

# Providing the experience

Customer experience is fast becoming a key metric in the South African Retail environment. As consumer behaviour constantly changes, preferences and choices need to be addressed with a level of urgency so that shoppers can be attracted and retained. It can therefore be said that good customer experience is a strong differentiator amongst retailers.

Often staff do not appreciate the bottom-line impact of bad customer service. Discontented customers are quick to leave and expensive to bring back. How are South African supermarkets fairing when it comes to good customer experiences? Field Agent assigned a survey across five of the major supermarkets to find out. In June, we assigned agents to visit retailers, make observations, and report on their preferences and experiences through photos and their answers to our questions in real time.

Crowdsourcing via smartphones provides an unbiased, real-time understanding of consumer shopping habits and frustrations, assisting retailers to focus on relevant operational issues and reinforce customer loyalty and shopper satisfaction. Feedback is collected through photos, videos, audio, timers, and barcode scanners, capturing consumer insights instantaneously.

We surveyed 105 random recipients, evenly spread across five supermarket chains in South Africa: Checkers, Woolworths, Spar, Pick n Pay, and Food Lovers Market. (see map)

In the survey, we assessed six categories:

- access & parking
- cleanliness & hygiene
- ambience
- aisle navigation
- staff assistance; and checkout.

A range of attributes were scored between favourable +1 and unfavourable -1. Visits were verified using in store and receipt photos as well as GPS and timestamps.

The highest-scoring retailer overall was Woolworths (106 points), followed by Checkers (92 points) Pick n Pay (87 points), and Food Lovers Market & Spar (both 86 points). The poorest scoring

Retailer Services & Standards	Checkers	Food Lovers Market /Fruit & Veg City	Pick n Pay	Spar	Woolworths
Access & Parking	17,00	18,00	15,50	18,00	20,00
Cleanliness & Hygiene	15,00	9,00	16,00	13,50	18,00
Ambience	16,50	17,00	17,75	19,25	19,00
Aisle Navigation	19,75	18,50	18,25	18,50	19,00
Staff Assistance	12,00	11,75	8,50	6,25	14,75
Checkout	12,21	12,08	11,42	10,67	15,00

Time to get assistance	Checkers	Food Lovers Market /Fruit & Veg City	Pick n Pay	Spar	Woolworths
no help rendered	0	1	3	3	1
up to 1 min	13	15	15	14	15
up to 2 mins	5	5	1	3	2
up to 5 mins	2	0	2	1	3
over 5 mins	1	0	0	0	0

Time spent in the checkout queue	Checkers	Food Lovers Market / Fruit & Veg City	Pick n Pay	Spar	Woolworths
no queue	10	13	7	9	8
up to 1 min	3	6	5	7	6
up to 2 mins	3	0	4	3	2
up to 5 mins	4	2	4	2	3
over 5 mins	1	0	1	0	2

attributes were Checkout and Staff Assistance with Spar being the lowest scoring retailer in these attributes. The average time seeking assistance from staff was 44 seconds, and in a queue at checkout was 53 seconds. A similar survey was completed in April 2016. In comparison, it was found that the most improved retailers were Woolworths and Checkers, with the biggest decline in score found to be Food Lovers Market. For more details, email us at: [client@fieldagentsa.com](mailto:client@fieldagentsa.com).

