CHAPTER-V
FINDINGS, SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

V.1. INTRODUCTION

The present study under the title, “Customer Satisfaction with regard to the Service Quality of Departmental Stores in Tiruchirappalli City” was undertaken with a view to understand the various factors which influence the satisfaction level of the customers regarding the service quality rendered by the departmental stores based on the five dimensions of service quality namely tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy.

The data collected through questionnaire were classified, tabulated and analyzed (SPSS package) with the help of various statistical tools such as $\chi^2$ and correlation analysis, t-test, ANOVA, factor analysis and logistic regression on all the five dimensions. The association and relation between several variables were also found. The primary factors governing the satisfaction level in each of the dimensions and the degree of satisfaction level among the five dimensions were traced. The main findings evolved from the study are summarized in this chapter.

V.2. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

A brief consolidation of the profile, shopping habits and preferences of the respondents are given below.
V.2.1 Profile of the Respondents

➢ A large majority of 85 percent of the respondents were under the age group of 21-40 years, 4.7 percent were below 20 years and 10.5 percent were above 40 years.

➢ A majority of 60.7 percent (364/600) of the respondents were female shoppers.

➢ A majority of 61.6 percent of the respondents were graduates and post graduates, 10.7 percent had qualification below 10\(^{th}\) and 27.7 percent had 10\(^{th}\) to 12\(^{th}\) qualification. Thus the response was collected mostly from highly qualified persons.

➢ Out of the 600 respondents, 34.3 percent were housewives, 18.8 percent were employed in private organizations, 16.5 percent were businessmen, 15.53 percent were government officials, 10.7 percent and 6.3 percent of the respondents were professionals and employed elsewhere respectively.

➢ 72.3 percent (434/600) of the respondents had a monthly income between Rs.10001-20000, 18 percent of them earned an income between Rs.20001-30,000 and only 0.3 percent earned above Rs.30,000 per month. Thus the majority of 72.3 percent earned monthly an average amount between Rs.10,000 and 20,000 per month.

➢ Out of the 600 sample respondents 58.2 percent (349) and 40.3 percent (242) had a small family with 2-4 members and 5-7 members respectively. Only 1.5 percent (9) of them had a large family with more than 7 members. Therefore, majority of the respondents belonged to the nucleus family type.
V.2.2 Shopping Habits and Preferences of Respondents

The shopping habits of the customers like their frequency of visit, amount spent, persons with whom they shop etc. vary from one individual to another. The habits and preferences of the respondents in the present study are consolidated below:

- 34 percent (209) of the total respondents went shopping alone and 33.3 percent (200) of the respondents went with their spouse, followed by 26.2 percent and 5.7 percent who went shopping with their family and friends respectively. Hence the majority, i.e. 68.1 percent (409) of the respondents went shopping either alone or with their spouse.

- While investigating the reason for choosing a particular shop, the respondents gave priority to reasonable price (44%), good store environment (31.3%) and more choices of product (13.3%) with the rest prioritizing convenient parking facility, location and the service provided. Hence a majority of 75 percent (264) chose a particular shop giving importance to reasonable price and good store environment.

- A majority of 63 percent of the respondents visited the shop twice in a month, followed by 23.8 percent and 10 percent who visited the shop once and thrice respectively. Hence, the majority of 63 percent (378) visited the shop twice in a month.

- A majority of 53.5 percent of the respondents spent Rs.500-1000 per visit, 39 percent spent below Rs.500 and 7.5 percent above Rs. 1000 for purchase in the retail shop.
53.8 percent of the sample respondents got introduced to the respective shop through their neighbours/colleagues, followed by 22.2 percent, 12.7 percent and 11.3 percent of the respondents who got introduced to the shop through relatives, friends and advertisements respectively. Thus the majority of 53.8 percent of the total respondents got introduced to the respective shop through their neighbours/colleagues.

With regard to the mode of payment, 69.3 percent of the respondents shopped on cash basis and the remaining 30.7 percent of the respondents had paid through credit cards. Thus the majority of the respondents were accustomed with cash payment.

V.2.3 Customer Satisfaction on account of Tangibles

The dimension of tangibles refers to the availability of sufficient physical facilities with good store environment.

Out of the 600 respondents, a large majority (98.8 percent) were highly satisfied with the tangible aspects of the store.

While ranking the various aspects of tangibles, the respondents gave the highest priority to the stores’ atmosphere which was expected to be good and welcoming. Secondly they considered one-stop shopping to be a vital need as it avoided unnecessary transportation and anxiety. On the other hand the respondents were least bothered about the availability of play area for children.
Very few respondents who were private employees (3.5%) and professionals (4.7%) had average satisfaction and all the rest of the Government officials, business men and housewives were fully satisfied with regard to the physical aspects of the store.

The majority of the respondents (44%) ranked the fixing of reasonable price to be the prime cause for selecting a particular departmental store and 181 respondents (31%) had prioritized the availability of good store environment to be the prime cause. A few respondents preferred the availability of more choices of products (80), parking facility (36), convenient location (9), and good services extended at the departmental stores (21). On the whole the respondents had given more weightage for reasonable price and good store environment while selecting a particular shop (Hypothesis I.10.6).

The frequency of purchase had a significant relation to the satisfaction level. The respondents who purchased twice or more in a month were fully (100%) satisfied than those who purchased only once a month (Hypothesis I.10.2). Hence it was proved that the frequency of visit increased with increase in satisfaction level.

All the respondents were aware and highly satisfied with the physical aspects whether they had made their payment through cash or credit cards.
Both the genders, didn’t take the responsibility of recommending the shop to others.

Except a few respondents with the educational qualification below 10th, all the rest had a strong opinion to recommend the shop to others.

There existed a significant association between income and opinion to recommend. The higher the income the more they didn’t want to recommend, whereas a few respondents whose income is in the lower bracket generally recommended the shop to their friends and colleagues.

The male respondents mostly were businessmen (36.9%) and Government officials (28%). On the other hand, most of the female respondents were housewives (52.2%) and a few were employed in the private sector (20.3%).

While analyzing the association between gender and income range, 81.4 percent of male earned Rs.10,001-20,000 and 12.3 percent earned Rs.5000-10000. On the other hand 66.5 percent of female respondents earned Rs.10001-20000, 21.7 percent Rs.5000-10000 and 11.3 percent earned Rs.20001-30000. The average income of the male respondents was more compared to that of the female respondents.

There existed a good association between gender and the reason stated to prefer a particular shop over that of others. The order or priority of the reasons remains almost the same irrespective of the gender. Both male (52.1%) and female (38.7%) had stated reasonable price to be their primary
priority, followed by good store environment and more choice of products. Compared to males, females gave more importance for convenient parking and service extended by the shop. Thus retail shops that sold at reasonable price, attracted more customers.

- A significant association existed between gender and the members who had accompanied them for shopping. 34.7 percent of the male shopped with their spouse, 32.6 percent with their family, 27.5 percent alone and 5.1 percent with friends. With regard to females, 39.6 percent shopped alone, 32.4 percent with their spouse, 22 percent with family and 6 percent with their friends. Thus a majority of males shopped with spouse or family and majority of females shopped alone.

- The association between gender and by whom the respondents got introduced to the shop returned a significant value. Males had got introduced to the shop through neighbours/colleagues (59.7%), relatives (22.0%) advertisement (9.3%) and friends (8.9%). 50 percent of the female respondents had got introduced through neighbours/colleagues, 22.3 percent through relatives, 12.6 percent through advertisements and 15.1 percent through friends. Thus the majority of the respondents had got introduced through their neighbours/colleagues, as people trust others experience.

- A significant association prevailed between gender and mode of payment. 64.4 percent of the male paid by cash and 35.6 percent of them used credit cards. Out of the total
respondents, 72.5 percent of the female paid by cash and 27.5 percent of them through credit cards. Thus a majority of the respondents paid by cash.

- There was a significant difference in satisfaction level of tangibles based on various age ((Hypothesis I.10.1). It was observed that people in the age group of 40 and above had higher satisfaction level with regard to the physical aspects of the shop compared to other age groups.

- There was a significant difference in satisfaction level based on the educational qualifications. It was observed that people below 10\textsuperscript{th} standard had higher satisfaction level towards tangibles, compared to other educational level of the respondents.

- There was a significant difference in satisfaction level based on various income groups. The people who had monthly income above Rs. 30,000 had higher satisfaction level.

- There was a significant difference in satisfaction level based on the persons who accompanied the respondents to do shopping. It was observed that people who were accompanied by friends had higher satisfaction level.

- There was a significant difference in satisfaction level based on the amount spent on purchase per visit. It was observed that people who spent more than Rs.500 had higher satisfaction (Hypothesis I.10.4).

- There was a significant difference in satisfaction level based on persons/media through which the shop had been
introduced. The satisfaction level of the respondents who got introduced through their relatives and advertisements was high (Hypothesis I.10.5).

- The t-test reflected a higher level of satisfaction for the female respondents than that for male respondents.
- The persons with high satisfaction level did not have an opinion to switch over to another shop.
- The factor analysis showed that the variables such as modern looking store, physical facilities and uninterrupted power supply can be together termed as attractive and convenient physical facilities which accounts for a highest variance of 10.53 percent.
- The outcome of the logistic regression showed that as the family size and occupation level increases, the good level of satisfaction increases more than 3 times and 1.5 times respectively. While gender, income level and preference for shop reduce the good level of satisfaction to a greater extent and it has to be carefully attended to by the departmental stores to increase the satisfaction level of the customers towards the tangibles of the store.
V.2.4 Customer Satisfaction with regard to Reliability

The dimension of reliability refers to the ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately.

➤ Out of the 600 respondents, 99.7 percent of the respondents were fully satisfied with the dimension of reliability.

➤ The respondents had ranked as first, the offering of the prices less than the MRP. Secondly almost the majority of the respondents were satisfied with the merchandise available. At the same time the respondents were least worried about the hidden prices or the availability of door delivery facility.

➤ No explicit relation can be stated between the satisfaction level and the level of education of the respondents.

➤ 1.9 percent of the respondents with monthly income between Rs.5,000 and Rs.10,000 had average satisfaction level, whereas the respondents with income greater than Rs.10,000 had 100 percent satisfaction. Thus higher the income higher was the level of satisfaction (Hypothesis I.10.3).

➤ There was a significant difference with regard to the satisfaction level based on the age groups (Hypothesis I.10.1). The respondents who were in the middle age of 31 to 40 years and above 40 years were highly satisfied.

➤ The respondents who were professionals (77.10%) and private employees (76.61%) were highly satisfied with respect to the dimension of reliability.

➤ The respondents those who shopped with their spouse (75.43%) and with their friends (75.14%) were highly
satisfied compared to those who shopped alone and with their family.

- The respondents who had selected the shop for convenient location were highly satisfied with the dimension of reliability.

- It was observed that people who shopped thrice (78.47%) and frequently (77.10%) had a higher level of satisfaction (Hypothesis I.1.2). Conversely it can also be stated that those respondents who were highly satisfied with reliability do shop frequently in the same shop.

- People who purchase more than Rs.1000 (81.02%) per visit had a higher level of satisfaction.

- It was observed that the respondents who had come to know about the shop through their relatives (75.23%) and through advertisements (74.90%) had a high level of satisfaction. Also those who got introduced through friends (74.80%) had a similar level of satisfaction.

- The level of satisfaction for the female respondents is higher than that for male, and the deviation in opinion was less for the data responded to by females.

- The percentage score did not differ significantly between the modes of payment with regard to the dimension of reliability. Thus, the mode of payment remained immaterial to decide on the satisfaction level with regard to reliability.

- The factor analysis showed that the variables such as error free transactions, prices of the products being less than MRP
can together be termed as good overall service with regard to reliability which accounts for a variance of 11.73 percent.

➢ The family size, education and occupation increase the good level of satisfaction. As the family size increases, the good level of satisfaction increased nearly two times. As the education and occupation level of the respondents increased, the good level of satisfaction also increased slightly more and slightly less than 1.5 times respectively. The preference for shop reduced the good level of satisfaction which demands further attention of the departmental stores in order to increase the satisfaction level of the customers towards the reliability of the store.

V.2.5 Customer Satisfaction with regard to Responsiveness

The dimension of responsiveness refers to the willingness to help the customers to provide prompt services to them.

➢ Out of the 600 respondents, a large majority (97.7%) were highly satisfied on account of the dimension of responsiveness.

➢ The respondents had first appreciated that the employees were readily helping to facilitate good shopping and extend prompt service. On the other hand the respondents were not much bothered about the knowledge of the employees to answer the customers’ questions or whether the employees were consistently courteous with the customers.
It was observed that irrespective of their educational level nearly 100 percent satisfaction existed among the respondents. Only a few (0.7%) of the undergraduate respondents had average level of satisfaction. The level of education and satisfaction on account of responsiveness/personal interaction did not correlate.

A strong relation existed between the satisfaction level on personal interactions and the monthly income of the respondents. Respondents with an income greater than Rs.10,000 were highly satisfied with the responsiveness of the shop (Hypothesis I.10.3). Thus it was proved that as income level is more, higher is the satisfaction level.

It was observed that people in the age group of 30 and above had higher satisfaction with regard to the aspect of responsiveness (Hypothesis I.10.1).

The Professional persons (77.50%) were highly satisfied with the personal interaction at the shop than those who had undertaken other jobs.

When people shop in the company of others, the satisfaction level in the perspective of responsiveness is also accountable to the interaction extended by the store workers to the persons accompanied too. There existed a definite variation in the satisfaction level of the respondents based on the persons who accompanied them for shopping. Those who shopped with their spouse were highly contented with the interaction at the
store, when compared to those who shopped alone or with family or friends.

➢ The customers who had selected the shop for the availability of more choice of products were highly satisfied with the aspects of responsiveness at the shop. Next in series, those respondents who opted for reasonable price and convenient location were also more satisfied with the dimension of personal interaction.

➢ The frequency of visit to a shop is highly dependent on the dimension of responsiveness, as it is the governing factor which attracts the customers and serves to be a cause to increase the periodicity of visit to the shop. All the customers who shopped more than once were extremely satisfied (Hypothesis I.10.2).

➢ There was a strong relation between the satisfaction and the amount spent per visit on purchase. The respondents who had spent more than Rs.1000 were much satisfied.

➢ The respondents who got introduced to the shop by their relatives and friends were highly satisfied with the aspect of responsiveness. As the relatives and friends recommend a shop to a person knowing his likes and dislikes, the customers who got introduced through their relatives and friends were highly contented than those who got introduced through advertisements or neighbours/colleagues.

➢ The female respondents had higher level of satisfaction than the male respondents.
The respondents who made their payment through credit cards (76.24\%) were highly satisfied with regard to responsiveness than those who paid by cash.

According to the factor analysis, the variables of safe transaction with the store, providing individual attention and receptive behavior of employees together can be termed as safe and friendly transaction which accounts for a variance of 14.52 percent.

The logistic regression traced that as the education level and family size increase, the good level of satisfaction increases slightly more than 1.5 times, whereas gender and preference for the shop reduce the good level of satisfaction. As the gender decreases the satisfaction level to a larger extent, keen interest should be taken by the departmental stores to trace out the reasons for the decrease in satisfaction level.

**V.2.6 Customer Satisfaction regarding Assurance**

The dimension of assurance refers to the possession of the required skills and knowledge to perform the service.

- Out of the 600 respondents, a large majority (93\%) were highly satisfied with regard to the dimension of assurance of the store.
- The respondents had given higher consideration to billing process, service extended and easy exchange of defected commodities.
The satisfaction level had no association with gender in the dimension of assurance.

All the business men were fully satisfied whereas only 82.6 per cent of the government officials were fully satisfied. 93.8 percent of the housewives and professionals also had full satisfaction. Thus the businessmen and government officials had the highest and the lowest satisfaction level respectively.

A definite association prevailed between the satisfaction level and the reason for selecting a particular shop. The respondents who selected the shop for availability of more choices of product, good service provided and convenient location were highly satisfied. Only 4.2 percent of the respondents who selected the shop for reasonable price along with 11.1 percent and 14.9 percent of the customers who selected the shop for parking facility and good store environment respectively had average satisfaction level (Hypothesis I.10.6).

Persons who had taken the word from personal experience of their friends, relatives and neighbours/colleagues had high satisfaction in comparison to those who got introduced to the shop through advertisements.

The respondents who paid by cash were more contented with regard to assurance than those who paid by means of credit cards.

Satisfaction level varied significantly between various age groups (Hypothesis I.10.1). The respondents in the age group
31 years and more had higher satisfaction level whereas those below 20 years had the least satisfaction level.

➢ There was no significant difference in satisfaction level with respect to assurance based on the educational qualification of the respondents.

➢ The respondents with monthly income above Rs. 30,000 had higher satisfaction compared to those of the other income groups. It was clear that as the income increased the satisfaction level also increased.

➢ It was found that those who had gone for shopping with their spouse (77.15%) were highly satisfied with the aspect of assurance. Also those who had gone for shopping with their friends were also satisfied, in comparison with those who shopped alone or with their family.

➢ Those who had shopped monthly thrice or frequently were highly satisfied than those who had shopped rarely may be once or twice (Hypothesis I.10.2).

➢ The satisfaction level varied significantly between the respondents based on the amount spent on shopping per visit. The respondents who had spent more than Rs.1000 per visit were highly satisfied (Hypothesis I.10.4).

➢ The factor analysis showed that the variables such as the efficiency of the cashier and quick billing which can together be termed as efficiency of cashier, accounts for a variance of 24.28 percent.
The logistic regression reflected that the family size is highly influential in increasing the good level of satisfaction to a larger extent of about 2.4 times. Age, occupation and income also increase the good level of satisfaction with a multiplicative factor of 1.5, 1.4 and 1.7 respectively. While the gender reduces the good level of satisfaction and the departmental stores should take utmost care to solve the problems and satisfy the respondents of both the genders.

V.2.7 Customer Satisfaction with respect to Empathy

The dimension of empathy means the care and individualized attention the store provides to its customers and it is a very important concern as it decides the overall functioning of the retail shops.

- Out of the 600 respondents, a large majority (97%) of the respondents had a good level of satisfaction with regard to empathy.

- While ranking the various aspects, the respondents had given prior importance to the shop offering its own credit cards. They had considered the supply of good quality bags to carry the goods purchased and the supply of free and complementary goods to the customers without fail, to hold the second priority. Next in order were the satisfactory service quality, acceptance of all major credit cards, items stated in the promotion catalogue being the same as that
offered by the store, adequate parking space, offering of high quality merchandise and convenient working hours.

➢ There existed a significant variation in the satisfaction level with regard to the gender of the respondents. The female respondents were fully satisfied with the empathy and only 8 percent of the male respondents had average satisfaction level. Thus the females were more contented and satisfied with the empathy of the retail shops rather than the males.

➢ Businessmen and professionals were fully satisfied and the government officials had the least satisfaction with regard to the empathy of the store. About 97.9 percent and 97.3 percent of the housewives and the respondents employed in the private sectors respectively had good level of satisfaction. On the other hand 13 percent of the government officials had only an average level of satisfaction.

➢ Except 6 percent and 2 percent of those who opted the shop for reasonable price and good store environment respectively all the others had good level of satisfaction with regard to the dimension of empathy (Hypothesis I.10.6).

➢ The satisfaction level of the respondents who paid by cash or credit cards did not vary with the mode of payment.

➢ There was a significant variation in satisfaction level with regard to empathy between the respondents with different age group and different educational qualification.

➢ The satisfaction level varied significantly with the income of the respondents. Those who had a monthly income of
Rs.20,001–30,000 (78.29%) had the highest level of satisfaction.

- There was no significant difference in the satisfaction level based on the persons accompanied for shopping. Those who shopped with their friends had the highest satisfaction level and those who shopped with their spouse and family had more or less the same satisfaction level. The respondents who shopped alone had the least satisfaction.

- The respondents who shopped thrice or more frequently had a higher level of satisfaction (Hypothesis I.10.2).

- Those who spent above Rs.1,000 had the highest level of satisfaction and hence more the amount spent, more was the satisfaction level with regard to the empathy of the shop.

- There was a definite association between the satisfaction level of the respondents and the mode through which they had got introduced to the shop. Those who were introduced to the shop through their neighbours/colleagues or friends were highly contented with the policy of the store (Hypothesis I.10.5).

- The factor analysis showed that the variables such as convenient operating hours, adequate parking area and accepting major credit cards which can together be termed as ease for shopping, accounts for a variance of 10.53 percent.

- The variables such as education, occupation, family size and preference for the shop were found to be significant from the logistic regression. The family size and the education level
increased the good level of satisfaction by nearly about 1.8 and 1.6 times respectively. Occupation also increased the good level of satisfaction with a multiplicative factor of 1.2. On the other hand, the preference for the shop reduced the good level of satisfaction.

The five dimensions in the increasing order of satisfaction level are as follows:

1. reliability
2. tangibles
3. responsiveness
4. empathy
5. assurance
Thus the customers give reliability the primary concern in scaling the service quality. They are also concerned with tangibles and responsiveness of the store.

V.3 SUGGESTIONS

On the basis of the findings of the present study, the following are the suggestions made for the retail shops to gauge and increase the satisfaction level of the customers by concentrating on the five dimensional aspects of their service quality.

- The majority of the shoppers belonged to the young and matured group of 21 – 40 years of age and hence the retail shops must gear up to the needs, mentality, taste and expectation of this age group.
- Most of the respondents belonged to the middle income group who always look for value for the money expended. The retail shops should take care to sell the goods of reliable quality at moderate prices. Frequent hike in prices would affect their sentiments and it must be avoided.
- As it was the housewives who shopped often, the satisfaction to their needs and expectations and their wisdom of choice of merchandise should be respected in terms of quantity, colour, design, space etc.
- Majority of the respondents hailed from a small family and hence the retailers should accommodate more product range catering to a nuclear size family.
Mostly, the customers shopped alone or with their spouse. Hence the retail owners should take keen interest to categorize and display the products neatly to facilitate easy selection.

As a huge number of customers chose a shop for moderate prices, the owners should be alert in fixing the right price margin for the products; it may be kept at a comfortable margin down the MRP.

The customers in general, shopped only twice a month and hence the retail shops should take care of the availability of products at all times and no shortage of goods should be encountered. Also the variety of products with different range of prices should be available as most of the customers spent less than Rs.1000 per visit.

Most of the customers had got introduced to the shop through neighbours/colleagues and hence the owners should take customer satisfaction to be the prime cause to promote retail business rather than advertisements. Word of mouth from friends and neighbours was found to be very effective and the shops should promote their interests through better customer satisfaction.

The number of cash counters must be increased in the retail shops to save customers’ time as it is really tiring to wait for long at the counter. Sofas and such comfortable seating facilities must be provided to make people relaxed.
V.3.1 Suggestions to promote satisfaction by means of tangibles (physical facilities) of the store:

- The customers appreciated good store environment and hence the atmosphere should be pleasant and conducive to attract them in terms of the ambience, location, space, layout etc.
- As customers preferred one-stop shopping, the retailers should provide all the related range of products under one roof, as far as possible.
- The departmental stores may attract more customers by its appearance, illumination, location, various kinds of facilities etc.
- The store should provide uninterrupted power supply inside the store as the transactions get affected whenever there is power failure.
- The store may provide play area for children, waiting room and hygienic toilets to make the customers more comfortable.
- The physical facilities and the layout should be unique and the shops should make it easily accessible and professionally competent.

V.3.2 Suggestions to promote reliability of the store:

- It is always advisable to fix the selling price slightly less than the M.R.P. as it would assuage the sentiments of the buyers who are price conscious.
- Merchandise should be readily available as and when the customers request for them.
• Customers should not be made to wait for long time to get the service and it is possible only with the availability of adequate number of trained personnel to pay individual attention to the customers.

• Store should provide error free sales transactions and prompt billing. There should be no mistakes anywhere in course of the pricing, selection and billing.

• Door delivery facility should be extended to the customers at reasonable costs and taking orders on phone will be an added boon to families far away or when it is not possible to shop personally.

V.3.3 Suggestions to promote responsiveness of the store:

• Employees should be readily available to cater to the needs of the customers and should be well trained and knowledgeable enough to take heed of their requests.

• The retailers should be responsible for the products - the price, quality, brand etc. so that the transactions with the store give a feeling of security and confidence to the customers.

• Employees should be patient/tolerant to explain the actual services rendered by the store and respond to the customers courteously.
V.3.4 Suggestions to promote assurance of the store:

- The cashier should be knowledgeable and efficient in dealing with the billing and payment; they should be quick and be able to manage the milling crowd around them at peak hours.
- Service provided should cater to the needs of the customers in a specific and individualized manner.
- These departmental stores should entertain exchange of defected goods as per proper policy which is made known to the parties concerned.
- The store should show keen interest in solving the problems encountered by the customers, at the point of selection, billing or payment.
- Store should welcome suggestions and attend to the complaints of the customers immediately.

V.3.5 Suggestions to promote empathy of the store:

- The store should provide good quality bags to carry the goods as it increases the ease of shopping and serves to be a source of advertisement as well.
- The store should never fail to provide free and complementary goods for specific seasons, occasions, specific customers etc.
- Credit cards should be readily accepted by the departmental stores and checking etc. should be done diligently so as not to hurt the feelings of the customers.
- Parking facility should be adequate to attract more customers. Restaurants, play area for children etc. will be an added boon as people might take their outing for refreshment and shopping.

- The operating hours of the store should be convenient to the customers according to the holidays, rest times, salary days etc.

V.4 SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Though an extensive effort has been put forth to make this study indepth and comprehensive, the possibility of further research is ample and abundant. SERVQUAL measurement can be expanded to various other dimensions, to understand the quality measures in detail and suggest for further improvements in specific areas.

Studies in the same line may be conducted in other urban conglomeration and rural areas to ascertain the homogeneity or heterogeneity of the impact of SERVQUAL on the level of consumer satisfaction. While this study has been done amidst consumers, a similar study may be done from the point of view of the retailers so much so, the retailers themselves can ascertain and rank these SERVQUAL measures and apply them in their own perspective, in order to augment customer satisfaction and sales.
V.5 CONCLUSION

The departmental stores in Tiruchirappalli City were found to be prospering in the recent years, providing quality service to the customers by employing newer and newer promotional tactics. The present research has brought out the various factors influencing the satisfaction level of the customers with regard to service quality based on the five dimensions namely tangibles or physical facilities, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. The study has covered the general profile and the shopping habits of the respondents, along with an enumeration of their opinion on the various dimensions that trigger satisfaction to the service provided.

From the outcome of the response analyzed, from the present study it is clear that the customers gave priority to the reliability aspect, i.e. first and foremost, they looked for right quality goods at prices below the MRP or moderate prices as well as, availability of the whole range of products needed by them. They always preferred a store which would aid one-stop shopping with essential space and ease to shop around reflecting customer-friendly atmosphere. The satisfaction level relied on the responsiveness wherein the service provided is prompt and the employees ought to be readily helping. Thus the retailers should take keen interest in the aspects of reliability, tangibility and responsiveness. Every retail concern should constantly take stock of the satisfaction level of the customers and take efforts to improve or expand the condition. The store should accommodate changes in the retail business and invoke necessary measures to sustain their business and draw more customers in this competitive scenario. With the springing up of
more and more stylish modern retail departmental stores in the city, it is up to these stores to spruce up in space and style, improve quality and variety of their merchandise and spice up the service with personal care and attention.