch such as physical facilities and equipment. These factors are easily identifiable and visible. Examples of

tangibles in the PUFFER would be the physical environment at the finish venue, first aid and emergency equipment and marketing material from the sponsor of the event, on route and at the finish.

- Intangible factors such as reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy are mostly subconscious and depend on the perception of the participants as to how well these factors were addressed by the organizers. In the case of the PUFFER, examples of intangibles would be the manner in which complaints were dealt with, the type of interaction of the staff members with participants and the ability of the organizers to provide a safe event and deliver on what they promised to deliver.

SERVQUAL is not necessarily an appropriate measuring instrument for all recreation and leisure organizations due to the difference in context and nature of different recreation and leisure events and services, for example health clubs versus community leisure centres. To this end, Lam, Zhang and Jensen (2005:79) developed the Service Quality Assessment Scale (hereafter referred to as the SQAS) to evaluate the service quality delivery of health-fitness clubs. The key components of SQAS will be outlined below in order to compare it to the SERVQUAL model and highlight the appropriateness for this study of using an adaptation of Tseane's (2006) questionnaire which was based on the SERVQUAL model, as discussed above.

3.3.3 Service Quality Assessment Scale (SQAS)

For the purpose of measuring service quality in the health-fitness industry Lam *et al.* (2005:79) developed the SQAS which is a measuring instrument consisting of 46 items, focusing on the following six dimensions: staff, program, locker room, physical facility, work-out facility and child care. The SQAS is a multi-dimensional service quality model of which the six dimensions (staff, program, locker room, physical facility, work-out facility and child care) can be grouped under three major constructs: personnel, program and facility. These three constructs are the key determinants in assessing the service quality in health-fitness clubs.

3.3.4 SERVQUAL versus SQAS: Assessment of quality in service delivery

In both the SERVQUAL and the SQAS measurement tools the extent to which the users of the service perceive the staff and the services they deliver, to be of quality, will influence the perception of quality of the organization. Therefore in both the SERVQUAL and the SQAS the need to evaluate the staff of the organization as a dimension of service quality is acknowledged. The SERVQUAL is a conceptual model which allows the researcher to design a questionnaire specifically tailored around the unique needs of an event. One of the key strengths of the SERVQUAL is its ability to assess the service delivered within the uniqueness of the specific context of any particular event. This could be what Lam *et al.* (2005:83) labeled "generic service quality". This was a contributing factor in choosing an existing questionnaire for the collection of date for this study.

As previously mentioned the SERVQUAL and the SQAS share similarities in that they both focus on facilities and staff. However, the SQAS assesses workout facilities of health and fitness centres, while the SERVQUAL is more suited to assessing the unique characteristics of recreation and leisure events which are not linked to specific facilities. The SQAS is specifically designed to assess fixed venues such as health and fitness centres and is therefore unsuitable for assessing the service quality of venues for outdoor endurance events. Here specifically, the SQAS model is designed to assess the specific features associated with health-fitness organizations such as childcare facilities, locker rooms and workout facilities. Unlike health and fitness centres, endurance events like the PUFFER, Comrades Marathon and Argus Cycle Tour, do not take place in one facility. In addition, the PUFFER can take up to 12 hours to complete and like the Foot of Africa Marathon, it begins and ends in different venues. The only structured facilities the organizers of the PUFFER need to deliver are the facilities around the start and finish venues. The dimension of the SQAS prevents it from assessing these, as they are not fixed facilities.

In this study the SERVQUAL was used to assess the finish venue and refreshment stations during the 80km PUFFER trial run. The demands of endurance type events require the organizers to provide suitable refreshment stations whereas the refreshment kiosks at health and fitness facilities are permanent fixtures within a facility. If the SQAS had been used to assess quality of service delivery in this study then the need for and usage of refreshment stations would not have been highlighted as a key issue as discussed in Chapter Four.

The SQAS would also not have been able to assess these facilities as the organizers of the PUFFER have limited access to and control over the restaurant which served as the venue for the finish of the race and the awarding of prizes. As will be seen from the results of this study, the availability of seating and lack of comfort thereof, were key issues for participants. Had the SERVQUAL conceptual model not been used, seating and therefore the choice of the finish venue may not have been noted as an important aspect relating to the quality of service delivery at the PUFFER.

Another important difference between the SERVQUAL and the SQAS lies with the focus of the latter on programs. This is suitable for health and fitness centres, but not endurance events such as the PUFFER which consists of a race run outdoors over a long period, ranging between 8-19 hours. The SQAS however focuses on an organized physical facility such as the Virgin Active fitness club. In endurance events like the PUFFER and the Argus Cycle Tour these dimensions of the SQAS are catered for in a different way to that required by clients in a health-fitness centre. The program of these type of events is the activity being participated in such as cycling and trail running making SERVQUAL a preferred method of assessment. The reason for this is that SERVQUAL measures the service dimensions around the activity such as refreshments, seating, venue and intangibles but not the actual activity, or in the case of the SQAS, the contents of the health and fitness program.

The provision of childcare facilities at health-fitness centres is one of the six service dimensions measured by the SQAS. This would be a key requirement for parents wanting to utilize the health and fitness facilities but cannot do so unless childcare facilities are provided.

Parents would want to be assured that the quality of the childcare facilities is satisfactory and it would therefore be a key measurable as to the service quality of a particular health and fitness centre. This is not an issue in the PUFFER because family members of the participants would be responsible for the care of their children as the finish venue differs from that of the start venue. Participants of endurance events would understand that the nature of the event does not allow for the provision of childcare facilities and would therefore not expect this as part of the service delivery by the PUFFER organizers. However, due to the fact that the PUFFER route is not on an official transport route but over mountainous terrain, participants would expect proper medical support at such an event. In addition to this, participants need to have the assurance that the organizers are well equipped to handle problems and more specifically, to handle emergencies. These service dimensions would not have been measured by the SQAS model due to its focus on fixed facilities.

The SERVQUAL model also allows for the assessment of diverse intangible dimensions which form a part of the PUFFER. The inflexibility of the SQAS in this regard makes it unsuitable for assessing quality of service delivery with regard to the way marshals and volunteers interact with participants and add value to events. The SERVQUAL assesses intangibles such as responsiveness, reliability, assurance and empathy. The SQAS only focuses on the staff of the health-fitness centre preventing it from assessing the intangibles of the PUFFER in the same manner as that of SERVQUAL.

3.4 Population and sample group

The sample for the study consisted of 33 (N = 33) participants out of a possible 108 participants in the event. Although 124 runners entered the event the questionnaires were only administered to the 108 runners who participated in the event on the day. According to Welman and Kruger (2001:64) an acceptable sample size should have no less than 15 units of analysis, however 25 or more units would be more appropriate. In addition to this, Welman and Kruger (2001:64) mentioned that the number of units in a sample is more important than the sample percentage of the total population as it is the absolute sample size that determines the standard error of the mean. Furthermore, Welman and Kruger (2001:64) maintained that the sample size not only depends on the size of the population but also on the anticipated variance across the population. As there are more than 25 respondents in this study the sample size is considered acceptable.

Questionnaires were distributed to all participants of the event at race registration. The population consisted of 78% male and 22% female participants of which the highest percentage of participants was in the age category of 31 – 40 years of age. The rules of the race state that participants must be 18 years and older on the day of the event. Although the majority of participants fell within the age group 31 – 40, a considerable number of participants fell within the older age groupings e.g. 27% fell in the 41-50 years age group and 18% in the 51-60% age group, including 9% retired participants. This could be an indication that age is not a preventative aspect even when it comes to participation in endurance events. All participants, except for full-time students and the retired participants are employed with 61% of participants in the R12,000 per month and higher income bracket which means they can afford the entry fee

of R175 for the PUFFER. It also implies the participants can support themselves with the necessary equipment and resources in preparing for an endurance event like the PUFFER which, based on the extreme nature and distance of the event, often starts as long as twelve months prior to the event.

All participants were South African citizens. Although efforts were made in the past to attract international participants this has not yet been successful. The race classification is skewed to 97% white participants and only 3% percent participants being of colour. Participants showed a high level of education with 96% of the participants having a tertiary qualification and 42% of those participants having a post graduate qualification. Only 3% of the participants indicated not having a formal, post school qualification. These could be students.

3.5 Data analysis

Data was analyzed using a commercially available statistical computer package called Statistica. Data was analyzed using this package to ensure that the conclusions of the study were not just the subjective opinions of the event organizers or the researcher. Gratton and Jones (2004:17) claimed that statistical analysis removes the need for more subjective or intuitive interpretation and generally the interpretation of the results is clear cut. Data was analyzed with the aim of identifying and defining the participants' perceived level of service quality of the PUFFER while answering the research problem and specific issues arising from analyzing the data. These included the role and impact of the different service attributes on the perception of quality of service.

3.6 Validity

Validity as described by Gratton and Jones (2004:87-89) is the ability of the measuring method to generate the correct data related to the topic being researched. They also explained validity as, "the extent to which what you are measuring actually reflects the phenomenon under investigation". The phenomenon under investigation in this study was the PUFFER, a very unique endurance trail run as explained in Chapter One, which required a measuring tool such as the SERVQUAL to enable the researcher to assess the unique issues of the event. In the case of this study the validity was ensured by the use of a well known measuring tool called the SERVQUAL conceptual model of service quality assessment as explained in section 3.3.2 of this Chapter. The validity of the study was enhanced by the use of a questionnaire that was developed from an existing one used in a previous study by Tseane (2006). Validity was further enhanced by the fact that the SERVQUAL model has been successfully used by other researchers such as Akan (1995), Burns *et al.* (2003), Kouthouris and Alexandris (2005), Staples *et al.* (2003), Murray and Howat (2005). The use of participants' first hand experience of the PUFFER and the fact that the study focused only on the 2006 event also enhanced the validity of the study.

3.7 Reliability

Reliability according to Gratton and Jones (2004:85) refers to the consistency of the results obtained. In agreement, Parkhouse (2005:290) mentioned that reliability is concerned with the consistency of what is being measured. The findings of this study are analyzed and discussed in

Chapter Four with reference to relevant literature, to highlight consistencies within the outcome of the study, and thereby ensure the reliability of the findings as related to the PUFFER. Reliability of the study was further guaranteed through the use of recognized research tools such as the SERVQUAL model of assessing service quality and the analysis of the data through the Statistica statistical package.

3.8 Ethical considerations

To ensure ethical acceptance of the study, ethical clearance was obtained from the University of the Western Cape Research Ethics Committee. Permission to conduct the study was also obtained from the Organizing committee of the PUFFER as well as the participants through the consent form. Refer to Appendices C and D for the information sheet and consent form respectively. Participants were made aware of the fact that they are participating in the study voluntarily and could withdraw should they wish to do so. Participants were all briefed on the aim of the study and what was expected of them. This was done at the race briefing before the race by the organizers and the researcher.

Information was handled in strict confidentiality and no name or identification was attached to any completed questionnaire. Participants were informed that they would be given access to documentation and transcriptions if requested. Participants were also informed that a copy of the final thesis would be given to the organizing committee.

3.9 Summary of the chapter

This chapter provided an overview of the methodology behind the research of the study. The study compared two different tools of measuring service quality of events being the SERVQUAL questionnaire and the Service Quality Assessment Scale. The SERVQUAL questionnaire was a more effective tool for assessing the quality of service of the PUFFER due to its relevance to the nature of the event and was therefore used for the purpose of this research. The ability of adapting the SERVQUAL questionnaire to a specific event was also highlighted as an advantage of using SERVQUAL in assessing the quality of service at leisure events.

In Chapter Four the data of the study will be presented in the form of tables and discussed within the following assessment categories: usage ratings of services at the event; tangible qualities of the services offered; and intangible qualities of the services offered. The length of participants' stay at the event is detailed in terms of actual versus intended length of stay, following which mention is made of the problems experienced by participants. The chapter concludes with a summary of the results and details the Five-Gap model as a method of interpreting the data derived from the use of a SERVQUAL questionnaire.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the data. The research question focused on the extent to which the participants of the PUFFER perceived the delivery of quality service by the organizers to be satisfactory. The data will be presented and discussed in the following categories:

1. Assessment of the usage ratings of services at the event, such as information, volunteers and entertainment.
2. Assessment of the tangible qualities of the services offered, such as seating, facilities and the venue.
3. Assessment of the intangible qualities of the services offered which were reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy.

As indicated in the methodology section this study was conducted using the same questionnaire used by Tseane (2006) in a study on the Berg River Canoe marathon in South Africa with the adaptation of not including the spectators at the event. Both the PUFFER and Berg River Canoe marathon in Tseane's (2006) study, can be defined as endurance leisure events as indicated by Edginton *et al.* (2004:224). However, to fit the specific profile of the PUFFER endurance run, questions related to spectators were excluded from the questionnaire in this study. As SERVQUAL is a conceptual model (Zeithaml *et al.* 1988:1) it allows the researcher the opportunity to include questions specifically related to the event being researched. The

basis of the questionnaire used in this study still makes use of the five dimensions of SERVQUAL.

The presentation and discussion that follows represents the participants' responses to questions asked in the questionnaire. These are presented in the form of tables and discussed as they relate to the perception of satisfaction of the participants. Except for Table 4.1 all tables reflect the rating given by participants in percentage for each variable used to investigate participants' perception of service quality of the PUFFER. Various aspects comprising each variable are also indicated in the tables. Ratings included Excellent, Good, Satisfactory and Poor. Percentage ratings for each aspect of the individual variable have been entered on individual bars in the tables to facilitate clarity of reading.

In Table 4.1 the usage ratings for specific services as offered at the PUFFER are reflected. The table reflects the various services plus the percentage ratings given by participants for each service.

Where applicable certain comparisons have been made between the results of this study and Tseane's (2006). Relevant findings as to the tangible aspects of both events were compared, such as the seating availability, access to the event, electronic displays and friendliness of staff. As previously noted this study did not assess aspects related to the spectators at the event as in the study by Tseane (2006) and therefore no comparison was made in this regard.

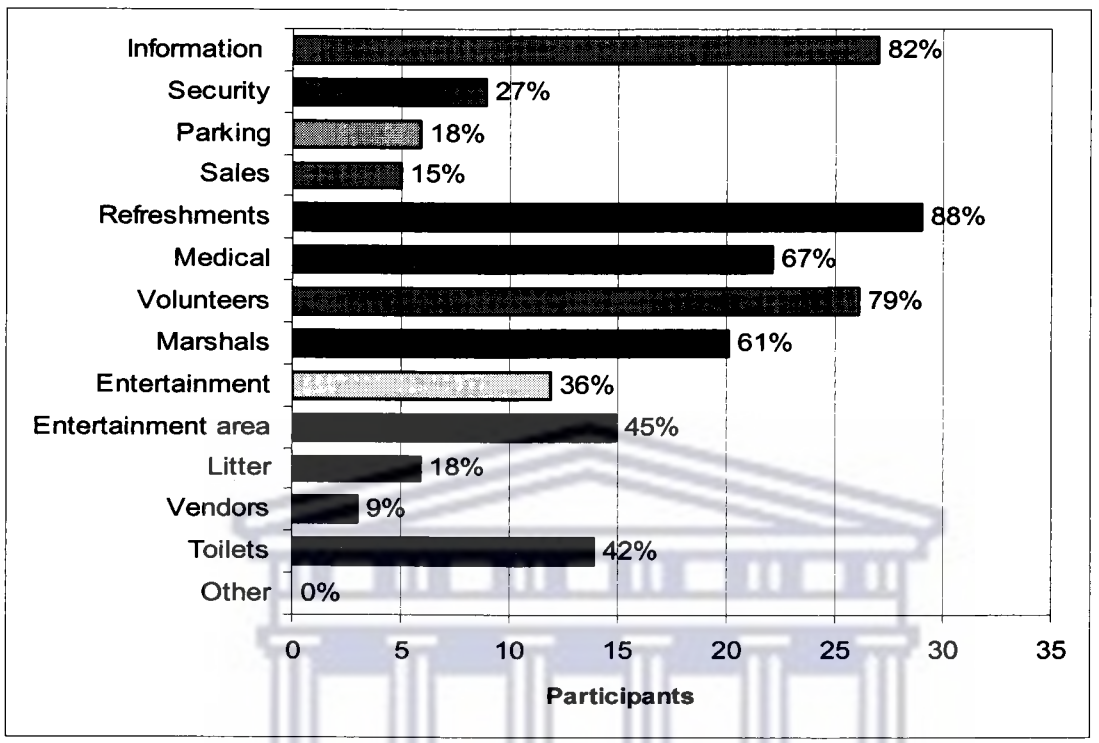
In the discussion of the responses, numerous references are made to the studies of Wakefield and Blodgett (1996) and Kouthouris and Alexandris (2005) because of the relevance of these studies to the specific nature of the PUFFER.

Table 4.1 indicates the responses towards usage of various services of the event while Table 4.2 shows a summary of the quality of the tangible attributes of the PUFFER. Table 4.3 to 4.6 indicate responses towards intangible attributes of the PUFFER while Table 4.7 shows a comparison between the tangible and intangible attributes of the services of the PUFFER. Tables 4.8 to 4.10 cover questions related to the length of stay and problems experienced at the event.

4.2 Assessment of the usage rating of the services at the event

In this section the participants' responses with regard to their use of the specific services available at the PUFFER are presented and discussed.

Table 4.1: Usage ratings



In Table 4.1 the usage of tangible elements of the event are indicated. These tangible elements should not be seen in isolation of the five SERVQUAL dimensions as they often play an enhancing role in the environment of the event. According to Tseane (2006:87) these services play a major role in the overall perception of service quality. Tseane (2006:87) further indicated that the services mentioned in Table 4.1 become the foundation of services offered at an event and therefore are the basis of the transaction between the organizers and the participants. Robinson (1999:21) indicated that the delivery of the service should be seen as a transaction between the organizers and the participants. It is often difficult to distinguish the difference between tangible and intangible factors of service delivery as they mean something different in each context.

As can be seen from the responses in Table 4.1 the following three sections received the highest usage percentage: Information (82%), Volunteers (79%) and Refreshments (88%). It can be argued that these services were important for the participants due to the extreme and remote nature of the event. As stated earlier this is an event run over 80 kms on remote outdoor terrain with specific dangers such as potential injuries due to the undulating terrain, encountering of dangerous animals, getting lost from running off the accessible track and extreme weather conditions. Participants have to have comprehensive information as they are mostly self sufficient during the event in terms of the route taken and at the few accessible points for spectators and race volunteers, participants are reliant on receiving refreshments to prevent dehydration. From the results in Table 4.1 it can be seen that volunteers scored higher than marshals. The volunteers might have scored higher due to the fact that they were offering their time and services for the event while the marshals were part of the organizers and official workers of the event. Volunteers are also often family or friends of the participants which means there is a stronger interest and emotional connection in the supporting of the participants. These aspects clearly added to the degree of satisfaction with the quality of service delivered by the organizers and therefore received a high rating.

On the other hand services such as entertainment (36%), vendors (9%), sales (15%), parking (18%) and toilets (42%) were not as important to the participants. The PUFFER is run in mountainous terrain and this in itself could be viewed as sufficient entertainment for the participants. From the researchers' own experience as a previous participant in the PUFFER this is in fact, one of the main reasons for participation. Other reasons include enjoying being in nature and also at times, due to the distance of the PUFFER, enjoyment of simply being

alone. Participants have to be self sufficient during the race. They are not reliant on access to shops and vendors and will have carried their eats and drink with them. However, the refreshment stations received a high rating and this could be due to the fact that volunteers were stationed at these points. Since the race is run over a long period, for the majority of the participants in the region of 10-12 hours, they would have enjoyed the support at the refreshment stations as well as the atmosphere the volunteers provided. This could leave them with a feeling of accomplishment and reassurance of being on the correct route. Similarly, services such as litter removal (18% usage) were not rated highly in terms of usage as people who enjoy nature, generally are aware and proactive about being responsible for their own litter removal. One of the requirements of Cape Nature Conservation for allowing the race to be run in the Cape Nature Reserve is that litter should be taken out by the participants. This point was also clearly stated by the organizers at the race briefing.

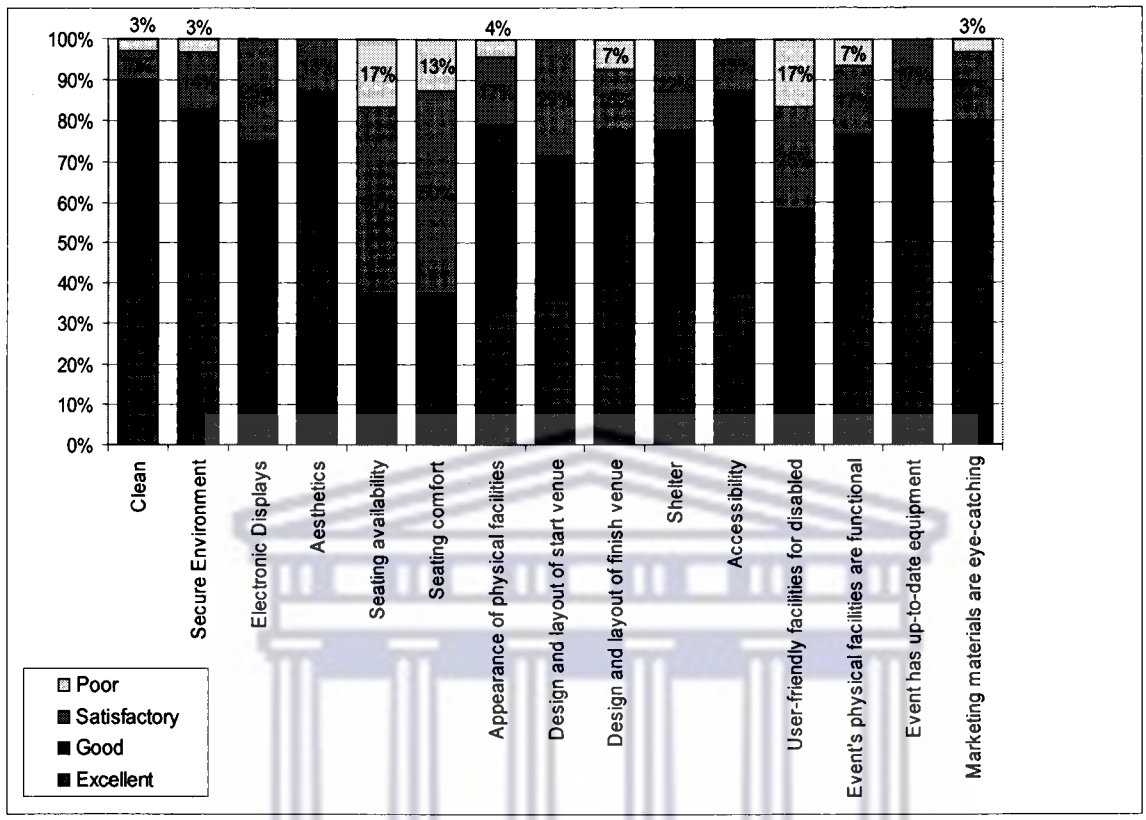
It is important for the leisure organization such as the organizers of the PUFFER to deliver the correct services in the event. As mentioned by Edginton *et al.* (2005:388) the service organization should connect with the customer to provide fulfilling and rewarding leisure experiences. In the case of the PUFFER, it is clear from the responses that the organizers have connected with the participants. A high usage rating has been given to the primary services provided. It can therefore be inferred that the organizers provided the appropriate services as were needed by the participants in order for them to feel satisfied about the event.

4.3 Tangible attributes of the PUFFER as one of the five SERVQUAL dimensions

Tangible attributes of any service are all those things one can see and touch. Zeithaml *et al.* (1988:1) classifies tangibles of a service as the appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel and communication materials. A business belonging to the service industry has to rely strongly on their tangible attributes to differentiate themselves from their competitors. As indicated by Akan (1995:43), customers attach great importance to tangibles related to the service.

In Table 4.2. the tangible attributes of the PUFFER are indicated as are the participants' responses to each of the tangibles. As indicated before, Table 4.2 is a combination of all the tangible attributes of the PUFFER comprising both the SERVQUAL dimension questions on tangibles and the quality of the tangibles of the event although they were in separate sections of the questionnaire. The results for each tangible is indicated in summary Table 4.2 as a percentage and scaled from being excellent, good, satisfactory or poor according to the Likert scale as indicated in Chapter Three. Within this summary table, the individual percentages for each variable for each of the Likert ratings are indicated within each of the relevant columns. Refer to Appendix E for a list of individual tables of tangible attributes of the PUFFER as shown in Table 4.2. The reason why the tangible attributes have been presented together in Table 4.2. is to provide a consolidated analysis of the partipants' ratings of all the tangible attributes. As previously mentioned, there are individual tables for each of the variables in Appendix E for the reader who wishes to compare the Likert scale ratings within one table per tangible as opposed to viewing all the tangibles in a single table.

Table 4.2 Summary of quality of tangible attributes of the PUFFER



Wakefield and Blodgett (1996:45) claimed that event organizers have control over service attributes such as aesthetics, layout, seating and cleanliness while the temperature, air, noise and music may not, depending on the specific environment, be easily controllable. Although the organizers of the PUFFER scored predominantly high in all of the tangible attributes it can be seen that they did not have control over all the tangibles, hence some of the tangibles namely, seating availability (17%), seating comfort (13%) and user friendliness of the facilities for the disabled (17%) received poor ratings. The reason for this could be due to the fact that the event was run over a long distance of 80km. This is similar to the findings of Tseane (2006:92) who found that the organizers of the Berg River Canoe Marathon did not have much

control over space and function, signage, symbols and artifacts due to the fact that the event took place across different viewpoints.

It can be seen from Table 4.2 that the majority of the tangible attributes of the event were perceived to be of very high quality with some receiving a rating above 50% as excellent namely, aesthetics (54%), design and layout of finish venue (52%), up to date equipment (52%) as well as eye catching marketing material (50%). Most of the tangible attributes; electronic displays (20% satisfactory, 55% good and 25% excellent), aesthetics (54% satisfactory, 33% good and 13% excellent), design and layout of start venue (36% satisfactory, 36% good and 29% excellent), shelter (33% satisfactory, 44% good and 22% excellent), accessibility (38% satisfactory, 50% good and 13% excellent) and equipment (52% satisfactory, 31% good and 17% excellent) received ratings of satisfactory, good and / or excellent.

The majority of participants responded as shown in Table 4.2 that the facilities were clean enough with 47% indicating they were excellent and 43% rating them as good, 7% as satisfactory and only 3% giving them a rating of poor. This might have little to do with the organizers due to the fact that the nature of the event and the environment in which it takes place, Table Mountain Nature Reserve, naturally provides for a clean environment.

In addition to this, the event does not have many stationary points therefore making it easier for the organizers to keep the refreshment stations clean and safe. Of all the participants 45% felt that the environment for the event was excellent in terms of being secure while 38% felt it was good and a combination of 17 % ranged in the region of satisfactory to poor as indicated in

Table 4.2. This provides for a higher percentage of participants feeling secure in the event environment than those feeling unsafe. As the PUFFER route is largely "off the beaten track" and it generally does not attract a field sufficiently large enough to draw outsiders or the criminal element which one may find at sporting events where there are expensive vehicles, sporting equipment and personal items of high value which people have to leave unattended in public areas.

Over such a long distance, in a remote setting, the organizers of the PUFFER have limited control over the environment and the safety of the runners and therefore rely on the participants to act responsibly in terms of their safety and looking after the environment. This is evident in the study by Kouthouris and Alexandris (2005:108) where they mentioned that the physical environment such as lakes, rivers, parks and mountains are complex issues and that the control of such environments are mostly out of the hands of the leisure organization. Along the route, the PUFFER runners would normally take personal responsibility for the environment and their safety and in doing so they will take a lot of the responsibility away from the organizers. Kouthouris and Alexandris (2005:108) go so far as to say that because of the uncontrollable nature of the outdoor environment as a tangible attribute it should not be measured under the same criteria in terms of the rest of the tangibles as it relates to SERVQUAL. Given the factors mentioned above, it may be reasonable to assume that the participants (3%) who gave cleanliness and security each a rating of poor in Table 4.2, were referring to the finish venue which was a public, accessible area in the city centre and therefore less controllable with non-participants making use of the same facility during the day.

It can be inferred from Table 4.2 that participants were more positive towards the electronic displays than those that were negative about it. Most of the participants rated the electronic displays as good (55%) while only 20% felt that the electronic displays were excellent and 25% of participants felt the electronic displays were satisfactory. As the nature of the event does not lend itself to the use of electronic displays along the route, the only electronic device used in the event was the electronic time keeping board at the start and finish venue which was sufficient for the requirements of the event. The same time keeping device was placed at the finish line where the runners could see their official finish time. Any other electronic equipment such as stopwatches and heart rate monitors were the personal property of the participants themselves, limiting the need for the organizers to provide electronic equipment. Unlike the environment the electronic displays and equipment are under the control of the organizers and they should therefore ensure the provision thereof as required by the participants. Tseane (2006:92) found that in her study 50% of the respondents thought that the electronic displays were excellent. If one takes into account the nature and similarities of the two events it can be assumed that the participants only need scoreboards at the start and finish venues of the event.

It can be seen from Table 4.2 that the rating for aesthetics received 54% for excellent with 33% feeling that the aesthetics were satisfactory and 13% of the participants rating the aesthetics was good. It is therefore clear that the organizers of the PUFFER were successful in creating the correct aesthetics as expected by the participants. Volunteers and marshals are mainly responsible for the appearance and "ambiance" created at the refreshment stations which can also influence how participants view the atmosphere and aesthetics of the event. It is therefore

important for the organizers to ensure the use of positive, loyal and enthusiastic marshals and volunteers as they play a crucial role in the perception of service quality of the event.

With the race taking place in a naturally beautiful and inspiring environment, the organizers do not need to offer entertainment. Participants generally feed off the excitement and tension of race day. This is supported by the low usage score given to entertainment (36%) and the need to be entertained as indicated in Table 4.1.

The next tangible rated was that of seating availability. As a tangible dimension of SERVQUAL seating would form part of the functionality and appearance of the physical facilities and should be seen in context of all aspects related to the physical facilities such as design and layout.

As indicated in Table 4.2 participants rated seating availability as follows: excellent (13%), good (25%), satisfactory (46%) and poor (17%) while seating comfort was rated as follows: excellent (13%), good (25%), satisfactory (50%) and poor (13%).

It can be seen in Table 4.2 the appearance of the physical facilities was rated as follows: excellent (33%), good (46%), satisfactory (17%) and poor (4%). Appearance of physical facilities and the quality thereof was seen as good rather than excellent. While rating the design and layout of the start venue 36% felt it was excellent; 36% felt it was good and 39% felt it was satisfactory. The design and layout of the finish area was rated as: excellent (52%), good (26%), satisfactory (15%) and poor (7%). This could definitely be identified as a growth

area for the organizers if they agree with Wakefield and Blodgett (1996:55) in Chapter Two that attention should be given to the physical environment in which the service is to be consumed.

The fact that seating availability and seating comfort was viewed as insufficient can be a contributing factor to the physical facilities receiving a lower rating. This indicates that all aspects of the physical facilities contribute to the overall impression of the facilities in terms of appearance and use and the few things that are not sufficient will impact the overall impression. The more the organization can deliver all aspects of the physical facilities with excellence the better the rating of the physical facilities will be. An excellent rating can in future be achieved by providing appropriate seating at the facility for participants and their supporters. In the case of the PUFFER the organizers should take cognizance of the participants, the supporters as well as the tourists not directly involved in the event when they prepare the facilities for future events. In doing so, the organizers will ensure there is sufficient seating and suitable facilities for non-participants which could also assist in increasing the visibility of the PUFFER event.

It would seem that physical facilities also play a role when participants are asked to rate the design and layout of the start and finish venues. Both the current study and the one by Tseane (2006:125-128) highlighted the importance of the physical facilities. This includes seating availability and seating comfort as being important in the overall perception of quality. This was also evident in Akan's (1995:41) study of the tourism industry in Istanbul. Akan found that issues concerning the interior and exterior appearance of the facilities, furniture, ease of access and products offered for use, played an important role in customer satisfaction regarding the

service. Wakefield and Blodgett (1996:45) also made similar claims regarding the importance of the facilities and the appearance thereof. In this study 7% of the participants felt that the finish venue was poor compared to the start venue which received no rating of poor by the participants. This is understandable considering that the event starts before sunrise and participants will be occupied with personal preparation and anticipation for the start of the event and participants will therefore have different requirements from the start venue compared to the finish venue. The finish venue is where participants would spend more time to rest, recover and reflect and therefore require a comfortable and well equipped facility.

Functionality of physical facilities of the event was rated in Table 4.2 as follows: excellent (43%); good (33%); satisfactory (17%) and poor (7%). The appearance and functionality of the facilities should be addressed by the organizers. In this regard Kouthouris and Alexandris (2005:108) indicated "physical facilities is one of the dimensions that is under the control of the management of the organization. Facilities can be improved and the same goes to equipment, appearance of staff and information material". As mentioned above, of all the quality factors, seating availability and seating comfort were two of the three tangibles receiving poor ratings. The event is 80km in length and participants are running between 12-14 hours with extreme physical exertion. It is therefore no surprise that seating would be a priority for participants when they arrive at the finish. This is not only for their own comfort and use, but also for family and friends waiting for them at the finish. It could also be important for them to know that their supporters are comfortable during the day allowing them to focus on the event alone.

In an outdoor endurance event shelter from the rain, sun or wind, is an important tangible for the organizers. However, in the case of the PUFFER this would be difficult as the race is run over mountainous terrain and over a distance of 80km. Notwithstanding the difficulty in providing shelter, as a tangible, shelter received the following rating as can be seen in Table 4.2: excellent (33%), good (44%) and satisfactory (22%). This is in agreement with the findings of Tseane (2006:92) indicating that shelter in the Berg River study received a rating of 50% excellent. The rating of shelter would be very subjective as the use and quality of a shelter on a good weather day would be lower than on a bad weather day. Participants do not expect shelter to be provided during the event as it is outdoors, however, at the refreshment stations one would expect a certain amount of effort to be made to provide a comfortable rest stop for the participants. This would involve shade in the case of hot weather and cover in the event of rain. Notwithstanding the above, it is however a prerequisite that participants carry their personal emergency equipment such as emergency blanket and rain gear at all times should a situation occur requiring them to keep themselves safe.

Accessibility in terms of transport or easy access does not seem to have been a problem with 88% of the respondents rating accessibility between excellent and good. Participants rated accessibility to the event as follows: excellent (38%); good (50%) and satisfactory (13%). None of the respondents felt that the accessibility of the event was poor. Due to the nature of the PUFFER event, accessibility should not affect the quality of the event as participants are aware of the fact that the event requires participants to select the quickest, safest route from an option of rugged trails across the mountain. One can accept therefore that the remoteness of the terrain, and the need to interpret a map (refer to Appendix A for the rules and regulations of the

PUFFER) along the route, could partly be the reason for participants entering. However, accessibility can become a problem should disabled people want to participate or be spectators of the race. The race would lend itself only to disabled participants with specific disabilities that can negotiate the terrain such as a blind person running with the assistance of a person with sight.

It follows therefore, given the distance of the event and the terrain to be covered, that the user friendliness of the event to disabled people was rated as follows: excellent (8%); good (50%); satisfactory (25%) and poor (17%). This is in line with Tseane's (2006) finding that user friendliness for disabled people at the Berg River was 50% excellent. However, the higher rating of excellence at the Berg River could be contributed to the fact that the Berg River study was rated at different access points whereas the PUFFER had no organized vantage points. Disabled people would have easy access to the start and finish venues at the PUFFER event but would, however, find it difficult to access other areas of the event, such as the refreshment stations which are situated at inaccessible points along the mountain.

In terms of growth of leisure events such as the PUFFER, and given the priority the Department of Sport and Recreation is placing on developing disabled sports participation, attention should be given to make the PUFFER more accessible to disabled people as is indicated in the White paper on South African Sport and Recreation, (South Africa, Department of Sport and Recreation, 1998:11). The race can possibly be run by a blind or visually impaired runner with the aid of a sighted runner as in the case of normal road running events. There is more and more evidence of disabled sportspeople competing in mainstream sports events such

as a mountaineer who recently ascended Mount Kilimanjaro with the aid of able climbers. An example close to home is also that of South African athlete Oscar Pistorious and Natalie du Toit constantly challenging able-bodied athletes and even training with and competing against them. This can become a growth area of development for the organizers of the PUFFER as indicated by the need for development of sporting facilities and opportunities for disabled people as indicated in the White Paper, South Africa. Department of Sport and Recreation (1998:11).

Tangibles also refer to the equipment used in the event as well as the image and functionality of the personnel. This would include identification clothing for the personnel. As indicated by Staples *et al.* (2003:5) equipment in the service industry assists and enables the service organization to handle the load of dealing with customers. In the case of the PUFFER proper equipment allows the organizers to deal with participants in an efficient manner especially during peak periods such as registration, the start venue and especially the finish venue. Participants, as can be seen in Table 4.2, rated the equipment used in the event as being up to date, with 52% rating the equipment as excellent, 31% good and 17% rated it as satisfactory.

As discussed in Chapter One the service organization should apply normal business principles in delivering their services to their customers. One of these principles is that of marketing and using marketing materials to advertise the event or leisure program. In agreement with this statement Smith and Steward (1999:159) stated, "marketing aims to influence demand for what an organization provides". Therefore this reiterates that the organizers of the PUFFER should implement proper marketing strategies and make use of effective marketing materials.

Participants rated the marketing materials to be eye catching as follows: excellent (50%); good (30%), satisfactory (17%) and poor (3%). This is in line with Kotler's (2004:276) claim that all efforts should be made to market all aspects of the service as it predominantly relies on the marketing efforts to promote the awareness of the service. In terms of the effective use of marketing materials for the event as can be seen in Table 4.2; 50% of the participants felt that it was excellent and 30% felt that the marketing materials were good. This rating means that the marketing materials were sufficient for the requirements of the event as it relates to the needs of the event and the participants. However the nature of the event prevents any marketing materials from being put up on the route as it will be against the rules and regulations of the Table Mountain Nature Reserve. The organizers were therefore only able to use marketing materials at the start venue, the finish venue, through correspondence before and after the event and at the refreshment stations. The fact that the finish venue was at a restaurant in the V&A Waterfront leant itself to good marketing opportunities but again it had to be aligned with the requirements of the venue and the management of the facility.

Based on the discussion of the figures presented in Table 4.2, it can be concluded that overall the participants of the PUFFER were satisfied with the tangibles and that the impression of the tangibles used in the PUFFER seem to be of a satisfactory nature. The main issue as highlighted in the results from the questionnaire, related to the physical facilities. If the organizers of the PUFFER take cognizance of the study by Kouthouris and Alexandris (2005:108), that the environment and the facilities play a crucial role in client satisfaction, they will have to focus their efforts in improving the physical facilities especially considering this is one of the SERVQUAL dimensions mostly within their control.

4.4 Intangible attributes of the PUFFER as one of the five SERVQUAL dimensions

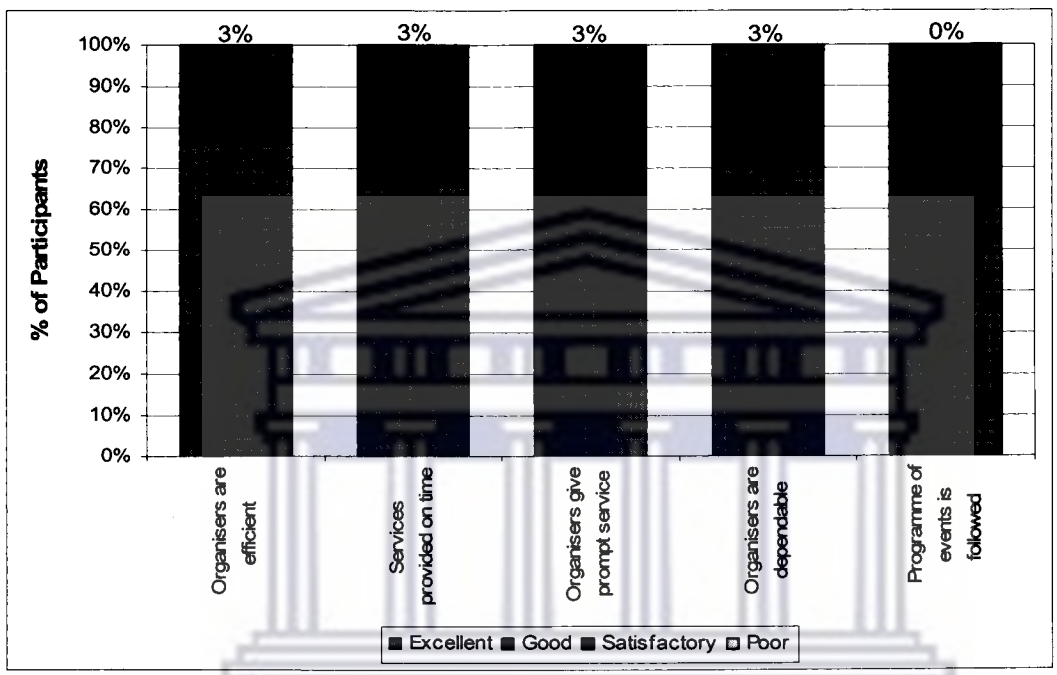
Due to the extreme nature of the PUFFER and the non-tangible nature of the service provided by the organizers of the PUFFER it is crucial for the organizers to ensure that the participants perceive the intangible dimension of the service delivery to be of high quality. Compared to the level of controllability of the tangible attributes the PUFFER organizers have less control on the influence of the intangible attributes. Therefore strong emphasis should be placed on reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy as service dimensions as they play a crucial role in the perception of quality and assists in generating customer satisfaction. This section will therefore concentrate on the intangible aspects of the PUFFER and how satisfied the participants were with these dimensions.

4.4.1 Reliability as a SERVQUAL dimension

Reliability as an attribute towards service quality is defined by Zeithaml *et al.* (1988:1), as the ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately. This section refers to issues related to the reliability of the organizers to perform the promised service to the participants. As mentioned earlier in Chapter Four the organizers of the PUFFER and the participants enter into a transaction with each party expecting something out of the transaction, therefore if the organizers are seen to be reliable, it will add to the satisfaction of participants while participating in the PUFFER. As indicated by Gratton and Jones (2004:85), reliability generally refers to the consistency of results. This means that the more consistent the PUFFER organizers

are in their actions the more reliable they will be perceived to be. Table 4.3 deals with issues related to the reliability of the organizers of the PUFFER.

Table 4.3: Reliability of the organizers of the PUFFER



Reliability refers to the ability of the organizers to perform the promised service dependably and accurately as indicated in the race entry form as well as at the race briefing before the event. As can be seen in Table 4.3, the overall impression of the reliability of the PUFFER organizers was very good. The organizers' efficiency and dependability rated as the highest factors contributing to their reliability. Seventy-six percent (76%) of participants rated the efficiency of the event as excellent with 21% giving it a good rating, 3% rated it satisfactory and no participants rated the efficiency as poor. The provision of timely services was rated as follows: excellent 66%; good 31%; satisfactory 3% and no participants rated the provision of timely services as poor. The organizers were seen as delivering promptly on their services as

they were rated by 55% of the participants as excellent; 42% rated organizers to be good while 3% rated organizers to be satisfactory.

Similarly, the dependability of the event organizers was rated in Table 4.3 as excellent by 70% of the participants, good by 27% of participants and 3% rated the organizers dependability as satisfactory. Implementation of events on the program was thought to be excellent (63%) and good (37%) by participants. Participants viewed the organizers to be reliable in terms of delivering the event. No aspects of reliability received a poor rating and 3% rated reliability as satisfactory with the remainder of participants rating the reliability as good to excellent in all aspects pertaining to reliability. Tseane (2006:125) concluded that participants in the Berg River Canoe marathon also rated reliability as an important issue in delivering the service with 60% of the respondents agreeing that the organizers of the Berg River were reliable. Given the outdoor nature of both events, and therefore the unpredictability with regards to weather and other environmental conditions, it is imperative that the organizers are considered reliable in terms of the expected service delivery. This statement supports the view of Staples *et al.* (2003:6) who pointed out that the higher the level of perceived reliability, the higher the level of trust and belief in the service organization.

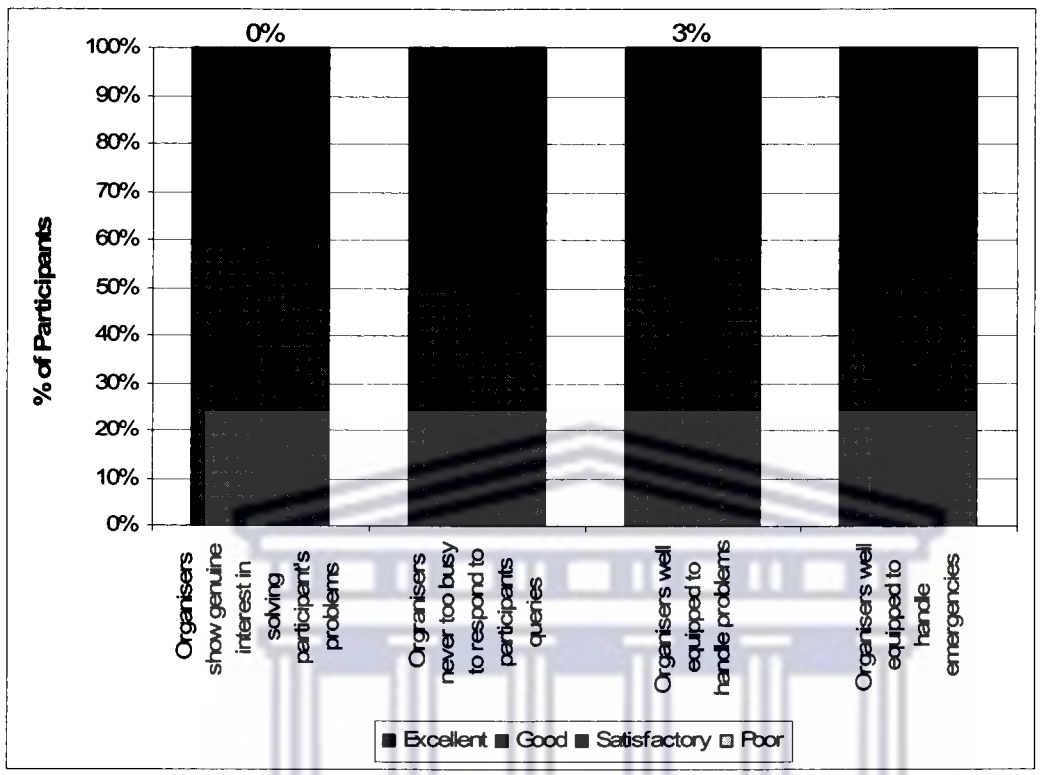
The high awareness and usage of information, staff (marshals as well as volunteers) and refreshments as indicated in Table 4.1, highlights the key issues for completing the race and all of these require the organizers to be competent and capable of delivering a reliable service. The nature of the PUFFER requires that the organizers be reliable as unreliability may impact on the safety of the participants and definitely the enjoyment factor of the race. It is clear from

the data discussed above that the participants perceived the organizers to be reliable in context of the transaction into which they entered.

4.4.2 Responsiveness as a SERVQUAL dimension

Responsiveness as a service dimension is defined by Ziethaml et *al.* as cited in Kouthouris and Alexandris (2005:108) as the ability of an organization's employees, in this case the organizers of the PUFFER, and their willingness to help customers and to provide prompt services. The help provided by the staff members can be seen as the willingness to assist the participants in satisfying their needs, for instance dealing with customer complaints or assisting with registration. As stated previously, the extreme nature of the PUFFER requires a deeper understanding of the intensity of what the runners are faced with during the race. Therefore the more responsive staff members are towards the runners the higher the perception of service quality would be. This might be especially true in the unfortunate situation where participants may be injured or lost. If in such a situation the staff responds in a positive manner, the overall perception of responsiveness will receive a high rating. The results in Table 4.4 indicate how responsive the participants perceived the PUFFER organizers and staff to be.

Table 4.4: Responsiveness of the organizers of the PUFFER



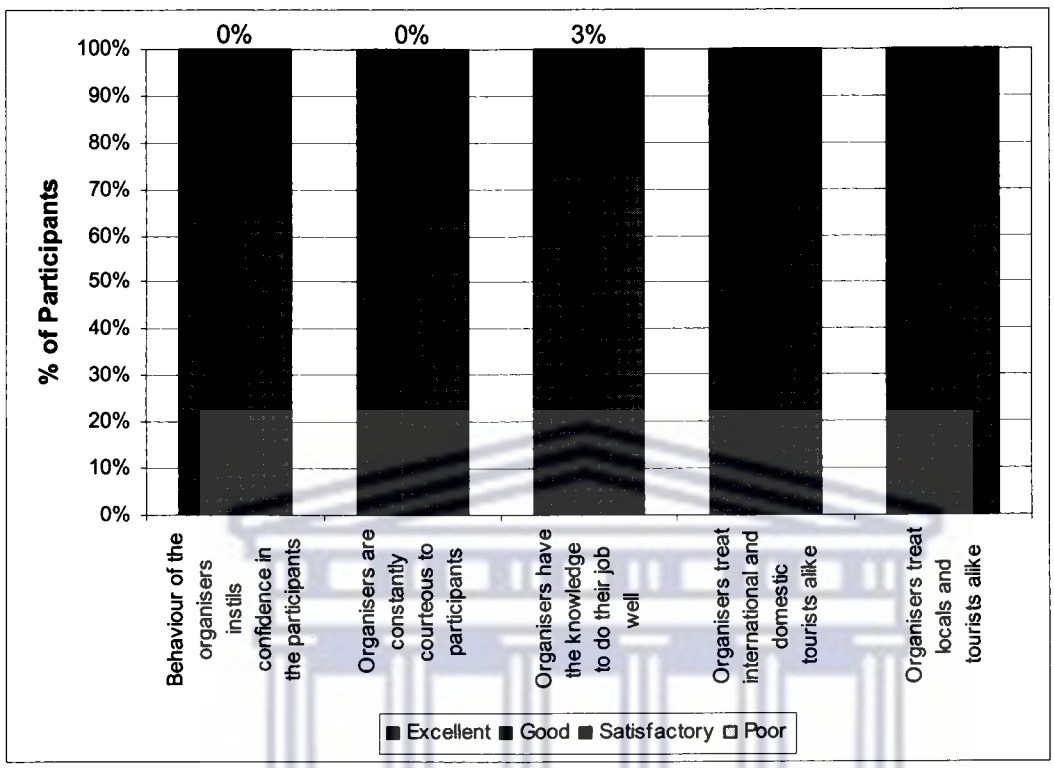
Overall, the participants indicated that the organizers were sufficiently responsive during the event. Essentially responsiveness is the staff, in this case the volunteers and marshals, as they are accessible along the route and therefore expected to be equipped to handle queries, problems and emergencies. This once again, relates to the high ratings of usage of volunteers and marshals as indicated above in Table 4.1. Problems and queries were dealt with promptly and the impression was that if an emergency occurred the organizers would be capable of handling any such situations. The organizers clearly showed the willingness to help and serve the needs of the participants. In terms of the event organizers showing a genuine interest in solving participant's problems they were rated as excellent by 60% of the participants and the remaining 40% rated the organizers as good.

In terms of the organizers not being too busy to handle queries, they were rated as excellent (50%), good (38%) and satisfactory by the remaining 13%. Fifty-seven percent (57%) of the participants thought the organizers could handle problems, 40% rated the organizers capability as good while only 3% as satisfactory. Similarly, in terms of being equipped to handle emergencies, 59% of the participants rated the organizers as excellent, good 28% and satisfactory 14%. The above results seem to indicate how important it is for the participants to believe that the organizers would respond to them in a manner they expect.

4.4.3 Assurance as a SERVQUAL dimension

According to Zeithaml *et al.* (1988:1), assurance relates to knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence to the clients. This is also emphasized by Staples *et al.* (2003) in a study of call centers that a high emphasis should be placed on reassuring the customer of the systems in place, security and credibility. Both the study on call centers and the PUFFER emphasize the need for assurance of their respective customers due to the mainly intangible nature of the services both organizations aim to deliver. Table 4.5 indicates the responses of the participants to the issues of assurance.

Table 4.5: Assurance provided by the organizers of the PUFFER



Participants in leisure events such as the PUFFER would want the assurance that the organizers are capable of presenting the event safely and that each participant will be treated equally and with courtesy. This is evident in Akan's (1995:41) study where courtesy and competency had a high loading factor while customers are simultaneously looking for knowledge, experience, training and proper physical appearance. Akan (1995:41) also mentioned the need for the staff to be friendly, show respect and understanding as well as the ability to speak well. It is evident that in the case of the PUFFER the participants felt assured by the behaviour and actions of the organizers and staff. The event organizers' behaviour to instill confidence with the participants was rated as excellent 64% and good 36%. Courteousness of the event organizers towards the participants was rated as excellent by 64% of the participants and good by the remaining 36%.

The organizers were also highly rated with regards their treatment of both local and international tourists. This can be seen in the light of them hosting the finish area in the V&A Waterfront which is a tourist destination and thereby giving the event exposure to potential international entrants. This would be especially important if the organizers would want to attract international athletes to participate. The ability of the organizers to treat international and domestic tourists alike was as follows: excellent 67%, good 25% and satisfactory 8%. Similarly participants rated the event organizers' equal treatment of locals and tourists as excellent by 64%, good 24% and satisfactory 12%.

As stated before, the assurance dimension according to the SERVQUAL relates to the knowledge and courtesy of the employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence. In terms of the event organizers ability to instill confidence in the participants and be courteous to participants they were rated as excellent (64%) and good by 36% of participants. No poor ratings were given.

Together with confidence and courtesy 73% of participants felt the organizers had enough knowledge to do their job well. The event organizers' knowledge to do their job well was rated as excellent 73%, good 24% and 3% satisfactory. The fact that the organizers received such a high rating of excellent, can be based on the fact that most of the organizers are also runners and might have done the same event in the past. The better the organizers can identify with the event and the participants the better the perception will be that they know what they are doing and would not expect the participants to do something they would not do themselves. It can

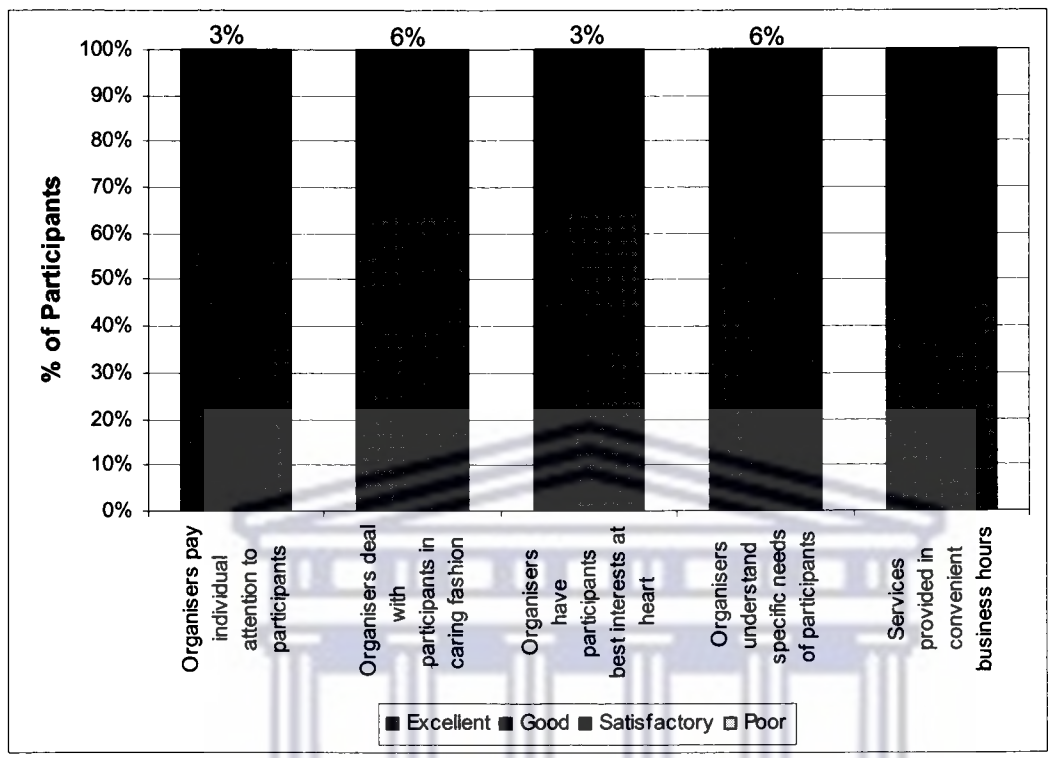
therefore be inferred that the more the organizers understand the event, the better they will be able to deliver a good quality event.

4.4.4 Empathy as a SERVQUAL dimension

Empathy relates to the ability of the PUFFER employees to understand and anticipate what the participants are experiencing. In the case of the PUFFER this is often easy to attain as most of the staff members have some vested interest in the race, either as runners themselves, a previous runner or a family member or friend of a runner. This personal connection to the race by the staff will improve the chances of the participants perceiving the organizers and staff as being empathetic towards their needs. Table 4.6 indicates the responses of the participants to the issues of empathy.

SERVQUAL promotes empathy as the provision of care and individualized attention to its customers and based on the ratings of the participants. The organizers of the PUFFER showed excellent empathy towards participants. Similar to the Responsiveness dimension, the high awareness and usage rating of the marshals and volunteers in Table 4.1 confirms the high empathy rating as well as the high reliability of the organizers to host the event as indicated in Table 4.3.

Table 4.6: Empathy of the organizers of the PUFFER



Empathy also relates to the ability of the organizers to provide and care for the participants in an individual manner as described by Zeithaml *et al.* (1988:1). Individual attention given to participants by the event organizers was rated in Table 4.6 as excellent by 58%, good by 39% and 3% rated it as satisfactory. In terms of the event organizers dealing with participants in a caring fashion 65% of participants rated the organizers as excellent, 29% as good and 6% as satisfactory.

As can be seen from Table 4.6 the event organizers' ability to have the participants' best interests at heart was rated as excellent by 65% of participants and good by 32%. Only 3% rated it as satisfactory. The event organizers' ability to understand the specific needs of the

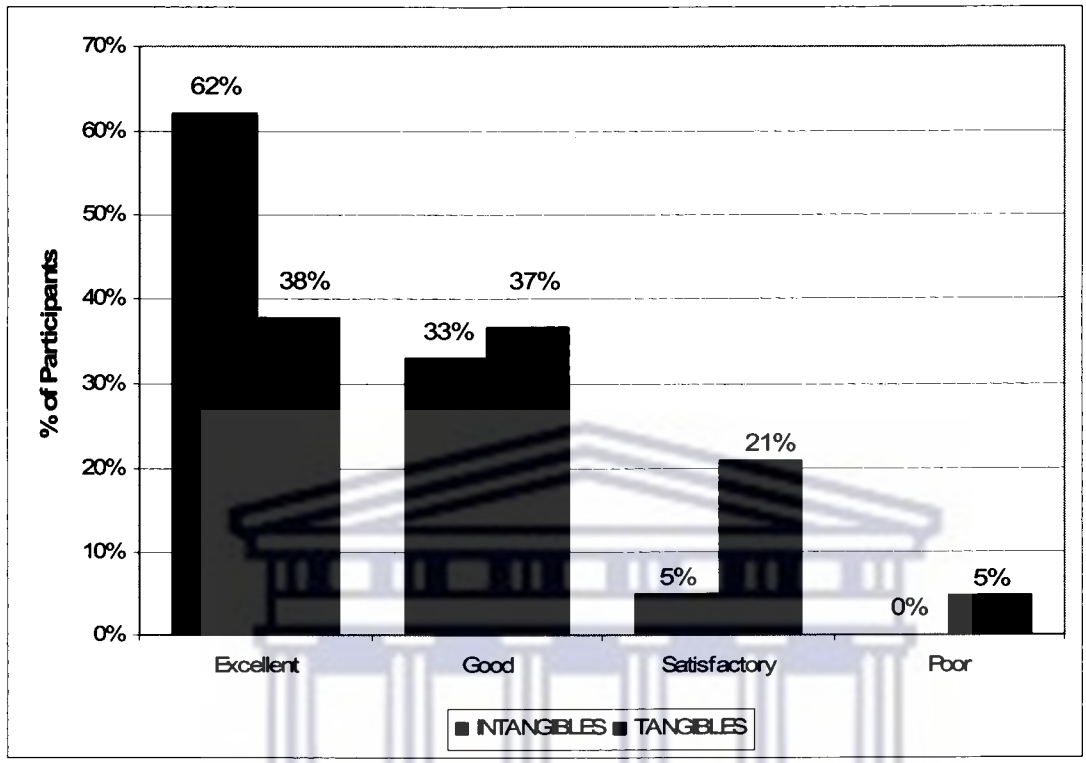
participants was rated as excellent by 61%, good by 33% and satisfactory by 6% of the participants.

Fifty-two percent (52%) of the participants rated the provision of services in convenient business hours, such as entering for the event and handling of queries related to the event, as excellent, 36% thought it was good and 12% as satisfactory. The fact that more than half the participants considered the services to have been provided in convenient business hours, highlights the fact that the organizers tried to accommodate and make the logistics of the event as convenient as possible for everyone.

4.4.5 Comparison of Tangible and Intangible service dimensions as perceived by the participants

Tangible and Intangible service dimensions both played a role in creating the perception of quality as rated by the participants of the PUFFER.

Table 4.7: Comparison of Tangible and Intangible service dimensions



It can be seen from the comparison in Table 4.7 that the organizers were rated mostly excellent and good in delivering both tangible and intangible service dimensions. The intangible dimensions however did not receive any rating of poor while the tangible dimensions received a rating of 5% as poor. It should also be mentioned that the ratings of excellent (38%) and good (37%) for the tangible dimensions were significantly lower compared to the ratings of the intangible dimensions being excellent (62%) and good (33%).

This comparison therefore strengthens the argument that both the tangible and intangible dimensions of the service play a role in the perception of service quality. However, should one of these dimensions not be delivered according to the participants' expectations, it would result

in a negative perception of service quality as in the case with the seating availability and seating comfort at the PUFFER.

Following the discussion of the impact of both tangible and intangible aspects in the perception of service quality the following section will discuss the impact of these service attributes on the length of stay at the event.

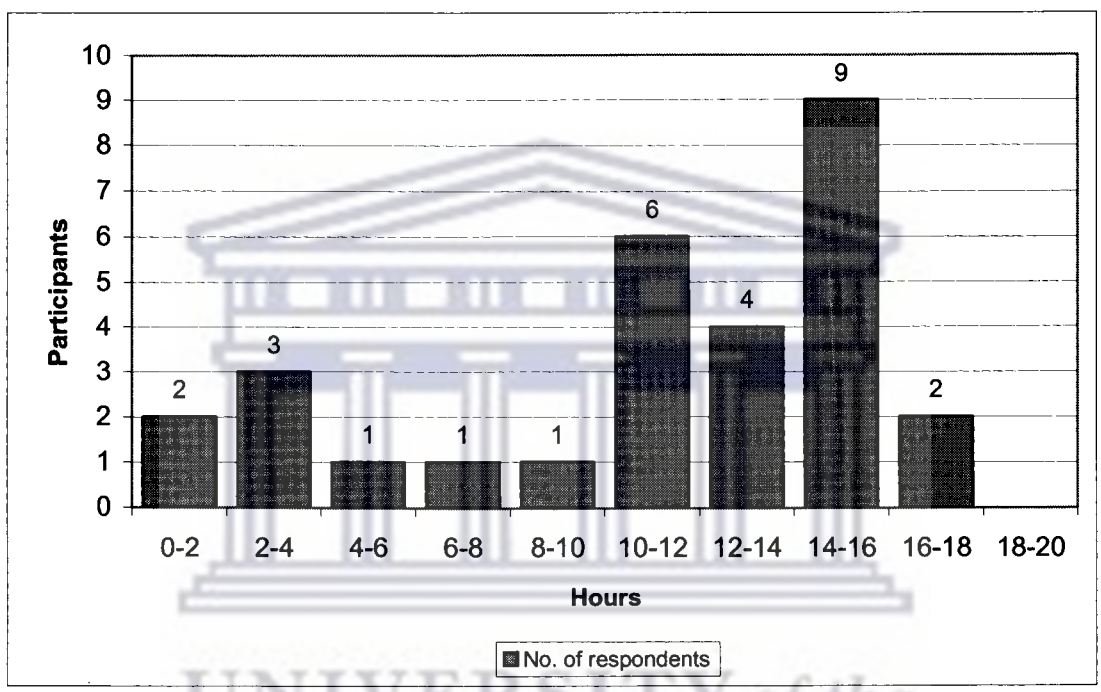
4.5 Length of stay at the event

Participants in the PUFFER were asked to indicate their actual length of stay and their intended length of stay at the event. People spend time at leisure events for different reasons. Tseane (2006:100) mentioned that the length of stay at an event can be influenced by factors such as the availability of physical facilities. Wakefield and Blodgett (1996:45) further explained that in the case where customers spend a longer period at the service facility, a tendency to assess the level of service, relies heavily on the tangible elements such as seating availability and other physical facilities. This is in line with the discussion on tangibles, as rated in Table 4.1 and the fact that tangibles in the PUFFER, such as the appearance of the physical facilities, received the rating of 33% for excellence compared to the intangible factors, such as aesthetics, design and layout of the finish area, event equipment and marketing material, which all received ratings above 50% in terms of excellence.

4.5.1 Actual length of stay at the event

Participants indicated their actual length of stay at the event in hours and minutes.

Table 4.8: Length of stay

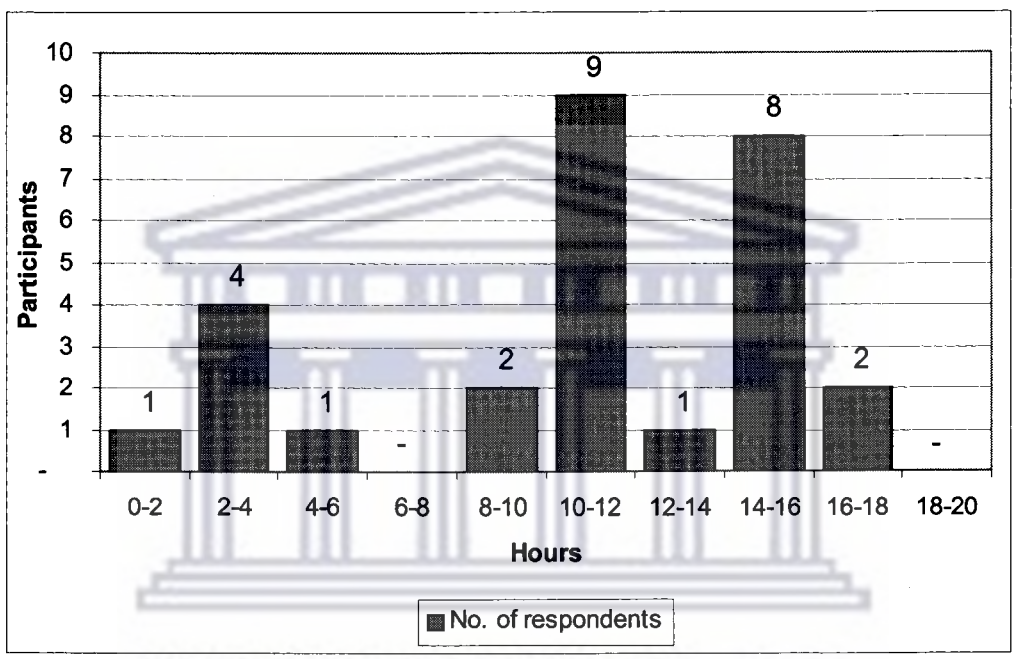


The general stay at the event was between 10 - 16 hours as 65% of participants fell into this category. The average stay at the event was 12 hours as this is the median of the amount of hours spent at the event.

4.5.2 Intended length of stay at the event

Participants indicated their intended stay at the event in hours.

Table 4.9: Intended length of stay



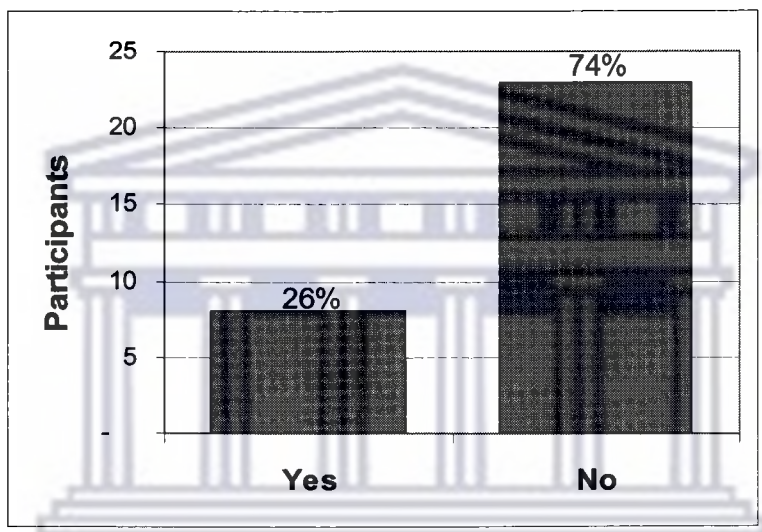
Most participants aimed at staying between 9-16 hours at the event (25% - 75% of participants fell into this category). The median intended stay however was 12 hours. As in the case of table 4.8 there was no clear separation in the questionnaire in terms of time taken to participate and time spent otherwise engaged at the event.

Future studies should therefore differentiate between time taken to participate and time spent before and after participation. This could provide the organizers with information regarding the

specific needs of participants outside of the actual race event and thereby, especially, assist them with improving the services provided after completion of the race.

4.6 Problems experienced

Table 4.10: Participants in % who experienced problems



Participants were asked to indicate problems experienced during and after the event. The majority of the participants, 74%, indicated that they did not experience any problems with the event while 26% indicated that they had experienced problems.

For the purpose of analysis, problems experienced were grouped according to similarity in order to prevent repetition.

The general problems experienced by participants are given below:

Problems related to tangible issues of the event:

- Results were not found on the scoreboard
- Shower facilities at the finish venue were inadequate
- Service at finish venue insufficient
- Bar service at finish area insufficient
- Route markers on Signal Hill poor
- Lack of parking facilities at V&A Waterfront
- Seating at finish area not enough for amount of people
- Participants should receive a proper map to navigate

Problems related to intangible aspects of the event:

- Lack of communication of the event organizers with the participants after the event.

Information regarding the problems experienced will be referred to further in Chapter Five as recommendations for improving the quality of service of the PUFFER.

4.7 Summary of results

An analysis of the data has highlighted four key findings of service delivery pertinent to endurance events such as the PUFFER. Three of them fall within SERVQUAL's tangible dimension. The fourth component concerns the entire dimension of intangibles.

The first finding was that of refreshments. In this study the use of the refreshment stations, not the quality, was assessed. The importance of refreshments along the route of the PUFFER was highlighted since this tangible aspect received the highest usage rating (88%). As an endurance event covering 80km over mountainous terrain where there are few places where organizers can place refreshment tables, it is an important service attribute and not to be neglected by the organizers of the event. Although participants would have some provisions with them, these would not be sufficient to last the complete distance of the event. In addition to this, in the event of an emergency or an injury, the refreshment stations would be areas at which race organizers can monitor the whereabouts and progress of participants.

The second finding is around the quantity and quality of available seating. Of the five dimensions of service delivery, tangibles were the only dimension to receive ratings of poor service. Of the tangibles rated poorly, seating availability and lack of comfort were key issues for participants. However, as this study highlighted, seating is relevant mostly at the finish venue of the PUFFER as this is the only time participants would be at the location for an extended period of time. Therefore it is important for the organizers to provide sufficient seating as it ultimately impacts on the perception of quality service delivery.

At the finish venue, racers would want to socialize with other participants, the organizers as well as their supporters. It is here where participants share their experiences and recall the events of the day and given that participants would have just completed 80kms on foot, it is safe to assume that most of the field would be relatively weary and comfortable seating would be welcome.

The third finding was that of the finish venue. In the PUFFER this was based at the Ferryman's restaurant at the V&A Waterfront. This was not reserved for PUFFER supporters and participants only. The choice of a finish venue of such a nature meant that the organizers did not have to attend to services such as parking, security of participant's property and entertainment. However it resulted in an impersonal experience for the participants and therefore resulted in a poor rating with regards to the service delivery at the finish venue.

The last finding concerned the entire dimension of intangible attributes offered by SERVQUAL to assess the quality of service delivery namely reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. Participants rated the organizers as predominantly excellent in all the intangible dimensions of service. This means that according to the participants the organizers portrayed the soft skills needed to deliver a safe and successful event. Contrary to Kouthouris and Alexandris (2005:108) who claimed that intangible dimensions are uncontrollable in nature it would seem that the PUFFER organizers delivered quality service in this regard for the participants.

For events such as the PUFFER, it is more important and informative to assess services such as the provision of information and security as well as the finish area and seating availability since the family support "staff", who are often volunteers and who play an important role at endurance events and should also be looked after. It is therefore imperative as can be seen from the results discussed above that the service organization understands exactly what the customer wants and what they need to deliver in order to exceed the expectations of the customer, which according to Thomson (1993:23) will provide the customer with an attitude that the service they received was superior to any other they had before.

From the results discussed above it can therefore be inferred that overall the participants were satisfied with the service they received. One can conclude that the participants perceived the service to be of high standard as stated in the problem statement. The program was followed and the organizers of the PUFFER were knowledgeable, able and willing to serve the participants in any way necessary. However it was identified that the physical facilities and especially the standard of the seating comfort and seating availability could be improved.

It is important to address these issues which create a gap between the expected and delivered service, as highlighted by the participants. In this study the following section will aim at interpreting these areas of concern according to the Five-Gap model of Parasuraman *et al.* (1985). The application and implementation of the Five-Gap model could provide the organizers of the PUFFER with constructive information regarding what to do in their attempts to improve their service delivery in future events.

4.8 The Five-Gap model of service quality

In previous sections of this chapter the results and findings were presented and discussed in the context of the research question which was: "To what extent do the participants in the PUFFER perceive the delivery of quality service by the organizers to be satisfactory?" Gaps were identified between participants' expectations and the actual service delivered by the organizers of the PUFFER. The gaps identified can also be defined as the difference between the delivered service and what the participant expected from the service as indicated by Thwaites (1999:504). In other words there is a difference between the participants' expectations and the delivered service by the organizers of the PUFFER. It could be useful for any service organization to identify any existing gaps as these will provide specific and constructive information about the areas where the organization is lacking in service delivery. In this study, the gaps were mainly related to the tangible attributes of the PUFFER which included the facilities and seating arrangements at the finish venue.

In an ideal world the service expectation of the customer would match their actual experience. However, this is seldom the case. In actual service delivery gaps often occur between expectation and delivery. The Five-Gap model of Parasuraman *et al.* (1985) can provide event organizers with specific information as to which areas of their service delivery did not meet the anticipated level of service. This information can therefore enable the service organization to focus on the necessary areas in order to reduce the gap between expectation and experience, thereby minimizing the possibility of customer dissatisfaction.

This section will further explain the Five-Gap model of service quality as developed by Parasuraman *et al.* (1985). The model is a method of interpreting the data from any SERVQUAL questionnaire and giving meaning to the gaps between participants' expectations and the delivery of service by the organizers. In this study the participants were the runners who participated in the PUFFER and the organizers were those who organized the PUFFER i.e. the Fish Hoek running Club in Cape Town, South Africa.

The Five-Gap model identifies five gaps that occur between the expectation and actual delivery of a service. It is important, however, for the service organization to view the service as a package and not to consider each of the problem areas in isolation.

The different gaps in the Five-Gap model, as shown in Figure 4.1 below, are described as follows:

- Gap 1: Customer expectations versus management perceptions
    - Gap 1 relates to what the customer wants and what the management perceives as the customer need. A gap at this level will mainly be caused by the inability of the organization to identify the customer needs through marketing research and proper needs identification.

- Gap 2: Management perception versus service quality specifications
    - If the service organization is unable or even unwilling to deliver the service as expected then Gap 2 will be created. This gap can be created by management's inability to interpret the expectation of the customer or

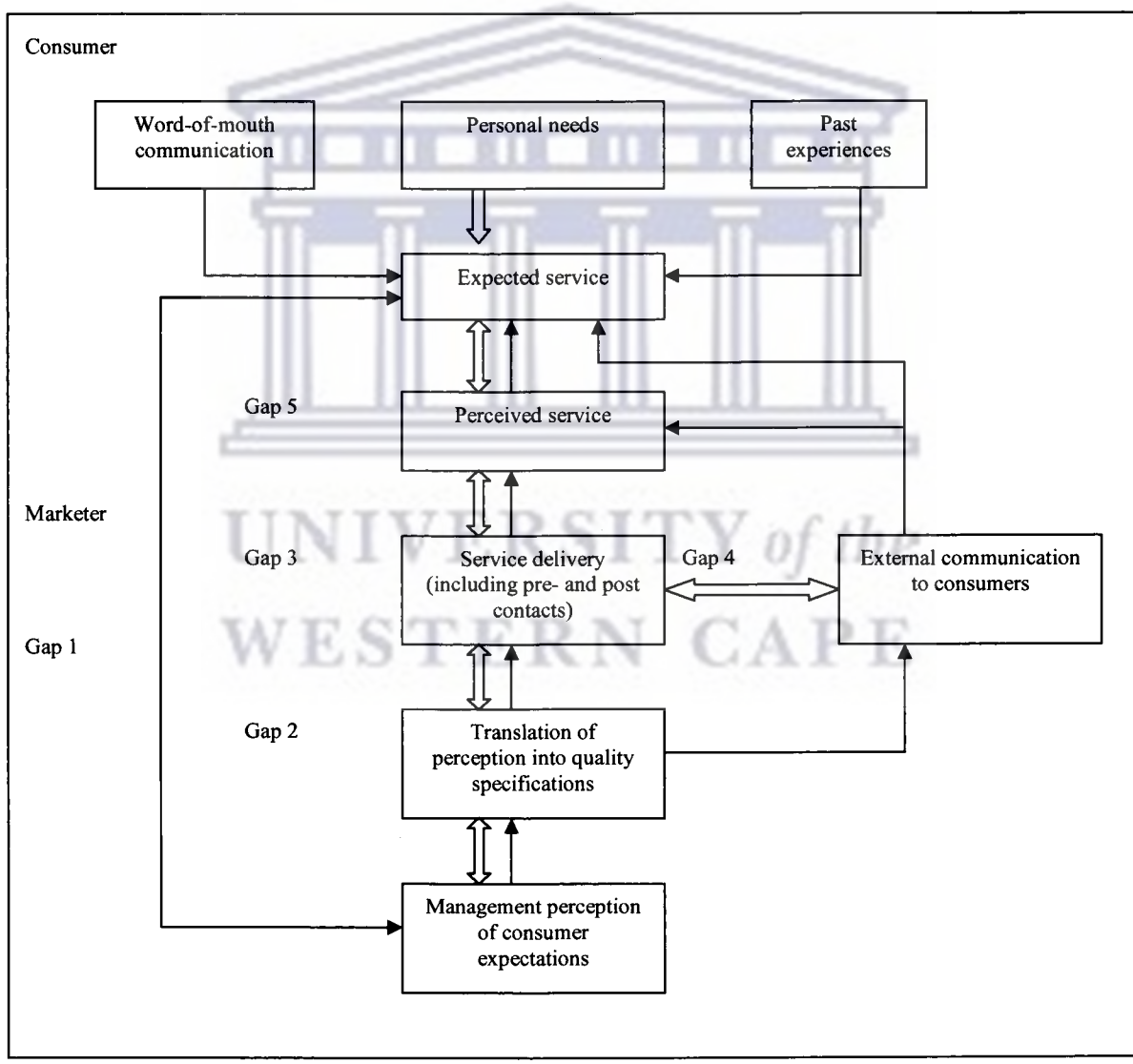
by the absence of customer driven delivery systems. Organizations creating a service gap at this level are not focused on adapting to the customer, but instead believe that the customer must adapt to their definition of service delivery.

- Gap 3: Service quality specifications versus service delivery
    - Gap 3 occurs mostly at the human resource interaction of the organization. Gap 3 therefore relates to the actual delivery of the service where the staff members and the customers interact and where the service is consumed. At this level management has indicated a willingness to deliver the service and to empower staff members through training and resources, but the staff members are unable or unwilling to deliver the required service.

- Gap 4: Service delivery versus external communications
    - Gap 4 relates to ineffective internal and external marketing. A gap is created when the service organization promises, through marketing, that they can deliver a specific service and then fail to do so. An expectation is created which the service organization is not capable of, nor intent on delivering.

- Gap 5:Expected service versus perceived service
    - Gap 5 is a culmination of all previous four gaps. As the other gaps increase the more Gap 5 increases. Gap 5 essentially represents the difference between the expected service and the perception of the service which was actually delivered.

Figure 4.1: The Five-Gap model of service quality (Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry: 1985)



In Figure 4.1 the Five-Gap model of Parasuraman *et al.* (1985) is outlined. This Five-Gap model of service quality provides insight into service expectations and how to improve services especially in the service industry where the product on offer is of an intangible nature, such as a leisure programme or event. Tseane (2006:63) commented that by applying this Five-Gap model, event organizers can develop more insights into potential problematic areas related to the quality of their service. Tseane (2006) did not apply this model to her study. This increased understanding and knowledge could enable them to close any existing gaps in their service delivery.

What this Five-Gap model proposes is that the greater the gap identified between the expectation of the customer or participant and what the organization has delivered, the lower the perception of quality will be. This will lead to lower level of satisfaction with the service delivered. This Five-Gap model is widely used in the service industry to identify shortcomings of services delivered. According to Lofman and Saarinen (2004:15) the model defines the service as meeting customers' expectations or knowing what customers expect. Bennett (2000: 233) mentioned that the Five-Gap model is closely linked to the marketing function of an organization as it deals extensively with customer issues. The model further indicates where and how a gap begins to exist if a certain aspect of the service is not delivered. For example, a gap can be created at Gap 4, which refers to communication, even when the service organization fails to communicate with the customer after the service has been delivered. It is important however, to highlight that not all services will exhibit all of the gaps as outlined by Figure 4.1. This means that a service that is perceived as high quality will have few or no gaps.

In other words that the service was delivered in line with the participants' or customers' expectations.

In this section each gap will be explained and then applied to the findings of the PUFFER. The key findings of this study relate to: use of the refreshment station; quantity and quality of available seating; the finish venue; and intangible attributes namely reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. The gaps focus on all the aspects of the organization in its attempt to deliver a service of acceptable quality including communication, internally and externally, as well as all the resources and systems the organization has put in place in order to deliver the service as promised.

Gap 1: Consumer expectation versus management perception gap

In Gap 1 the focus is on the ability of the service organization to effectively communicate with the customer and also to interpret the feedback given by the consumer. Any service organization will have to know and understand the customer and what their expectations are regarding delivery of services. One way to establish this is if the organization does research focusing on what a customer wants from the service. If the organization therefore fails in conducting relevant research and understanding the needs and expectations of the customer, Gap 1 would exist. Gap 1 will also exist and even increase if the needs of the customer changes and the product of the organization fail to adapt o such changes.

The service organization's staff may not understand what features indicate high quality to consumers in advance, or what features a service must have in order to meet customer's needs and what levels of performance are required to deliver high quality service therefore resulting in Gap 1.

In the case of the PUFFER, participants expected the facilities at the finish venue to be of a higher standard. As can be seen from the results the participants clearly thought that the seating availability and comfort was of unsatisfactory standard. Both seating availability and seating comfort received a poor rating of 17% and 13% respectively. The lack of seating therefore developed a gap because management did not seem to be aware of the need for seating at the finish venue. This could have been prevented if they had conducted research about the needs of the participants either after the event in preparation for the next event or in studying similar events. Although seating only played a role at the end of the event, it still impacted on the overall perception of quality even though most other aspects of the event were seen as being good to excellent. Contrary to this the organizers seemed to have understood the participants' need for information because the PUFFER organizers provided participants with sufficient information to safely participate by giving each a route brochure, organizing an information session at registration and proper communication through staff members, volunteers and marshals, all of which received a usage rating.

Gap 2: Management perception versus service quality specification gap

In Gap 2 the focus is on the willingness and ability of the organization to deliver the service as expected. A gap is created at this stage if the service organization knows and understands what the customer wants but is unable or even unwilling to develop the processes and resources to satisfy the requests of the customer. Getz (1997:83) mentioned that this can be due to inadequate commitment to service quality, lack of perception of feasibility, inadequate task standardisation and the absence of goal settings or being overwhelmed by the results from the research done before delivering the service. There might be constraints, which prevent organizations from delivering what consumers expect. These constraints can either be resource or market related. In the case of the PUFFER the organizers seemed highly capable and willing to deliver what the participants expected except for some tangibles such as the facilities at the finish venue. Part of the responsibility for the finish venue was out of the organizers' hands as the finish venue was in a public area and they did not have complete control over who would make use of the venue. As mentioned in Chapter One, the race ends in the V&A Waterfront which gives the regular public and other interested parties access to the finish area and who can take up some of the seating areas around the venue. This therefore created Gap 2 due to the inability of the organizers to ensure proper seating facilities at eh finish venue. This highlights at least one area of concern which the organizers of the PUFFER can address if they want to improve the quality of their delivery at the PUFFER.

Gap 3: Service quality versus service delivery gap

In Gap 3 the focus is on service delivery and the interaction between the participants and the staff of the organization. This normally referred to as the performance gap. A gap here will highlight issues of the service organization relating to human resource policies. Included in these policies will be aspects such as recruitment of the correct staff members for the specific event, the roles and responsibilities required to be fulfilled by staff members, empowerment of staff members and compensation of staff members. It is here that employees and customers or participants interact. In the case of the PUFFER the organization did not have to concern themselves with remuneration of the staff as they made use of volunteers for the event. The fact that the organizers were rated highly in terms of marshals and volunteers, as well as the intangible aspects of service delivery, clearly indicates that participants did not experience a gap in the service at this particular level. This could be attributed to the fact that the staff members were empowered for their duties and were provided with sufficient resources and training for what they were expected to deliver during all phases of the event. From the results it would seem that the PUFFER organizers showed their understanding and willingness to deliver services of high quality at this point of interaction. As explained in section 4.4, this meant they were rated as being mostly excellent and good in all the intangible aspects of service including reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy.

Gap 4: Service delivery versus external communications gap

Gap 4 is created when the organization fails to effectively communicate with the customer or participant. Communication at this level relates to how the organizer entices the participant to take part in their event through marketing and advertising. A gap is created when the organization promised to do something during the service but eventually fails to deliver on what they promised. It is clear that an organization's advertising and other communications can affect consumer expectations. Thwaites (1999:505) calls this over promising in advertising and inadequate horizontal communications. Organizations often promise more than what they can deliver and if this is the case it can lead to a low perception of quality service. From the responses it seems that the organizers of the PUFFER clearly did not promise more than they could deliver which can be seen in the participants overall satisfaction of the event. Their communication before and during the event was rated as high quality. However; some problems were identified by participants regarding the communication after the event. This therefore created a gap between what was expected and what was delivered by the organization. Addressing this issue can be a means of improving the quality of service at the PUFFER event.

Gap 5: Expected service versus perceived service

The more gaps that are evident from Gap 1 through to Gap 4, the more the gap will become visible and increase at Gap 5. The cumulative effect of the disjuncture between delivery and expectation at Gaps 1-4 creates a difference between the overall perceived service and the

expected service. The expected service is what the customer expected from the organization and if not met will lead to dissatisfaction. The key to ensuring good service quality is meeting or exceeding what customers expect from the service. According to Lofman and Saarinen (2004:15) service quality, as perceived by a customer, depends on the specific problem experienced by the customer which will in return indicate the impact thereof in Gap 5. Gap 5 is further impacted on by the Gaps from 1-4, which are associated with design, marketing (communication) and delivery of services.

In summary, therefore, the Five-Gap model as applied to the PUFFER indicates that there were limited gaps in the service delivery by the organizers of the PUFFER, which resulted in relatively few gaps in the participants' satisfaction. The size of the gaps can be derived from the percentages given in the rating of the tangibles and intangibles as discussed in Chapter Four. High percentages indicate a high level of satisfaction while low percentages indicate lower levels of satisfaction. This therefore indicates that participants of the PUFFER perceived the service of an acceptable standard and that generally their expectations of the event had been met. The gaps that were identified such as seating and lack of communication however provide insight into the areas which can be improved on for future events.

4.9 Summary of the chapter

This chapter presented and discussed the results of the study. The method used to collect the data, namely a questionnaire adapted to the needs of the study, was also discussed. By interpreting the results of the questionnaire, areas for improvement in the service delivery of the PUFFER where highlighted, which was further supported by applying the Five-Gap model

of service quality to the findings of the PUFFER event. Two major gaps in the expected service of the PUFFER were identified which was seating availability and comfort, as well as a lack of communication with participants after the event. These findings, amongst others, are discussed in Chapter Five. Recommendations for the improvement of services at future PUFFER events and other similar leisure events are offered in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The aim of the study was to assess the extent of satisfaction of quality of service delivery of the organizers of the PUFFER as perceived by the runners who participated in the event. In Chapter One the purpose and rationale of the study was explained and the research problem, the aim of the study as well as the specific objectives of the study were outlined. In addition, the importance of service quality in a leisure event was highlighted as was the benefit of making a profit in a challenging economic environment and the relevance of this to the leisure industry. Chapter Two covered the literature related to service and service quality and the importance of organizations to focus on service quality in a global environment. Chapter Two further explained SERVQUAL as a tool for measuring service quality in the leisure industry. The methodology and population of the study was explained in Chapter Three with special mention of the design of the SERVQUAL questionnaire as a tool for generating the data specifically related to an endurance leisure event such as the PUFFER. The results generated with the questionnaire were discussed and interpreted in Chapter Four within the context of the service dimensions described by the SERVQUAL as: responsiveness, reliability, assurance, empathy and tangibles. Specific gaps in the service delivery of the PUFFER were also highlighted in Chapter Four.

Having discussed the results and major findings while also identifying certain gaps in the service delivery, Chapter Five describes some limitations in the study and recommendations are made for the improvement of the quality of service of the PUFFER. Finally a conclusion of the study will be offered in terms of whether or not participants' expectations were met and the impact of both the tangible and intangible aspects of service delivery.

A quantitative approach was adopted in this study. The researcher constructed a questionnaire based on the questionnaire used by Tseane in 2006 while assessing the service quality at the Berg river canoe marathon. The questionnaires of both studies made use of the SERVQUAL model of assessing service quality in the service industry focusing on the five dimensions of service quality which includes tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, empathy and assurance.

It was stated in Chapter One that the aim of the study was to assess the extent of quality of service delivery of the organizers of the PUFFER as perceived by the participants

The objectives of the study were as follows:

- To assess the participants' perception of the quality of the service they received from the organizers.
- To explore ways in which the service delivery of a popular event such as the PUFFER can improved.

5.2 Limitations of the study

There were certain challenges experienced by the researcher as it relates to the study. These challenges are indicated below:

- Although an extensive body of knowledge relating to service quality and service delivery exists there is, however, a lack of literature on service quality and assessment of service quality specifically related to endurance sports as a leisure event, such as the PUFFER. This made it difficult to compare the current study to existing literature on similar studies and to make assumptions based on the relevant literature.
- The administration of the questionnaire was out of the control of the researcher as it was included in the race information package. The researcher did not have sufficient opportunity to explain the research study to the participants and as a result certain questions were left blank. This, however, did not impact on the quality of the study results as the omitted questions were not related to the SERVQUAL service dimensions.
- The final population of 33 participants who eventually completed the questionnaire, out of a possible population of 124 registered participants was seen as a limitation of the study as it is only a small representation of the population. This did not impact negatively on the study as the responses from the 33 questionnaires were so consistent that a conclusive understanding was gained as to the participants' satisfaction with the service quality at the PUFFER. Future research should, however, attempt to include a larger percentage of the population.

5.3 Summary of key findings

The key findings for this study were as follows:

1) All actions of the PUFFER organizers, both tangible and intangible, played a role in the extent to which participants' felt satisfied with the service quality at the PUFFER event.

2) Of the tangible aspects at the PUFFER, participants in this study rated the seating availability and seating comfort as the worst of the organizer's service delivery at the PUFFER.

3) The finish venue, as part of the tangibles, was highlighted as an area for improvement and was closely linked to seating requirements at the event.

4) None of participants in this study rated the intangible aspects of the service delivery at the PUFFER poorly.

It is clear from the results as discussed and interpreted in Chapter Four that all actions related to the service delivery at the PUFFER were seen to be important by the participants. This would suggest that the organizers should therefore adopt a holistic approach to service delivery at the PUFFER where all aspects of the service is focused on delivering a service which will satisfy participants' expectations while still upholding the characteristics and hallmarks of the event. This is in line with the claim of Davies *et. al.* (1999) that it is possible to link observable characteristics of a service with ideas of quality of service and the requirements of the participants. Following this, the researcher proposes that the organizers of the PUFFER establish for themselves a set of minimum standards for the different aspects of the event. These standards should be implemented to enable the organizers to measure the different aspects of the event to their own acceptable standards. This is supported by the Rienheitsgebot

as indicated by Davies et. *al.* where the use of standards and hallmarks of service quality in the beer trade were adopted. Although quality standards are more readily linked to manufacturing organizations, such as the beer trade, it is nonetheless as important to establish benchmarks for the delivery of quality services by service organizations. Chelluderai & Chang (2000:14) as well as Dhurup *et. al.* (2006:1) further highlight the importance of service quality indicating that "service quality has become the staple current, and also a considerable topic for researchers in the last 15 years".

This study indicates that overall, participants perceived the services of the organizers to be of high or acceptable quality. Both tangible and intangible aspects of the service are important in the perception of quality and influence overall satisfaction with the service. The organizers received very high ratings ranging between excellent and satisfactory on four service dimensions namely, responsiveness, reliability, assurance and empathy. The only service dimension receiving any ratings of poor was the tangible aspects of the event. It is therefore possible to conclude after analyzing the data, that the participants perceived the service quality of all service aspects to be of a high standard and that they were satisfied with what they had experienced in relation to the service delivery they had anticipated. Murray & Howat (2002) further support the claim that satisfaction and quality is linked. They state that satisfaction is a consequence of service quality.

It can further be inferred from the data analysis and discussion that the SERVQUAL dimensions namely: responsiveness, reliability, assurance, empathy as well as tangibles such as the physical facilities, environment, aesthetics, layout and design of finish and start venue and

marketing materials, all played a part in creating the perception of service quality at the PUFFER. The fact that four of the five dimensions namely: responsiveness, reliability, assurance and empathy scored higher than 50% as a rating of excellent, indicated that the organizers were meeting the participants' expectations with regards to the intangible dimensions of the service delivery. The tangible ratings however, indicated that service delivery was not of satisfactory standard especially concerning the finish venue and seating provided. It is important for the organizers to understand that if these factors are addressed, it would ensure participants' satisfaction with the service delivery at future events. Wakefield & Blodget (1996:56) support this claim that attention should be given to the physical environment where the service is to be consumed. Wakefield & Blodget (1996:56) further support this by indicating that attributes such layout, seating and cleanliness are all under the control of the organizers. These are all aspects the organizers of the PUFFER should focus on in their attempt to improve the quality of their service. The impact thereof for the PUFFER according to Kouthouris & Alexandris (2005:106) would be the retention and even increase in participants' numbers. These improvements could even become the benchmark on which other organizations in the endurance sport leisure industry could model their own service delivery. In addition to this, it may lead to participation by international tourists, which has been identified in this study as a shortcoming of the event as it currently only attracts local participants.

5.4 Conclusions related to research findings

This study set out to examine the research question: "To what extent do the participants in the PUFFER perceive the delivery of quality service by the organizers to be satisfactory?"

To this end participants who were runners in the PUFFER race were asked to complete a questionnaire. The questionnaire was constructed using the SERVQUAL conceptual model of service assessment which was adapted to fit the specific needs for this research. It comprised questions related to the five service dimensions namely; tangibles, responsiveness, reliability, assurance and empathy. Thirty-three of a possible 124 runners completed the questionnaire. There were questions covering various issues relevant to the above mentioned service dimensions and the questions covered the usage of tangible attributes, time spent at the event, problems experienced and certain demographical questions. See Appendix C for the questionnaire used to collect date for this study.

From the findings it can be concluded that:

(1) There is conclusive evidence that the organizers of the PUFFER delivered a more than satisfactory service with regards to the intangible service dimensions namely; reliability, responsiveness, empathy and assurance.

(2) It can be concluded that intangible aspects of service delivery are as important as the tangible, more visible aspects in ensuring the perception of service quality at an event.

(3) The organizers of the PUFFER should focus on improving the service delivery of the tangible aspects of the event, specifically with regards to seating availability and layout of the finish venue.

(4) From the findings, it can be concluded that overall, the quality of the service delivered by the organizers of the PUFFER was perceived by the participants to be of a high standard.

5.5 Recommendations of the study

5.5.1 Participants' recommendations

In the completed questionnaires a number of recommendations were made by the participants regarding how the organizers of the PUFFER can improve service delivery and therefore satisfaction with the event. Most of the problems experienced by the participants fall within the tangible aspects of the event.

Recommendations to improve the quality of service of the PUFFER as highlighted by the participants are as follows:

- Emphasis should be put on the presentation and use of the tangible aspects of the event as they relate to the need of the participants of the PUFFER. As mentioned earlier by Kouthouris & Alexandris (2005:113) tangibles are under the control of the organizers and they should be able to provide for the tangible needs of the participants.
- Care should be given to the influence that people not associated with the event, such as shoppers, may have on the participants especially at the finish area.
- Special attention should be given to the provision of suitable seating for the participants, especially after they have just run 80 kms, and that the seating at the venue is not taken up by somebody who is not part of the race. This also applies to the volunteers who are often family or friends of the participants.
- With some of the runners finishing the race close to the prize giving it would be appropriate if the organizers could offer proper shower facilities for the participants to

freshen up after the event. It is not always possible for the runners to go home after the race and come back for the price giving. The organizers could explore other possible ways and/or places to hold the prize giving.

- In terms of ensuring quick and secure access to the finish area for both the participants, supporters and volunteers, the organizers could provide a designated parking area near the finish venue which is only accessible to the above mentioned parties.
- The organizers of the PUFFER should develop a set of accepted minimum standards against which the service delivery of future events can be measured.

5.5.2 Summary of recommendations based on the findings

The following recommendations are made on the basis of the findings with regard to service delivery at the PUFFER endurance trail run.

(1) That the quality of similar research studies can be enhanced if the questionnaire is designed specifically for the event and that not only should a greater percentage of total population of race participants complete the questionnaire but that the study include more of the stakeholders involved in the event.

(2) That leisure event organizers give careful consideration to the development of a set of minimum service delivery standards.

(3) That organizers of unique leisure events such as the PUFFER ensure that they understand the tangible and intangible needs of the customer, or as in this case, the

participants of the PUFFER, especially with regard to seating at the end of the event; shower facilities, parking areas and communication material.

(4) Leisure service organizations should be aware that all their actions play a role and can influence the perception of the quality of the service.

As stated in Chapter One, it is difficult to standardize the services of leisure events like the PUFFER, compared to services such as hotels, banks and restaurants due to the changing context in which leisure services are delivered. However, leisure event organizers, such as in the case of the PUFFER, should make all possible effort to ensure that the service dimensions are relevant to their specific service and that it relates to the expectations of the participants and consumers of their services. These efforts should include attention to both the tangible and intangible aspects of the service.

It was identified that the sole mission of leisure organizations should be aimed at satisfying the participants' needs while participating in a leisure program. Emphasis should be placed on what is important for the user of the service. Such an approach to service quality in the leisure service organization will ensure the continued economic growth and success of the relevant leisure organization. This can be accomplished by installing a set of minimum standards to be used in the service industry. Such documentation can be developed into a standardized practice for the service industry.

5.5.3 Recommendations for further research

For further research on service quality delivery in endurance recreational events, researchers should consider the following recommendations:

- Questionnaires should be designed with the nature and demands of the specific event in mind as that would lead the researcher to include specific issues and questions rated to the event being assessed, while still applying the SERVQUAL model.
- All stakeholders of the event such as spectators, volunteers, marshals and other staff members should be included in the study. This will provide a more comprehensive analysis of the service delivered and the specific service requirements for each of the stakeholders.
- Attempts should be made to have a bigger participating population as this will validate the results more.

5.6 Concluding summary

Although only 33 of a possible total of 124 participants completed the questionnaire, there is valuable information emerging from this study which makes a meaningful contribution to our understanding of service quality of leisure events and the expectation of the participants, especially in unique events such as the PUFFER.

From this study it can be seen that service quality of the leisure service organization is important and does influence the participants' perception of satisfaction of the leisure event or

program. Therefore the leisure organization should do everything in its power to deliver services expected by the participants. The services delivered should address both the intangible as well as the tangible needs of the participants. Although the objectives of this study have been met, limitations regarding the number of participants and the inclusion of other stakeholders in the study were identified and recommendations made for future studies.

The findings of this study show that the participants in the study perceived that the services of the organizers of the PUFFER met their expectations of the event except with regard to the seating arrangement and seating comfort at the finish venue of the race. Consequently it can be concluded that there were no considerable gaps between participants' expectations and the actual service delivered by the organizers of the PUFFER.

This study concludes that the participants in the PUFFER perceived the overall quality of the services at the event as satisfactory.

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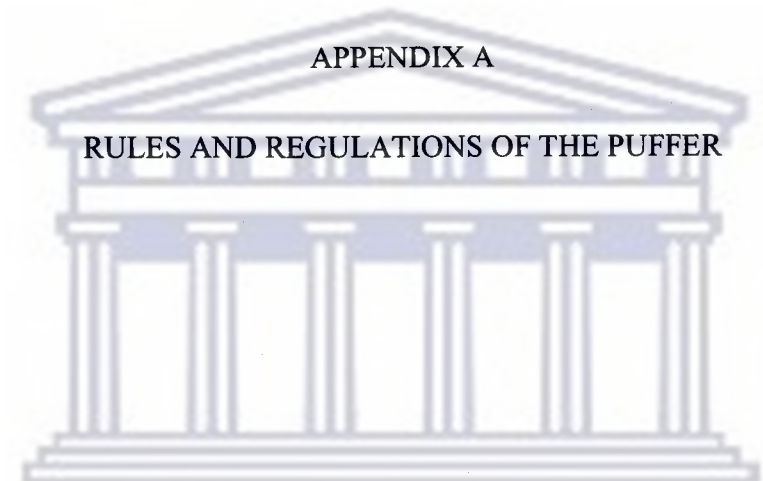
APPENDIX A

RULES AND REGULATIONS OF THE PUFFER



Salomon
Peninsula Ultra Fun Run
PUFFeR

Race Rules and Regulations

The Start:
The starting time is 5:30 am, Saturday, 25 August 2006. Cars must meet at the Cape Point Reserve gate at 4:45 and proceed by bus to the parking area by the restaurant—that's where the race starts. If you're not at the gate by 4:45, you will not be allowed in the reserve!

Be Prepared
Do not underestimate the challenge of this run. Ensure that you are fit and strong. Do not take this run lightly - it is tough, it will be tough on race day and it will push you to your limits – be sure you are ready for the run.
The route will NOT be marked. You should have familiarised yourself earlier with the terrain and route. If not, stick with others - ***especially if you're an up-country runner or novice***. Even veteran PUFFER runners lose their way at times - some novice runners have lost the track completely and ended up miles away from the route. We don't want to have to call out Mountain Rescue!
This cannot be a *race* - the reward is to reach the finish line. Do not attempt to run in areas which are extremely steep and/or rocky. Keep your wits about you - this is especially important on Table Mountain (e.g. Platteklip) where your legs will be tired ... TAKE IT SLOWLY where necessary.

Cut-Off Times
There is a strictly enforced ***13:30 cut-off time at Constantia Nek*** to prevent runners from being stranded in the dark on Table Mountain.
The official race cut-off time is sunset (However, the real cut-off time is when the race organisers leave Ferryman's pub).

"Retiring" from the race

- If you retire from the run, you ***must inform the nearest race official***. Failure to do so could result in a rescue being launched for no reason (Not only might you be liable for any costs, you will be banned for life from participating in the PUFfeR!)
- Runners finishing at Constantia Nek are considered to have completed the "PUFfeR Fun Run".
  A medical doctor may be at Constantia Nek or the Water Bailiff's House (checkpoints9 and 10). Should it be his/her opinion that you should retire from the race, you must accept that decision.

Refreshments
Water and Coke and (hopefully) a sports drink will be provided at regular intervals, approximately every five to seven kilometres. Biscuits, chips and sweets will be available as well at the road-accessible points.
Although all efforts will be made, we can't guarantee that seconds, refreshments or your bags will be at each scheduled station; we are dependent on volunteers. Plan to be able to survive at least one stretch without a refreshment station.

Bags with Personal Food and Kit

You can supply THREE bags with food and other personal gear. The bags are for checkpoints 7 (Silvermine Dam), 9 (Constantia Nek) and 12 (Lower Cable Station/Tafelberg Road). The bags must be marked clearly with your name, race number and the checkpoint number. Bring these bags to the RACE BRIEFING on 23 August. Note that we will endeavour to get your bags back to the finish but they *may* get lost (or get there very late) so don't have anything of value in them.

Your bag for checkpoint 9 (Constantia Nek) should contain raingear, gloves, hat, compass, map and emergency food.

Foul Weather

Unless the weather conditions are absolutely ideal, there will be a ***compulsory gear check at Constantia Nek***. You will be required to take your own compass, map, foul weather gear and emergency rations before being allowed to proceed up Table Mountain. Novices are required to carry a map or cross Table Mountain with a veteran Puffer runner.

In case of foul weather, the race will be re-routed, possibly at the last minute or even during the course of the race. The organisers reserve the right to alter the route as circumstances dictate, or even to cancel the race midway.

Race Numbers:

- You must have your PUFfeR race number visible at the front of your clothing. You don't need to run in club colours.
- Runners can choose their own race numbers, preferably with 4 or fewer digits or letters. Decimals, fractions, and formulae are permissible. You may lose "your" number if you miss a PUFfeR and another runner applies for the same number (except for permanent numbers--these remain "yours" in perpetuity).

  Permanent numbers are allocated after 3 successful completions of the PUFfeR, the Tuffer PUFfeR or the Ruffer PUFfeR (or any combination thereof). Please note that the Tuffer PUFfeR does not count as two PUFfeRs!

Substitutions:

If you have entered the PUFfeR and been accepted but cannot run for any reason, you canNOT nominate another runner to run in your place. Acceptance is based on personal criteria, not like the lottery or ticket system used in other races. Any entry fees paid will be forfeited but, provided that you give early notice of your withdrawal, you will enjoy a "preferential entry" in next year's PUFfeR.

Entry Allocation:

The following priorities (order) are used in accepting entries:

1. Previous PUFfeR winners and VIPs (e.g. RSA president, FHAC chairperson, Comrades winners, Bill Gates, space aliens, etc.).
2. Runners who successfully completed 1 or 2 PUFfeR(s) during the last 5 years.
3. Runners who were accepted the previous year but gave early notice of their inability to participate due to circumstances beyond their control.
4. Novices (to the PUFfeR) – based on the personal runner info provided in the entry form.

   Any runner with a permanent PUFfeR number.

   Please note that, to date, no qualified person who entered any previous PUFfeR before the closing date has ever been turned away – only those who entered after the deadline.Thus there has never been a waiting list (despite rumours to the contrary). However, with increasing numbers of entrants each year, a waiting list may soon be needed – but none exists as yet.

Entry Form and Payment

Entries close 04 June 2006

A photocopied map and detailed route description will be sent in mid-June to accepted entrants. The run is normally oversubscribed so enter early. Entries are processed on a first-come, first-serve basis.

Please do not abuse your personal friendship with one of the organizers or sponsors to try to get in after the deadline. It is unfair, unethical and leaves a sour taste in (y)our mouth.
Please deposit R200.00 directly into the Fish Athletic Account (details below) or send a cheque.

Disqualification (possibly for life):

- You do not attend the pre-race briefing at the Ferryman's Tavern at the Waterfront on the evening of 23 August 2006 .
- You disobey any official, warden, traffic officer or the organisers.
- You continue on if you miss the 13:30 Constantia Nek cut-off time.
- You obstruct, verbally abuse or are obnoxious to other trail or road users or any member of the public.
- Infringement of one of the safety rules, such as not assisting a fellow runner in serious trouble
- Infringement of one of the ecology rules, such as littering (be it as little as a sweets wrapper or squeezy sachet)
- You willfully disturb/destroy any animal or vegetation (excepting mosquitoes and Port Jackson).
- Not informing race officials if you pull out of the race.
  You fail to buy the race organiser a drink when meeting him in a pub ☺

When in doubt: MARTIN rules, OK! ☺

APPENDIX B

DESCRIPTION OF THE PUFFER ROUTE

Salomon
Peninsula Ultra Fun Run
PUFFeR
Route description

SAFETY WARNING: As a result of the nature of the event and the small field it is likely that you will be running on your own along isolated stretches of the route. Although these trails are used regularly and unfortunate incidents are relatively rare, the organisers of the race can not guarantee your personal safety. This responsibility rests with each runner. If you feel uncomfortable about this, please agree beforehand to run with other participants or arrange non-participants to accompany you for sections of the route.'

NOTE: these directions are just a general guideline; things change fast on the mountain. They are NO SUBSTITUTE for your map with compass or your own memory. I recommend the Shirley Brossey maps for most of the route, and the MCSA Table Mountain map for TM. They're available from good local bookshops. Some sections of the route are still under negotiation and therefore subject to change. In general, you are allowed to choose your own route in between checkpoints, except for the Silvermine stretch (where you are NOT allowed to take the Ou Kaapse tar road) and the Tafelberg Road section between Platteklip Gorge and the lower cable car station (before sunset). Erosion paths on the down hill sections (Tokai Forest, Table Mountain) are also strictly out of bounds. The final route (changes) will be announced at the briefing/registration meeting. You are strongly advised to familiarize yourself BEFOREHAND with the various track sections, especially the sections through the Silvermine Nature Reserve and very definitely the Table Mountain section.

Try to run the Table Mountain trail first in an ideal weather situation and then a second time in slightly less favourable circumstances. Do not run Table Mountain in bad weather or solo and, before setting out, leave your route + expected return time with someone reliable.

DEFINITIONS: Road = has hard surface; Track = soft surface but theoretically suitable for 4x4 vehicles i.e. runners can run 2 abreast; Path = soft surface (sometimes very rocky i.e. not runnable) where only 1 person can run at a time (please give way to fellow runners wanting to pass).

All runners to meet outside the main entrance to the Cape of Good Hope Park at 4:45 *sharp* where we will re-group into as few cars as possible ,limited to 50 in order to enter the gate. Late-comers will not be allowed in the Reserve since the Field Ranger cannot issue permits and is under the instruction to allow only one group with a collective pre-issued permit in. We drive to the main parking area at Cape Point where we start at 5:30.

Follow the main road through the Cape of Good Hope Park back to the main entrance. It will still be (very) dark so you may wish to carry a torch. The first 20 kays are gentle roadrunning designed to let you find your stride and warm up gently.

Checkpoint 1 will be at 7,5 km (by the Gifkommetjie turn-off)

Checkpoint 2 is at 13,5 km at the main entrance gate to the Park.

Beyond the gate, at the T-junction, turn LEFT towards Scarborough/Red Hill. This is a nice, flat tree-lined road.

Checkpoint 3 at 21,8 km where you turn RIGHT towards Simon's Town.

Continue the fairly steep ascent up Red Hill for just more than 3 kays. A few hundred metres after the highest point turn LEFT into a small tar side road. (There is a little track shortcut just before Pinehaven turn-off). There is a little

sign "Pinehaven" which is only visible coming from the other direction. If you run past the parking area with sweeping False Bay views on your right, you have run too far, turn back a few hundred metres.

Follow this lekker little tar road for about 2 kays when you arrive at the Brooklands farm (will the usual barking dogs be there?) where Checkpoint 4 will be.

Pass this house to the LEFT and continue with the track, along the base of the Lewis Gray Dam (do not turn right here) and continue straight along the steep track up for 500m i.e. running alongside and then above the Dam. At the top there is a T-junction with a little green reserve sign, where you must turn RIGHT. As you run across the crest, pause a couple of micro-seconds to admire the view of Table Mountain in the distance where you will arrive sometime later today.

Follow the track which makes a left (West) turn down the little valley. At the bottom, a little stream crosses the track. Try to keep your takkies as dry as possible. You then have to zigzag back up the other side of the valley, taking care not to mistake the firebreak (on the right) for the real path. Do not take the righthand track which goes towards the trees down to Da Gama Park. At any time here: when in doubt, take the left turn. At the top of the hill (by the low cairn), take the firebreak path on the right hand, to rejoin the jeep track less than 1 km further. Turn RIGHT (East) to head for Black Hill. Just before you reach Ou Kaapse Weg/Glencairn Free way, there is a T-junction (perhaps the photographer will see you just before you get there (make sure your race number is visible!). At the T-Junction, turn left (downhill) to get to the Glencairn freeway.

You should find Checkpoint 5 about 200 metres further where you meet the road. At the road, turn LEFT to go down to Fish Hoek.

This is a fast 2 kay down hill to the main traffic lights on Kommetjie Road. You should cross VERY CAREFULLY as you are now an ordinary pedestrian in between lots of fast and nervous cars (on their way to shopping pleasures). There will be NO traffic marshall so you must obey normal traffic rules. You continue (straight) along Ou Kaapse without taking any turn-offs. Cross the second set of traffic lights. Also Ignore the Two Oceans impulses that will try to steer you towards Noordhoek but instead plough up Peers Hill (in fact, the peak to your left is slightly higher, it's called the Dassenberg). [Note that there is a short-cut up this hill: just before the "90km maximum speed" sign where the road turns left, there is a track off to the right, follow it for 50m and then turn LEFT following the underground sewerage pipe to the top of the hill - only do this if you have run this before]. From the top it is downhill for a few hundreds of metres to the next intersection (4 kays from the Sunvalley 4-way stop) where you can see the Silvermine Retirement Village on your right.

Continue for another 200 metres where Checkpoint 6 is located at the start of the jeeptrack entrance (old Wagon Trail) to Silvermine (on the LEFT of the road, take extreme care when crossing this road with fast traffic and a short line of sight). Note: you HAVE to take this track i.e. you are NOT allowed to proceed along Ou Kaapse.

Whilst you check your footing, you puff zigzagging up towards Bokkop (about 3 kays) until you get some gentle downhill. When you have crossed the "top", proceed straight ahead (the main track also veers back towards the right) following the track (partly not indicated on the map) and follow this in the general direction of Contanstiaberg (FM-mast, may be shrouded in the mist); ignore any tracks joining you on the right the first 300 metres but take the "gravel" track (left) up instead. After about one and a half kays, it veers sharply right for almost a kay and then, just before you reach the top, it turns into the direction of the FM mast again (i.e. LEFT). Keep continuing in the same direction (follow the FM mast, your nose or compass) on this nice and level (at last) track (remains of the old forest all around you), ignoring all tracks to the left (going up) or right (going down) whilst regaining some of your breath. There is a choice of routes when you almost reach the stream, but all tracks parallelling the river will eventually lead to the parking area close to the dam.

At the Dam wall/parking area Checkpoint 7 is located. Load up on energy bars etc: you'll need it (take some with you)

Follow the main track up in north-westerly direction, heading towards the Constantiaberg with its FM-mast. After about half a kay, turn RIGHT onto the slightly more grassy track and turn left again after another 150 metres. Just before the hairpin bends, there is a small, rocky "shortcut" footpath on the RIGHT (walk this, don't run!) which turns RIGHT just after meeting up at the last road bend. Follow it to the forest where it runs along the (firebreak) edge of the forest in the direction of Elephant's Eye. Follow this for about half a kay where you have to cross the stream bed. (You should see the fire outlook on the ridge ahead). Less than 100m further, you turn right back towards the forest/edge of the ridge where you can follow the "Elephant's Eye". Follow the main path down into the Tokai forest

plantation. STICK TO THE PATH AND DO NOT TAKE THE EROSION SHORT-CUTS or you and your off-spring will be doomed forever, haunted by the Tokai Elephant Ghost and disqualified!

Keep running down the path until you meet up with the (highest level 5) forest road of the Tokai plantation where you turn LEFT and follow it meandering at more or less the same altitude (the 330m contour). When in doubt at any fork on the dirt, choose the left turn-off. (If you do this consistently, you will actually meet up with the Telkom FM-mast tar road, turn right and follow it down to the forest)

.

Vlakkenberg forest/nek: Where the track turns left, rising up towards the Telkom FM-mast (i.e. where it changes from dirt to tar), keep going straight (due west). Somewhere along this stretch there may be a checkpoint (No. 8) but we doubt that we can bring up coke or water, so ensure that you take your own rations with you! 100m further, the track turns right; take the path which continues straight ahead (i.e. it runs horizontally across the saddle). Follow this until it crosses another path on the other side of the "firebreak" (not really visible). Here you turn RIGHT (north) to run up the Vlakkenberg. You climb up to admire the view of the back of Table Mountain and then reflect on how lucky and privileged you are to have to descend a very steep rocky path to lose 300m altitude, only to have to climb it up again at the other side of Constantia Nek.

Take GREAT CARE in going down this path. Also don't get confused by the firebreak which you cross on the way down. A bit further down, you admire the remains and re-sprouting of horrible aliens (the planty kind). The path over the last half kay or so has become very muddled due to the new developments, just try to follow the old route, the track or make your way down in the general direction of Constantia Nek below. When you reach the road which some of you walk on the Two Oceans, turn RIGHT towards Constantia Nek which is only 100m away.

At the circle enjoy the atmosphere at Checkpoint 9 for a while, courtesy of **Hout Bay Harriers**. A marshal will check your kit here: raingear, warm top, (emergency blanket,) food rations. If you don't leave here by 13:30, you will not be allowed up the mountain [in which case your time will be taken and you will qualify for the "Fun Run" section of the run; proceed by other means of transport eg car, helicopter, bike, ... to the Waterfront].

If you are unlucky enough to be allowed through, take the (new) Rhodes Drive to Kirstenbosch but turn off immediately to your LEFT to take the Old Rhodes Drive which will take you up Table Mountain. Don't trust the survey maps nor the "MapStudio" maps to show you how the track goes, but follow your memories. Choose any route (bridle path or the new steps...) up, up, up, up and up towards the first (De Villiers) Dam where you will find a water tap just outside the Wynberg waterbailiff's house (on your right hand side). [*** the best map for Table Mountain is the 1:12500 "Approved Paths on Table Mountain" by the MCSA, available from your local outdoors shop eg Camp&Climb or the Mountain Club of SA office ***]..

There may be a medical check-up here to assess your general physical and mental shape. The marshal has the authority to turn runners back if he is doubtful about your ability to continue. You need to be able to do 50 push-ups and 100 high jumps without pushing your heart rate above 80 pm ☺. 100 m further, leave the concrete track (which turns east/left), and take the hiking path that runs along the eastern side of Table Mountain. A good km further, you'll cross the path coming out of Nursery Ravine. Continue north towards "Breakfast Rock" at the top of Skeleton Gorge another half kay further. (Runners can also run along the jeep track, via Woodhead & Heli Hutchinson reservoirs to Skeleton Gorge, if they wish)

At the Skeleton Gorge junction, keep going north up the mountain, along Smuts Track as indicated by the signpost, instead of going right down (east) Skeleton Gorge (where nice warm coffee and cake is to be had at Kirstenbosch - temptation!) nor west (towards Heli Hutchinson Dam). There is a "bit of a climb" going all the way up to Maclear's beacon which will only become visible at the very last moment. The path is in very good condition with nice steps and wooden bridges, but at many occasions it is difficult to make out where the path really goes, although the newly painted arrows make live a bit easier. Trust your instinct, memory or compass whichever is right. This is the place to curse your parents (they caused you to be alive) and wish the organizers to go to hell (but note that verbal abuse against the race organizers also leads to disqualification, we have little tape recorders hidden along the path).

Congratulations, you've made it to Maclear's beacon, Checkpoint 11 (again without provisions!). Enjoy the hospitality of the **PINENUTS** here.

Set off in a generally (north) westerly direction towards the Cable Car station (hopefully visible). The path is not always clear but at least it is always soggy. There are two paths (follow the yellow footprints). Depending on how you run, you will end up along the ridge at the front of the Mountain with magnificent views. Be careful - you're pretty tired now and the urge to commit voluntary or involuntary suicide by running too close to the edge will be

great. Remember that you will be missing out on some good beer if you fall off the edge. Take it from us that you cannot fly either although in your current mental state you may think otherwise.

There will be a little crevasse just before you get too close to the Cable Car station (where refreshments are on sale when it's open) and the signposts indicates the proper direction (RIGHT) towards Platteklip. This is an extremely steep downhill with many loose rocks, big steps and fairly badly eroded, despite the best efforts of CPNP. TAKE **EXTREME CAUTION**. At least 30% of the field will twist one, two or more ankles here! Do NOT run, WALK slowly, carefully and gently. You are too tired by now to take any risks! If the rocks are moist, the danger is multiplied many times over. **THIS IS A DANGEROUS PART OF THE ROUTE.**

Proceed down to the bottom of Platteklip until you meet up with the Contour path (less than 100 metres above the Tafelberg Road) where you turn LEFT.

About 100 m further you cross the stream and continue along the Contour Path following the direction for "Lower Cable Car Station - do NOT follow the stream downhill towards the Tafelberg Road (unless it's after dark). About a kilometer further, just after the contour path takes you below the cable car cables, you will come to a path crossing.

Take the rock steps on your RIGHT towards the LOWER CABLE CAR station onTafelberg Road where at last you reach Checkpoint 12. No, those are still your legs, it is not really jelly.

Follow the Tafelberg Road from the lower cable car station but be mindful of the traffic! You can short-cut the zigzag of the Tafelberg Road on either side (just after the lower Cablecar Station there are steps down to the next bend; or at the first bend there is an in places tricky & eroded path down).
The Kloofnek traffic "circle" - cross this VERY CAREFULLY: there is a lot of fast traffic here and, because of your exhaustion, you are likely to have lost most of your sense of judgement (as well as your sense of humour). These cars WILL NOT STOP for you, they will flatten you. Take care!

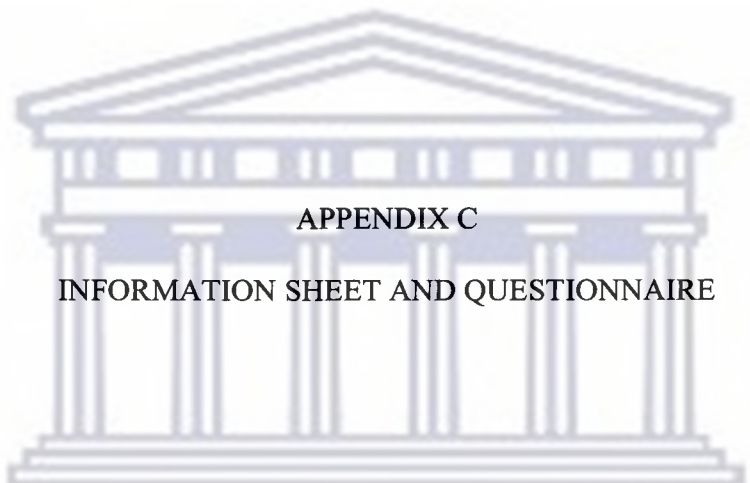
Take the road which leads you to Signal Hill (no, we leave the climb to Lion's Head for another time) along the Lion's Rump. Although there is a lovely path right on top the Lion's spine, you most probably had enough of paths by now and are likely to stick to the road. Keep to the very right of the road (if you walk, walk on the gravel). After slowly climbing/walking up the Lion's Bum (?) for a while there will be a (the first) clump of trees (with a parking spot) on your left, Checkpoint 14 and a track turning off to the RIGHT (by the "no parking" sign and with a chain).

Follow this nice gravel track which first goes down a bit and then levels out to contour around Signal Hill. At the first fork, ignore the right-hand track leading down the hill. A while further, the same(?) track joins you back from the right (ignore) but there is another fork just 50 metres further (just as you start climbing up again) where you should take the RIGHT hand track i.e. the one that leads down (at last); the left hand one will take you back up to the top of Signal Hill. Follow this track for a couple of hundreds of metres where it stops dead against a military-style standard issue nasty bit of fence. Although you can now proceed either way, I recommend following this fence on the RIGHT hand side (but keep your body well clear off the fence, especially if it starting to get dark). There is a cleared bit of path all around this weirdly shaped fenced property and you just keep following the fence, past the main entrance (cross the entrance road), all around until you can clearly make out the houses and roads less than 100 metres below you. Leave the fence (which would actually lead you back up the mountain to your original point of departure anyway) and slipslide down in the general direction of the Waterfront (you can almost smell Mitchell's now). Steer to the RIGHT of the house and slide down the grassy bank right to where the steps are. But be careful crossing the very busy and dangerous Strand/High Level Road; it is safest to detour slightly to the left and cross at the robots. Take the steps down to Boundary Road, which you follow all the way down to the main road leading to Sea Point. There is lots of traffic here (and many motorists are NOT looking at the road but at unspecified distractions on the pavements) so do NOT cross here but turn LEFT.

Follow the pavements (taking care not to bump into stationary pedestrians) until the pedestrian robots (No 187?). Cross (RIGHT) here and follow the road down to the Waterfront. Another 500 metres to go to the circle which you circle (cross the Waterfront road at the pedestrian crossing to be safe!) and then down to the finish outside Ferrymen's Tavern (next to Mitchell's Brewery, the big building on the RIGHT of the Red Workshop, idiot) where you must try to locate a timekeeper (outside if the weather is okay and it's still light, otherwise inside the pub) and announce your arrival. CONGRATULATIONS YOU HAVE MADE IT!

APPENDIX C

INFORMATION SHEET AND QUESTIONNAIRE



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INFORMATION SHEET

SERVICE QUALITY AT LEISURE EVENTS: A CASE OF THE PUFFER ENDURANCE TRAIL RUN

Dear participant

I am a student at the University of the Western Cape currently doing my Master's degree. I am trying to ascertain if participants in endurance events such as the PUFFER are satisfied with the quality of service they receive from the organizers of such events. Also to identify what participants view as quality service. In agreement and with the approval of Fish Hoek running club I therefore request your participation in this study.

Why are we doing this?

Organizers of leisure events need to compete with manufacturing organizations in a very competitive economic market. Leisure organizations should improve the quality of their events if they whish to attract more participants to their events. The more participants they receive the better they are in competing for market share.

Information obtained through this study will provide an understanding of the needs of the leisure consumers and the role of both tangible and intangibles aspects in ensuring satisfaction on the part of the participant.

Who are the participants?

All entered participants of the PUFFER are invited to take part in the study.

What do we expect from participants in the study?

If you agree to participate in this study then please sign the consent form and thereafter complete the questionnaire. You will find the questionnaire in a self addressed envelope in your race bag. This questionnaire should be filled in after participation of the event and should be posted back within 14 days of completion of the race. On reception of the filled in questionnaire consent forms and questionnaires will be separated in order to ensure anonymity.

Will you be informed about the outcome of the study?

Yes, once the study has been completed a copy of the final document including the results and conclusions will be given to the race organizers for reference and perusal of participants.

Can you withdraw from the study?

Yes you may choose not to send back the questionnaire. Only filled in questionnaires received back 10 days after the event will be included in the study. Participation in the study is totally voluntary.

Will your identity be kept confidential?

Yes, as you will see no name or any form of identity has been requested on the questionnaire. Each questionnaire will be given a number at reception in order to assist analysis of the information.

Any further questions?

If you need more information regarding the study please contact me at:
Etienne Joubert
Cell: 082-353-425
Office: 021-680-1549
E-mail: joubertet@cput.ac.za

Alternatively the supervisor for the study, Prof. D. Jones, can be contacted at:
021-959-2350.

In addition to this you can also contact Serena Haupt (organizer) at Fish Hoek Running Club should you wish to confirm any of the details regarding this questionnaire:
Cell: 083-2733-260
E-mail: puffer@fishhoekac.com

If you are willing to take part in the study please read and sign the consent form.

Thanking you in advance

Etienne Joubert

KNOWLEDGE OF SERVICE

1. What services are you familiar with at this event and which did you use?

If aware, please rate service (1 – excellent; 2 – good; 3 – satisfactory; 4 – poor)

SERVICE	USED
Registration	
Information and enquiries	
Security	
Parking attendants	
Ticket booths / Sales	
Refreshments	
First aid / Medical	
Volunteers	
Marshals	
Entertainment	
Entertainment area	
Litter removal facilities	
Vendors	
Toilets	
Other (specify)	

2. Please rate the quality of the following at the event:

	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Poor
Cleanliness				
Secure environment				
Electronic displays				
Atmosphere				
Aesthetics				
Seating availability				
Seating comfort				
Appearance of physical facilities				
Design and layout of start venue				
Design and layout of finish venue				
Shelter				
Accessibility				
User- friendly facilities for disabled				

PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES

1. Please indicate the level of agreement with the following statements about the service quality at the event (select one option for each variable).

(1 - strongly agree; 2 – agree; 3 neutral; 4- disagree; 5 – strongly disagree)

	1	2	3	4	5
RELIABILITY					
Event organisers are efficient					
Services are provided on time					
Event organisers give prompt service to participants					
Event organisers are dependable					
The programme of events is followed					
RESPONSIVENESS					
Event organisers show genuine interest in solving participants problem/s					
Event organisers are never too busy to respond to participant queries					
Event organisers are well equipped to handle problems					
Event organisers are well equipped to handle emergencies					
TANGIBLES					
This event's physical facilities are functional					
This event has up-to-date equipment					
The event marketing materials are eye-catching					

(1 - strongly agree; 2 – agree; 3 neutral; 4- disagree; 5 – strongly disagree)

	1	2	3	4	5
ASSURANCE					
The behaviour of the event organisers instils confidence in the participants					
Event organisers are constantly courteous to participants					
Event organisers have the knowledge to do their job well					
Event organisers treat international and domestic tourists alike					
Event organisers treat locals and tourists alike					
EMPATHY					
Event organisers pay individual attention to participants					
Event organisers deal with participants in a caring fashion					
Event organisers have the participants best interest at heart					
Event organisers understand the specific needs of participants					
The services are provided in convenient business hours					

LENGTH OF STAY AT THE EVENT

Actual length of stay	Minutes	Hours	Days
Intended length of stay	Minutes	Hours	Days

If there is a difference between actual and intended, give the reason for being.

PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED

1. Did you experience any problems related to the event, including service quality?

Yes (specify)	**No**

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

2. Do you have any suggestions for improving the service quality at this event in the future?

_____

_____

_____

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

1. What is your age?

<20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61-70	> 70 (specify)

2. Employment status:

Employed	Unemployed	Student/ scholar	Retired

3. Profession: _____

4. Monthly income in Rands

None	1-1000	1001-2000	2001-3000	3001-4000	4001-5000	5001-6000
6001-7000	7001-8000	8001-9000	9001-10000	10001-11000	11001-12000	>12000

5. Highest education level completed

No formal education	Partial primary	Primary completed	Secondary completed
Certificate/ diploma	Undergraduate degree	Postgraduate degree	Other (specify)

6. GENDER

Male	Female

7. RACE CLASSIFICATION

African	White	Coloured	Indian	Other:

8. Country of Residence (non South Africans)

APPENDIX D

CONSENT FORM

UNIVERSITY of the
WESTERN CAPE

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Private Bag X17 Bellville 7535 South Africa
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Fax : (021) 959-3688
E-mail : vkensley@uwc.ac.za

CONSENT FORM

SERVICE QUALITY AT LEISURE EVENTS: A CASE OF THE PUFFER ENDURANCE TRAIL RUN

I have been informed about the purpose and the nature of the study. I understand that all information will be confidential.

I understand that participation in the study is totally voluntary.

Should I want to withdraw from the study, I can do so at any time without giving reasons. I also have a right to refuse to answer questions and withdraw from the study without any negative repercussions.

Name of participant.....

Signature.....

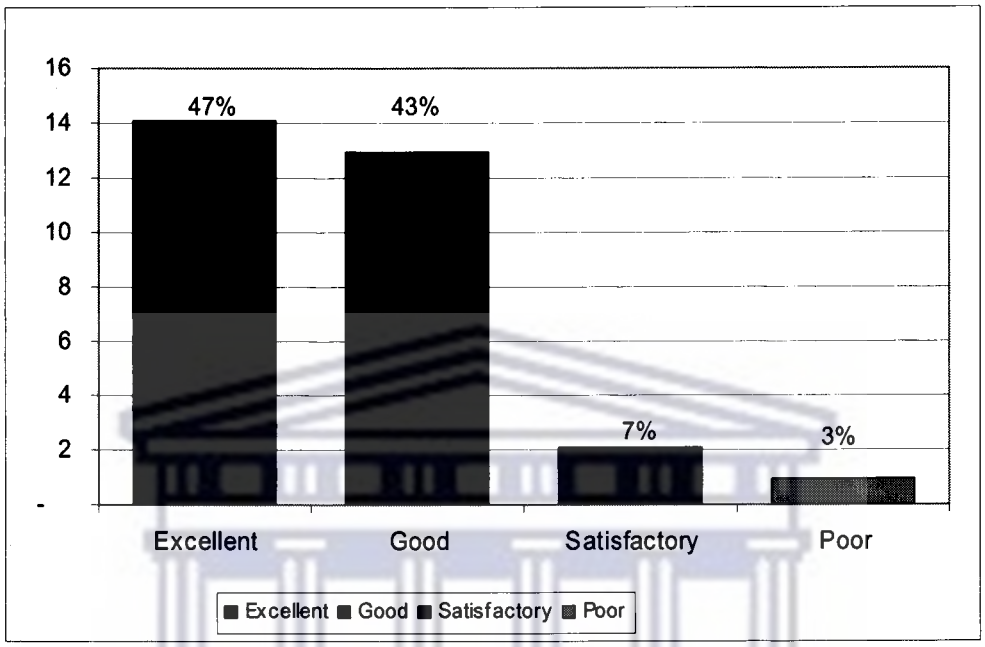
Date.....

APPENDIX E

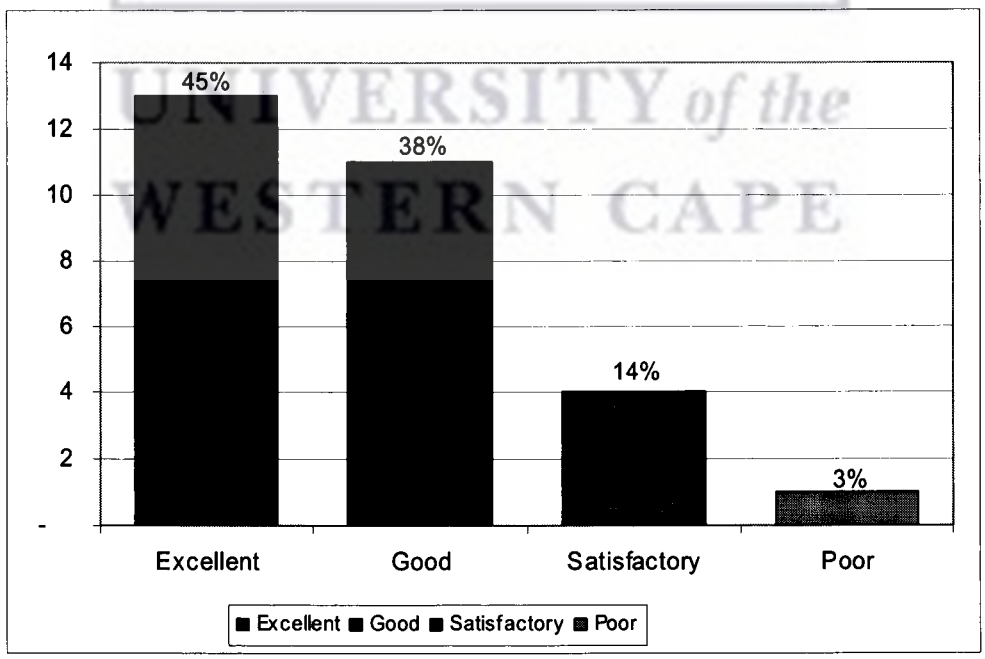
LIST OF TABLES OF TANGIBLE ATTRIBUTES

Tables of individual Tangible attributes of the PUFFER as indicated in Table 4.2

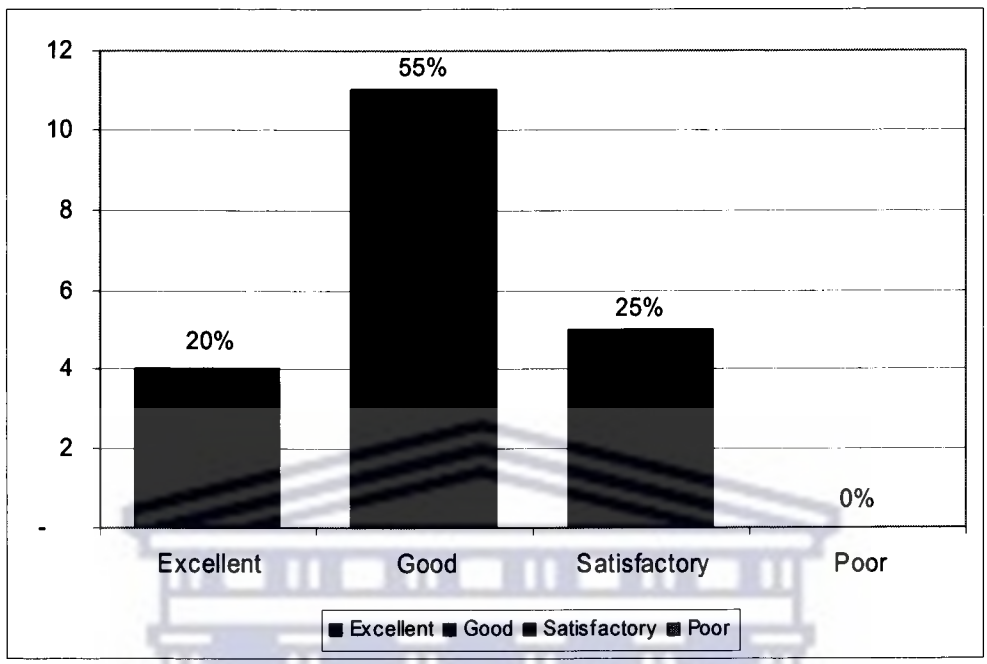
1. Cleanliness of environment



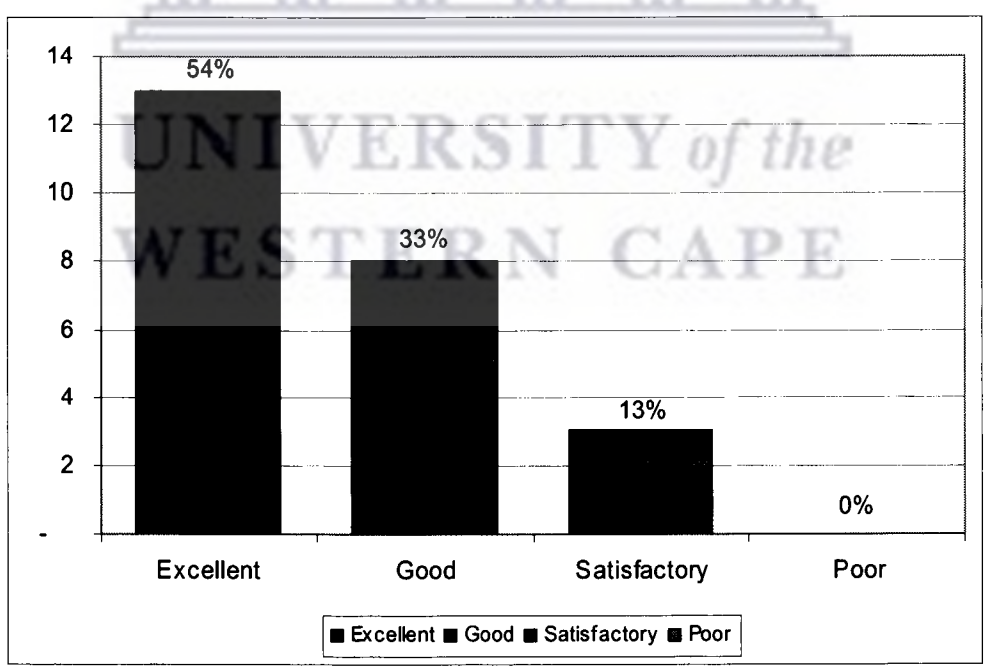
2. Secure Environment



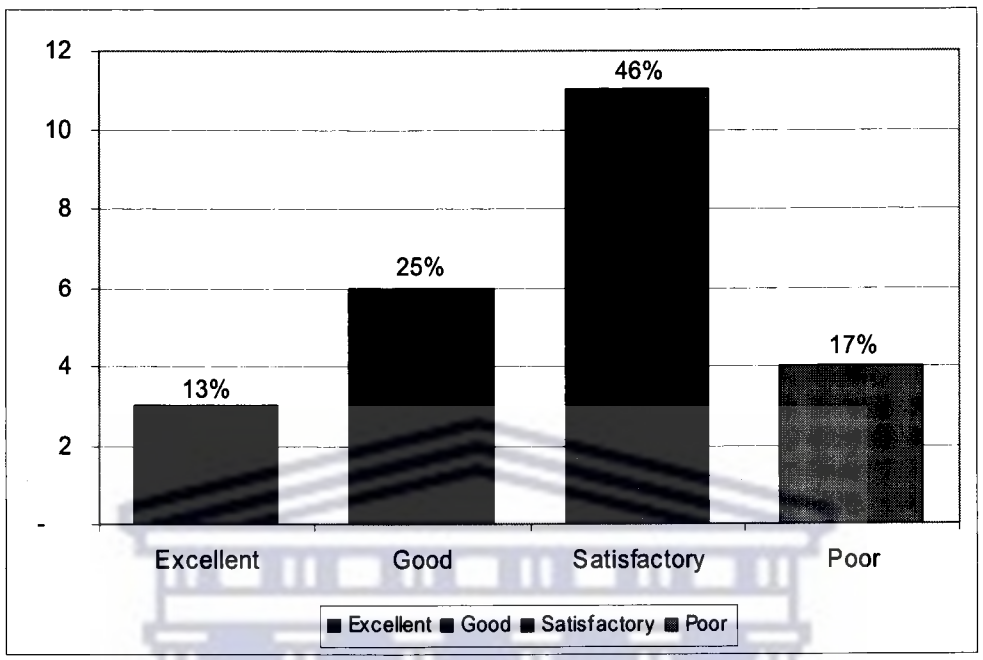
3. Electronic Displays



4. Aesthetics

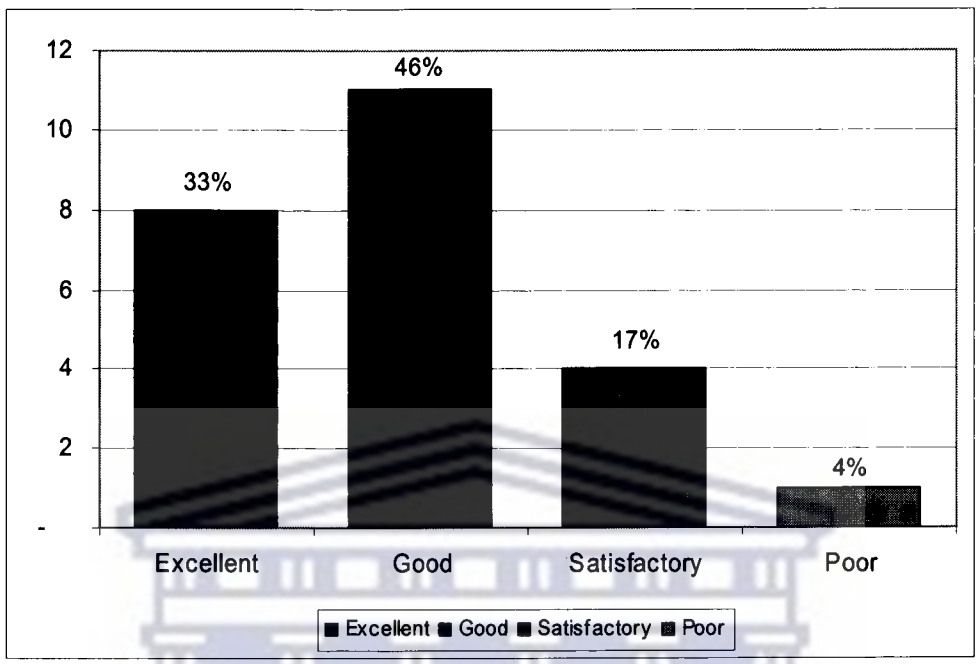


5. Seating availability

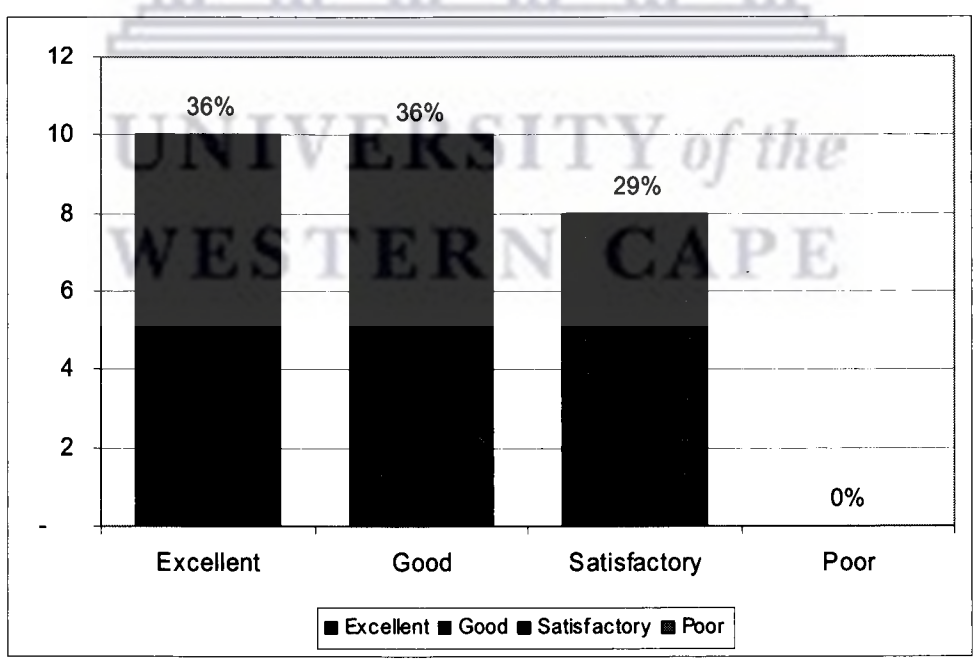


6. Seating comfort

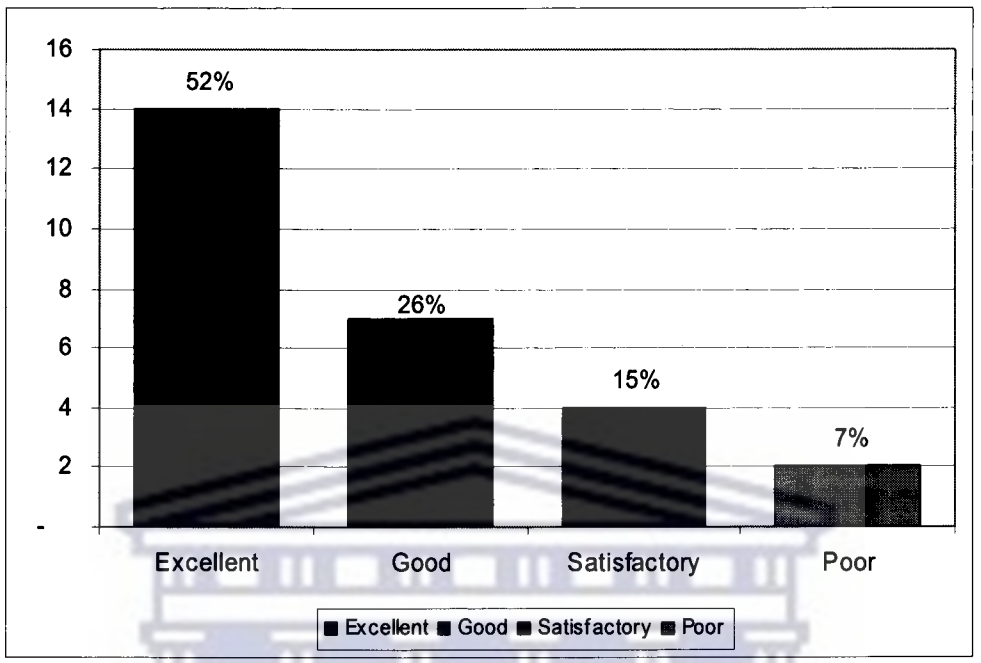
7. Appearance of physical facilities



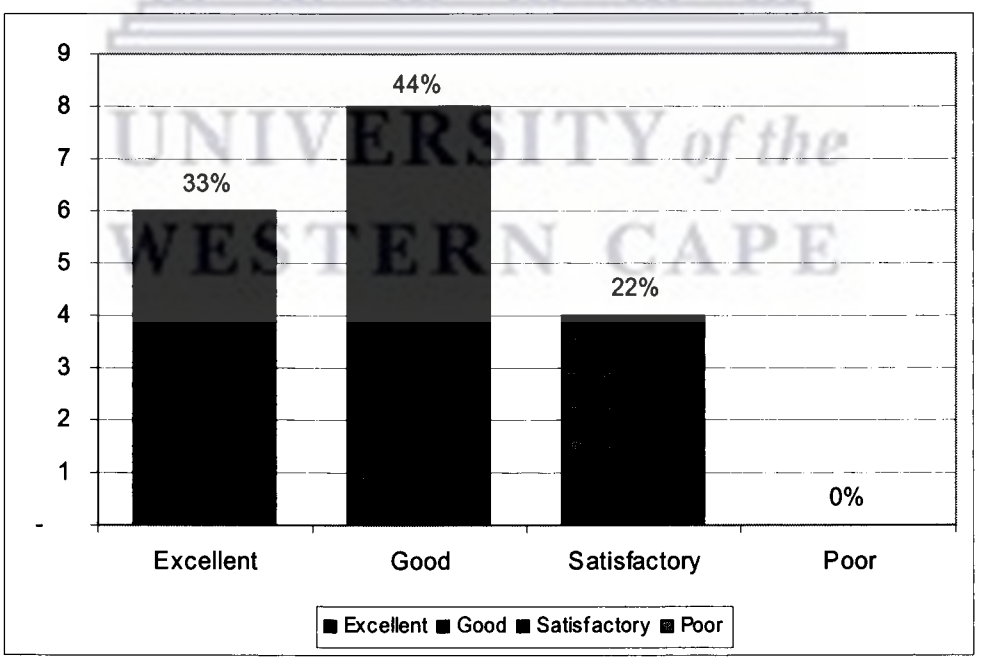
8. Design and layout of start venue



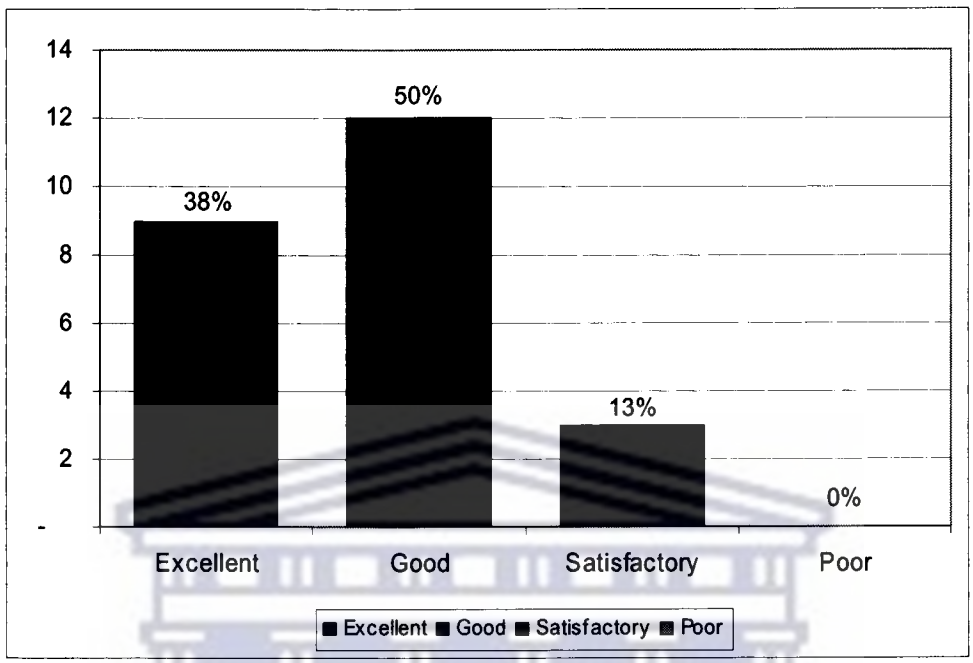
9. Design and layout of finish venue



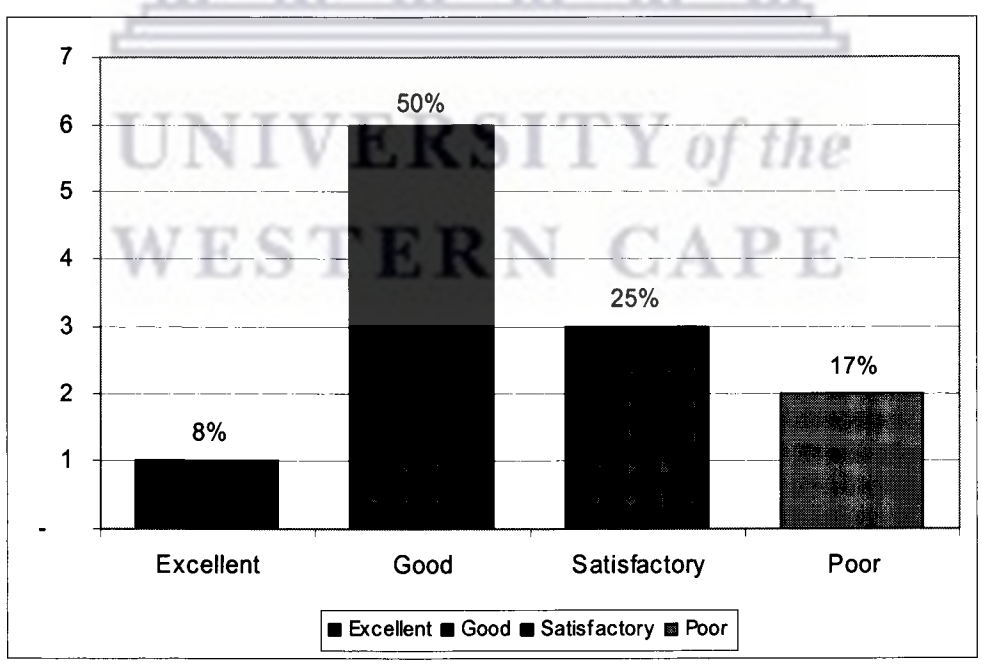
10. Shelter



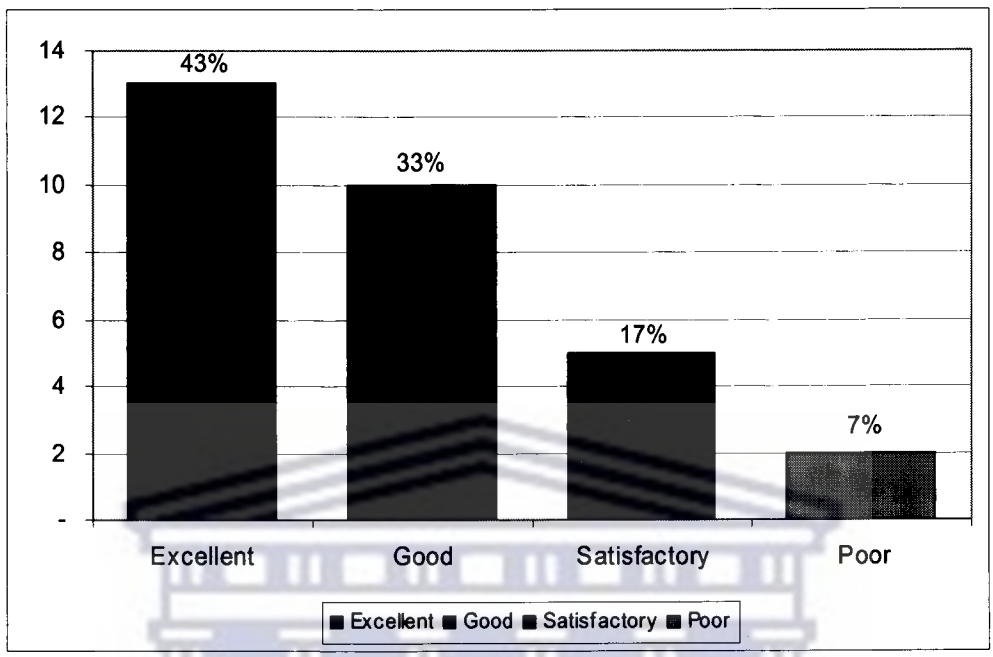
11. Accessibility



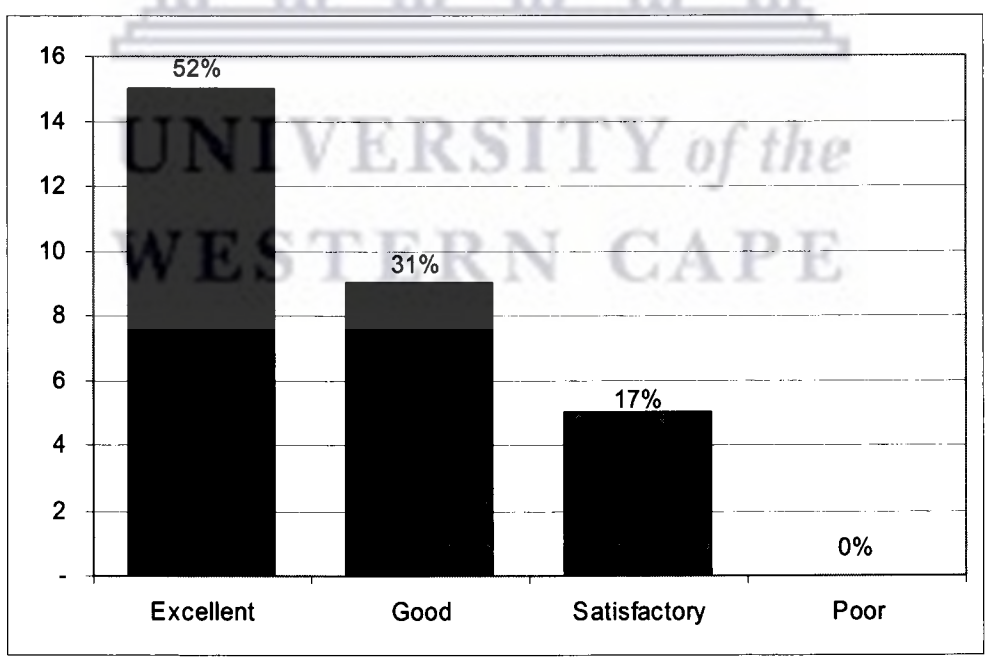
12. User-friendly facilities for disabled



13. Event's physical facilities are functional



14. Event has up-to-date equipment



15. Marketing materials are eye-catching