Applying the SERVQUAL model to describe the satisfaction of the Aviva Company’s employees in Dublin, Ireland, regarding to the canteen service quality in their workplace

Dissertation submitted in Dublin Business School and Liverpool John Moore’s University of part fulfilment for the Master of Business Administration in Marketing degree

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Declaration

I declare that all the content and the effort put to develop this dissertation is entirely my own, except those sentences included in the text in inverted commas which have been referenced with their original source and can be found in the reference section at the end of this thesis. Furthermore, there is no part of this thesis that has been used previously for any other assignment or in support of any education qualification, either at Dublin Business School or any other institutions of learning. Additionally, this material was completely developed under the supervision and guidance of Mr David Hurley which is a Senior Marketing Lecturer at Dublin Business School, in Ireland.

Signed: Juan Carlos Marroquin Brandt

Date: 23/05/2014
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To those who have given their lives fighting for a better Venezuela.
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Firstly, I would like to thank my uncle Rodrigo Brandt because without his support all this lines wouldn’t have been written.

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Abstract

Doing business in today’s economy is going further than simply setting prices and quantities, in fact, in many products and services categories, service quality and customer satisfaction have become extremely important for organizations in order to be more competitive, to grow, and therefore to succeed. For this reason, the purpose of this thesis is to investigate throughout the SERVQUAL model how employees of the Aviva headquarter in Dublin, Ireland, perceive their workplace canteen service quality and how satisfy they are with this service. To achieve this, both primary and secondary research methods were applied. A variety of theories and concepts focusing on service, quality, customer satisfaction, the SERVQUAL model and the catering industry, needed to be examined to provide a proper background for the investigation. In order to collect the data, 100 questionnaires were handled personally by the researcher to the Aviva employees, but unfortunately only 95 were filled up correctly which determined the size of the sample. The analysis of the data was done using Microsoft Excel 2010. It was found out that in general, the service quality perceived by the employees of the Aviva headquarter, regarding to the canteen catering service in their workplace is seen as low, and therefore they are not satisfied with it. This is mainly caused because these consumers presented to have higher expectations of a canteen service quality in comparison to what they actually perceive. Additionally, the results could show to the catering management where failures are, and therefore to take the actions to amend them in order to improve and provide a better service.

Key words: Service, Service Quality, SERVQUAL, Customer Satisfaction, Catering Industry.
Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of the whole dissertation. It contains the Research Background of the investigation as well as its academic justification, a brief description of both Catering Industry and Customer Satisfaction and its justification for being researched, a Personal Justification on the interest of the research, a concise description of the Organisation of the Dissertation, and finally its Scope and Limitations.

1.2 Research Background and its Academic Justification

Doing business in today's economy is going further than setting prices and quantities, in fact, in many products and services categories, service quality has become extremely important for organizations in order to be more competitive and therefore successful (Schneider, Holcombe and White, 1997). Nowadays, organizations are shifting from goods to a service focused management for the main reason that it enhances their competitiveness (Gummesson, 1994). According to Bogomolova (2011), for service provider organizations, service quality and its measurement can be considered as the cornerstone for them in order to analyse their performance, as well as for researchers whose studies regarding to this topic have increased considerable throughout the last decades. In addition, she also points out that service quality measurement is very important for service providers to obtain information related to the levels of performance of the job executed by their top managers. This clearly highlights the importance of service quality and its continuous improvement for organizations regarding to their growth and survival in a day a day more competitive marketplace.

Even though services are relatively new within the marketing field, tons of research has been done about it and mostly related to service quality, being this last defined as the evaluation that relate the judgment of the customers about a service or a product (McCollin et al., 2011). From the point when customers’ needs meet a service, which can be defined by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1988) as the difference between the customers’
expectations and their perception towards a specific service. If what a customer perceives results as lower of what expected, quality is judge as low, and if what customer perceives is superior of what expected, the quality of the service is seen as high.

Bearing this in mind, it is likely to agree that customers undoubtedly seem to play a key role for the success of organizations, especially to those dedicated to services, and customers’ perception of the service needs to be watched carefully by them. In this respect, and according to Homburg, Wieseke and Bornermann (2009), it is really important for organizations to accurate identify the preference and needs of their target market in order to adapt themselves to satisfy these needs, and generating customer satisfaction to fulfil their goals way better than the competition. In addition, recent literature has also shown the importance related to customer satisfaction as a key objective associated to the attraction and the retaining of customers (Garver, 2009), as well as a quite useful standard of performance to any organization because of it relationship as the only source of return on investment (ROI) (Mohsen, Mohammadreza and Majid, 2012). Consequently, customer satisfaction has become a fundamental part for any business; either for producers of goods or service providers, and this is due it is considered as highly connected with their future success or failure.

For these previous reasons, the purpose of this research is to describe and provide an understanding how employees of the Aviva headquarter in Dublin, Ireland, perceive service quality regarding to the canteen catering service provider in their workplace, in order to examine how satisfied they are with this service. It is needed to state that, even though the canteen company allowed the researcher to carry out the investigation they decided that its name has to remain anonymous for the whole document.

1.3 The Catering Industry, Customer Satisfaction and its Justification for the Research

A frequently accepted definition of catering is the provision or service of meals (food and beverage) far away from individuals’ home (Davis, Lockwood and Stone, 1998). Nowadays, in the worldwide market and despite the recession issues, the catering industry is considered by many authors to be one of the industries with the fastest growth rate
(Abdullah, Abdurahman and Hamali, 2013; Hass, 2008). In fact, between the year 1993 and the year of 2003, it was consider as the “boom industry” due to its average global annual rate of service sales had been about 3.2 per cent (Occhiocupo, 2011). In addition, Edwards and Overstreet (2009) point out that the catering industry is one of the major employers in many countries in the world, either directly or indirectly.

According to Occhiocupo (2011), even though that the average American citizen is at the top in terms of consumer expenditure, with almost a 50 per cent of its budget spent on catering services, in Europe, the average spent of a citizen is nearly around 30 per cent of total food expenditure, representing also a great figure in terms of consumer spend. This author also expresses that the catering sales in the old continent represent almost a 35% of the world total, and with an average growth rate of 22% between the year of 1999 and 2003, where the countries of Germany, France and the UK (including Ireland) contributed to even more than half of the total sales in Europe. In addition, a recent research conducted by Lachat et al., (2011) points out that eating out has become a usual fact for Europeans, and regarding to the Celtic country, the average Irish adult on a daily basis has approximately two meal occasions at their workplace and another one in any other place rather than eating at home. Actually, the Irish food service has increased considerably from 2008 to present date (Central Statistics Office, 2013), becoming as a real challenging as well as competitive industry within the country’s economy (Huddleston et al., 2009).

Despite this industry has always been characterized to remain competitive by only two methods: Lowering its prices or by offering continuous deals to attract customers, the aggressive competitiveness and the variety of options for customers have influenced customers’ preferences towards a higher demand of quality in this industry (Abdullah, Abduragman and Hamali, 2013). According to Grigaliunate and Pileliene (2013), despite customer satisfaction and its attention within the catering service field has practically emerged, it has been proven that for these organisations knowing the level of customer satisfaction helps them to set future goals, and to achieve efficiency in their operations and activities.

For the researcher, the great competition faced during the last years by the catering industry both globally and in Ireland might be due to the reason that they are likely to provide quite
similar services and products to their consumers, and a good way for an organization to highlight, being profitable and to differentiate among its competitors in this field is to gain better knowledge and understanding of their customers as well as how these perceive their activities and services (Carpenter and Moore, 2006). In fact, in the food retailing, the experience and the perceptions of the customers are of ultimate importance because they determine where and what will be purchased (Meneely, Burns and Strugnell, 2008). For this reason, the researcher of this investigation suggests that there is an extremely need for the catering service providers to measure their service in terms of quality, because it represents an important matter for their customers at the time of doing their purchasing action in these places.

Undoubtedly, customer satisfaction takes an important place for every organization and this is due it is highly connected with the future failure or success of it. And for this reasons, this research is to provide an understanding of how employees of the Aviva Company headquarter in Dublin, Ireland, perceive the canteen catering service quality provided in the facilities of the building and therefore if they are satisfied (or unsatisfied) with it.

1.4 Personal Justification on the Interest in the Subject of the Research

Even though the academic background of the researcher is based mainly in economics, Marketing has been a discipline that has captured his attention for a long time, and both fields are characterized to have a topic in common: Consumer Behaviour, a field which has always been of a great interest for the researcher, and the desire and willingness to learn to understand it has increased considerably through time. Additionally, the researcher professional background has always been related to the sector of services, and his interest of keep growing professionally in that sector is still latent.

Coupled with the fact that in the service sector the term of quality plays a key role for the survival of organizations. Consumers’ perceptions of services these days are far beyond prices and quantities, they are practically seeking for a service delivered simply the way they want it. The actual job of the researcher of this investigation is in a catering provider company, and for the company as well as for the researcher, an investigation about the perceived quality of the catering service they provide results as a great opportunity because
it would offer an enormous contribution for both the company to keep improving their activities, enabling them to clearly identify important aspects of service quality through their customers’ perceptions and discovering which dimensions need to be improve in case of frailty, and for the researcher to put in practice all the knowledge acquired during this full-time master program, and also to fulfil his desire of keep his professional development growing in the services field.

1.5 Organisation of the Dissertation

This dissertation is composed by 6 chapters and they are listed and briefly described below.

1.5.1 Chapter 1: Introduction
This is the first and current chapter of the dissertation. It gives a brief overview of the background of the investigation and its academic justification, catering industry and customer satisfaction, a personal justification, the dissertation’s organisation, and the dissertation’s scope and limitations.

1.5.2 Chapter 2: Literature Review
This chapter begins with a concise introduction about the significance of the literature review for the investigation, and then is followed by a discussion of the available academic literature, topics, concepts and theories considered as relevant to fulfil the aims of this thesis.

1.5.3 Chapter 3: Research Methodology
This chapter focuses on the methodology chosen for this investigation. Likewise, and in order to outline de details of the methodology used, the model of the Research Onion by Saunter, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) was used to go throughout the research methodology process. Therefore, the chapter provides a broad explanation of the methods used in order to reach the agreed objectives of the investigation.

1.5.4 Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Findings
The chapter highlights the analysis of the data and findings collected throughout the primary research method (questionnaire) conducted during the investigation, in order to achieve the research objectives of the thesis.
1.5.5 Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations
This chapter contains and provide a review about the main findings obtained in the previous chapter, and its relation to the original aim of the investigation as well as the answer of the investigation’s research question. Additionally, it also provides recommendations regarding to the results obtained in the study.

1.5.6 Chapter 6: Self Reflection on Own Learning
This last chapter provides a broad analysis of the author’s self reflection on learning, which is composed by development learning plan of the researcher during the dissertation period and the master degree program, as well as the evaluation of the acquired skills by the researcher.

1.6 Scope and Limitations of the investigation

This investigation has been done with the main purpose of studying the perceptions of the Aviva employees (customers) headquarter in Dublin, Ireland, regarding to canteen catering service quality provided in their workplace. For that reason, the scope of the research is to determine throughout the implementation of the SERVQUAL model if Aviva’s employees of Dublin’s headquarter are satisfied with level of service quality provided by the canteen catering company in their workplace.

In order to achieve this previous scope, the investigation involved surveying 95 employees of Aviva, making use of the SERVQUAL questionnaire developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry in the year of 1988 under the name of “SERVQUAL: A Multiple-Item Scale for Measuring Consumer Perceptions of Service Quality” and adapted to the conditions and purposes of this investigation. Also, a deep analysis of the secondary data available about the field of service quality has been carried out. This included the usage of books, academic journals, papers and the EBSCOhost portal provided by the Dublin Business School library.

On the other hand, during the enforcement of this study some limitations (explained broadly in Chapter 3) were encountered. The first limitation was regarding to time, because the researcher needed to wait for the approval for the questionnaires’ implementation from the management of both companies, and leading to a shortening of the sample size, and
hence some biases in the results. The second limitation is related to the questionnaire responses as it was applied to the customers for a short period of time and this might have led to some misunderstandings and uncertain responses altering the results of the research.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Ridley (2008, p.2) defines the literature review as the chapter of the thesis that is composed of an extensive reference of theory and research that is highly related to the field the researcher is working on. She also points out that, it is an ongoing process that helps the researcher to formulate the investigation’s research questions and also to identify some theories and research studies that might be relevant to adopt in order to assist the researcher in the analysis of the data. Bruce (1994) states that it is an important part of thesis for the reason that it provides the background and justification for the research taken. Therefore, this chapter will highlight those elements of the literature that the researcher has decided to undertake in order to develop the investigation. The elements considered are: the concept of service, quality, product quality, service quality and customer satisfaction, the SERVQUAL model, customers’ expectations and perceptions, and the catering industry and customer satisfaction.

2.2 The Concept of Service

A new definition of service is the one stated by Claridy (2009) as the degree of courtesy and attention provided to those individuals who are pursuing an objective from an organization. However, Jhons (1999) suggests that even though services usually tend to be described as something “naturally intangible”, rather than an object with the opposite nature, this might not be a clear feature after all, and this is due that many services can provide an output that is compound by tangible components such as a product, equipment, physical entity and even staff. In addition to the previous suggestion, a research carried out by Hara, Arai and Shimomura (2009) describes that the service activities are composed basically by two stages: the first one occurs at the moment when the interaction between the customer and the provider of the service is being held, while the second stage takes time when the visible actions (tangibles) are separated from the invisible ones (intangibles) performed by the service provider. A good example for this last assumption is the service
offered by a canteen catering provider, because it involves a wide variety of retailing goods like food and drinks, and at the same time these goods are provide and surrounded by tangible elements such as physical facilities, staff, state of the art and many other. Finally, it is important for organizations that provide services to take into consideration the tangible aspects regarding to quality with the purpose of achieving service quality at a higher level, and therefore, a better level of competitiveness in the marketplace.

After all these different concepts and characteristics of a service, it is quite acceptable to infer that services are present in our daily life and almost everywhere we look at, weather if we go to a lecture class in college or a meal in a fast food restaurant. The global service economy has been growing enormously throughout the years, and more and more developed countries have realised that a huge amount of their gross national product (GDP) is coming from the sectors dedicated to services (Hoffman & Bateson, 2001). For example, the United States, services have become an important element regarding to its economic development, and for the year of 2011 the services industries occupied approximately about a 70 per cent of the country’s GDP (Dotzel, Shankar and Berry, 2013), and likewise, services accounts in most of its national industries tend to reach even more than three-fourths of all their costs (Terzioglu and Chan, 2013). In addition, the European Central Bank (2006) stated that there has been a significant change in the economies of developed countries and this is due to a shift in the employment composition from an industrial sector to a service dominated sector during the last decades, and from the year 2000 many countries involved in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) showed that nearly 75 per cent of its employed citizens were actually working within the service sector. In this respect, Ireland has shown a very well performance regarding to the service sector in the country, which since 2006 until the year of 2012 it has shared to the GDP on average 26 per cent and contributing even more than the industrial sector, and additionally the country’s exports of services has also increased exponentially throughout the last years, being around 60 billion USD for 2005 and almost reaching the high amount of 117 billion USD (doubling its size in only 6 years), matching for a very little margin of the exports of goods (118 billion USD) in the Celtic country (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2013). For people, the occurrence of encounter with services within the marketplace have been increasing throughout the time,
and companies are becoming more and more aware of this situation and the implementation of a set of standards to fit the expectations of the customers are being applied in order to fulfil these expectations (Sivakumar, Mei and Beibei, 2014).

Even though that the traditional 4Ps of the marketing mix play a significant role when marketing products, this approach presents some limitations for managers when applying it to services, and due to an increasingly importance regarding to the way a service can be marketed, a newer and more extended marketing mix focused on 7Ps (price, product, place, promotion people, physical evidence and processes) has been created (Baines, Fill and Page, 2011). In this regard, Gummesson (1994) also argues that this “movement” from the traditional 4Ps marketing mix into the 7Ps approach is extremely important for the service firms, and this is because it reinforces and at the same time creates an interactive relationship between them as the service provider and the customers throughout different strategies such as the innovation of their processes, which brings in the long-term customer satisfaction and furthermore their retention. This previous arguments express how primordial customers are for services organizations, and also the importance for these last group to look after a method that allow them to measure the quality of their service and how it fits both the expectations and the perceptions of their customers.

In a research made by Cheng-Hua and Shiu-Chun (2012), they stress that the in the catering industry are 3 several factors (ambient condition, the spatial layout and its functionality, and the symbols and artefacts) and attributes that influence in the customers’ perception of the service provided. But additionally, the authors also point out that the concept of service within this industry should be addressed more carefully from the side of the perspective of the customer and this is due they are the ones that perceive and experiment it, and therefore decide over the success or failure of the catering provider. In this regard, Johns (1998) suggests that the perception of services is different by both the customer and the service provider; for the first one, is considered as life experience that involves elements such as emotions, choices, needs and so on, while for the service provider it tends to be seen as a process per se, a process that involves a variety of factors like personal interaction, ambience, delivery and interpersonal performance, all these linked to the service interaction
with the staff and the clients contributes to customer satisfaction regarding to the service experienced.

This current investigation is looking at the catering service provided to the employees within the facilities of the Aviva company headquarter located in Dublin, Ireland. The author is considering both measurable and tangible elements of this catering service, like for example the staff, the facilities, the products, the equipment which are likely to influence in the perceptions of the customers.

2.3 The Concept of Quality

During the last three decades, organizations have focused on an important issue which is the term of quality, an element that has become more and more important due to the increasing competitiveness in markets, and also being considered as a factor merely important for the success (or failure) of any business (Battini et al, 2012; Molina-Castillo et al, 2013). Additionally, Battini et al., (2012) point out that quality can be seen from two perspectives: the productive and customer perspective; the first one expresses that quality depends on the correct production of goods at the first time, whilst the second perspective is highly related to the failure of these goods. Although the word quality has become one of the most used and heard these days, and there has been done plenty books, articles, and even journals research about this topic, the truth is that the understanding (and hence, its definition) of it is still being very complex. In fact, some researchers have argued that quality has been defined in so many different ways that there isn’t a universal definition for such word (Hardie and Walsh, 1993; Golder, Mitra and Moorman, 2012; Schraeder, 2013). As a mere fact, some definitions of quality are going to be quoted below:

“Quality means pleasing consumers, not just protecting them from annoyances” (Garvin, 1987, p. 103)

“Quality is perhaps the most important and complex component of business strategy. Firms compete on quality, customers search for quality, and markets are transformed by quality” (Golder, Mitra and Moorman, 2012, p.1)
“Quality is composed by 2 aspects: the cultural and the technical aspect, and because of that it does not make any exception in terms of cultural diversity” (Horațiu-Cătălin et al, 2013).

“Even though quality can be defined in many different ways it is usually described as the meeting or exceeding of customer expectations, and it is compound by six principles: continuous improvement, empowerment, teamwork, data usage for decision making, problem solving and at last customer satisfaction” (Brown, 2013).

“Quality is defined by a variety of global dictionaries as an attribute that indicates the level of excellence or the degree of satisfaction perceived by people while they experiment either a product or a service” (Rotaru, 2012).

“In operations and quality management, quality tends to mean the efficiency of internal processes in the strategic business unit, and focuses on how quality is accomplished” (Molina-Castillo et al, 2013, p. 384).

As can be seen, all of the definitions stated above may share some similarities as well as differences, and therefore, pointing out the very views that can be attributed to such word. For this current investigation, the researcher has decided to see quality from two perceptions: from the quality of the product (food, drinks, and so on) and from the service quality one (ambience, service, staff, customer service and many others). Consequently, almost all of the previous definitions are very important to this thesis due to the mention they make of services and products and the extremely ability both have in order to influence in the satisfaction of the customer when their quality is high. In Addition, and according to Wicks and Roethlin (2009) some of the quality definitions are primarily focused on a set of diverse five categories and/or characteristics. These five categories are: (1) transcendent definitions. Which basically refer to terms that go far beyond a logical description and therefore their measurement. (2) The product based definitions. These express that quality is able to be measured by objective attributes of the product or service. (3) The definitions based on users. It concerns that quality is a measure of customer satisfaction, which makes it partially subjective. (4) The Manufacturing based definitions. They reflect the existing relationship between quality and its capacity to fulfil specifications.
and requirements. (5) The definitions based on value. This is the last of the categories and it refers to those definitions that describe quality as related to costs.

Other considerations related to quality is the one highlighted in the research made by Golder, Mitra and Moorman (2012), in which they see quality as an integrated framework comprised by three different processes: (1) the quality production process. This one takes place during the moment when firms make use of both attribute designs and process design in order to convert their inputs resources into the attributes that customers are looking for. (2) The quality experience process. It occurs at the moment when firms deliver their outputs (or attributes) to their customers and these ones perceive them throughout motivation, emotions and expectations, bringing as a result movement from customer experience to what the customer is really experiencing. (3) The quality evaluation process. The third and last part of the framework and it takes place when the firm’s customers are comparing the perceive attributes of the product (or service) with their actual expectations of it, being a crucial moment for the organization, because it success (or failure instead) highly depends on it once more.

According to Elg et al., (2011), nowadays one of the most important elements for firms in order to reach high levels of competitiveness in the marketplace is throughout quality, and its continuous implementation and development within all their operational processes such as production, manufacturing and also while providing a service. These authors also highlight that managers must believe in the power that quality and its improvement throughout the time can provide to guarantee elevated levels of profit in business. And from this point, the researcher of the current investigation has deducted two main kinds of quality; the product and the service quality (for being present in a catering service provider), and both of them are going to be analysed in order to understand their similarities a differences.

2.4 The Product Quality

According to a recent investigation carried out by Fitzsimmons and Fitzsimmons (2011), the distinction between a service and a product is not longer clear any more, and that is because most of the manufacturing processes are likely to contain a segment of service, a
segment that a deal with a customer is needed, bringing as a result the delivery of a product throughout a service. Additionally, these two authors also estate that as service operations are acquired by organizations in order to become a great competitor, these should focus on both aspects of quality: the technical aspects and also the functional aspects; while the first one is about what the customer is finally receiving, the second aspect refers to the technical components and the way they are being delivered to the customers.

Even though the previous statement seems to be a bit aseptic regarding to an existence difference between products and services, some researchers still see it from a different perspective, for instance and according to a very important paper carried out by Garvin (1987), there are 8 dimensions of product quality that for customers are critical at the moment when they are looking after a specific product, and these dimensions are stated as follows: (1) performance. It refers to main characteristics of a product, what the product can really do. (2) Features. This is the second element and it is considered as an extension of a product’s performance, those features that supplement the basic functions of the product. (3) Reliability. For many people, this dimension can be one of the most important because it refers to the possibility of failing of a product within a certain period of time. (4) Conformance. This dimension is about how a product is design under the purpose of meeting some established standards by market regulations for instance. (5) Durability. It basically refers to the amount of times that a product can be used before it becomes useless, in short, the life of a product. (6) Serviceability. This is the sixth dimension of product quality, and it is about a firm reacts (courtesy, speed, ease of repair, among others) before the presences of a product’s malfunctioning issue. (7) Aesthetics. This is considered as one of the most subjective dimensions, for the mere reason that it involves the way that individual preferences can judge over products features such as the way it looks, the way it feels, its taste, how it smells and so on. (8) Perceived quality. This is the last of all the quality dimensions and it is also a quite subjective one, and this is due to manner that consumers often measure the attributes of a product against a product of similar features. Altogether, and even though this investigation refers to a catering service provider these eight dimensions are very important, and that is because consumers perceive the quality of the products offered by the catering provider and bringing as a result a way of measure the quality of that service.
Other essential (and newer) considerations about a product and its dimensions are the ones made in a research by Molina-Castillo et al (2013), in which the authors express that even though the dimensions of quality can be seen differently from an operation management point of view, or a quality management view, a marketing view and of course, the consumer view, it can be structured into only two dimensions: the external quality and the internal quality. The internal quality is based on customers and its perceptions of the plausible attributes of a product like its price, the brand, warranty and many others. While the dimension of the internal quality point of view of the product refers to its intrinsic cues, for example the process and engineering design used while a product is being made with the purpose of achieving its objective regarding to quality.

For this current investigation, the researcher has decided to adopt the definition of quality of user-based, which describes quality as subjective because it is completely related to the perception of the customers, and for the main reason that quality is evaluated by people and hence, it is the most proper scheme to evaluate and examine quality and its dimensions (Minjoon and Shaohan, 2010).

**2.5 Service Quality and customer satisfaction**

The frequency and the variety of encounters between customers and services in the marketplace has increased exponentially as the time went by, and with it, its interest from scholars and managers during the last years, and they have being focusing on its various aspects regarding to the way a service is delivered and also on how it is perceived (Sivakumar, Mei and Beibei, 2014). Firms dedicated to services have put efforts to set standards for the diverse elements of the service that they deliver, while on the other hand, customers are creating expectations from the different aspects they perceive from these services. In this regard Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1988) have clearly expressed that a precondition for a firm to achieve success within the marketplace is by the delivering of superior service quality in comparison to its competitors.

Service quality has been defined and operationalised by many researchers under the terms of what consumers really value in an encounter with a service provider (Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, 1988; Farrell, Souchon and Durden, 2001). According to Bogomolova
service quality is very important for the fact that its measurement is the basis of performance for service providers. Nowadays, service quality has gained such relevance among companies all around the world for the key reason that it is able to provide the opportunity to achieve competitive advantages and therefore bringing customer satisfaction. Ghylin et al (2008) also mark that those service companies who clearly understand a definition of service quality are capable of providing their service with a higher quality which is likely to bring as a result an increased level of customer satisfaction, and with it customer loyalty and the its success, and additionally Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman (1991) suggest that service quality by creating the retention of customers may also create an impact on the way customers behave and this can be both detectable and measurable.

For this investigation, the service quality definition considered is the one of Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1985), which is the difference between the expectations of the customers before receiving the service and their actual perception when the service is perceived. According to Meirovich and Little (2013) customer expectations has become an important factor of understanding in the marketing field for a long time, and they can be defined as the various standards against which customers measure the performance of the providers. Another meaning of customer expectation in service quality literature is regarded to the desires or wants of the customers towards a service provider (Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, 1988). Regarding to this, Asutonberg, McCleary and Swan (1996) strongly state that the expectation of the customers can be used in order to evaluate service quality and this is because when performance surpasses their expectations quality is high, and the exact opposite takes place when the performance does not meet the customer’s expectations.

On the other hand, and regarding to the customers perceptions of a service, it can be described as the perception of an individual concerning to the outcome and the process of such service; being the outcome the quality or the value added, while the process refers to the role play by the consumer (Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, 1988). Also, the perceive quality has been defined as a kind of attitude that might be similar but is not the same that the feeling of satisfaction, and it comes from the consumption of both expectations and perceptions of the performance, which means that better way to know how customers perceive service quality of the catering provider in their workplace is throughout better
understanding of the attitudes of the consumers. In the situation of the catering provider, this investigation is looking forward not only to study and learn about the variety of elements related to the perception of service quality by customers, but also how this service quality can be measured and therefore being able of provide a way to improve it (If it is needed to) with the purpose of bring customer satisfaction.

According to Scotti, Harmon and Behson (2009), the pursuit of quality by consumers in the service sector has become imperative established, and for those customers who are continuously seeking for high levels of quality both in services and products have become way more challenging and also fewer tolerant to “failures” in quality perception. These three authors also make mention that the service provider’s employees are likely to influence on the service quality perceived by the customers, which supposes that service quality is highly judged on how it is finally delivered at the moment of the service process and its last result on the perception of the customers.

Customer satisfaction has been recognized as an important topic within the marketing field due to its importance as a set goal for all organizations and the realizations of its vital role has originated innumerable amount of research about for years (Yi, 1990). Customer satisfaction has been defined by Cronin and Taylor (1992) as the positive or negative experience of a customer regarding to an encounter with a particular service, whilst Negi (2009) states that customer satisfaction can be described as a feeling that appears when customers compare their expectations to what they finally received, and Yi (1990) considers it simply as an attitude. All these assumptions lead to a not general definition of customer satisfaction but to a fact that is purely on the customer’s experience towards a product or a service.

Researchers have found that a positive impact on customer satisfaction within the service sector can strongly influence in the creation of customer loyalty towards the service, which is also at the same time highly connected with the success of the company or conversely its failure (Bion, 1993), and also it can be used as a good indicator to predict the future profits of any organization (Reichheld and Sasser, 1990). Therefore, it is not surprising that a “must do” strategy for the firms provider of services is to understand and to provide high levels of service quality with the main purpose to have a better opportunity to achieve a top
position in the marketplace and in a more effective way, and this is due to the presence of a loyal customer for the main fact of being satisfied, which has the characteristics of a better level of purchase and a higher willingness to pay and repurchase, influencing positively by word of mouth recommending the company and hence determining its success (Cronin & Taylor, 1992). In this regard, Wicks and Roethlin (2009) point out that organizations that are looking forward to improve their processes to satisfy their customers in the best possible way are likely to show high levels of customer retention (customer loyalty) and therefore higher levels of profitability. For this reasons, the knowledge of the comparison between customer expectations and perception would be helpful to keep customers with high levels of satisfaction.

For this study, the Aviva employees are the chosen ones to evaluate the service quality of the canteen catering provider in their workplace, bearing in mind a variety of important quality attributes in the service offered, which are likely to indicate the customers’ level of satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) and hence an opportunity for the catering service provider to take any improvement if needed.

2.6 The SERVQUAL Model

Even though the efforts to define and to find a way to measure quality in the good sectors have become larger and larger throughout the time, this knowledge is not enough in order to understand service quality (Garvin, 1983). As explained previously, there is no concrete definition of service quality and many authors have described it in many different ways. But this has not been a major issue for authors in order to find a method that allows them to measure the quality of a service perceived by the consumer.

In this regard Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1985) have described service quality as the difference or the gap between the expectations of the customers prior have the service and the perceptions of the customers of the service offered. These three authors have been important within the field of service quality and its measurement, for the reason that in recent decades, organizations are trying to evaluate their service performances from the point of view of their customers, and in response of it, the authors have developed valid statistic instruments to accomplish these systematic evaluations, which have been
extremely successful by measuring the consumer’s evaluation of the service quality provide in different industries such as product repair and maintenance, retail banking, credit card, securities brokerage and some others. This model has also identify 5 different gaps that are capable of generate an impact on the way that customers evaluate the quality of a service, and this gaps are shown as follows (Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, 1985):

Gap 1. The consumer expectation-management perception gap: this first gap arises when firms dedicated to services might not recognize which elements are able to indicate a high level of quality to consumers beforehand, and therefore, which are the key features that a service must have in turn to meet the needs of the consumers, and also what sort of performance these features need to have in order to provide a higher level of quality service.

Gap 2. The management perception-service quality specification gap: this gap takes place at the moment when the firms and their executives become aware of the wants and needs of the customers but they cannot find the perfect way to fulfil these needs, and this is due to some factors like market conditions, resource constraints, management indifferences among others.

Gap 3. The service quality specifications-service delivery gap: this third gap occurs when even though the service firms can have an existence strategy to achieve a well service performance as well as treating customers in a proper way, the high quality of the service performance may not assured. These service quality problems are very much related to the firm’s employees and the way they get along the customers, which results as a very difficult task for the organization to maintain standardized quality.

Gap 4. The delivery-external communications gap: this fourth gap expresses that different communication tools such as media, advertising, public relations and many other by a firm are capable of affecting the expectations of the consumers. Therefore, and due to important role that expectations play in consumer perceptions of service quality the organizations must not use these tools and promise more that they can actually deliver, because this will bring a raise in the first expectations but afterwards a lower perception of quality.
Gap 5. *The expected service-perceived service gap*: this is the fifth and last of all gaps and it supports that the best way to achieve a good service quality is when the expectations of the customers are actually met or even exceeded, and hence the customers judgement of a high or a low service quality will always depend on the way of how customers perceive the real presentation of the service and how they were expecting it. This investigation only focuses on this gap because is the one related to customers, while the fourth previous gaps focus on the organization.

Additionally, in 1985 the American researches Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry indentified 97 attributes that had the ability to generate an impact on service quality, and they were very important in order to asses both customers’ expectations and perceptions on the service they are perceiving. All of these items were divided into ten dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, communication, credibility, security, competence, courtesy, understanding/knowing the customer, and access, and these first dimensions are considered as the basic structure to assess service-quality. But it wasn’t until the year of 1988 when they purified these 10 previous dimensions and finally developed the well known SERVQUAL model, which is an instrument conformed by 22 items (22 for customers’ expectations and 22 for their perceptions) and a seven point scale from “Strongly Agree” as a seven (7) to a “Strongly Disagree” as a one (1), and from the points two (2) to six (6) no other verbal label. It was made to assess and study the customers’ perceptions of service quality in any service and retailing firms in the service sector, which plays an important role in order to assess profitability. These 22 items are decomposed into five different key dimensions, which are (Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, 1988, p. 23):

1. **Tangibles**: the physical facilities, equipment, and appearance of personnel
2. **Reliability**: the ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately
3. **Responsiveness**: the willingness to help customers and provide prompt service
4. **Assurance**: Knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence
5. **Empathy**: caring, individualized attention that the firm provides its customers
The three first dimensions remained without being discarded, but assurance and empathy which are the new two dimensions are responsible of containing seven of the previous dimensions (communication, credibility, security, competence, courtesy, understanding/knowing the customer, and access) of the scale prior purification. The scale was first time used in four different service industries, such as banking, credit card, repair and maintenance company and long-distance telephone company to assess its reliability, in which the instrument resulted as highly reliable and hence quite valuable to achieve service quality measurement.

The SERVQUAL model is described by the authors as “a concise multiple-item scale with good reliability and validity that retailers can use to better understand the service expectations and perceptions of customers and, as a result, improve service” (Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, 1988, p. 30). Additionally, they also state three potential aspects of the scale: (1) it offers more value if it is used at regular intervals instead of only once (which is not the case of this current investigation), (2) it can measure a given quality of a firm, and also an average score throughout its five dimensions, and (3) also determine how important is any of the five dimensions on influencing the overall quality perception of the customer. A diagram provided by Mukesh, Fong Tat and Amat Tap (2009) of how to measure service quality using the SERVQUAL model is shown below:

![SERVQUAL Dimensions Diagram](image-url)

**Figure 1: Measuring service quality using SERVQUAL (Mukesh, Fong Tat and Amat Tap, 2009)**
The diagram above also expresses the gap 5 (the expected service gap) which is the difference between the perceived service and the expected service by the customers, being this expectation highly influences by different external factors.

Although the previous diagram was used to determine the perceived quality of a group of Malaysian banks, it is still very useful for this investigation but some changes have to be done in order to adapt it to and moreover find the answer to the investigation’s research question and hypothesis. The context of this thesis is the catering service, and the SERVQUAL model is used with the purpose of assessing the satisfaction of the employees of the Aviva headquarter in Dublin, Ireland, towards the canteen catering service quality provided in the company facilities. In addition, the author also believes and makes usage of the 5 dimensions (pointed previously) of the original SERVQUAL model, plus an extra dimension; “groceries”, and this is because they are the main reason for customers to go to a canteen (or a catering service provider) and they are very significant for them regarding to the perceive quality of the catering service. Also, the investigation’s instrument (questionnaire-see appendix 1 for details) beside of fulfilling the SERVQUAL model dimensions with its respective items, it contains has two additional questions; (1) gender and (2) age. After all these descriptions, the conceptual framework for this investigation can be expressed as follow:
To sum up, the SERVQUAL model adopted for this investigation in order to measure the service gap is composed by the five basic dimensions (tangibles, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance and empathy), plus the added dimension of groceries, which leads the researcher to a survey instrument of 48 items: 24 items for expectations, 24 items for perception, plus 2 demographic questions of gender and age (see appendix 1 for further details).

2.7 Customer Expectations

Customer expectations are described as the variety of standards set by customers in order to assess the performance of the provider (Meirovich and Little, 2013). Similarly, Customer expectations are considered as a key determinant of how the service interactions with providers can be evaluated (Trisga, 2013), and in the services field, its understanding and these expectations causes are extremely vital in order to manage how to deliver quality in a specific service (Calvert, 2001).

According to Trisga (2013), customer expectations are based on a diversity of elements, and they can be arranged in two categories: expectations 1 and expectations 2. The first group is composed by customer previous experience, word of mouth, customer perceived service, customer needs, firm communications, brand and price; while the second group is simply an update of the first one plus experiential clues. However, Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1998) state that customer expectations are not viewed the same way by both satisfaction and service quality literature. In fact, in the satisfaction literature, the expectations of the customer are thoughtful as a prediction by consumers of what might happen whilst in a transaction, whereas in the literature of service quality they are seemed as the basic desires of a consumer towards a service, which is the difference between what a service provider “should offer” rather than it “would offer”. In addition, these authors also mention that customers’ expectations tend to be not precise, include some levels of uncertainty as well as having temporal dimensions.

For this current study, the researcher has decided to define expectations as the anticipation of the customers of the capacity of performance of such service or product, influencing on the purchase decision of the customers, and also serving as a reference point (or standard)
against which the performance of a service can be evaluated both during and after the consumption process (Tam, 2007). And the reason of this choice is because it is vital to understand and also to measure their expectations, with the aim of identifying the existence of any gaps while delivering service quality and the levels of satisfaction it can provide.

2.8 Customer Perceptions

Customer perceptions have been described by Bitner et al. (1997) as a person’s perception of something viewed, and it is not standard because it varies from person to person, due to the different beliefs that people might have towards products and/or services. While Douglas and Connor (2003) said that customers’ perceptions towards a service is based primarily on what they are actually getting from it.

According to a recent study from Titko and Lace (2012), they express that from a manager point of view, it is very important for organizations to focus on how much profitable value can they obtain from their customers’ perceptions regarding to the service they provide, because if they don’t, they are able to become unsustainable within the competitive environment. In addition, Kothari and Lackner (2006) point out that customers don’t buy services and products, in fact, they buy different attributes such as value, product performance, experience, accessibility and costs; and those organizations that know how to provide these attributes in an efficient way to their customers are likely to achieve a long-term profitable growth.

In this regard, Kotler (2003) states that customers choose to buy from those organizations that offer them the highest perceived value, and organizations can build from these interactions competitive advantages. Besides, and according to Chang and De Run (2009), customers’ perceptions are extremely related to their judgement, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty, being this last element a good provider of a sustained competitive edge to any organization. They also stress that, to organization a good way of retaining customers is through the meeting of customer perceptions, with purpose of keeping a loyal customer, satisfied and furthermore high levels of performance in the marketplace.
This study is based primarily on the inconsistency (if any) between the expected service and the perceived service (the 5th gap of the SERVQUAL model exposed previously) by the employees of Aviva headquarter in Dublin, Ireland, towards the canteen service provided in their workplace. Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1988) made a connection between service quality and satisfaction by only three possible ways: (1) when the expected service is superior than perceived service, the perceive quality of the service is not acceptable; (2) when the expected service is equivalent to the perceived service, the perceive quality is acceptable; and (3) when the expected service is lower than the perceived service, the quality of the service results as satisfactory.

2.9 The Relationship between the Catering Industry and Customer Satisfaction

As seen in previous points, the service sector has grown incredibly through the last decades and the catering (or food service) industry hasn’t been an exception, in fact, it has been described for many authors as the fastest growing industry at a global level, but the economic crisis has disfavoured it as it has done to any other single industry (Hass, 2008). It is important to bear in mind that customers’ preferences are capable of highly influence on the catering industry (Waldfogel, 2008), and this can be considered as the main reason whereby the elaboration of a service quality analysis can be way too complex and even abstract either for the catering industry or for any other (Cronin & Taylor, 1992).

Research related to customer satisfaction within the catering service industry has revealed that one of the most influential elements that determines the level of satisfaction in customers is the quality they perceived during the moment their getting the service, and even influencing them to the repurchase option in the future, while the place and the ambience it offers are considered not as influential factors in the customer satisfaction area (Bojanic & Shea, 1997). On the other hand, Abdullah, Abdurahman & Hamali (2013) express that in the catering service industry the mere facts of offering a perfect food and an outstanding service cannot always be enough in order to attract the customers, and in fact, the catering providers should be able of providing their meals within a proper place with a comfortable ambience, influencing customers to chose establishment for having some food.
Additionally, the catering industry can be divided in two kinds: the first one is related to the tangibles which is basically conformed by the food and the environment where it is being provided, and the second one are the intangibles such as the employees of the food retailer and their relationship with the customers, and when these are combined in the best possible way the service is perceived as high (Lee et al., 2003). Some researchers have discovered that this intangible element mentioned before about the interpersonal relationship that customers and the staff of the food retailer while they interaction between them is occurring it is not so influential for the perception of the customers and it actually plays a small role in customers’ overall perception of the service, while some other factors need to be considered as even more influential for customers such as value or price, the environment, the atmosphere, the location and the service and the food (Johns & Howard, 1998).
Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

According to Gross et al (1996), methodology can be described as the procedural process that researches make use of to analyse information or data, and the process selected represents the way a researcher sees the world. Blumberg, Cooper and Schindler (2008) express that research methodology is truly essential for researches due to its vast contribution regarding to knowledge and skills provided in order to solve the problems, and achieve the goals or objectives planned for the investigation. For researchers, it is quite important to have a clear methodological framework in order to pose questions and also to answering them (Gross et al, 1996). Therefore, this chapter highlights the methodology chosen the investigation, as well as its limitations and the ethic conditions.

This study has as a main purpose to describe how the employees of Aviva headquarter in Dublin, Ireland, perceive service quality of the canteen catering provider within the company’s facilities. Therefore, in this chapter there are a variety of points covered to get all this information, these points or aspects are going to be the methodology of the design, the universe and the selection of the sample, the method of collecting the data and the way it will be analysed and at last the ethical issues considered to successfully fulfil the research’s purpose.

3.2 Research problem definition

Ellis and Levy (2008) point out the research problem must be considered as the initial point for any research and it works as a thread that goes through all the elements entailed in the investigation. Kerlinger and Lee (2000) express that a statement of problem is merely important for any investigation, because without it, it is very difficult for the researcher to go further and hence a successful work. For this investigation, the general research question is expressed as follows:
“Can the SERVQUAL model be applied in a canteen catering service context, in order to describe how customers (employees of the Aviva headquarter in Dublin, Ireland) perceive service quality and if they feel satisfied with this service?”

3.2.1 The research objectives

Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) suggest that the research objectives are derived from the research question, and they are more likely to lead the researcher to obtain more specific information of the topic in question. For this reason, research objectives have been developed for this investigation, and they are expressed as follows:

1) To describe the influence of the SERVQUAL tangible dimension on customer’s satisfaction regarding to the canteen catering service in their workplace canteen.

Especially in:

To analyse the following tangible dimensions items on customer’s satisfaction:

- Up-to-date equipments.
- Appealing physical facilities.
- Employees’ appearance.
- Clean physical environment.

2) To evaluate how influencing the SERVQUAL reliability dimensions items can be on customer’s perception in terms of their workplace canteen.

More specifically:

To understand the effects of the following reliability items on customer’s satisfaction:

- Willingness of promise accomplishment.
- Willingness to solve customer problems.
- Service dependability.
- Service provide at the promised time.
• Records kept accurately.

3) To evaluate the SERVQUAL responsiveness dimension items and its influence on customer’ perception regarding to the canteen catering in their workplace.

In particular:

To examine the four items of the responsiveness dimension items and how they influence on customer’s satisfaction:

• Employees’ willingness to provide information to customers.
• Employees’ readiness to give prompt service to customers.
• Employee’s motivation to help customers.
• Employees’ availability to respond customer’s requests.

4) To examine the SERVQUAL assurance dimension items and how influencing can it be on customers’ perception of the canteen service in their workplace.

Specifically:

To obtain a precise understanding of how these following assurance items influence on customer’s satisfaction:

• Employees’ behaviour provides confidence in customers.
• Customers feel safe regarding to transactions with the employees.
• Employees’ politeness towards customers.
• Employees’ levels of knowledge.

5) To evaluate the influence of the SERVQUAL empathy dimension items on customers’ perceptions of the canteen service in their workplace.

More specifically:

To gain a clear understanding of how the five following items of empathy are capable to influence on customers’ satisfaction:

• Catering provider offers individual attention to customers.
- Employees of catering provider give personal service to customers.
- Employees know what customers’ needs and wants are.
- Catering provider has its customer’s interest at heart.
- The hours of the catering provider are convenient to customers.

6) To evaluate how influential can the grocery dimension items be on customers’ perceptions of the canteen service in their workplace.

Particularly:

To explore how these items of the Grocery dimension can influence on customer’s satisfaction:

- Catering provider has a variety of products.
- Catering provider has quality products.

3.3 Proposed Methodology and its structure

The aim of this research is to demonstrate in a quantitative way how customers perceive the canteen catering service quality provided within the Facilities of the Aviva headquarter in Dublin, Ireland. To achieve that goal, the researcher will adopt a variety of characteristics chosen from the model of the “research onion” (figure 3) proposed by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009), which is a model composed by six different layers: the research philosophies (the outset layer), the research approaches, the research strategies, the research choices, the time horizons and the different techniques and procedures used to collect the data (the last and inner layer of the onion); in which every layer of it provides an important element regarding to the process of research and the way it will be designed (Robson, 2002), altogether leading us to its centre (or the end of the process) which is the moment of collecting the data, and analysing it and therefore being able to drop the conclusion of the investigation.
3.3.1 The research philosophy layer

This is the first and most external layer of the model, and according to Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2009) it offers the different philosophical approaches that the research can take in order to underpin its research strategy and the variety of methods that are going to be used regarding to the successful fulfilment of the research. Likewise, it is well related to the creating of knowledge in a determined field, or in the case of this investigation which it would be a topic. The research philosophy might be also considered as one of the most significant points regarding to the research methodology and this is because it stresses the understanding of the methods selected to gather, to analyse and consequently to make use the primary data collected for the investigation.

According to Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2009), there are ten different philosophies that can be adopted by researchers, and for this actual research and its conduction, the **positivism** approach will be the one adopted by the researcher for being the most suitable and this is because the only way to produce and collect a reliable data is through the fact of observing. Therefore, and according to Bryman and Bell (2011) human behaviour plays as a significant key within this approach and this is due to the possibilities of gather information that in some cases does not necessarily coincide with the pre-existing principles or even theories. Hence, to do so previous or existing theory is needed to
compare and to be tested, and therefore find some similitude or differences allowing the researcher to either confirm or refuse these previous theory stated in the previous chapter, and to achieve the research objectives developed for this investigation. In addition, according to Gil and Johnson (2002), the positivist researcher is very likely to make use of statistical procedures and analysis regarding to the quantifiable perceptions throughout the research. This approach is undoubtedly an essential facet of this investigation’s research methodology because it provides the opportunity of gathering contemporary data and comparing it to the secondary data researched.

3.3.2 The approaches layer

After “peeled off” the previous layer of the research onion model, it is moment for the researcher to identify the specific tools in order to find an answer for the research question. Therefore, it is necessarily to choose from only two different approaches: the deductive approach and the inductive approach. Which according to Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2009) the first approach is better and more connected to the research philosophy of positivism for the main reason that it attempts to the creation and development of theories and to find methods that allow to achieve the research objectives and hence answering the research question, while on the other hand, the inductive approach owes more to the philosophy of interpretivism, which is achieved merely through the understanding of the behaviour of the variables that are under examination.

For this reason, the investigation’s approach is the **deductive** one, because it provides a better way to approach both the research objectives of this investigation, and therefore an answer for the investigation’s research question. In Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2009) own words: “As such, it is the dominant research approach in the natural sciences, where laws present the basis explanation, allow the anticipation of phenomena, predict their occurrence and therefore permit them to be controlled” (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009, p. 124).
3.3.3 The strategies layer

This is the third layer of the Research Onion model and it gives a diversity of strategies such as: experiment, survey, case study, action research, grounded theory, ethnography and archival research, that researchers might use to go through their analysis, and some of these strategies belong or offer a better usage when carrying a deductive approach, while other strategies would fit better when the approach is inductive. For that reason, the research strategy for this investigation will be the survey, instrument that according to Zikmund (2003) is describe as:

“A research technique in which information is gathered from a sample of people by use of a questionnaire or interview; a method of data collection based on communication with a representative sample of individuals. Surveys provide quick, inexpensive, efficient, and accurate means of assessing information about the population” (Zikmund, 2003, p. 175).

In addition to the previous definition, Blumberg, Cooper and Schindler (2008) also note that surveys are a very strong tool if the researcher is attempting a primary data-collecting approach and this is owed to the wide variety of information that the researcher can gathered by the simple fact of questioning others. For this reason, the surveys for this investigation were printed questionnaires provided personally to the employees of the Aviva Company headquarter in Dublin, Ireland, during the Friday 2\textsuperscript{nd} of May of this current year. And the main purpose is to obtain the information about their perception of the canteen catering service quality provided within the facilities of their workplace.

3.3.3.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaires are very useful because they represent a method of asking people about the way they feel, think and/or do regarding to a specific topic, and one of the main reasons of its importance for investigation purposes is because they allow gathering information from a wide group of people at a relative low cost (Cameron and Price, 2009). The self-completion questionnaire (specifically in the form of administration explain lately) is the precise sort of questionnaire chosen by the researcher for this investigation, and they are described by Bryman and Bell (2011) as those questionnaires where respondents are able to
answer and completing its question by themselves without the need of an interviewer to ask each of the questionnaire’s questions. These kinds of questionnaires are characterized and generally tend to have three main elements:

- Are mainly composed by closed-ended questions and few open questions due to the grade of difficulty of answering these last ones;
- Are designed under a very easy follow way in order to keep the interviewee on track and minimizing the chances of failing, omitting or skipping a question;
- Are short in terms of number of questions, and the purpose of this is to avoid a respondent fatigue, which is when the interviewee shows signals of tiredness from the questionnaire and the answers provided may not really match to what they do want to express.

As can be seen, the implementation of the self-questionnaire for this investigation is considered as highly significant for the researcher in order to gather the data that allows the completion of the specific objectives. The importance of the self-questionnaire tool matches the advantages that it represents, advantages that according to Bryman and Bell (2011) are briefly explained as follows:

**Cheap to implement:** in comparison to other methods such as a telephone interview or a postal questionnaire, the administration form of questionnaire results as one of the cheapest options for data collection due to the non existence of telephone charges or postal fees respectively. Bearing in mind the student position (lack of economic resources and time) of the researcher this method suits perfectly advantageous.

**Quick for administration:** this sort of questionnaire has the ability of being applied to a high amount of people with a low need of time (hence, low level of times for collecting the information pursued), while an interview will definitely lead to a higher amount of time if applied to a sample of the same size. This accords or for this investigation, since the questionnaires were handled to the employees during one day only and they are going to get back from them on the same day.

**The effects from the lack of an interviewer:** it has been demonstrated that the presence of an interviewer is capable of create some pressure on the respondents, and therefore
influence the answers that they are providing at the moment of the application of the survey. But, on the other hand, when a self-completion questionnaire is provided to the respondents these sort effects generated by the interviewer presence are avoided.

**The absence of interviewer variability:** this advantage of the application of a self-completion questionnaire is quite related to the previous one, and this is originated since this kind of questionnaire do not experience the problem of having different interviewers asking the respondents any question they like, and in any order they like.

**Being convenient for the respondents:** the high level of convenience for the respondents while answering the questionnaire and this is originated mainly for two reasons: the completion of the questionnaire at the moment they want, and the time they want to spend in order to complete it.

On the other hand, Wakley (2005) highlights five disadvantages of the implementation of self-questionnaires:

*Low response rates:* these rates tend to vary extensively, and when the response rate is low means that the information is far from being reliable. The response rates depend on three factors: questions designed poorly, large number of questions and frequent requests to the respondents for completion of questionnaires. This first disadvantage is likely to affect the current investigation due the high amount of items (50 in total) contained in the questionnaire.

*Loss of flexibility:* this occurs because respondents usually want to qualify questions. Closed-ended questions are easy to quantify in comparison from open-ended questions, because these last ones can originate wide comments that can be time consuming and also introduce more bias. This disadvantage doesn’t apply for the current investigations’ questionnaire because all the items in it are closed-ended.

*Lack of information about attitudes:* in order to obtain data about facts, ticking boxes represent a very good way of doing it, but to obtain attitudes they might not result as useful, in fact, the best method to explore them is throughout focus group or interviews, which are considered as face-to-face interviews. This doesn’t represent a disadvantage for this thesis.
because respondents only have to tick boxes in order to answer each of the items contained in the questionnaire.

_Identifying confounding:_ in some cases, questionnaires are not actually completed by the respondent per se, because this person might have moved to another person to complete it on his or her behalf, and this can occur due to time or disinterest reasons. Once more, the face-to-face methods are more functional in order to avoid these kinds of confounding issues. This disadvantage is likely to have a presence for this investigation, and this is because the implementation of questionnaire is being held in the canteen facilities, and respondents might move questionnaires among them.

_Unsuitability for the target sample:_ this last disadvantage refers to the selection of the appropriate target with the intention of obtaining the pertinent data that the researcher is willing to assess. For example, a written questionnaire might not be worth applying to people which literacy skills are considered as poor. This doesn’t affect the investigation’s questionnaire because the sample selected is composed by the Aviva employees, which can be considered as professional and skilled people.

### 3.3.3.2 The Investigation’s Questionnaire

For this investigation, the SERVQUAL model and its 5 dimensions (mentioned in chapter 2) was the one used, and it is divided into 2 parts, with 22 questions for expectations, and 22 for perceptions, plus two additional statements for the Grocery dimension included by the researcher and the demographic section which contains the gender and age questions, bringing a total a 50-questions questionnaire. Although the SERVQUAL model uses a 7-point Likert scale in order to measure both expectations and perceptions, the researcher decided to use a 5-point Likert scale for this investigation, in which alternative 1 was for “Strongly Agree”, 2 was for “Agree”, 3 for “Neither Disagree nor Agree”, 4 was “Agree” and 5 was for “Strongly Agree”. This decision was due to the time restrictions faced, and by this way it was less time consuming when analysing the data. In this regard, data was analysed and is presented thorough figures and tables obtained using Microsoft Excel 2010.
For this investigation, the researcher decided to use a non-probability and convenience sampling technique (which is explained later in section 3.3.8 of this chapter). The researcher had only 100 questionnaires to administer, and managers of the two companies (Aviva and the canteen company) only provided one day to administer them, which limited the size of the sample. The date given to do so was the Friday 2\textsuperscript{nd} of May of this current year. Even though these 100 questionnaires were administered and respondents were really kind by giving all them back, unfortunately only 95 were properly completed and therefore used, placing the sample of the investigation on 95 people.

These questionnaires were provided by the researcher to the respondents that made usage of the canteen service in the Aviva building on that day. The researcher gave a brief explanation to every single respondent about what the questionnaire was about, its scholar purpose and its confidential use.

3.3.4 The choices layer

This is the fourth layer of the model, in it the researcher intends to choose the research method for the investigation, and these research methods can come in three different ways: mono method, multi-method and mixed method. A mono method selection is the one considered as appropriate for the current research and this is because the only way to collect and analyse the data will be through the survey.

In the marketing research field, Domegan and Fleming (1999) point out that the research method or design of any investigation is as important as the investigation’s problem definition, and it can only be chosen after the objectives have been selected. These two authors define research design as the general action plan in a marketing research study, and it can be classified into three types of research: Exploratory, Descriptive and Causal.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Type</th>
<th>Exploratory</th>
<th>Descriptive</th>
<th>Causal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Data Type</td>
<td>Qualitative</td>
<td>Qualitative and descriptive</td>
<td>Quantitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aims</td>
<td>To explore, to chart and to identify</td>
<td>To describe, to quantify</td>
<td>The establishment of cause and effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature of Variables</td>
<td>Unknown, Uncharted</td>
<td>Known associations and Documented</td>
<td>Known exactly and clearly supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree of Formality</td>
<td>Little</td>
<td>Some to Extensive</td>
<td>High Mathematical Content, highly formal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample Size</td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>Small to Large</td>
<td>Large</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Types</td>
<td>Probing and response driven</td>
<td>Some probing and Interview driven</td>
<td>No Probing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypothesis</td>
<td>Generates, develops</td>
<td>Tests, develops and/or generates</td>
<td>Tests</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Types of Research. Source Domegan and Fleming, 1999

According to Burns and Bush (2014), the selection of any of these three types of research will depend on the objectives set by the researcher. **Causal** research is the one selected for this investigation, and they are described as the deeply understanding of certain phenomenon regarding to a conditional statement, engaged to a high use of mathematical and statistical tools. Additionally, as this research is having a quantitative approach, one of the best techniques to collect the information is by making use of surveys or questionnaires that provide the data in a numerical way.

**3.3.5 Time horizons layer**

This is the penultimate layer of the model and it contains the two possible ways that an investigation can be approached when taking in consideration the time variable, and it can be: cross-sectional or longitudinal.

For this research the **Cross-sectional** study is going to be the one applied, and they are used when the investigation is going to study a specific phenomenon but only at a certain time rather than for a long period of time (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). The survey applied to the employees of Aviva was only during a specific date, and beside that, the dissertation also counts with a deadline to be submitted which also can be considered as a factor of time restriction.
3.3.6 Secondary Research

According to Cowton (1998), secondary research refers to that sort of data that is collected by others, more specifically, it is not the data gathered by the researcher per se, and it can have a variety of forms. In this regard, Burns and Busch (2014) state that secondary is truly important within the marketing research field, and this is due to the many uses of it, which makes it almost impossible to avoid when conducting a research project.

Rabiansky (2003) assures that even though secondary data has been collected by other authors in order to achieve their own purposes, this data is still useful for other researchers to generate their own entity primary data. According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) there are three different types of secondary data: documentary, multiple source and Survey, which at the same time are subdivided by seven categories: written materials, non-written materials, area based, time-series based, censuses, continuous and regular surveys and ad hoc surveys. For this investigation, the author has made use of written material data like academic journals, publications, EBSCOhost, newspapers and organizations websites, and also of area based data such as books.

3.3.7 Quantitative approach

In order to achieve the results that this research is pursuing, the method of a quantitative research is the one taking in consideration. In this respect, Bryman and Bell (2011) have defined it as “In very broad terms, it is described as entailing the collection of numerical data and as exhibiting a view of the relationship between theory and research as deductive, a predilection for a natural science (and of positivism in particular), and as having an objectivist conception of social reality” (Bryman and Bell, 2011, p. 150). Additionally, and in contrast to qualitative research, it involves the administration of a group of well planned questions to a large number of people (or respondents) usually through a survey (Burns and Busch, 2014).
Hair, Bush and Ortinau (2003) flatter quantitative research methods in marketing research because it provides precise facts that researchers can make use of in three different ways: (1) in order to make precise predictions regarding to market factors, behaviours and the relationship between them, (2) to gain a deeply understanding of those relationships and (3) to confirm those existing relationships.

On the other hand, Bryman and Bell (2011) express that quantitative research has been criticised over the years, particularly from exponents of the qualitative research. In fact, these two authors point out four main criticisms of quantitative research, and they are mentioned briefly as follows (Bryman and Bell, 2011, p. 86):

- Quantitative researchers tend to fail to distinguish social institutions and people from the world of nature.
- The measurement process possesses an artificial and spurious sense of precision and accuracy.
- The reliance on instruments and procedures hinders the connection between research and everyday life.
- The analysis of relationships between variables creates a static view of social life that is independent from people’s life.

Therefore, and bearing in mind its criticism, the researcher of this investigation has chosen the quantitative research approach, because it represents the best way of conducting it, in order to attempt for a precise measurement of customer’s perceptions of the catering service quality. In this regard, and as previously explained, the data for the analysis was collected in its raw form via the SERVQUAL model questionnaires handled to the employees of the Aviva company headquarter located in Dublin, Ireland, with the purpose to process and analyse, these data collected and turn it into useful information (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009). All this in order to achieve the purpose of this investigation to describe the satisfaction of the Aviva employees regarding to the catering service provided within their working place.
3.3.8 Sample

In order to collect the data for this research and therefore provide a deeply analysis and conclusions, the researcher needs to consider studying a sample of the whole population, which in this case are all the employees of the Aviva Company headquarter located in Dublin, Ireland. It is worth noting that, the researcher was told by an Aviva representative a vague amount of between 300 and 350 total employees (the universe) of the company, and for this and time constraints the sample selected were 100 employees (95 were the total of questionnaires proper completed, and therefore the size of this study’s sample).

According to Sekaran and Bougie (2010) a sample is referred as a subgroup of the whole population, and hence, it is composed by some members that are selected from it, and provide the researcher the ability to describe conclusions about the population studied. Additionally and according to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) there are a variety of sampling techniques that can be separated into two different groups: probability sampling and non-probability sampling.

For this research, a non-probability sample design was the one considered, because the probability attached to the members of the population for being chosen as components of the sample is unknown, and therefore, the results obtained from it may not be completely generalized for the whole population (Cooper and Schindler, 2003). But for this research, and because of time and monetary limitations, this was the only way of collecting the data. In addition, and as a sample design within the non-probability ones, convenience sampling was the one used for this research, which in Sekaran and Bougie (2010) own words “refers to the collection of information from members of the population who are conveniently available to provide it... and it is perhaps the best way of getting some basic information quickly and efficiently” (Sekaran and Bougie, 2010, p. 276).

3.4 Ethics

According to Blumberg, Cooper and Schindler (2008) ethical issues take part in every single sort of investigation and all parties involved in this process should be able to show
an ethical behaviour as it is shown in any other aspect related to the business field. Therefore, ethics refers to the way of how a research should be conducted in order to be achieved in both responsible and moral way without harming any elements considered by it.

For this investigation, all the information obtained by applying the questionnaires was only used for the purpose of the dissertation, and all the policies asked for the Aviva Company and the canteen provider company are respected, therefore, confidentiality is guaranteed to all the respondents. Additionally, all the questionnaires replied and the information and the data provided by them was kept confidentially during the process of it analysis, while after completing it, these questionnaires were discarded in a proper way.

3.5 Limitations

Limitations are considers as those extraneous actions that create certain restrictions while conducting an investigation, and all researchers must be aware of them in order to avoid a high impact on the investigation’s findings (Hair, Bush and Ortinau, 2003). In the case of this investigation, which is not an exception, some limitations were faced.

Basically, the first limitation encounter is regarding to the quantitative technique (questionnaire) disadvantages stated previously. The second one is the time limitation, which is present in two patterns: (1) the researcher time limitation; which prevents the investigation the time of choosing a bigger size of sample (providing the opportunity of more accurate information), and (2) the respondents time limitation; which is tied to their availability and commitment towards the questionnaire completion. In addition to this last time limitation and due to the researcher was person providing the questionnaires to the respondents (sample) as a completely unknown person, this could bring some distortions within the information provided by them. Moreover, and as the researcher was dealing with people in order to collect the data, some elements such as un-commitment and misunderstanding could alter the results of the investigation.
Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Findings

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to highlight the data and findings obtained through the use of the primary research method, which in this case was through the use of the questionnaire. Every section within this chapter explains all the findings for each of the items included in the SERVQUAL questionnaire and therefore, the findings for each of the dimensions of the framework.

4.2 The Questionnaire of the Investigation

As explained previously in Chapter 3, the questionnaire used for this investigation was the Parasuraman, Zeithmal and Berry (1988) SERVQUAL model and its five dimensions of Tangibles, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance and Empathy, which are composed by 22 statements, which are divided in two parts: 22 first statements about customers’ expectations of a service, and 22 last statements regarding to customers’ perceptions the service, plus a sixth dimension (Groceries) included by the researcher and composed by only 2 statements. For each item answer, a 5-point Likert scale was used, in which alternative 1 was for “Strongly Agree”, 2 was for “Agree”, 3 for “Neither Disagree nor Agree”, 4 was “Agree” and 5 was for “Strongly Agree”. Additionally, a demographic section had place with just 2: gender and age. All these elements provide the pertinent information on the investigation’s research questions with the purpose of describing how the Aviva employees perceive the service quality of the canteen service provided in the facilities of their workplace by assessing the difference between what they expect and what they are actually getting.

4.3 Demographic Section

4.3.1 Gender

The results of the survey regarding to the Gender question can be seen in table 2. And it expresses that the majority of the respondents that took part in the research were males (56.8%), while the remaining were females (43.1%).
Table 2: Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>56.8%</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>43.1%</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3.2 Age

The survey results shown in table 3, and it reflects that the most of the respondents are within the group of the 34-41 years of age, with a total of 24 people (25.3%), followed by the group of ages of 18-25, with 23 (24.2%), then is the group of 50 and above, with 21 respondents (22.1%), then the 26-33 years of age group with 15 people (15.8%), and at last the group with the minority of respondents is the one between 42-49 years of age with a total of 12 participants (12.6%)

Table 3: Age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Age</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-25</td>
<td>24.2%</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-33</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34-41</td>
<td>25.3%</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42-49</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 and above</td>
<td>22.1%</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.4 Expectations versus Perceptions

Although in the investigation’s SERVQUAL questionnaire is explicitly conformed by the Expectation section and the Perception section separate one from each other, the researcher
decided to show in this section both expectations and perceptions results for each item the six dimensions together, in order to give a better and clearer sight of the data gathered. It is important to bear in mind that the gap score shown is the difference between the perception and expectation score, with values that could go from -5 (highly unsatisfied) to 5 (highly satisfied). In other words, when the gap score shows a negative value means that expectations are higher than perceptions, when a positive value expresses that perceptions are higher than what expected.

4.4.1 Tangible Dimension

4.4.1.1 Customers’ expectations and perceptions of up-to-date equipments in canteen catering services.

Figure 4 shows that 50.5% (the majority) of the respondents’ expectations strongly agreed to the need of up-to-date equipments in canteen services, whilst only the minority (13.7%) expressed neither agreed nor disagreed. On the other hand, and compared to the respondents’ perceptions of the canteen service in their workplace, only 22.1% strongly agreed to the statement, while 8.4% and 2.1% disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively to it. Table 4, contains the same results but in terms of the response count, plus the gap score of means between customers’ perceptions and expectations of the item, whose values is -0.6527.

**Figure 4:** Customers’ expectations and perceptions of up-to-date equipments in canteen catering services
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Scores</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expectations</td>
<td>4.3684</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions</td>
<td>3.7157</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gap Score</td>
<td>-0.6527</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4.4.1.2 Customers’ expectations and perceptions of appealing physical facilities in canteen catering services.

Figure 5 demonstrates that most of the respondents’ expectations agreed (45.3%) or strongly agreed (32.6%) regarding to appealing physical facilities in a canteen. Although the majority of the respondents agreed (47.4%) that this same attribute is present in their workplace canteen, there is also a presence of disagreed and strongly disagreed opinions, with 11.6% and 2.1% respectively. Table 5 shows the same results but in terms of the numbers of responses for each option, as well as the gap score between expectations and perceptions with a value of -0.3579.

**Figure 5:** Customers’ expectations and perceptions of appealing physical facilities in canteen catering services
Table 5: Customers’ expectations and perceptions of appealing physical facilities in canteen catering services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Scores</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expectations</td>
<td>4.0526</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions</td>
<td>3.6947</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gap Score</td>
<td>-0.3579</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4.4.1.3 Customers’ expectations and perceptions of employee’s appearance in canteen catering services.

Figure 6 illustrates very similar results regarding to the respondents’ expectations of the appearance of the employees of a canteen and their perceptions of the employees’ appearance in the canteen of their building. Table 6 shows that 49 people strongly agreed that canteen employees should look neat, while 40 also strongly agreed that the employees of their canteen are clean and proper dressed. In addition, the score gap between their expectations and perceptions regarding to this element was almost neutral with a figure of -0.0948.

Figure 6: Customers’ expectations and perceptions of employee’s appearance in canteen catering services
Table 6: Customers’ expectations and perceptions of employee’s appearance in canteen catering services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Scores</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expectations</td>
<td>4.4526</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions</td>
<td>4.3578</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gap Score</td>
<td>-0.0948</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.4.1.4 Customers’ expectations and perceptions of the cleanliness in the physical environment of a canteen service provider.

The following figure clearly expresses that the majority of the respondents (88.4%) expect cleanliness in the physical environment of a canteen, while no customer expects the opposite. Regarding to their perceptions of the cleanliness in the canteen service in their workplace, a majority also expressed to agree (43.2%) and to strongly agree (36.9%) that it possesses a clean environment, but at the same time some people noted to disagree (2.1%) and to strongly disagree (5.3%) to that argument. Table 7 contains once more the exact number of responses for each of the options, and the gap number for this item is -0.8421

Figure 7: Customers’ expectations and perceptions of the cleanliness in the physical environment of a canteen service provider
Table 7: Customers’ expectations and perceptions of the cleanliness in the physical environment of a canteen service provider

|expectations and perceptions of willingness to fulfil promises by catering service providers.

Figure 8 shows once more that the expectations of the customers regarding to the willingness of canteen catering providers to fulfil their promises tend to be high, with a majority of responses (51.6%) as strongly agree, followed by agree (42.1%) and last the neither disagree or agree option (6.3%). Regarding to the customers experience with the canteen service in the building and its fulfilment of promises, most of the respondents (49.5%) agreed to the statement, but also a significant group (34.7%) neither agreed nor disagreed. Table 8 includes the amount of responses for each of the options and shows a gap score for this item of -0.7684.

Figure 8: Customers’ expectations and perceptions of willingness to fulfil promises by catering service providers
Table 8: Customers’ expectations and perceptions of willingness to fulfil promises by catering service providers

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4.4.2.2 Customers’ expectations and perceptions of canteens’ willingness to solve customers’ problems.

The figure 9 and table 9 below show the respondents’ responses regarding to their expectations and perceptions of the keenness of canteens in terms of solving the problems of their customers. None customer seems to expect canteens to be unconscious about it, in fact, most of the responses were for the Agree and strongly agree options, 53.7% and 42.1% respectively. In terms of their perceptions of the canteen service and this issue was a bit similar with the majority of the responses (46.3%) were to the agree option, but some other responses showed some customers’ disappointment by marking the strongly disagree (4.25) and disagree (4.2%) options. The score gap for this item was -0.7473.

Figure 9: Customers’ expectations and perceptions of canteens’ willingness to solve customers’ problems
Table 9: Customers’ expectations and perceptions of canteens’ willingness to solve customers’ problems

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4.4.2.3 Customers’ expectations and perceptions of canteens service provider’s dependability.

Figure 10 shows both customers’ expectations and perceptions of canteens service provider’s dependability. In terms of their expectations, most of the respondents (69.5%) strongly agreed, while 28.4% simply agreed and 2.1% neither disagreed nor agreed. Regarding to their canteen experience in their workplace, the majority (53.7%) agreed, followed by a 21.1% that strongly agreed, and a 16.8% that disagreed. Table 10 contains the exact amount of numbers for each option as well as the gap score which is -0.8844.

Figure 10: Customers’ expectations and perceptions of canteens service provider’s dependability.
Table 10: Customers’ expectations and perceptions of canteens service provider’s dependability

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4.4.2.4 Customers’ expectations and perceptions of the canteens’ willingness to provide their services at the promised time.

Figure 11 below shows both customers’ expectations and perceptions of the canteens’ willingness to provide their services just as they promised. In this regard, customers’ expectations were mostly for the options of strongly agree and agree, with 49.5% and 44.2% respectively. Their perceptions of the canteen service in their workplace were also for these two options but in less proportion (26.3% strongly agreed and 44.2% agreed), while 21.1% of the respondents assured not to be clear about the canteen’s performance for this item. Table 11 contains the gap difference for the item whose value is -0.4632, plus the responses for each option.

Figure 11: Customers’ expectations and perceptions of the canteens’ willingness to provide their services at the promised time
Table 11: Customers’ expectations and perceptions of the canteens’ willingness to provide their services at the promised time

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4.4.2.5 Customers’ expectations and perceptions of records kept accurately in canteen service providers.

Figure 12 illustrates the expectations and perceptions of the customers regarding to how canteens service providers keep their records. Customer expectations were that canteens should definitely keep their records adequately, with 47.7% of them strongly agreed with the statement, and followed by a 31.6% which agreed to it. But on the other hand, and regarding to their experience with the canteen provider in the workplace, the clearly expressed neither disagreed nor agreed (62.1%) to the statement, which denotes a high level of uncertainty. Table 12 shows a score gap of -0.8315, as well as all the choices for the statement.

Figure 12: Customers’ expectations and perceptions of records kept accurately in canteen service providers
Table 12: Customers’ expectations and perceptions of records kept accurately in canteen service providers

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4.4.3 Responsiveness Dimension

4.3.3.1 Customers’ expectations and perceptions of willingness of the canteens employees to provide information.

In terms of customers’ expectations regarding to canteens employees willingness to provide information, figure 13 undoubtedly reflects that most of the respondents (60% strongly agreed) expect that canteen employees should provide information of the service. Regarding to their perception of the canteen service in their workplace, although the majority of the respondents (47.4%) agreed to the statement, some other expressed to strongly disagree (8.4%) and disagree (7.4%) to it. Table 13 contains a score gap for the item of -0.9895, as well as the responses of each alternative.

Figure 13: Customers’ expectations and perceptions of willingness of the canteens employees to provide information
4.4.3.2 Customers’ expectations and perceptions of willingness of canteens’ employees to give prompt services.

The expectations and perceptions of the customers in terms of canteen employees and how prompt they give services are shown in Figure 14. Respecting to their expectations, the majority of the responses went for the choices of agree (49.5%) and strongly agree (46.3%), which undoubtedly means that customers expect to be treated cordially while in a canteen service encounter. Additionally, their perceptions were also positive, showing that the majority of the respondents (51.6%) agreed and 46.3% strongly agreed with the statement, which leads to a narrower score gap shown in table 14 with a value of -0.2843.

Figure 14: Customers’ expectations and perceptions of willingness of canteens’ employees to give prompt services
Table 14: Customers’ expectations and perceptions of willingness of canteens’ employees to give prompt services

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4.4.3.3 Customers’ expectations and perceptions of readiness of the canteens employees to always look after them.

Figure 15 illustrates both customers’ expectations and perceptions of canteens employees and their willingness to help customers. Regarding to their expectancy, once more the majority of the respondents showed to strongly agree (50.1%) and agree (38.9%) to the statement. And in terms of what they perceive from their canteen service, majority of the responses also went to the strongly agree (50.1%) and agree (38.8%) choices, but a few responses also occupied the options of strongly disagree (2.1%) and disagree (6.3%), showing some dissatisfaction regarding to this statement. Table 15 includes the total of responses for each option as well as the score gap for this item, which digit is -0.2316.

Figure 15: Customers’ expectations and perceptions of readiness of canteen’s employees to always look after them
Table 15: Customers’ expectations and perceptions of readiness of canteen’s employees to always look after them

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4.4.3.4 Customers’ expectations and perceptions of the availability of the canteens’ employees to respond their requests.

In figure 16 are shown both expectations and perceptions of customers regarding to the availability of canteens employees to respond their requests. In terms of their expectation, even though most of the respondents strongly agreed (44.2%) and agreed (36.8%) to the statement, the choice of neither disagree was chosen by an important part of them (18.9%), which means there is some unsteadiness regarding to the statement. On their perception’s side of the canteen service in their building, most of the respondents agreed to the statement, with a 49.5% of responses, which clearly exceeds their expectations. Table 16 shows a -0.4737 gap score for this item, plus the total of responses for each option.

Figure 16: Customers’ expectations and perceptions of the availability of the canteens’ employees to respond their requests
Table 16: Customers’ expectations and perceptions of the availability of the canteens’ employees to respond their requests

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4.4.4 Assurance Dimension

4.4.4.1 Customers’ expectations and perceptions of the confidence provided by canteens’ employees.

Customers’ expectations and perceptions of the confidence provided by canteens’ employees are illustrated in figure 17. Respecting to the expectations of the customers, the majority agreed (48.4%) and strongly agreed (37.9%) to the statement. In terms of their experience with the canteen service in their workplace, the majority of the respondents also strongly agreed (31.6%) and agreed (42.1%) with the statement but in lower proportion compared to their expectations. Table 17 provides the gap score for the item which is -0.1684, plus the exact responses for each alternative.

Figure 17: Customers’ expectations and perceptions of the confidence provided by canteens’ employees
4.4.4.2 Customers’ expectations and perceptions of their safeness whilst doing transactions with canteen’s employees.

Figure 18 demonstrates both expectations and perceptions of customers about their safeness at the moment of transacting with the employees of a canteen. Customers’ expectations seem to be high in concern of this item, due to most of the responses were for the choices of agree (49.5%) and strongly agree (43.2%), and no selection of the strongly disagree or disagree options. Regarding to their experience, results were almost the same with most of the responses occupying the strongly agree (43.2%) and agree (49.5%) choices, demonstrating that customers tend to feel safe while in contact with the canteen’s employees in their workplace. Therefore, the score gap for this item is quite narrow but still negative, with a value of -0.1263, and can be seen in table 18 along with the rest of responses for the options.

**Figure 18:** Customers’ expectations and perceptions of their safeness whilst doing transactions with canteen’s employees

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*Table 17: Customers’ expectations and perceptions of the confidence provided by canteen’s employees*
Table 18: Customers’ expectations and perceptions of their safeness whilst doing transactions with canteens’ employees

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4.4.4.3 Customers’ expectations and perceptions of how polite are the employees of a canteen service provider.

Customers’ expectations and perceptions of politeness of employees in canteen service providers can be seen in Figure 19. Customers’ expectations for this item were also high, and most of the responses went to the agree and strongly agree choices, with 50.5% and 49.5% respectively. Their experience regarding to this item can also be seen as high, in fact, the number of responses occupying the strongly agree choice was of 49.5% which is slightly higher than the perception’s one, indicating that canteen’s employees in their building are polite. The gap score (-0.1052) for this item was also narrower but it is still negative, and can be seen in table 19.

Figure 19: Customers’ expectations and perceptions of how polite are the employees of a canteen service provider
Table 19: Customers’ expectations and perceptions of how polite are the employees of a canteen service provider

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### 4.4.4.4 Customers’ expectations and perceptions of employees’ levels of knowledge in a canteen service provider.

The figure below illustrates customers’ expectations and perceptions about the level of knowledge of canteens services providers’ employees. Customers’ expectations only went to the choices of strongly agree (64.2%) and agree (35.8%), denoting how important can it be for customers a well trained staff. Unfortunately, customers’ perception don’t show the same results, in fact, the majority of the responses went to the neither disagree nor agree option, with a total of 53.7%, and some other responses occupied the strongly disagree (2.1%) and disagree (7.4%) choices, denoting some lack of knowledge in the canteen’s staff. A wide gap score can be seen in table 20 with a value of -1.2526, and the rest of the responses for each option too,

Figure 20: Customers’ expectations and perceptions of employees’ levels of knowledge in a canteen service provider

![Histogram showing expectations and perceptions of employees' levels of knowledge](image-url)
Table 20: Customers’ expectations and perceptions of employees’ levels of knowledge in a canteen service provider

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4.4.5 Empathy Dimension

4.4.5.1 Customers’ expectations and perceptions of canteens’ willingness to meet the need of their customers.

The results of the item regarding to customers’ expectations and perceptions of canteen’s willingness to meet their need are shown in figure 21. In regard to customers’ expectancy, all of the alternatives were at least 2 times chosen as a response, being the agree (45.3%) and the strongly agree (27.4%) options the most chosen ones, and the strongly disagree and disagree the least preferred with a 2.1% each. Customers’ experience presented a similar situation, the majority of the responses went to the agree choice with 43.2%, and followed by the neither disagree nor agree one with 30.5%, and lastly strongly disagree as the least chosen with a 1.1%. Table 21 contains the item’s score gap which is -0.2105.

Figure 21: Customers’ expectations and perceptions of canteens’ willingness to meet the need of their customers
Table 21: Customers’ expectations and perceptions of canteens’ willingness to meet the need of their customers

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4.4.5.2 Customers’ expectations and perceptions of personal service of canteens’ employees.

Figure 22 illustrates the results of the item of customers’ expectations and perceptions of personal service of canteen’s employees. In this regard, most of the responses of customers’ expectations were for the neither disagree nor agree alternative (49.5%) while for the agree and strongly agree options the responses were of 26.3% and 20% respectively. In contrast, customers’ perceptions regarding to the canteen service in their workplace seem to be higher, with the exact amount of 34.7% responses for the agree and strongly agree options, and followed by the neither disagree nor agree option with 26.4% and the disagree choice with 4.2%. This brings a positive gap score of 0.4 (table 22) for this item, which means customers are satisfied with this aspect.

Figure 22: Customers’ expectations and perceptions of personal service of canteens’ employees
### Table 22: Customers’ expectations and perceptions of personal service of canteens’ employees

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4.4.5.3 Customers’ expectations and perceptions of employees’ knowledge of the needs of the consumers of a canteen service provider.

Figure 23 shows the customers’ expectations and perceptions of employee’s knowledge of the consumers’ needs of a canteen. Regarding to their expectations, customers’ most selected choice was the agree option with 38.9%, followed by neither disagree nor agree with 32.6%, strongly agree with 24.2%, and at last the disagree alternative with 4.2%. Concerning about their perceptions of the canteen service in their workplace, the most selected alternative was the neither disagree nor agree option with more than half of the responses (51.6%), and followed by strongly agree (23.2%), agree (20%) and disagree (5.3%). Table 23 notes the item’s gap score whose value is -0.2211.

**Figure 23:** Customers’ expectations and perceptions of employees’ knowledge of the needs of the consumers of a canteen service provider
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Scores</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expectations</td>
<td>3.8316</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions</td>
<td>3.6105</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gap Score</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.2211</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4.4.5.4 Customers’ expectations and perceptions of canteens’ interest of having their customers’ needs at heart.

Customers’ expectations and perceptions of canteens’ interest of having the needs of their customers at heart are shown in Figure 24. Customers’ expectations seemed to be high once more with a total of 44.2% responses for the agree option and 35.8% for the strongly agree one, and only 20% neither agreed nor disagreed to the statement. Whilst regarding to their actual experience with their workplace canteen, they seemed to be unsure about it because most of the responses were neither disagree nor agree (43.2%), followed by agree (34.7%), strongly agree (18.8%) and lastly disagree (3.2%). Altogether, this leaded to a negative item’s gap score of -0.4632 (table 24).

**Figure 24: Customers’ expectations and perceptions of canteens’ interest of having their customers’ needs at heart**
Table 24: Customers’ expectations and perceptions of canteens’ interest of having their customers’ needs at heart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Scores</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expectations</td>
<td>4.1579</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions</td>
<td>3.6947</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gap Score</td>
<td>-0.4632</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.4.5.5 Customers’ expectations and perceptions of canteens’ operating hours.
Figure 25 illustrates customers’ expectations and perceptions regarding to the working hours of a canteen. Customers’ expectations were also high, with a total of 48.4% of the responses were to the agree option and 32.6% for the strongly agree one. The perceptions of the customers of this item and their canteen showed that the majority of the respondents (41.1%) agree to it, but at the same time a quite number of responses went to the neither disagree nor agree (35.8%), expressing some uncertainty from their part regarding the canteen working hours. Table 25 includes all the responses for each alternative plus an item score gap of -0.621.

Figure 25: Customers’ expectations and perceptions of canteens’ operating hours.
### Table 25: Customers’ expectations and perceptions of canteens’ operating hours

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Scores</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expectations</td>
<td>4.0947</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions</td>
<td>3.4737</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gap Score</td>
<td>-0.621</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4.4.6 Groceries Dimension

#### 4.4.6.1 Consumers’ expectations and perceptions of variety of products offered by canteens service providers.

Both expectations and perceptions of the consumers about the diversity of products offered by canteen service providers are shown in figure 26. In terms of their expectations, consumers are likely to expect a wide variety of products offered by canteens, with most of the responses to the strongly agree (47.3%) and the agree (43.2%) options, and followed by a 7.4% of neither disagree nor agree responses. Regarding their personal experience with the canteen catering service in their workplace, they also seem highly satisfied, with a majority of responses for the agree choice (51.6%) and followed by the strongly agree one (25.3%), and some few responses for the strongly disagree (3.2%) and disagree (2.1%). A narrower item score gap (-0.4211) can be seen in Table 26.

#### Figure 26: Consumers’ expectations and perceptions of variety of products offered by canteens service providers
### Table 26: Consumers’ expectations and perceptions of variety of products offered by canteens service providers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Scores</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expectations</td>
<td>4.3579</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions</td>
<td>3.9368</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gap Score</td>
<td>-0.4211</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4.4.6.2 Customers’ expectations and perceptions of the quality of the products offered in canteens.

The final item results are shown in Figure 27, which contains customers’ expectations and perceptions of the quality of the products offered in a canteen. Their expectations were seen as very high with a majority of responses of 72.6% for the strongly agree choice and only followed by the agree alternative with 27.4%. On their perceptions side, even though majority of them agreed (54.7%) with the statement, only 24.2% strongly agreed, while some others went for the neither disagree nor agree option (15.8%) and even 5.3% disagreed, communicating some lower levels of quality compared to what they are expecting. The gap score for this last item can be seen in table 27 and its value is -0.7474.

**Figure 27:** Customers’ expectations and perceptions of the quality of the products offered in canteens
4.5 Descriptive Statistics Section for the Dimensions and their description

The upcoming table contains some of the statistics elements considered for this investigation such as Mean, Median, Standard Deviation, Variance and Skewness, in order to describe for each of the dimensions (Tangible, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, Empathy and Groceries) how they behave depending on how Aviva’s employees perceive service quality from the canteen in their workplace. All the figures contained in the table obtained from the gap score of each item’s dimension.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistic element</th>
<th>Tangible Dimension Gap Score</th>
<th>Reliability Dimension Gap Score</th>
<th>Responsiveness Dimension Gap Score</th>
<th>Assurance Dimension Gap Score</th>
<th>Empathy Dimension Gap Score</th>
<th>Groceries Dimension Gap Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>-0.4869</td>
<td>-0.7389</td>
<td>-0.4950</td>
<td>-0.4131</td>
<td>-0.2232</td>
<td>-0.5843</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>-0.5053</td>
<td>-0.7684</td>
<td>-0.3795</td>
<td>-0.1474</td>
<td>-0.2211</td>
<td>-0.5843</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
<td>0.3287</td>
<td>0.1633</td>
<td>0.3458</td>
<td>0.5603</td>
<td>0.3887</td>
<td>0.2307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variance</td>
<td>0.1081</td>
<td>0.0266</td>
<td>0.1196</td>
<td>0.3139</td>
<td>0.1511</td>
<td>0.0532</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skewness</td>
<td>0.2447</td>
<td>1.633</td>
<td>-1.504</td>
<td>-1.987</td>
<td>1.172</td>
<td>1.212</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Tangible Dimension:** this dimension possesses a mean score of -0.489 which indicates the Aviva’s employees aren’t at ease with the tangible elements offered by the canteen catering service in their building. Its median gap value is -0.5053 which is lower than the mean. In addition, its standard deviation is 0.3287 which indicates how scattered are the gap of each
item from the mean. The skewness value is 0.2447 which means that the distribution is negatively skewed and the gaps are deviated mostly to the left.

**Reliability Dimension:** the mean score for this second dimension is -0.7389 (being the broader gap, and therefore the dimensions they are more unsatisfied with), which expresses that on average employees are highly unsatisfied with the elements regarding to the reliability dimension in their workplace canteen. It also has the broader median value which is -0.7684. Its standard deviation is 0.1633 which means gaps are just a little spread away from the mean, and a variance of 0.0266. The distribution is once more negatively skewed with a skewness value of 1.663 and indicating that the gaps are more on the left side.

**Responsiveness Dimension:** this dimension has an average score of -0.4950 which is quite similar to the tangible dimension’s one and this could be due to the similarity of some items in both dimensions. This negative average score expresses dissatisfaction levels from part of the Aviva’s employees in regard to the responsiveness canteen service in their workplace. Its median value is -0.3795 and its standard deviation of 0.3458 which means that the gaps have a little deviation from the mean, as well as a variance of 0.1196. It shows a positively skewed distribution with a skewness value of -1.504 and stressing the existence of the gaps more to the right.

**Assurance Dimension:** the mean gap score for the assurance dimensions has a value of -0.4131 which stresses some low levels of dissatisfaction from the Aviva’s employees in respect to the assurance in their workplace canteen. Its median is also higher than its mean with a gap value of -0.1474. The standard deviation for this dimension is the broadest one of the six with a value of 0.5603, but the gaps are still not too far away from the mean, and its variance is 0.3139. It also has a positive skewed distribution with a skewness figure of -1.987.

**Empathy Dimension:** On average, even though Aviva’s employees seem to be unsatisfied with the levels of empathy of the canteen service in their workplace as they showed to have an average mean score of -0.2232, it is also the dimension they are more satisfied with. The median average gap for it is of -0.2211 and slightly higher than the mean. Its standard deviations value is 0.3887 indicating a little spread are the gaps from the mean and a
variance of 0.1511. Their deviation is more to the left due to its distributions is negatively skewed with a skewness value of 1.172.

**Groceries Dimension**: this is the last of the six dimensions and one of the Aviva’s employees are more unsatisfied with, and this can be seen as its mean gap is of -0.5843, which is related to the presence of only two items in it. Its standard dimension’s value is 0.2307 which means how the gaps are deviated from the mean which in this case is once more not much, and a variance of 0.0532. The distribution is one more time negative with a skewness value of 1.212 indicating that the gaps are more deviated to the left of the mean.
Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

This chapter is presented in order to answer the research question while drawing the findings for each of the research objectives of the investigation, by summarizing all the results exposed in the previous chapter with the purpose to provide a proper conclusion for the study. Likewise, at the end of the chapter, some pertinent recommendations are given for further related investigations.

5.2 Research Question and Research Objectives

As stated in the beginning, the main purpose of this study is to investigate how the Aviva’s employees of Dublin’s headquarter perceive service quality in the canteen catering provider in their workplace through the use of the SERVQUAL model, and hence determine the employees satisfaction as a canteen’ customers.

In Chapter 3, six research objectives were specifically pointed by the researcher in order to answer the investigation’s research question. These six objectives and their respective finding are being described as follows:

1) To describe the influence of the SERVQUAL tangible dimension on customer’s satisfaction regarding to the canteen catering service in their workplace canteen.

The purpose of this objective is to describe the influence of the four items of the tangible dimension on customer’s perception regarding to their workplace catering service quality, which according to Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1988) describe service quality as the gap between customer expectations and perceptions of a received service. The up-to-date equipment item shows and overall score gap of -0.652, which stresses that on average, customers are highly unsatisfied with the canteens’ equipment. Regarding to the second item, customers are also unsatisfied with the physical facilities of their workplace canteen, with a gap score of -0.3579. The employee’s appearance item score gap was the smallest gap out of the four, with a value of -0.0948, very close to cero, but also expressing some
unsatisfied customers. At last, the cleanliness item was the one that customers were more unsatisfied with, having a gap score value of -0.8421, and this is because most of the customers’ responses were strongly agree (88.4%) regarding to their expectations of a very clean canteen environment. In general, it was discovered that, regarding to the tangible dimension of the SERVQUAL model, Aviva employees’ perceptions do not meet their expectations.

2) To evaluate how influencing the SERVQUAL reliability dimensions items can be on customer’s perception in terms of their workplace canteen.

After all the finding and the analysis of the primary research made in chapter 4 regarding to the reliability dimensions items, the researcher concludes that Aviva’s employees are not satisfied with the service offered by the canteen catering provider in terms of the reliability dimension of the SERVQUAL model. More specifically, the promises fulfilments item shows a high and negative gap of -0.7684, denoting a lack of compromise by the canteen provider. The problem solving item had also a high and negative gap score with a value of -0.7473, which is related to irresponsibility issues from the canteen company. The third item, the service dependability one had the highest score gap, whose value was -0.8844 and denoting that the canteen service is not constant throughout the time. The service delivered at the promised time item had the smaller gap score with a figure of -0.4632, revealing that the canteen makes an effort to stick provide what they promise. Records kept accurately by the canteen is the fifth and last item of the dimension, and it shows a score gap of -0.831, but this is because for customers it is not easy to know how the canteen provider keeps their records, which lead to a total of 59 responses to the “neither disagree nor agree” alternative.

3) To evaluate the SERVQUAL responsiveness dimension items and its influence on customer’ perception regarding to the canteen catering in their workplace.

The aim of this objective is to evaluate the four items of the responsiveness dimension of the SERVQUAL model, and how it influences the Aviva employees’ perception of the service quality provided by the canteen within their workplace facilities. The first item, which is about canteen employees’ willingness to provide information had the highest negative score gap with a value of -0.9895, and this is because logically customers
expectations are really high, with 57 of the responses for the strongly agree choice, against only 16 for the same choice but regarding to their own experience in their building’s canteen. The following item, concerning of employees promptness of giving service had also a negative gap score (-0.2843) but way lower than the previous one, and it shows to be close to cero which is the point where customers’ expectations are met (Parasuraman, Zeithmal and Berry, 1988). Third item regarding to canteen staff willingness to help customers had also a negative gap score (-0.2316) but the closest one to cero of the four items, indicating the presence of a kind and polite employees of the canteen. The last dimension item had negative gap score with a value of -0.4737, expressing that canteen employees are not always available to respond customer’s requests and causing them some dissatisfaction. Overall, Aviva employees’ expectations are not met by their perceptions of the quality service offered by the canteen’s employees in their workplace regarding to the responsiveness dimension of the SERVQUAL model.

4) To examine the SERVQUAL assurance dimension items and how influencing can it be on customers’ perception of the canteen service in their workplace.

This fourth objective aims to examine those factors contained in the assurance dimension of the SERVQUAL model that influence on customers perception of the canteen service quality. In this regard, the first item of the dimension, trustiness on canteen’s employees, had a negative value of -0.1684 and very close to cero, showing one again an unsatisfied customer but by a very little gap. Item 2, safeness regarding to transactions with canteen’s employees also shows a negative and even smaller score gap, with a figure of -0.1263 and once again quite close to cero, this is because Aviva employees perceptions are almost met in terms of transactions safeness. The third dimension’s item possesses also a negative and the lowest value of -0.1052, denoting that Aviva employee’s expectations regarding to canteen employees’ politeness are still not met bur very close to do so. Lastly, the item concerning of canteen employees’ service knowledge has the highest score gap amongst them all with a value of -1.2526, which is not surprisingly at all because 61 of the responses went to the choice of “strongly agree” in terms of their expectation, while regarding to their experience most of these responses went to the “neither disagree nor agree” one with a total of 51, and expressing the existence of a kind and polite staff but an unknown level of
knowledge. In total, the expectations of the employees of Aviva are not met by their perceptions of the quality service offered by the canteen’s employees in their workplace regarding to the assurance dimension of the SERVQUAL model.

5) To evaluate the influence of the SERVQUAL empathy dimension items on customers’ perceptions of the canteen service in their workplace.

The aim of this fifth is to analyse the five items contained in the empathy dimension of the SERVQUAL model that influence on customers perception of service quality offered by the canteen catering provider in their workplace. In this respect, item number 1 (canteen’s willingness to offer individual attention) has a negative gap score of -0.2105, and confirming a not so interested canteen in terms of provided individual attention to their customers. Item 2 of this dimension and concerning about canteen employees’ personal attention to customers is the only one item out of 24 with a positive gap score, with a value of 0.4 and slightly higher than cero, and this is because Aviva’s employees perception regarding to this item are higher than their expectation, with a total of 33 responses for each of the “strongly agree” and “agree” options. Item 3, about canteen employees’ knowledge about the customer’s needs presents also a low and negative gap score of -0.2211, stressing customers’ dissatisfaction and some disinterest from canteen’s staff in terms of what their customers really want. Item 4 regarding to the canteen and its customer’s interest at heart also shows a negative and higher gap score (-0.462) value than the previous ones, but this can also be considered as a tricky item for customers to know in a proper way and it can be seen through the 41 responses for the “neither disagree nor agree” option respecting to their perceptions. Lastly, item 5 beside of having a negative value of -0.621 it is also the highest one of the dimension, denoting a clear dissatisfaction regarding to the canteen operating hours, which basically they are not the most appropriate ones for the Aviva’s employees. In total, this dimension’s items can be considered as the one with best results compared to other dimensions ones, because most of them are slightly close to cero and one of them is even higher than cero, but generally, the expectations of the employees of Aviva are not met by their perceptions of the quality service offered by the canteen’s employees in their workplace regarding to the empathy dimension of the SERVQUAL model.
6) To evaluate how influential can the grocery dimension items be on customers’ perceptions of the canteen service in their workplace.

This is the last (and added one) dimension of the SERVQUAL model framework and its purpose is to evaluate its two items contained in it, and its influence on customers perception of service quality offered by the canteen catering provider in their workplace. The first item, concerning about the variety of products offered in a canteen provider had a negative gap score of -0.4211, and clearly indicating an unsatisfied customer regarding to the different choices of products offered by the canteen in their workplace. Item 2, also shows a negative and even higher score gap of -0.747 in terms of the quality of the product offered by their workplace canteen, and this is quite expected due in the catering sector customers are always expecting products with high quality standards (Abdullah, Abdurahman & Hamali ,2013), and by seeing and the Aviva’s employees expecting of product quality, most of the respondents (69) went for the Strongly agree” option, while regarding to their experience with their workplace canteen, only 23 people went for the same choice. Once again, the expectations of the employees of Aviva are not met by their perceptions of the quality service offered by the canteen’s employees in their workplace regarding to the grocery dimension.

As explained previously, both customers’ expectations and perceptions were measured using a 5-point likert scale, where “strongly disagree” signifies the lowest level of expectations or perception, and the “strongly agree” indicates the highest level of both feelings, and the subtraction of Perception-Expectations shows the service quality levels. Overall, it was discovered that the perceptions of the employees of the Aviva headquarter in Dublin, Ireland, offered by the canteen catering provider in the company’s building do not meet their expectations, and this is because all the gap scores of the dimensions resulted negative. In which, the reliability dimension was the one who showed the higher mean gap with a value of -0.7389, and followed by the groceries (-0.05843) and responsiveness (-0.4950) mean scores, while the smaller gaps of the mean were achieved by the tangible dimension (-0.4869), assurance (-0.4131) and empathy with the smallest mean gap score of them all with a value of -0.2232. Altogether, these previous values clearly express that the perception from the Aviva’s employees about the performance of the canteen in their...
workplace is less than their expected service quality levels. However, Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1988) state that it is quite common that customers’ expectations in the catering field tend to exceed their perceptions of the service, which signifies two things: customers’ expectations in the food field are usually high, and hence, for the food provider there is always a must to keep improving.

In addition, and more specifically, in terms of the Aviva employees’ expectations of a canteen service, the highest scores were cleanliness of the physical environment with a score of 4.8821, then the quality of the products with a 4.7263 score, followed by the canteen’s dependability with 4.6739, employees’ knowledge with a score of 4.6421 and employees availability to provide information with a 4.5579 score. The score of the rest of the other items were very close to the previous highest five, which means that canteen users’ expectations are high. On the other hand, and regarding to their actual perception of the canteen service in their workplace, the five items rated as the highest are shown as follows: employees’ politeness (4.3741), then employees’ appearance (4.35782), followed closely by how safe they feel in transactions with employees with a score of 4.2317, then how employees look after customers (4.1684) and lastly, employees willingness to give prompt service with a score of 4.1365. Once again, the rest of the scores for the perceptions are quite similar but in general all of them are bellow to what expected, which brings a perception of poor service quality and hence, an unsatisfied customer (Lee, Lee and Yoo, 2000; Saravana and Rao, 2007).

From all the findings previously mentioned, finally the researcher proceeds to answer the investigation’s research question: Can the SERVQUAL model be applied in a canteen catering service context, in order to describe how customers (employees of the Aviva headquarter in Dublin, Ireland) perceive service quality and if they feel satisfied with this service? After carried out the investigation using the SERVQUAL model, it is valid to state that in general, the service quality perceived by the employees of the Aviva headquarter in Dublin, Ireland, regarding to the canteen catering service in their workplace is seen as low, and therefore there is not a satisfied customer. This is mainly caused because they presented to have higher expectations in comparison to what they perceive from their canteen service provider, but it is also true that these differences are not too wide among
the 6 dimensions, but in general customers are not satisfied with none of them. In addition, and even though score gaps of the dimensions are little and close to cero, or to become positive, it is also apparent that customers are actually expecting more than what the canteen service provider in their workplace is offering (at least in terms of the six dimensions of the SERVQUAL model). It is obvious that the canteen service provider in the facilities of the Aviva headquarter in Dublin, needs to improve its performance regarding to these six SERVQUAL dimensions of service quality with the main purpose of being able to offer their customers what they are truly expecting, with the purpose of satisfy them, which directly will contribute to the canteens’ grow and success.

5.3 Recommendations

One of the limitations the researcher had to face while doing this investigation was regarding to time. This was mainly because permission for both companies (Aviva and the canteen company provider) to allow the researcher to use the questionnaires and therefore carry out the investigation. All these time constraints, influenced on the sample size which was of only 95 respondents, which definitely created bias on the information gathered. Therefore, for further investigations it is highly recommendable to deal with enough time in advance with the organizations (if any) managers included in the investigation, in order to work with a higher and more appropriate sample size.

Secondly, further research related to the catering services in Ireland, and more specifically in-company providers and customer perception should be carried out because there is a clear scarcity in terms of literature about these topics. This will improve the catering service provided in-companies as well as the customers’ levels of satisfaction. Additionally, and as the literature review has shown, the service sector, and specifically in Ireland, has grown considerable during the last years, which makes it a great opportunity to do all the pertinent analysis regarding to service quality and customer satisfaction.

And last but not least, the purpose of this investigation was to measure quantitatively through the SERVQUAL model how satisfied the Aviva employees of Dublin headquarter are regarding to the canteen catering service offered in the company’s facilities. Therefore, it is recommended for future research, to carry out an investigation but with a qualitative
approach instead, with the purpose of understand in a deeper way the experiences of the customers
Chapter 6: Self Reflection on Own Learning

6.1 Introduction

Brown, Bull and Pendleburry (1997) defined learning as the changes in terms of knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes acquired through experience and reflection about that experience. Learning is a process where knowledge takes part, and it depends on the transformation of experience (Kolb, 1994). While for Burns and Sinfield (2010) describe it as a social, interactive and constructionist process, and the only way of achieving it is by engaging with both people and knowledge in a very dynamic and interactive way. Therefore, chapter six highlights the researcher’s development learning plan made during the course of the Master of Business Administration (MBA) in Marketing as well as through the process of the creation of this thesis.

6.2 Learning Style

Each individual learns in a different and unique way and this is due no individual is the same, in fact, people perceive and process information in many unequal ways, which makes the process of learning a topic of individual styles or preferences (Payne and Whittaker, 2006). Van Blerkom (2006) defined learning styles as the preferred way of an individual to obtain, process and retain any sort of information, and it involves a variety of factors such as time of the day for study, strategies used to study, the place to study and so on. In this regard, Kolb (1984) points out that the process of learning can be considered as a circular process (Figure 27), and it involves four stages: Concrete Experience, Reflective Observation, Abstract Conceptualisation and Active Experimentation. He expresses that the process of cyclical learning should be seen as a continuous area, and it all begins when an individual performs any action for the very first time.
Honey and Mumford (1992) based on the model of Kolb’s learning cycle, identified and developed a set four individual learning style. These styles will vary depending on every student’s process of learning. These styles are briefly explained as follows:

**Activist:** it emphasizes on experiences and focuses on feeling as opposed to thinking. Individuals with concrete-experience orientation tend to be good intuitive decision makers, and also prefer working in groups and therefore to be very good at the moment of relating to others. They are also open minded people always seeking for new experiences and challenges.

**Reflector:** it focuses on deeply understand situations or ideas throughout observing and describing them. These people are good at seeing the implications that any idea or situation could bring. They can be considered as very thoughtful individuals because they are brilliant at looking at situations from many different points of view to form opinions.

**Theorist:** it can be considered as the counterpart of concrete experience and this is because it relies on thinking instead of feeling. People under this orientation are more focused on generation of ideas, use of logic and applying concepts. Also, they are good at quantitative analysis rather than qualitative ones, systematic planning and manipulation of complex symbols.
**Pragmatist:** this sort of orientation relies on influencing people in different situations. It is basically based on practical situations rather than a deep understanding, and focuses on the practical side (doing) as opposed to the analytical side (observing). Those with an active experimentation orientation are experimenters, and are always looking forward to the creation of new ideas. They tend to dominate the environment that surrounds them and make the most of these circumstances, and their way to accomplish this is by solving problems in a very quick way.

Farooq and Regnier (2011) explain that in the educational field, learning varies from student to student, and hence no student has the same way of learning of another. For instance, the two authors state that in a common classroom there might be some students that are more likely to learn through interactive activities such as simulation, problem solving and games, while some others are keener to learn with the experience of workbooks to be completed under planned instructions, whilst others prefer to study on their own or working in groups, and this preferences will depend on their past experiences for getting good marks.

Bearing in mind the learning the Honey and Mumford learning styles, the researcher considers that has style of a Reflector. This is because researcher prefers to listen, to observe and collect data from his own experiences rather than learning from others. In this regard, McCabe (2014) expresses that individuals with a reflective orientation have the ability to look at things from many perspectives and also to appreciate different ideas and points of view, which throughout the time makes them as social learners. This Master Program as well as the dissertation process provided the researcher an opportunity to deeply understand its way to learn through observing and analysing its past experience in order to keep going forward.

**6.3 A Master of Business Administration**

For the researcher, enrolling on an MBA program had always been in his mind since the moment he got his first degree, but for the researcher it was totally unknown that an MBA was going to be one of the toughest challenges ever faced but at the same time one of the
most rewarding experiences. From the first moment, the program showed how complex and demanding it was, and hence, how different it was going to be in comparison to his first degree program. While the MBA program was firmly based on deeply investigation and research from different academicals sources (and its proper way of referencing them) for the assignments, his bachelor degree program presented a lacked regarding to this academic rigor, it was based mostly on exams. Therefore, the MBA program truly introduced the researcher the field of the academic investigation and all the benefits that surrounds it.

As a foreign student the MBA program gave the researcher the opportunity to create an international scope regarding to the educational, cultural and professional areas. The researcher needed to develop skills to integrate to a whole new cultural educational diversity that was present since the first days of the program. Fellow students with different backgrounds provided the researcher a broader and wiser way to look at situations. Altogether, this international experience has influenced the researcher to look after new employment horizons under the area of international business.

6.4 The Dissertation Stage

This dissertation is the result of an arduous work done by the researcher through eight months. First, the researcher started to think about a possible topic for the dissertation during September of 2013, and the ideas (which were loads) were primarily related to aspects that he was comfortable with and of his personal interest. The areas the researcher had always in mind for his thesis were Consumer Behaviour, Quality and Customer Perceptions, but always related to the area of services because it is a field that passionate the author, and also he was working for a service provider company. In fact, the title for the proposal for this thesis was: “A consumer behaviour analysis: Aviva’s employees perceptions of the catering service provided in their workplace”.

The proposal feedback resulted as a very valuable outcome, because it showed the researcher both comments and concerns about his first ideas for this thesis. Dr. PJ Paul made a huge effort in order not only to show the researcher where the good aspects of this proposal were, but also where some mistakes and the lack of consistency were present. While the Literature Review and the Methodology showed interest and relevant content for
the investigation, the way it was presented and how it was structured wasn’t to clear and was even confusing at times. Altogether, these constructive comments given by Dr. PJ Paul definitely helped the researcher to improve most of the aspects of this investigation.

Right after that, and as soon as the researcher received a formal notice from DBS saying that all modules had been passed successfully, and hence, a supervisor (Mr. David Hurley) had been granted for the thesis’s purposes, the researcher contacted him to arrange the first meeting and start working on the final dissertation as soon as possible. Mr. Hurley responded in short time and the first meeting was arranged for a few days after, first meeting that was very useful for the researcher because first of all Mr. Hurley liked and approved the topic for the dissertation, and he showed step by step how the meetings were going to be structured and what was going to be covered in every one of them.

The way these meetings were structured gave the researcher the motivation to set deadlines to every one of them, making the writing for the whole dissertation process as continuous and smoothly. Which according to Murray (2006) writing regularly on a thesis with the purpose of meeting deadlines process helps the researcher to keep focus, and also influence the student to develop different skills such as writing habits, how to handle busy schedules and developing writing as a task of professional life. In total, there were 5 live meetings with the Mr. Hurley, each time checking the progress made by the researcher regarding to the previous meeting, and also setting the new tasks for the upcoming meeting, which usually was placed from three weeks to three weeks time.

In general, the MBA program has been a very rigorous program in the academic life of the researcher, but at the same time, the learning outcomes and the knowledge it has provided is impossible to measure. These outcomes are described as follows:

**Research Skills:** from the mere beginning of the MBA, the researcher had to deal with a variety of assignments in most of the modules and which academic content need to be very broad and quite objective. As stated before, the author researcher skills weren’t very sharp because of the lack of these types of investigative assignments while studying for his previous degree. Activities such as analysis of study cases, individual essays and group investigations have highly influenced on the improvement of his research skills. In the
upcoming future, this research ability would help the researcher to perform business and marketing research analysis in a clearer and more critical way.

**Time Management Skills:** for the researcher, time management throughout the whole MBA program has been a key factor to succeed, and this was because the researcher had a full-time job and the MBA was a full-time program too, so the researcher needed to make use of every single free second he had to study, and to carry out the assignments as well as working on the dissertation. Overall, the time management skills of the researcher have improved considerably since commencing the program and without it he would not have been able to complete it successfully.

**Team Working Skills:** even though the dissertation process at DBS can only be carried out individually, the rest of the modules were packed with group assignments. For the researcher, group works were almost a new area in his academic path due to the lack of this kind of activities in his previous degree program. These activities had their pros and cons. The researcher had to interact with many people from different cultures and understand different points of views in order to get along with the activity, but on the other hand, there were always students whose attitudes were unconcerned towards the fulfilment of the assignment. For the researcher, at a master level these attitudes resulted as not understandable and annoying at times, but he always led with it in a professional way.

**Communication Skills:** the researcher strongly believes that his communication skills are improved during the MBA program. The mere fact that the researcher is a non English native speaker and successfully made it through the whole course speaks for its own. Additionally, the researcher feels more confident in his abilities to achieve every new goal that lies ahead.

6.5 A New Beginning

Undoubtedly, the MBA experience has been unique and has added uncountable value to the researcher personal, professional, and academic life. The creation of this thesis as a final outcome of the program has been truly influential for the researcher to believe that nothing is impossible when you keep that in mind and you work hard enough to get it. Sincerely, it
wasn’t an easy process to manage and a few times the researchers simply wanted to let go, but in the end everything went smoothly and became one of the most important and significant step ever taken by the researcher, and he would definitely do it once more if he had to. This has also highly influenced the researcher to be extra-motivated to always go ahead and keep looking forward to bigger challenges, in other words, a new beginning.
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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Questionnaire (Survey on Customer Satisfaction)

Survey on Customer Satisfaction

Dear participant,

I am a Master student in Marketing at Dublin Business School, and I am currently working on my dissertation. The aim of this research is to investigate the factors that might have an impact on your satisfaction regarding to the canteen service provided in this building.

I kindly ask for your support by dedicating a little time to take part in this questionnaire, and telling me about your experience with canteen services. I would really appreciate if you take part in this questionnaire. Your experiences with the canteen service would give me an important input to my investigation.

Please, be assured that your response and all the information collected through this questionnaire will be treated anonymously.

Thank you very much for your time and support.

Juan Carlos Marroquin Brandt
Dublin Business School
MBA
The questionnaire is divided in three parts: personal information, expectations and experience.

1. **PERSONAL INFORMATION:** Please, put a cross (x) on your choice of answer.

   **Gender**
   - [ ] Female
   - [ ] Male

   **Age**
   - [ ] 18-25
   - [ ] 26-33
   - [ ] 34-41
   - [ ] 42-49
   - [ ] 50 and above

2. **EXPECTATIONS:** This section is about your EXPECTATIONS or opinions of canteen food services. Please, show the extent to which you think firms offering canteen services should possess the following features. Do this by circling ONLY ONE of the five numbers next to each statement. If you strongly agree that these firms should possess a feature, circle number 5. If you agree circle number 4. If you neither agree nor disagree circle 3. If you disagree circle number 2, and if you strongly disagree, circle 1. There are no right or wrong answers, all I am interested in is a number that best shows your EXPECTATIONS about firms offering canteen food service.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Scores</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Ideal canteens should have up-to-date equipments.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Their physical facilities (tables, chairs, counters, fridges, lights) should be visually appealing.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Their employees should be well dressed and appear neat.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The appearance of the physical environment of a canteen should be clean.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. When canteens promise to do something by a certain time, they should do so.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. When customers have problems, canteen firms should be sympathetic and reassuring.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Canteens should be dependable (food quality/standards consistent)</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Canteens should provide their service at the time they promise to do so.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Canteens should keep all their records accurately.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Employees in a canteen should make information (such as opening times, menus, price lists) easy to access by the customers.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Employees in a canteen should give prompt service to customers.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Employees in a canteen always have to be willing to help customers.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Employees in a canteen should never be too busy to respond to customer requests promptly.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Customers should be able to trust the employees of a canteen.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Customers should be able to feel safe in their transactions with</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
canteens’ employees.

16. Employees in a canteen should be polite.  

17. Employees in a canteen should get adequate support to do their jobs well.  

18. Canteens should be willing to meet the individual needs of customers.  

19. Employees in a canteen are expected to give customers personal attention.  

20. Employees in a canteen should know what the requirements of their customers are.  

21. Canteens are expected to have their customers’ best interests at heart.  

22. Canteens should be expected to have operating hours convenient to all their customers.  

23. Canteens should have a diversity of products.  

24. Products offered in a canteen should be of good quality.  

3. EXPERIENCE: The following set of statements relate to your PERCEPTIONS or feelings about the canteen food service experienced in this building. For each statement, please show the extent to which you believe the canteen of this building has the feature described by the statement. Once again, if you strongly agree that these firms should possess a feature, circle number 5. If you agree circle number 4. If you neither agree nor disagree circle 3. If you disagree circle number 2, and if you strongly disagree circle 1. There are no right or wrong answers, all I am interested in is a number that best shows your PERCEPTIONS about the canteen service in this building.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Scores</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The canteen in this building has up-to-date equipments.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The physical facilities of the canteen are visually appealing.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The employees of the canteen are well dressed and appear neat.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The appearance of the physical environment of the canteen is clean.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. When the canteen promises to do something by a certain time, it does so.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. When you have problems, the canteen is sympathetic and reassuring.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. The canteen is dependable (food quality/standards are consistent).</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. The canteen provides its services at the time it promises to do so.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>---</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>The canteen keeps all their records accurately.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>The canteen’s employees make information (such as opening times, menus, price lists) easy to access by the customers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>The canteen’s employees give prompt service to customers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Employees of the canteen are always willing to help customers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Employees of the canteen are never too busy to respond to customer requests promptly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>You can trust employees of the canteen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>You feel safe in your transactions with the canteen’s employees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Employees of the canteen are polite.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Employees get adequate support from the canteen company to do their jobs well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>The canteen gives you individual attention.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Employees of the canteen give you personal attention.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Employees of the canteen know what your needs are.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>The canteen has your best interests at heart.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>The canteen has operating hours convenient to all their customers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>The canteen has a diversity of products.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>Products offered by the canteen are of good quality.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thank you very much for answering this questionnaire!