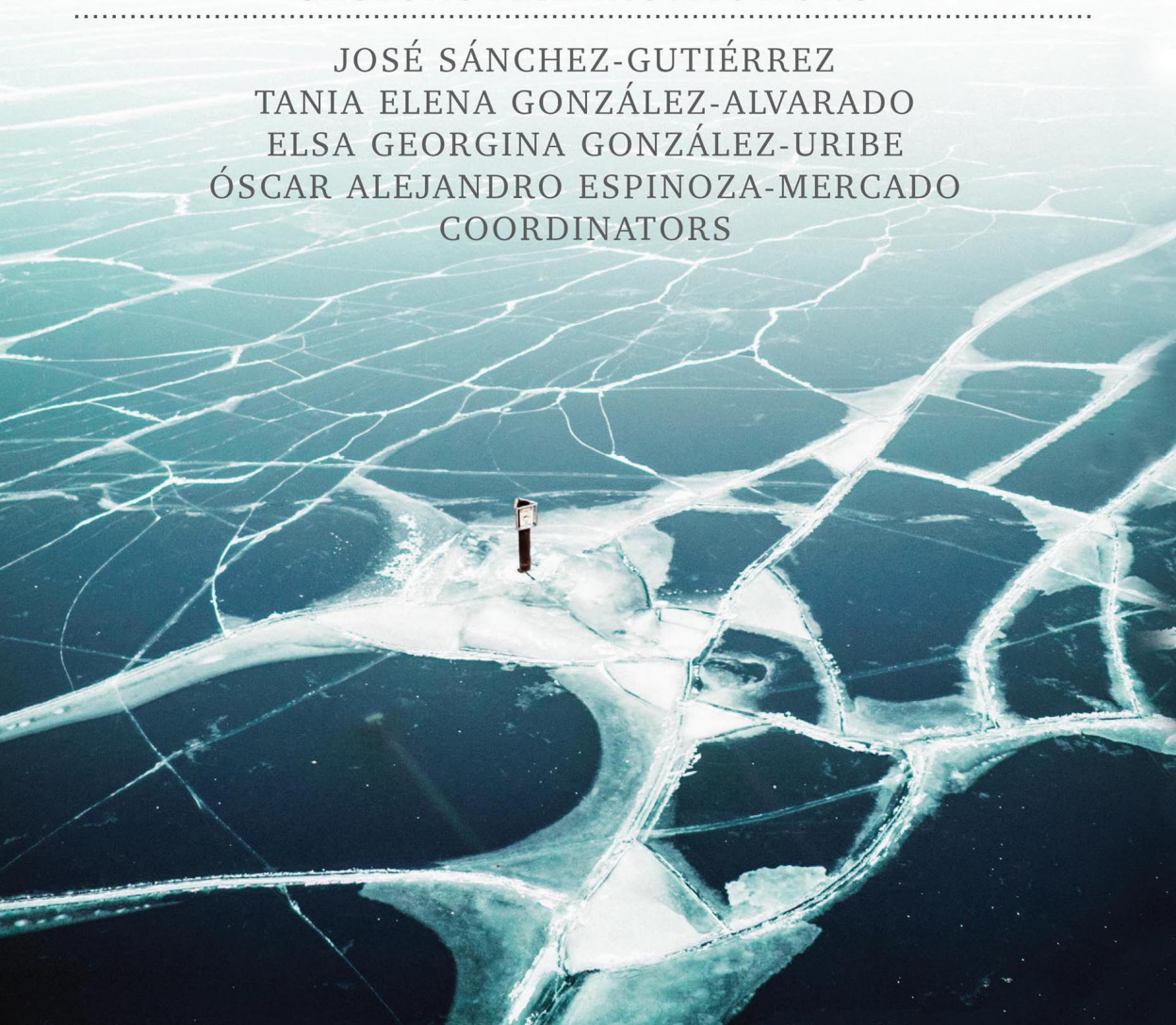




# COMPETITIVENESS DEVELOPMENT IN REGIONS, SECTORS AND INSTITUTIONS

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JOSÉ SÁNCHEZ-GUTIÉRREZ  
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COORDINATORS



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# Chapter TWO



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## Service Quality Granted by a Marketing Company

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## Service Quality Granted by a Marketing Company

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### INTRODUCTION

The consumption habits of people and companies have changed over the years as a result of globalization and the competitiveness boost among service companies. The current study is a practical application of evaluation of the service quality in a marketing company, when managing the satisfaction knowledge obtained from the service granted by such organization. It should be noted that the service is a benefit that allows the differentiation of the client between the competition as well as being according to (Lara, 2002) the set of benefits that the customer expects, the product or the basic service, as a consequence of the price, image and reputation. The overall objective of service quality is: to maintain customers, retain them and develop new clients, expressed in terms of attitudes as they are; courtesy, integrity, reliability, willingness to help, efficiency, concern and considerations for others, friendship, availability and knowledge (Tschohl & Franzmeier, 1994).

The research problem is focused on considering the fact that in a world characterized by rapid, paradoxical and complex changes, consumers and customers have become more demanding when choosing products and services (Martínez & Martínez, 2009), so that organizations currently need to improve the quality and competitiveness of their service from the customer satisfaction perspective. These study analyzes the perception that the client has regarding the service quality granted by a marketing company.

## **THE TOPICS DEVELOPMENT**

As part of the background of the study, some publications found where the quality of service in companies dedicated to the commercialization of products are evaluated and/or measured, such as the study of customer service as a competitive advantage in groceries marketing companies in the municipality of Retalhuleu, prepared by Celada (2014). He reveals how the improvement of customer service can add a competitive advantage and differentiation regarding its competitors, by achieving the preference and customers loyalty. The main findings indicate that the customer service can be an element that used by grocery companies to achieve a competitive advantage. In addition, the lack of tools that help to build long-term relationships with customers conclude that it is important to offer a good quality service, where total consumer satisfaction can be seen as a priority. Another study, related to the retail commercial distribution through the SERVPERF model: the cases of Mercadona and DIA by Vigo (2015) aimed to make a comparison between these two companies, finding that there is a large discrepancy in most of the valued dimensions, reaching a higher Mercadona score. Only in the price dimension, the scores were similar. In Communication, DIA managed to add more points, due to the excellent use

of the media to transmit their messages to their customers. Mercadona is a company where employees are recognized as a fundamental part for achieving the company's objectives. Therefore, they receive better training, which is reflected in the results of the study. Both studies reflect in their results the relevance implied by the preparation of the personnel to develop the necessary skills that make it possible to recognize customers needs.

## **KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AND SERVICE SATISFACTION**

Knowledge management (KM) has become a fundamental tool for the organizational and social development of any organization, assuming that knowledge is a strategic resource for shaping a new social order (Flores, 2010). Knowledge, as a resource, is needed by the organization of a general framework and specific processes that contribute to organizational performance. Nowadays, knowledge is based on a factor that differentiates productivity, creation of wealth and it is investing its intellectual capital in competitive processes (Topete, Busto & Bustillos, 2012).

When the term KM is heard, it can be linked to information technologies. However, technology is only a means. What matters in organizations is the quality of the content that is to be promoted and the sponsorship of a learning culture, which are factors associated with human capital (Castañeda, 2002). Therefore, it is important to understand what the basic cycle of knowledge management should be, in order to develop a dynamic process of generating knowledge flows and carrying out new knowledge, but related to its strategy and knowledge. Knowing the inside of the organization, what the client thinks of the service he actually received is a fundamental resource from which strategies can be created to guarantee

quality and competitiveness. It must be clear that it implies trust and cooperation of the people who are involved in the organization, people who share a business vision and who develop an environment that promotes organizational learning with the conversion of tacit to explicit knowledge. The KM term has had different meanings such as:

- a) A function. The KM can be understood as a function that plans, coordinates and controls the knowledge flows that are created in the organization according to their activities and their environment, with the aim of creating essential competencies.
- b) A practice. By organizing, storing and sharing vital information, so that everyone can benefit from its use. That is, it is seen as a set of techniques and tools involved in the process of storing, distributing, sharing and communicating data and information, in order to improve communications and knowledge, among employees of a company (De Freitas & Yáber, 2014).
- c) Actions inherent in human activity. Due to its characteristics, it is a process that can be studied, organized, structured and applied creatively in an organization (Estrada, 2006).
- d) As a new business culture. By placing human resources as the main asset and sustaining its power of competitiveness in the ability to share information, experiences and individual and collective knowledge.
- e) New approach to organizational management. Given the rise of new technologies and the growing importance of human resources in the

organization, it also involves new information and communication technologies, management methods and culture.

What prevails is the fact that it implies a management with the purpose of using it the accumulated knowledge and experience of the organization, so that the reach of the employee is improved to obtain competitive advantages.

The KM is based on four pillars: people, processes, content and information and communication technologies. Each pillar contemplates aspects that can influence the effectiveness of the knowledge management practices of the organizations (Gómez & Garcia, 2015). The new knowledge begins with the individual and later becomes knowledge of the organization, thus acquires value for the entire organization. Regarding knowledge, the important thing is not the quantity that is possessed but its productivity. This productivity requires increasing the performance of what is known by the individual or by the group. Hence, knowledge must be connected with the results and more in the case of evaluation of services, where strategic decisions can be made, to innovate, better manage resources, take advantage of the opportunities offered by the market and provide the services demanded by the market's performance and comply with specific learning processes (Pérez & Cousin, 2005).

Despite the difficulty of giving a uniform definition to an intangible such as knowledge, the importance it has for companies has not been limited. Davenport (1996) provided a meaning to the KM considering it a systematic process that consists of finding, selecting, organizing, extracting and presenting the company's information, in order to improve the

understanding of a specific area of interest for the company's members the organization, or even the contributions that have been granted (González, Castro & Roncallo, 2004). Then, we state that KM implies the planning, coordination and control of the activities that lead to the creation, capture and transmission of knowledge in an effective way.

In a globalized world, Small and Medium Enterprise that use the optimization of information and knowledge, constitute a weapon to face competition with large companies. On the one hand, according to Maldonado, Martínez and Pérez (2010), these organizations have various levels of obtaining knowledge, both within the company and abroad, unlike large companies. On the other hand (Pillania, 2008), it considers that the KM studies focus mainly on large companies, encouraging these small and medium organizations to face their competitors with tools that help them to defend themselves from this dynamic oriented to mass consumption, giving information and communication technologies a preponderant role when it comes to acquiring, processing, managing and sharing knowledge. Over time, the role of knowledge and intangible resources has been demonstrated to create organizational value in SMEs, since it is not only about how many sales a company has or what tangible resources has, but that goes beyond becomes more complicated to measure. Managing knowledge and intellectual capital in the right way can generate competitive advantages, including satisfying wants and needs for the parties involved, and developing new strategies that create organizational value (Schiuma, 2014).

The KM is a shield for SMEs, it makes sense to "include all processes related to the identification, sharing and creation of knowledge" (Serradell

& Pérez, 2003). In this sense, KM is continually processed with a series of activities to acquire, create, store, share, use and evaluate knowledge for the reuse of knowledge, especially in the fulfillment of missions and the improvement of the management of the organization (Suravee & Beyerlein, 2015).

It can be considered that knowledge management is a business strategy that ensures that the right knowledge goes to the right person at the right time and, in addition, helps you to share and use the information so that the company can improve its organizational action and this process takes place within the interaction community of the company. Nowadays, organizations have realized that knowledge, its effective use, the rapid acquisition and use of new knowledge, represent the only source of sustainable competitive advantages. In fact, efficient exploitation and management of knowledge resources are the basis for the development of those capacities that underpin the organization's capacity to deliver value proposals that are successfully managed (Carlucci, Lerro & Schiuma 2012). The complexity of KM is affected by the influence of four factors such as leadership, organizational culture, organizational control and work style.

The results of the study conducted by Magnier-Watanabe and Benton, (2013) showed that a single model of knowledge management should not be applied to all organizations, but should be adapted to each stage of maturity of the KM. By involving all these factors, the management of information and knowledge are considered as supports for strategic decision making since knowledge management and decision making have a close relationship at the socio-anthropological level as two complex forms of survival and adaptation. Therefore, when making strategic decisions it is

necessary to harmonize these two aspects to achieve competitive success in the environment, (Batista, Velázquez, Díaz & Ronda, 2015). Due to the considerable increase of companies dedicated to the same business, the service represents the decisive factor to attract consumers; this is where the importance of offering a quality service lies. Miranda, Chamorro and Rubio (2007) sustain the importance that as a company defines its own quality standards, "based on the expectations of customers, their degree of satisfaction, the offer, the processes, systems that a company possesses and the efficiency in its execution, are fundamental parts for the client to perceive the service granted as excellent. Hence, the relationship of managing the knowledge to evaluate the service, turn out to allow strategic decisions for the organization.

When managing the knowledge to evaluate the quality of the service provided by the marketing company, the SERVPERF (SERVICE PERFORMANCE) model proposed by Cronin and Taylor (1992) was used, which focuses on the measurement of service performance leaving a side-in part-customer expectations. The empirical evidence obtained by Cronin and Taylor suggest that the perception of performance alone can predict -at least- the behavior of individuals, as well as the conjunction of the perception of dimensions with the importance attributed to them (Morales & Medina, 2015).

The dimensions of the SERVPERF model that were used in the study based on Parasuraman and others (1988) and Setó (2004) were: Reliability (Confidence deposited by the client in the service provider (s) with the assurance that the service will perform correctly), Responsiveness (willingness to respond to the doubts and requests of the clients, as well as

the ability to solve problems that may arise during the process effectively and efficiently), Security (Skills and knowledge that gather employees to resolve conflicts and questions from users, which in turn inspire confidence and security in these), Empathy (Quality that allows knowing the consumer in order to offer personalized attention) and tangible elements (Appearance of the facilities: cleaning and accommodation, equipment and materials that the organization has for the provision of the service).

The reason why organizations seek to direct their efforts in offering a quality service through the implementation of different tools and / or strategies focuses on the relevance that consumer satisfaction has, with the intention of building customer loyalty, making them feel comfortable, safe and happy when buying. Kotler (2002) expresses customer satisfaction as "the sensations of pleasure or disappointment that a person has when comparing the perceived performance of a product with their expectations".

## METHODOLOGY

In order to carry out the objectives of the study, a research was carried out through a quantitative approach, based on the application of a survey by means of which the data of the marketing company's customers were collected and then the hypotheses were tested. The present study contains numerical measurement and statistical analysis (Hernández, Fernández & Baptista, 2010). The study was descriptive in order to interpret the nature and composition of the phenomenon or phenomena that intervene in the processes of the current operation of the company (Tamayo, 2004). It was also a cross-sectional study with the aim of observing and analyzing the effects of performance on a final result at a cut-off point in time (Gras,

1996), whose information was collected from a sample of elements within a population only once (Malhotra, 2004) and finally correlational, performing analysis of variance between the dimensions of the study.

**Table 1. Elements that make each evaluated dimension**

Ítem	Coding	Indicator
1	Tangible1	The sales executives have a presentable
2	Tangible2	The website is easy to access.
3	Tangible3	The informative materials (catalogs,
4	C. Answer1	The staff is available to provide
5	C. Answer2	The quotes are in established times.
6	C. Answer3	Executives resolve doubts at the time of
7	C. Answer 4	The executives effectively solve any
8	C. Answer 5	Executives are able to guide the
9	C. Answer 6	The driver resolves doubts at the time of
10	Security1	The attention of the staff transmits
11	Security2	The guarantee that is offered goes
12	Empathy1	Executives are interested in knowing the
13	Empathy2	The customer is paramount for the
14	Reliability1	The delivery of the order adapts to the
15	Reliability2	The products are delivered in good
16	Reliability3	The after-sales service is done in a short

Source: Own elaboration with questionnaire data.

The research technique was the survey that according to Grasso (2006), allows to make a "detailed record of the data when studying a population through samples with representatively guarantees" and who also describes Festinger (1993) as a method that requires the systematic collection of data from populations or from population samples. For the collection of data it

was decided to design the survey in both formats, printed and on the Survio digital platform, using a probabilistic sample for convenience, with data from 17 consumers of the marketer, representing 23% of a total of 73 clients that make the total universe. This was due to the need of employing individuals from the population who were easily available for the study (Ochoa, 2015).

The design of the instrument was evaluated through a pilot test in a small sample of respondents in order to improve it and identify or eliminate potential problems of its construction (Malhotra, 2004). The initial reliability test was applied to 10 respondents considering 16 items (table 1). For the Cronbach's Alpha and the internal consistency of the designed instrument, the coefficients proposed by Frías (2014) were considered according to Table 2 presented below.

**Table 2. Scales of coefficients for the reliability of a research instrument**

Alpha coefficient> .9 is excellent
Alpha coefficient> .8 is good
Alpha coefficient> .7 is acceptable
Alpha coefficient> .6 is questionable
Alpha coefficient> .5 is poor
Alpha coefficient <.5 is unacceptable

Source: Frías (2014).

The value of Cronbach's alpha in the first stage considering 16 items yielded .886 which indicated that the instrument was reliable according to the scales shown in table 3, however, in the second test result as shown in

the same table, it depicted .900 in 15 elements that more accurately measure the variables of the study.

**Table 3. Reliability Statistics**

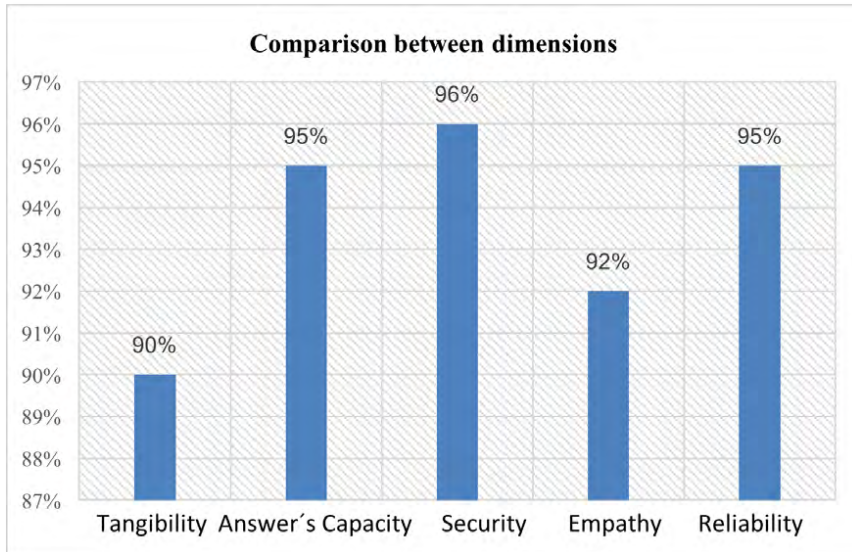
Second result reliability test	
Cronbach's Alpha	No. Of elements
900	15
First result reliability test	
Cronbach's Alpha	No. Of elements
886	16

Source: Self elaboration with questionnaire data.

According to Bojórquez and others (2013), the correlation matrix is a square matrix that indicates the relationship of each question with the others, where the Pearson correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) scale of -1 to close to 0 indicates little association, close to 1 indicates a direct association and close to -1 indicates an inverse association, where one of the items by its results is a variable that cannot be calculated. That is why it is excluded from the instrument. Therefore, when performing a second reliability test, item 15 was excluded, which improves the Cronbach's Alpha from .886 to .900 (table 3), which makes the questionnaire an excellent instrument according to the scales of table 3 shown above. The information gathered with the survey is presented in tables and graphs obtained when processed in the SPSS version 24 program for better understanding and analyzing each

dimension that the study contemplated and based on the established hypotheses.

**Graph 1. Comparison between dimensions**



Source: Own elaboration based on the data collected and processed in the statistical program SPSS, v 24.

## RESULTS

The general hypothesis was that: the customers of the marketer are 100% satisfied with the service provided in each of the dimensions. The results obtained for the evaluation of the information are shown in graph 1. The results show the level of importance in percentages on the perception that customers have in relation to the five dimensions received during the service, for which in security it obtained 96%, response capacity 95%,

reliability 95%, empathy 92% and 90% tangible elements, for which the hypothesis is rejected.

As shown in the graph, the percentages obtained for each dimension range from 90 to 96 percent, which indicates that the marketer is at a good level. However, the null hypothesis was rejected because it did not reach the maximum percentage in each dimension as it was initially proposed, however there are great opportunities in each of the dimensions to consider improvements in the service, in order to create new opportunities for growth and positioning in the preference of the clients.

After the treatment of the descriptive data, analysis of variance between the dimensions was carried out in order to make the crossings between them. The results by dimension shown in table 4, express the average obtained for each of the items of the five dimensions. The tangible dimension is the best considered by the clients, being the number 1 affirmation that belongs to the presentation of the executives with an average of 4.94 and the lowest is the access of the website with an average of 4.06. In the dimension of responsiveness that is represented by items 4 to 9 the items that represent the staff are available. The executives resolve doubts and the executives resolve effectively have obtained the average of 4.88 equally the three, this being the score higher, while item 5 that represents the quotes in established times only reached an average of 4.41 followed by executives guide the client with an average of 4.59. In the security dimension, the highest average of 4.82 belongs to item 10, the personnel transmits security, followed by the guarantees offered according to the client's needs with 4.76. Dimension of empathy the item that says that the customer is essential with an average of 4.71 and the interest to know the needs of the client with

4.53. The last dimension corresponds to reliability and it is the dimension where the highest average obtained in all the dimensions that belong to item 15 is found (the products are delivered in good condition) with an average of 5, obtaining in its entirety the maximum and minimum of 5, descending is followed by item 14 with an average of 4.71 and 4.47 for item 16.

**Table 4. Descriptive statistics of the 16 items corresponding to each dimension**

Dimension	Ítems		N	Minimum	Maximum	Half	Standard
Tangible	1	The sales	17	4	5	4,94	243
	2	The website is	17	1	5	4,06	1,197
	3	The informative	17	1	5	4,47	1,068
Answer's Capacity	4	The staff is	17	4	5	4,88	1,068
	5	Quotes are in	17	1	5	4,41	1,176
	6	The executives	17	3	5	4,88	485
	7	The executives	17	4	5	4,88	332
	8	Executives guide	17	3	5	4,59	712
	9	The driver	17	3	5	4,76	562
Security	10	Staff transmits	17	4	5	4,82	393
	11	The guarantee	17	3	5	4,76	562
Empathy	12	Interest in	17	2	5	4,53	943
	13	Customer is	17	3	5	4,71	588
Reliability	14	The delivery of	17	3	5	4,71	588
	15	The products are	17	5	5	5,00	0
	16	The after-sales	17	3	5	4,47	800
		N valid (per list)	17				

Source: Own elaboration based on the data collected and processed in the statistical program SPSS, v 24.

### Analysis of variances by dimensions

An analysis of variance was carried out for each dimension in order to answer the hypotheses raised by each one, using as a variable the factor that "the customer is paramount for the company", for the evaluation of the average in each of the corresponding factors by dimension.

**Table 5. Anova tangible dimension. Items 1, 2 and 3**

		Sum of squares	gl	Quadratic means	F	Sig.
The sales executives have a presentable image	Between Groups	0.018	3	0.006	0.085	0.967
	Within Groups	0.923	13	0.071		
	Total	0.941	16			
The website is easily accesible	Between Groups	9.210	3	3.070	2.907	0.075
	Within Groups	13.731	13	1.056		
	Total	22.941	16			
The informative materials (catalogs, samples, etc.) provide necessary help for the provision of the service	Between Groups	13.928	3	4.643	14.011	0.000
	Within Groups	4.308	13	0.331		
	Total	18.235	16			

Source: Own elaboration based on the data collected and processed in the statistical program SPSS, v 24.

#### a) Tangible dimension.

A variance was created (table 5) that evaluates the tangible dimension in order to evaluate the hypothesis "The website is accessible". As can be seen in table 6, the hypothesis is rejected when having a significance value greater than .05, which indicates that the data are not relevant. However,

the informative materials (catalogs, sample, etc.) provide help being relevant for the investigation with significance of .000 and a quadratic mean of 4.643.

**Table 6. Anova dimension responsiveness. Items 4 to 9**

		Sum of squares	gl	Quadratic Means	F	Sig.
The staff is available	Between Groups	1.765	3	0.588	.	.
	Within Groups	0.000	13	0.000		
	Total	1.765	16			
Quotes are in stablished times	Between Groups	18.425	3	6.142	21.624	0.000
	Within Groups	3.692	13	0.284		
	Total	22.118	16			
The executives resolve doubts at the time of quotations	Between Groups	1.765	3	0.588	3.824	0.037
	Within Groups	2.000	13	0.154		
	Total	3.765	16			
The executives resolve effectively	Between Groups	1.765	3	0.588	.	.
	Within Groups	0.000	13	0.000		
	Total	1.765	16			
Executives guide the client	Between Groups	5.925	3	1.975	11.712	0.001
	Within Groups	2.192	13	0.169		
	Total	8.118	16			
The driver resolves doubts at the time of delivery	Between Groups	5.059	3	1.686	.	.
	Within Groups	0.000	13	0.000		
	Total	5.059	16			

Source: Own elaboration based on the data collected and processed in the statistical program SPSS, v 24.

b) Dimension responsiveness. This dimension is made up of six items, of which the contributions are at established times in relation to the factor of

interest that the client has on the part of the company, which accepts the hypothesis "Quotes are delivered in a punctual "since it shows to be relevant for clients with a quadratic mean of 6,142, followed by customer orientation in their purchases with a quadratic mean of 1,975 and significance close to zero, see table 6.

### c) Security dimension

For the security dimension, two items were generated to evaluate this section. The hypothesis "Guarantees are always fulfilled in an adequate manner" was established. This hypothesis is refuted because the item that responds to this assertion shows a level of significance of .470. For the client it is more relevant that the personnel transmit security since it shows a significance of .004. (Table 7)

**Table 7. Anova security dimension. Items 10 and 11**

		Sum of Squares	gl	Quadratic Means	F	Sig.
Staff transmits security	Between Groups	1.548	3	0.516	7.265	0.004
	Within Groups	0.923	13	0.071		
	Total	2.471	16			
The guarantee that is offered goes according to your need	Between Groups	0.867	3	0.289	0.896	0.470
	Within Groups	4.192	13	0.322		
	Total	5.059	16			

Source: Own elaboration based on the data collected and processed in the statistical program SPSS, v 24.

#### d) Empathy dimension

An assumption was generated to evaluate this dimension, being "The customer is paramount for the company". The hypothesis is accepted when registering a level of significance of .000 and a quadratic mean of 1.535 which makes it relevant for the investigation, see table 8.

**Table 8. Anova reliability dimension. Items the Customer is paramount**

	Sum of Squares	gl	Quadratic Mean	F	Sig.
Between Groups	4.606	3	1.535	21.624	0.000
Within Groups	0.923	13	0.071		
Total	5.529	16			

Source: Own elaboration based on the data collected and processed in the statistical program SPSS, v 24.

e) Reliability dimension For this dimension three assertions were created that integrate it, of which the item that says, the product is delivered in good conditions, is the one that responds to the hypothesis which throws scant information through the Anova, because the quadratic mean is of .000 (Table 9). The hypothesis is accepted by the value of the mean that, as can be seen in the descriptive table of table 11, is the item with the highest value of 5 in the mean, which makes it the most valued by the clients. A relevant item for the client is that the delivery of the orders is adapted to the customer's times with a level of significance of .000 and a half-square of 1.369.

Table 9. Anova reliability dimension. Items 14,15 and 16.

	Sum of Squares	gl	Quadratic Mean	F	Sig.
Between Groups	4.606	3	1.535	21.624	0.000
Within Groups	0.923	13	0.071		
Total	5.529	16			

Source: Own elaboration based on the data collected and processed in the statistical program SPSS, v 24.

## CONCLUSION

The security dimension is the best valued by customers, with an average of 4.79. Which means that the user feels calm and safe with the service provider (Setó, 2004). On the other hand, the tangible dimension obtained the lowest score (4.49), due to the lack of knowledge on the part of the clients of the existence of the web page.

Within the items of tangibility, the appearance and presentation of the sales executives achieved a good score; however the material resources (catalogs, magazines, etc.) as well as the website did not prove to be profitable for the user's experience of the marketer lacking updating and promotion of these resources. Therefore, it is recommended to put emphasis on electronic media, because nowadays it is a valuable link for an organization.

The results reflect that sales executives have the knowledge to answer questions about orders and quotes, as well as having the attitude and availability to do so. However, it is necessary to improve the delivery times of the quotes when the clients request them.

Despite being a company with a reduced client base, users did not rate the empathy dimension as excellent; as they consider that they are not given the necessary attention by staff to efficiently meet their needs.

Empathy requires an interest in knowing the needs of the client (Cottle, 1991); however, lacking means to facilitate the approach of customers with the company, user-provider communication is weak for the marketer.

The knowledge to resolve possible conflicts and doubts as well as the attitude of the personnel is adequate; in spite of this, it is necessary to consider the instruction and preparation of the personnel to offer the client the necessary attention to promote long-term relationships.

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