3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction:

The retail sector in developing economies is experiencing a phenomenal growth compared to other sectors. As the numbers of retail outlets are increasing, customers’ expectations of service quality are growing. It has become imperative to measure the retail service quality for the developing economies so that the retail service providers can assess their level of service quality and identify the quality gaps for improvements. This research applied the scale exclusively developed to reflect the service quality dimensions and factors of the Gujarati Customers in particular and Indian customers in general for measuring service quality in the Indian Retail Super Market context.

3.2 Statement of the Problem:

To study the Customer Perceived Service Quality of Retail Super Markets in select cities of Gujarat.

3.3 Rationale behind study:

With the liberalization and internationalization, service quality has become an important means of differentiation and a journey towards successful business. Such differentiation based on service quality has become the only source of competitiveness for many Indian firms. The proven relationship between service quality with satisfaction (Danaher and Mattsson, 1994; Leisen and Vance, 2001), Customer Loyalty and Retention (Ranaweera and Neely, 2003), Profitability (Thomson, De Souza and Gale, 1985; Bloemer, Ruyter and Wetzel, 1999) and Competitive Advantage (Hampton, 1993) provides the base to explore the subject in the Organised Retail Super Markets context.

3.4 Research Questions:

- What are the dimensions important for Indian Customers while evaluating Retail Service Quality?
- Is there any difference in their perception about the Retail Service Quality with respect to different Retail Service Quality Dimensions?
➢ Is there any difference in their perception about the Retail Service Quality with respect to different Super Markets?

➢ Is there any association between various demographics of respondents and dimensions of service quality?

➢ What is the relationship between Service Quality and Repurchase Intentions with respect to Indian Customers?

➢ What is the relationship between Service Quality and Recommending Behaviour with respect to Indian Customers?

➢ Which dimension is doing well among all four dimensions in retail super market sector?

3.5 Research Objectives:

The research comprises of the following objectives:

3.5.1 Primary Objective:


3.5.2 Secondary Objectives:

➢ To study and evaluate the organised retail industry in India.

➢ To comparatively analyse the customers’ perception about the service quality of various Super Markets of select Cities of Gujarat State.

➢ To comparatively analyze the customer satisfaction about the service quality of different retail super market.
➢ To find out association between service quality dimensions and demographics of respondents.
➢ To suggest concrete measures to improve the customer’s perceived service quality satisfaction for the super markets.
➢ To offer suggestions based on analytical results and of the study.
➢ To develop a suitable model to measure retail service quality so as to best reflect the Indian Retail customers’ perspective.

3.6 Research Hypothesis

1. There is no significant difference between age group of the respondents with respects to overall opinion about service quality dimensions.

2. There is no significant difference between income groups of the respondents with respects to overall opinion about service quality dimensions.

3. There is no significant difference between occupations of the respondents with respects to overall opinion about service quality dimensions.

4. There is no significant difference between educational qualifications of the respondents with respects to overall opinion about service quality dimensions.

5. There is no significant difference between genders of the respondents with respects to overall opinion about service quality dimensions.

3.7 Research Approach/Philosophy

According to (Saunders et al., 2000), there are two research processes which dominate the literature: positivism and phenomenology. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, (2007) emphasise that the research philosophy influences the way in which the researcher views the world and underpins the research strategy.

In the positivist stance, emphasis is on quantifiable observations that lend themselves to statistical analysis whereas in the interpretivism stance, emphasis is on qualitative
observations by which researchers make sense of the social world as humans (Saunders et al, 2007). Quantitative approaches are much more rigorous than the qualitative research as qualitative approaches inherit the lack of ability to generalise and lack of ability to repeat the same procedures to test the commonality of the findings (Sekaran 2003). Positivism considers that properties of the externally existing social world should be measured through objective methods without being subjectively attached through sensation, reflection or intuition (Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2008). Quantitative research is frequently referred to as hypothesis-testing research. Characteristically, studies begin with statements of theory from which research hypotheses are derived. The sample of subjects is drawn to reflect the population (Newman & Benz 1998). The research approach is deductive when a theory and the hypothesis (or hypotheses) are developed and a research strategy is designed to test the hypothesis, or it is inductive when the data is collected and the theory is developed as a result of the data analysis. The procedures are deductive in nature, contributing to the scientific knowledge base by theory testing.

The reason of using both data collection techniques is to get the advantages of both techniques, quantitative (collecting data from large samples, expressing research findings in numerical terms and being more objective) and qualitative (exploring the research topic in greater depth, getting the bigger picture of reality and being more familiar with the subject area). This procedure is found to be useful and adopted in various studies (most recently; Caro & Garcia, 2007; Chu & Murmann, 2006; Toncar et al., 2006; Karatepe, Yavas & Babakus, 2005; McMullan, 2005; Millan & Esteban, 2004). The philosophical stance of this research is a positivist stance hence the deductive approach was taken to represent the findings and conclusions. Since the purpose is to understand the most important dimensions of service quality from the Indian customers’ perspective, quantitative research is found to be more appropriate for this study. This research is deductive because first the hypotheses are developed and then the research strategy is designed.

3.8 Research Strategy

Research strategy is a general plan of how to answer the research questions that have been set. What matters is that the strategy that is appropriate for the research question(s) and objectives be chosen (Saunders et al., 2000). Research can be
classified in terms of their purpose. Accordingly, Saunders, Lewis & Thornhil (2003) mentioned that they are most often classified exploratory, descriptive or explanatory while Cooper and Schindler (2003) categorized in descriptive and causal. The essential difference between descriptive and causal studies lies in their objectives. If the research is concerned with finding out who, what, where, when, or how much, then the study is descriptive. In a causal study, the intent is to explain relationships among variables.

An Exploratory Qualitative Study has been undertaken to better understand the key dimensions of service quality that are important to retail Super Market Customers. Exploratory research is useful when the research questions are vague or when there is little theory available to guide predictions. At times, research may find it impossible to formulate a basic statement of the research problem. Exploratory research is used to develop a better understanding (Hair, Babin, Money & Samoel 2003). There are three principle ways of conducting exploratory research: a search of the literature, talking to experts in the subject, conducting focus group interviews (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2003). For this, personal in-depth interviews, comprising open-ended questions with the Customers of retail super markets, have been conducted. The semi-structured in-depth interview focused on the following issues:

- How do customers evaluate service quality of retail super markets?
- What are the key-factors influencing the customer’s perceptions about the service quality of retail super markets?

The object of descriptive research is to portray an accurate profile of persons, events of situations. It is necessary to have a clear picture of the phenomena on which researcher wish to collect data prior to the collection of the data (Saundrers, Lewis & Thornhill 2003). The data has been collected through questionnaire, is aimed to understand the most important factors of service quality. Since question in this study is based on “what” question and this what question is actually form a “how many” and investigator has no control over the actual behavioral events, Survey is found to be a more appropriate approach in order to gain a better understanding of the research area.
3.9 Research Design:

A research design is framework or blueprint for conducting the research study. Single Cross Sectional Descriptive Research Design is adopted to determine customers’ perception about the Service Quality offered by super markets. Sampling Design and Data collection & analysis are two main components of research design.

3.9.1 Sampling Design

Sampling design is one of the main components of a research design. Population, Sampling frame, sampling technique and sample size determination are main components of sampling design.

3.9.1.1 Population

A population consists of all elements-individuals, items, or objects-whose characteristics are being studied. The population that is being studied is also called the target population (Mann, 1995). The population in this research consists of all the retail Super Market customers of select cities of the state of Gujarat.

3.9.1.2 Sample Selection

If we collect and analyze data from every possible case or group member, this will be termed a census. However, for many research questions and objectives like this research it will be impossible to collect or analyze all the data available owing to the restriction of time, money and often access. Sampling techniques provide a range of methods that enable us to reduce the amount of data that is needed to be collected by considering only the data from a sub-group rather than all possible case elements (Saunders et al., 2000).

The basic idea of sampling is that by selecting some of the elements in a population, researcher may draw conclusions about the entire population.

3.9.1.3 Sampling Frame

**Data Source:** There are two major approaches to gathering information about a situation, person, problem or phenomenon. Sometimes, information required is already available and only need to be extracted. However there are times when the
information must be collected. Based upon these broad approaches to information gathering data are categorized as: Secondary data and Primary data. Secondary data are collected from secondary sources such as govt. publications, personal records, census (Ranjit Kumar 1996) and primary data are collected through questionnaires (Hair et. al., 2003).

(a) Primary Sources: The primary source of the data collection has been the direct customers’ survey at/outside the Super Market premises. It has been collected through a structured questionnaire. The sampling frame for any sample is a complete list of all cases in the population from which your sample has been drawn (Saunders et al., 2000). As the research questions in this study concern customer of super market in select cities, so the sampling frame is a complete list of all retail customers of select cities in Gujarat State. Since participation was voluntary for customers, only those who were willing to participate in the exercise were administered the questionnaire. The focus of the research was to get the real idea about the perceived service quality of the state of Gujarat and for the very reason all cities having the presence of retail super markets i.e. Mehsana, Rajkot, Vadodara, Surat, Gandhinagar, Ahmedabad of the state have been selected. The following retail super markets have been selected for the survey: Big-Bazaar, Central, D-Mart, National Handloom, Reliance Fresh, Star Bazaar, V-Mart and Vishal Super Market.

(b) Secondary Sources: The secondary sources include literature review from various journals, magazines and websites as mentioned in bibliography.

3.9.1.4 Sampling Technique

A Convenience Sampling was used to elicit information regarding customer perception about the Service Quality offered by Super Markets. Selection of the sampling method to use in a study depends on a number of related theoretical and practical issues. These include considering the nature of the study, the objectives of the study and the time and budget available.

Traditional sampling method can be divided into two categories: probability and non-probability sampling (Samuel et. al., 2003).
In probability sampling, sampling elements are selected randomly and the probability of being selected is determined ahead of time by the researcher. If done properly, probability sampling ensures that the sample is representative (Hair et. al., 2003)

Non-probability sampling provides a range of alternative techniques based on researcher subjective judgment (Saunders et. al., 2003). In non-probability sampling the selection of elements for the sample is not necessarily made with the aim of being statistically representative of the population. Rather the researcher uses the subjective methods such as personal experience, convenience, expert judgment and so on to select the elements in the sample (Samuel et. al. 2003). Convenience sampling involves select sample members who can provide required information and who are more available to participate in the study. Convenience samples enable the researcher to complete a large number of interviews cost effectively and quickly (Hair et. al., 2003).

Purpose of this research was to the find out the service quality dimensions for retail super markets and to measure the perception of the customers about retail super markets of the state of Gujarat. Sample was selected by using judgment (for pilot study only). The non-probability convenience sampling has been used in the main research.

### 3.9.1.5 Sample Size Determination

Determining sample size is a very important issue because samples that are too large may waste time, resources and money, while samples that are too small may lead to inaccurate results. According to (Saunders et al., 2000) researchers normally work to a 95 percent level of certainty. This means that if your sample were selected 100 times, at least 95 of these samples would be certain to represent the characteristics of the population. In this research the confidence level has been determined at 99% and confidence interval at 4%.

A survey has been planned to determine what proportion of people in a certain region are satisfied with service quality. It is believed that the proportion cannot be greater than 0.50. At 99 percent confidence level and confidence interval 4%, the sample size has been found out using the formula given below:
Here \( Z = 2.054, p = 0.50, q = 0.50, d = 0.2, \)
\[
Z = \frac{(2.054)^2 (0.50)(0.50)/0.02,}{n = 1040}
\]

### 3.9.1.5.1 Response Rate

Even though, the sample size determine was 1040 customer of the retail super market, the researchers aimed to approach more than the required number (1040) to minimize the consequences of non-response. A total of 1300 customers were approached to participate in the survey and were administered the research questionnaire, and only 1040 showed willingness to participate. This is an 80 per cent response rate. The customer was asked to fill the questionnaires. Those who didn’t want to participate mentioned the lack of time as the prime reason. The response rate in this research performing the above method of data gathering was calculated as 80 percent and this is because the questionnaires were given one by one and face to face.

According to (Saunders et al., 2000) the actual sample size of this research is calculated by this formula:

\[
N = n \times \frac{100}{\text{response rate}}
\]

\[
N = 1300 \times \frac{100}{80} = 1040
\]

Out of this, 12 were void because of incomplete data, not returned in due time, at a time many tick marks etc.

\[
N = 1040 - 12 \text{ (Unreturned Questionnaire)} = 1028
\]

This means by spreading 1300 questionnaires, I could have the sample size which is 1028.

### 3.9.2 Scale Development, Data Collection, Preparation and Analysis

This section of research design includes instrument used for survey, scaling techniques, questionnaire development and pretesting, sources of data collection and data analysis.
3.9.2.1 Scale Development (Instrument)

Exploratory Interviews with Super Market Consumers

↓

Literature Review

↓

Identification of the dimensions of SQ from customer’s perspective

↓

Design of survey instrument by careful selection of items

↓

Pre testing of the instrument by professionals and academicians (content validity)

↓

Pilot Study

↓

Modification and Refinement of the instrument

↓

Data collection from customers of Super Markets

↓

Data analysis

↓

Final Scale development
3.9.2.2 Questionnaire Development and Pretesting

Secondary research was conducted and instruments used to measure service quality of different sectors and of Retail Super Market in different countries were collected. Based on this literature and keeping in mind the peculiarities of Indian Customers, a service quality model named has been developed and used in this research.

Ozer (1999) recommended the development of industry specific quality measurements for a better fit to the nature of the industry. In echoing to this, the current study attempts to develop a new multi-item measurement scale for assessing the perceived quality in retail super market services. To do so, eight steps approach proposed by Churchill (1979) and modified and used by Parasuraman, et al. (1988) has been followed by using the customers of Super Market of Gujarat. These eight steps are in turn: “specify domain of construct, generate sample of items, collect data, purify the measure, assess reliability with new data, assess construct validity and finally develop norms” (Churchill, 1979, p. 66). To operationalize these steps, grounded approach (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996) has been employed by the use of both quantitative (in form of in-depth interview) and qualitative (in form of close ended survey instrument) techniques. In grounded approach, the concept is developed according to the collected data and the hypotheses related to this concept are improved in the research process. The hypotheses are then tested in the research process to come up with some conclusions (Ozen, 2000).

3.9.2.3 Pilot test/Pretesting:

A pilot test is conducted to detect weaknesses in design and instrumentation and to provide proxy data for selection of a probability sample. It should, therefore, draw subjects from the target population and simulate the procedures and protocols that have been designated for data collection (Cooper and Schindler, 2003).

The pilot test was done in three stages. The first stage was done by some retail industry experts to see whether the factors of this model are proper in this environment or not. All of them agreed with the factors except the five factors - Elegant & informative website, Fun factor (making shopping fun), Technology support to customers for analysis, comparison & measurement, Store image, Service
Recovery, Home Delivery, On-line purchase, Good after sale service; which were in the model.

The next stage was done for becoming sure of the simplicity of the questionnaire. So, 30 questionnaires were given to the customers of the Super Markets to see whether the questions were understandability of the same. In this phase I was beside each customer during the filling process and I took notes of all of their comments. After doing the pilot test some little editing was done.

The last phase of the pilot test was done by 15 customers to see whether everything was ok with the questionnaire or not. Fortunately, the answer was positive.

In total, 67 service attributes were identified for inclusion in a questionnaire. In the pilot survey respondents were asked to rate their Retail Super Market along each attributes using 7-point scale, from poor to extremely good. They were also asked to indicate their overall degree of satisfaction with the Retail Super Market, again using a 7-point scale. Piloting revealed that respondents had difficulty in rating dimensions using the 7-point scales. Grapentine’s (1998) report on the scales that is commonly used in service quality evaluation indicates that the specific number of points on the scale ‘three, five, seven or eleven’ does not make a lot of difference to the results. So, after pilot testing scale was revised and a five-point Likert-type scale is used anchored by “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”, for perception measurement. Pilot Questionnaires were interviewer-administered in Retail Super Market, as well as in respondents’ homes and offices. Face-to-face interviewing was used during pilot testing. Pilot study results were used to determine sample size, and to do factor analysis and reliability testing. In final questionnaire there are total 61 variables remaining and they are divided in to four dimensions namely: PHYSICAL ASPECTS, ENCOUNTERS, PROBLEM SOLVING, and POLICY.

3.9.2.3.1 Reliability

This is about the results of each investigation, which have to be reliable. If nothing changes in a population between two investigations for the same purpose, it is reliable. (Robson, 1993) asserts that there may be four threats to reliability:
Subject error: has to do with the time the interview is carried out. It is of great importance to select a neutral time and date.

Subject bias: is a great problem in organizations where the management is of an authoritarian character and the interviewee(s) might say what the manager wants them to say, not what they feel.

Observer error: can be lessened with a high degree of structure to the interview schedule.

Observer bias: this is a question about how the interviewer interprets the data received.

As we dispensed the questionnaires during the exhibitions we really did not face the subject error. For reducing the subject bias, we tried to make the respondents certain that their answers would be considered confidential. Since the questionnaire was designed as a survey format, I did not face the observer error or the observer bias. According to Saunders et. al., 2003, reliability refers to the degree to which data collection method or methods will yield consistent findings, similar observations would be made or conclusions reached by other researchers or there is transparency in how sense was made from the raw data. Cooper & Schindler (2003) have defined reliability as many things to many people, but in most contexts the notion of consistency emerges. A measure is reliable to the degree that it supplies consistent results. Reliability is a necessary contributor to validity but is not a sufficient condition for validity. Reliability can be assessed by the following questions (Easterby-Smith et al., 2002: p.53):

1. Will the measures yield the same results on other occasions?

2. Will similar observation be reached by other observers?

3. Is there transparency in how sense was made from the raw data?

SPSS software offers “Reliability Analysis Statistics”: Reliability analysis allows you to study the properties of measurement scales and the items that make them up. The Reliability Analysis procedure calculates a number of commonly used measures of scale reliability and also provides information about the relationships between
individual items in the scale. Intra class correlation coefficients can be used to compute inter rater reliability estimates.

Statistics: Descriptive for each variable and for the scale, summary statistics across items, inter-item correlations and covariances, reliability estimates, ANOVA table, intra-class correlation coefficients, Hotelling's T2, and Tukey's test of additivity.

3.9.2.3.1 Reliability Models

The following models of reliability are available:

- Alpha (Cronbach). This is a model of internal consistency, based on the average inter-item correlation.
- Split-half. This model splits the scale into two parts and examines the correlation between the parts.
- Guttman. This model computes Guttman's lower bounds for true reliability.
- Parallel. This model assumes that all items have equal variances and equal error variances across replications.
- Strict parallel. This model makes the assumptions of the parallel model and also assumes equal means across items.

Numbers of different steps were taken to ensure the reliability of the study:

Alpha Cronbach test has also been performed and as table below shows the result was coefficients range from 0.592 to 0.718, as a rule 0.60 or more represent satisfactory reliability of the items measured, which confirmed the reliability of the questions.

3.9.2.3.2 Validity

Validity is concerned with whether the findings are really about what they appear to be about (Saunder et al., 2000). There are three tests for validity:

Construct validity: establishing correct operational measures for the concepts being studied.
Internal validity: (for explanatory and causal studies only, not for descriptive or exploratory studies) establishing a causal relationship, whereby certain conditions are shown to lead to other conditions.

External validity: establishing the domain to which a study’s findings can be generalized.

If a question can be misunderstood, the information is said to be of low validity. In order to avoid low validity, we piloted the questionnaire after translating it into Gujarati. In addition, meetings were arranged in a semi-interview environment and questionnaires were given to the respondents face-to-face, so that if they faced any difficulties while filling out the questionnaire, the ambiguity could be explained. By doing so, the validity was increased.

Validity is concerned with whether the findings are really about what they appear to be about (Saunders et. al., 2003). Validity defined as the extent to which data collection method or methods accurately measure what they were intended to measure (Saunders et. al., 2003). Cooper & Schindler (2003) believe that validity refers to the extent to which a test measures what we actually wish to measure. There are two major forms: external and internal validity. The external validity of research findings refers to the data’s ability to be generalized across persons, settings, and times. Internal validity is the ability of a research instrument to measure what is purposed to measure (Cooper & Schindler, 2003).

3.9.2.3.3 Scaling techniques

Scaling is the process of placing the respondents on a continuum with respect to their attitude towards retail service quality. A five-point Likert-type scale is used in this study, anchored by “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”. Likert scales were developed in 1932 as the familiar five-point bipolar response format most people are familiar with today. Likert Scale is widely used rating scale that requires the respondents to indicate a degree of agreement or disagreement with each of a series of statements about the stimulus objects. These scales always ask people to what extent they agree or disagree with something, approve or disapprove something and believe something to be true or false. There's really no wrong way to do a Likert scale, the most important thing is to at least have five response categories (Likert, 1932).
3.9.2.3.4 Time Horizon

Saunders et al., 2000 believes that most research projects undertaken for academic courses are necessarily time constrained. When planning for the research there are two options in the time perspective:

- Cross-sectional: a study in which a group(s) of individuals are composed into one large sample and studied at only a single point of time.

- Longitudinal: a study in which an individual or a group of individuals is observed over a period of time.

In this research cross-sectional study is performed.

3.9.2.4 Data Analysis

The primary data collected from the respondents are analyzed through statistical methods. SPSS Version 19 and Microsoft Excel have been used to analyze and interpret the data. Multivariate techniques like Reliability test, ANOVAs, T-test, Chi-square test, Cross-tabulation, Percentage & Frequency Analysis, have been used to test the various hypotheses. From the calculated outcomes meaningful interpretations are done to draw out important implications for the organized retail sector in Indian market.

3.9.2.5 Data collection

For the purpose of collecting primary data researcher used survey (questionnaire) method for data collection. A survey approach was chosen in order to collect data directly from consumers visiting the identified organized retail stores operating in the state of Gujarat. A survey methodology permits the use of questions to measure constructs exclusively internal to respondents, e.g. perceptions, attitudes, opinions, intentions, etc., (Cooper and Schindler, 1998), and the answers can be collected and combined to represent the answers of an entire population (Reaves, 1992). At an exit door (mall intercept manner) was conducted at storefront with consumers who were asked to fill the questionnaire. Consumers were contacted by researcher personally to get the questionnaire filled and help of the trained students was taken those questionnaires back. Survey allows the collection of large amount of data from a
sizeable population in a highly economical way. Survey is more appropriate for quantitative study. The survey strategy is commonly associated with the deductive approach and allows for collecting quantitative data which can be analysed quantitatively using descriptive and inferential statistics. In this study a survey has been done. Numbers of different steps were taken to ensure the validity of the study:

- Data was collected from the reliable sources, from respondents who are more experienced to super market concept and frequent visitors.
- Survey question were made based on literature review and frame of reference to ensure the validity of the result;

This process saved a lot energy and time of the researcher at the same time due care was taken to ensure right data collection by the researcher.

Data was collected through a structured questionnaire based on “SUPERSERV INDIA”. The questionnaire was divided in to three sections; in the first section, the personal/demographic information was elicited from the respondents. The second section includes 61 structured questions designed to assess customers’ perceptions through two sub-sections i.e. likert scale statements and semantic differential scale items. The third section includes questions to measure customers’ future intentions and recommending behavior. The direct customers’ survey at/outside the Retail Super Market premises (Mall intercept method) was conducted to collect the primary information.

3.10 The Scale: “SUPERSERV INDIA”
3.10.1 The Scale: “SUPERSERV INDIA”: A Tool to Measure Customers’ Perceptions of Retail Super Market

The instrument poses a set of 61 (36+22+03) structured statements designed to assess customers’ perceptions of what was actually delivered. A five-point Likert-type scale is used in this study, anchored by “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”. Content validity (wording and meaning) was checked carefully by experts.

The questionnaire was structured in two Parts: first part was designed to measure the perceptions of the retail customers and the second part was to cater the personal information of the respondents, which consisted of demographic questions.
The first part was further divided into three sections i.e. Section-A, Section-B, and Section-C. 

All of the statements in “Section-A” were measured on a five point "Agree-Disagree" Likert scale having 36 statements. 

“Section-B” consisted of semantic differential scale having bipolar format to measure the intensity of the agreement or disagreement with respect to particular dimension having 22 Attribute Sets. 

“Section-C” intends to measure the Behavioural Aspects of the customers through the measurement of Repurchase Intentions, Word of Mouth and Recommending Behaviour. Perception Item 36 of “Section-A” measures the feeling of pride of the customer while shopping from the particular super market. It explores the esteem attribute of the customer behavioural study. 

A pre-test (pilot-study) was then conducted with a group of customers and minor changes to the scales were made accordingly to ensure that the questions were not repetitive. A questionnaire was constructed and piloted on Academicians and Marketing Professionals of the retail field along with the customers through judgment sampling. Care was taken to minimize the possibility of wrong interpretation and biased views. 

For the analysis of data statistical methods are applied with the aid of SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) software, version 16.0 and excel. Sample size was determined using following formula. 

The four dimensions operationalized by the researcher to measure service quality are: 

1) PHYSICAL ASPECTS: - 

The first dimension — Physical Aspects — encompasses the appearance of Tangibles (the physical facilities) (Perception Item 1 to Perception Item 8 & Attribute 1 to 7 in the scale) and the convenience offered to the customer by the Design (layout) of the physical facilities (Perception Item: 9 to Perception Item: 15 & Attribute 8 to 9 in the scale). The literature suggests that appearance is important to customers (e.g., Baker, Dhruv and Parasuraman, 1994). It also suggests that customers value the convenience offered during the treatment that physical aspects such as layout offer (Gutman and Alden, 1985; Hummel and Savitt, 1988; Mazursky and Jacoby, 1985; Oliver, 1981).
(2) **ENCOUNTERS:**
The second proposed dimension is **Encounters**. It has three sub-dimensions — responsiveness **Reliability** (Perception Item 16 to 20 in the scale & Attribute 10 to 11 in the scale), **Employees Attitude** (Perception Item 21 to 24 in the scale & Attribute 12 to 14 in the scale), and **Process** (Perception Item 25 to 26 in the scale & Attribute 15 to 16 in the scale). These sub-dimensions are very closely related and capture how the customer encounters the Retail Super Market during the shopping experience.

(3) **PROBLEM SOLVING:**
The third proposed dimension is **PROBLEM SOLVING** (Perception Item 27 to 28 in the scale & Attribute 17 to 18 in the scale). It has been one of the most important dimensions which came into limelight during the primary stage of the development of the scale for the Indian Consumers. This dimension does not have any sub-dimension.

(4) **POLICY:**
The third proposed dimension is **POLICY** (Perception Item 29 to 34 in the scale & Attribute 19 to 22 in the scale) — captures aspects of service quality that are directly influenced by retail super market policy. For example, when customers evaluate a retail super market on the basis of convenient hours, it is viewed as whether the retail super market’s policy is responsive to customers’ needs. This dimension does not have any sub-dimension. Perception Item 35 measures the overall satisfaction of the customer.

3.10.2 The Scale: “SUPERSERV INDIA - REVISED”: A Tool to Measure Customers’ Perceptions of Retail Super Market
The instrument poses a set of 49 (18+22+03+06) structured statements designed to assess customers’ perceptions of what was actually delivered. A five-point Likert-type scale is used in this study, anchored by “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”.

The questionnaire was structured in **two Parts**: first part was designed to measure the perceptions of the retail customers and the second part was to cater the personal information of the respondents, which consisted of demographic questions.

The first part was further divided into three sections i.e. **Section-A, Section-B, and Section-D**.
All of the statements in “Section-A” were measured on a five point "Agree-Disagree" Likert scale having 18 statements.

“Section-B” consisted of semantic differential scale having bipolar format to measure the intensity of the agreement or disagreement with respect to particular dimension having 22 Attribute Sets.

“Section-C” intends to measure the Behavioural Aspects of the customers through the measurement of Repurchase Intentions, Word of Mouth and Recommending Behaviour.

“Section-D” measures the Customers’ Involvement with respect to various dimensions of the scale.

The four dimensions operationalized by the researcher to measure service quality are:

(1) PHYSICAL ASPECTS:

The first dimension — Physical Aspects — encompasses the appearance of Tangibles (the physical facilities) (Perception Item 1 to Perception Item 3 & Attribute 1 to 7 in the scale) and the convenience offered to the customer by the Design (layout) of the physical facilities (Perception Item: 4 to Perception Item: 5 & Attribute 8 to 9 in the scale).

(2) ENCOUNTERS:

The second proposed dimension is Encounters. It has three sub-dimensions — responsiveness Reliability (Perception Item 6 to 9 in the scale & Attribute 10 to 11 in the scale), Employees Attitude (Perception Item 10 to 12 in the scale & Attribute 12 to 14 in the scale), and Process (Perception Item 13 in the scale & Attribute 15 to 16 in the scale).

(3) PROBLEM SOLVING:

The third proposed dimension is PROBLEM SOLVING (Perception Item 14 in the scale & Attribute 17 to 18 in the scale). This dimension does not have any sub-dimension.

(4) POLICY:

The third proposed dimension is POLICY (Perception Item 15 to 17 in the scale & Attribute 19 to 22 in the scale) — captures aspects of service quality that are directly
influenced by retail super market policy. This dimension does not have any sub-dimension. Perception Item 18 measures the overall satisfaction of the customer.

3.10.2.1 Data collection

Data was collected through a structured questionnaire based on “SUPERSERV INDIA- REVISED”. The questionnaire was modified based on the outcomes of scale used in the first phase of the survey i.e. “SUPERSERV INDIA”. The editing was done based on the CFA and Rank Analysis performed on the scale. The direct customers’ survey at/outside the Retail Super Market premises (Mall intercept method) was conducted to collect the primary information.

3.11 Limitations of Research

Few limitations must be acknowledged that suggest caution in generalization. The research is just a small step in understanding the constructs of SQ and CS. The causal relationships between the two have not been investigated. The present study is based on a sample data collected from the cities i.e. Ahmedabad, Baroda, Gandhinagar, Mehsana, Rajkot, and Surat. Therefore the results of this study cannot be generalized. The current study focused on customers living in four largest cities of Gujarat, it therefore has not covered residents of smaller towns. However, this study provides an opportunity for the researchers to use the “SUPERSERV INDIA” on the rural respondents of the state of Gujarat larger sample size to arrive at generalization. In this study “SUPERSERV INDIA” scale was used. Comparison of various scales was not attempted to prove the suitability of a particular scale. Sample is Gujarat focused; the participants in this study may possess attributes and behaviour that may differ from those in other states of country. This again provides a room for the future research i.e. the same study to be replicated in the other states of the country. In addition to the above, the total sample size was 1028 useable questionnaires, after disaggregation into the demographic categories, a few of subgroups were small in number. For example, the sample is skewed to a particular gender with 57.8 per cent of the respondents being female. The present research focused only on retail super market format, and not addressed each of the retail formats present in the country.
3.12 Future Research Directions

Future researcher could make several extensions of the current study. As mentioned above the research is just a small step in understanding the constructs of SQ. The causal relationships between the two have not been investigated. Researcher can develop more specific service quality scale by incorporating link between service quality and customer satisfaction and the effect of promotional offers, involvement, etc. Future research could examine a wider respondent base across the cities of Gujarat state with more diversified sample. The sample is skewed to a particular gender with 57.8 percent of the respondents being male. Future researchers could use quota sampling across the different income groups, gender and age categories. This research addresses an issue that has important implications for service quality. Continued revision of the scale for measuring service quality in retail Retail Super Market is necessary. This study has attempted to cover all aspects of service quality, there may be certain aspects that may have been ignored or that may become relevant as new trends in Retail Super Market evolve. With the passage of time, customers may find new aspects of service quality. Future research can be conducted, taking in consideration new dimensions of service quality as well as new services that are offered by the Retail Super Market. Lastly, the objectives of this research were fully met, but this is a single sector research focusing on Retail Super Market sector. Such concentration could limit generalizations of the findings to the whole service sector. Anyway, this drawback creates opportunity for future researchers in this area by investigating same SQ dimensions in other service sectors.