



Universiteit van Pretoria  
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GORDON INSTITUTE  
OF BUSINESS SCIENCE

The Consumer Decision Model: Non Professional Service Supplier Selection Criteria  
under Conditions of Time Pressure

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A research project submitted to the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University  
of Pretoria, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of  
Business Administration.

26 September 2012

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## Abstract

The criteria for the selection of service providers have also been studied at length. However, there have been no distinctions drawn between the selection criteria of professional and non professional services. Recently the notion that there is a distinction between professional and non professional service providers has become apparent. As a result, research has taken place regarding non professional service provider selection criteria.

Therefore, the purpose of this research is to understand the consumer's selection criteria for non professional services specifically whilst under conditions of time pressure.

### Keywords

Non professional Service Provider; Selection Criteria; Time Pressure

## Declaration

I declare that this research project is my own work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Business Administration at the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University. I further declare that I have obtained the necessary authorisation and consent to carry out this research.

Name: Lior Avi Solomons

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Date: 26 September 2012

## Acknowledgements

It is with considerable humility that I would like to thank the following people for their assistance, guidance and support during this process:

My supervisor Michael Goldman without whom this plumber would not have become an academic. Your guidance has helped me to compile a worthy document, and for that, I thank you.

My wife Shelley Solomons whose unwavering support, insights and love has allowed me to become the person I am today while pushing me to new heights every day.

My parents whose unconditional support has allowed me to find my own way in this world while relieving the external stresses that occur.

My classmates for sharing in pain and helping each other come through the other side.

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## Chapter 1

### 1.1 Introduction

Consumer behaviour has long been studied specifically under the guise of the consumer decision making process and specifically relating to the consumers motivations and information searches regarding products (Simon, 1955; Howard and Sheth, 1969; and more recently Peter et al. 2005). More recently there has been a movement towards understanding the differences between products and services and how the consumer's decision making process affects services, as opposed to products (Grönroos, 1994; Bebeko, 2000). Coupled with these developments, psychologists have also been studying the effects of time pressure on decision making. (Maule and Svenson, 1993; Maule and Edland 1997; and most recently Maule, Hockey and Bdzola, 2000)

The criteria for the selection of service providers have also been studied at length. However, there have been no distinctions drawn between the selection criteria of professional and non professional services. Recently the notion that there is a distinction between professional and non professional service providers has become apparent. As a result, research has taken place regarding non professional service provider selection criteria.

Therefore, the purpose of this research is to understand the consumer's selection criteria for non professional services specifically whilst under conditions of time pressure.

Limited research is available specifically focusing on the service environment with regard to the consumer decision making model, the non professional service provider selection criteria and the effects of time pressure therein while much research has taken place regarding the decision making model for professional services and goods/products under time pressure.

The decision making model as described by Kotler (2009) includes the following steps: Problem Recognition, Information Search, Evaluation of Alternatives, Purchase Decision and Post Purchase Behaviour. The decision making model for

services as described by Day and Barksdale (1994) includes the following steps: Recognition of a need or problem, Identification of the initial consideration set, Refinement of the consideration set, Evaluation of the consideration set, Selection of the service provider, Evaluation of the quality of service delivery, Evaluation of the quality of the outcome (“product”) and satisfaction/dissatisfaction. A number of these steps include understanding the evaluation criteria and subsequently the actual selection criteria with which the service provider is selected.

The idea that consumers are rational agents making conscious decisions has formed the foundations of multiple studies of consumer behaviour (Bargh, 2002). Howard and Sheth (1969) first described buyer behaviour as rational in the sense that it is within the buyers bounded rationality; that is his behaviour is rational within the limits of his cognitive and learning capacities and within the constraint of limited information. Simon (1972) goes on to explain that theories that incorporate constraints on the information – processing capacities of the actor may be called theories of bounded rationalities. Time pressured decisions lead consumers into situations that lead consumers to act in ways which appear outside the realms of bounded rationality. Simon (1972) explains rationality as a style of behaviour that is appropriate to the achievement of given goals, within the limits of given conditions and constraints. Thus, if a consumer, when placed under conditions that occur outside the limits of the given conditions and constraints, such as conditions of time pressure, then the consumer will act in a manner that is irrational.

French, Maule and Papamichail (2009) explain how it is tempting to think that decision making is nicely ordered, however; this chronologically ordered logical perspective is, more often than not a complete fiction. Decision making is driven by events and developments in the external world as much as by some logical internal rationality. Further Duant and Harris (2012) describe how research is based on the assumption that customers behave in a normative and functional manner during service exchange. This view contrasts with a growing body of practitioner and theory based literature that shows customers routine activities in an alternate light.

According to Howard and Sheth (1969) time pressure will create inhibition and it will also unfavourably affect the search for information. Therefore, if time pressure influences the consumers’ ability to search for, and evaluate information for a non

professional service provider then consumer can be seen to be acting in a manner that can be considered irrational.

In relevant journal articles, the Reeves Journal (A trade journal catering towards the plumbing, heating and cooling industries in the USA), make clear reference to consumers decision making and hence why it is incumbent on the researcher to study this topic. Diamond (2007) describes loyalty as the tendency of a customer to choose one business product over another for a need. The notion of loyalty is a choice for the consumer and hence a possible service selection criteria. Therefore, every time a customer requires a service provider, their loyalty to that service provider is tested. Loyalty to a brand or service provider forms part of the selection criteria of the consumer; thus the research needs to understand how loyalty plays a role in the selection of a non professional service provider. King (2011) further reiterates this sentiment by arguing that a stellar reputation for turning out quality work just is not enough anymore. The consumer's service supplier selection criteria, especially under time pressure, can be viewed in the simplest terms, as the discussion of this point. As businesses in the non professional services industries, it is necessary to understand other criteria with which consumer's select service providers if previous quality of work is not enough of a consideration set. If a service provider can no longer simply rely on their reputation as an indication of the way in which consumers will select a service provider, it is necessary for the researcher to understand the consumer and the subsequent decision making process, particularly under time pressure.

Sweet (2010) in an article in which the author interviews relevant industry heads cites the following significant changes to be expected in the plumbing industry over the next ten to fifteen years: Casey – Internet - A company's communications and connections with its customers via the internet. Keirns – Ever more educated customers. Jones – Quality work, consumers will tolerate less quality and will be more educated in what quality is and what it is not. Non professional industries and business need to understand the way in which the consumer is changing their selection criteria whilst under conditions of time pressure. This will help both marketing and sales functions to understand which aspects play a crucial role in the consumer's choice of service providers. Chapter 2

## 2.1 Literature Review

### *2.1.1 The difference between products and services*

Understanding the selection criteria of the consumer under time pressure for non professional service providers, meant first understanding of the differences between two types of product classifications.

Much previous research took place regarding the differences between goods and services. Gabbot & Hogg (1995) described the difference between goods and services where services were defined purely in terms of their physical properties. The distinction was been drawn between the use of physical goods and the “evaluation and consumption of intangibles.” Thus, the distinction has since been made between goods and services and so customer relationship marketing has turned its attention to understanding that difference. Subsequent research by the same authors explained that services could now be seen as a distinctive product class which have characteristics that require special attention from marketing theorists. Gabbot and Hogg (1999) (citing Zaichowsky, 1985) further described that consumer involvement was shown to be a significant antecedent of purchase behaviour in relation to physical products, and it was assumed that it should be equally applicable to the purchase of services.

Groonross (1994) described how in standard marketing text, services marketing, industrial marketing and international marketing, for example, are touched on in a few paragraphs or they may be presented in a chapter of their own. However, they were always occurring as add-ons (to product marketing) and never integrated into the whole text. Importantly, understanding the difference between services and products and hence the differences between the consumers buying behaviours in services and products allowed a distinction to be drawn between the two.

Bebko (2000) described services with the following characteristics: Intangibility, Variability, Inseparability and Perishability. Each characteristic distinguishes a service in such a way that a service, as consumed by a customer, could not be expected to be a standardised item and each service would thus be different from each other. Thus, Berry (1980) added one more characteristic in Non-

Standardisation. Importantly the distinction between the non standardisation of services affected the way in which a consumer viewed, and subsequently select, a service provider.

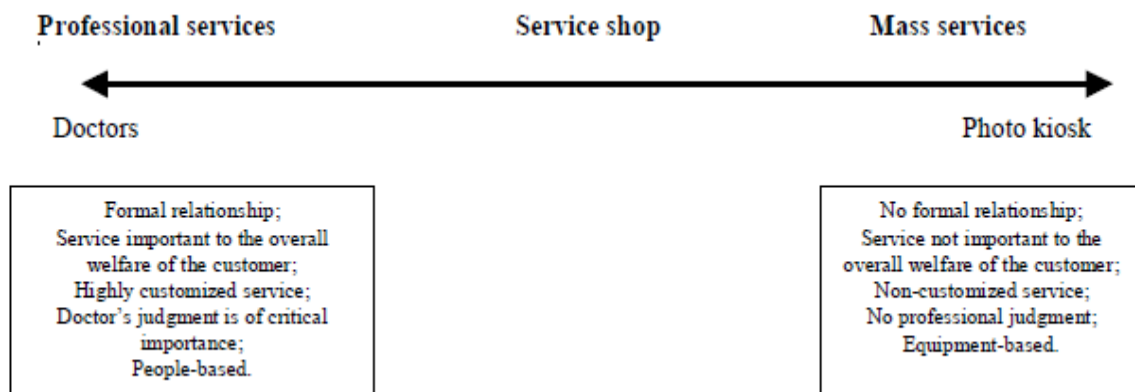
Gronroos (2000) and Gummesson (2007) also detailed service characteristics as 'IHIPs' which were defined as intangibility, heterogeneity, inseparability and perishability. The authors went on to describe how there was a disconnect between making services distinct from products/goods (In previous literature) and only recently had the distinction been drawn between the two.

### *2.1.2 Distinctions between different types of services*

Previous research drew distinctions between different types of services. Much of the literature focused on organisational buying of professional services while paying little attention to mass or generic services or the consumer as a purchaser of services (Collier and Meyer, 2000; Grace and O'Cass, 2003).

Kugytė and Šliburytė (2005) drew on previous research and defined three classifications of services. These classifications were based on work carried out by Etteson and Turner (1997) who proposed five service dimensions for better understanding of differences between service providers. These differences included:

1. Type of commitment between service provider and consumer,
2. Importance of the service to the overall welfare of the consumer,
3. Degree of customisation required,
4. Degree of professional judgement exercised in rendering the service,
5. Whether or not the service is equipment or people based.



**Figure 1 - Classification of services based on five dimensions (Etteson and Turner, 1997; Collier and Meyer, 2000)**

Their research described professional services as those services that had a recognised group identity and that required extensive training and advanced study in a specialised field such as health, legal and financial specialists. Professional services were analysed mostly from a corporate customers' point of view. Exceptions were made when an individual required personal finance advice or an architect for the construction of a new house.

Mass or Generic Services were described as those services which conversely did not have a recognised group identity and required little or no training and advanced studies. Therefore non professional services were consumed by consumers on an individual basis. Thakor and Kumar (2000) suggested that services involving simple, repetitive, low paid, manual work were not considered professional and thus could not be defined as professional but rather non professional.

Service Shops were defined as mostly banking markets and financial institutions.

### *2.1.3 The consumer decision making process for products or goods*

Much research had been carried out regarding the consumer decision making process for the purchase of goods and products. Each stage of the models described below has been researched and understood by many previous authors (both individually and sequentially).

The consumer buying model for goods and products as described by Kotler (2009) included the following steps: (1) Problem Recognition (2) Information Search (3)

Evaluation of Alternatives (4) Purchase Decision and (5) Post Purchase Behaviour. This particular model was echoed by Schiffman and Kanuk (2009) who proposed the definition of consumer behaviour as the behaviour that consumers display in searching for; purchasing; using; evaluating and disposing of products and services that they expect to satisfy their needs. Lamb et al (2010) also described, as a general frame work which consumers make use of, for the decision making process, included the following steps: (1) need recognition (2) information search (3) evaluation of alternatives (4) purchase and (5) post purchase behaviour.

Throughout the literature, the consumer decision making models did not specify if there was an explicit time frame in which the consumer undertook each step however Kotler (2009) indicated that consumers did not always pass through each stage sequentially and therefore they may have skipped or reversed some of the stages.

#### *2.1.4 The consumer decision making model for services*

Hill and Neely (1988) described the decision making process for generic services in the following manner:

- (1) Need recognition: the buyer defines the problem and there is little advice from the service provider.
- (2) Search Process: there is little willingness to expend effort on the part of the buyer, there is sufficient information available and the buyer makes use of advertising and makes use of their own experiences in the information search.
- (3) Evaluation of alternatives: There are many alternatives to evaluate and these alternatives are easy to compare and the evaluation criteria are known.
- (4) Choice: the choice is relatively clear cut.
- (5) Use and Post purchase evaluation: the outcome is uncertain but the consequences are minimal and a re-do is possible.

Day and Barksdale (1994) stated that the selection process of service providers for professional services consisted of two stages. (The authors in their research added their voice to previous research by describing how, because of the different types of services that were defined in previous literature, there may or may not have been a close link between this model for professional and non professional services). These two stages were defined as the ‘first cut’ and final

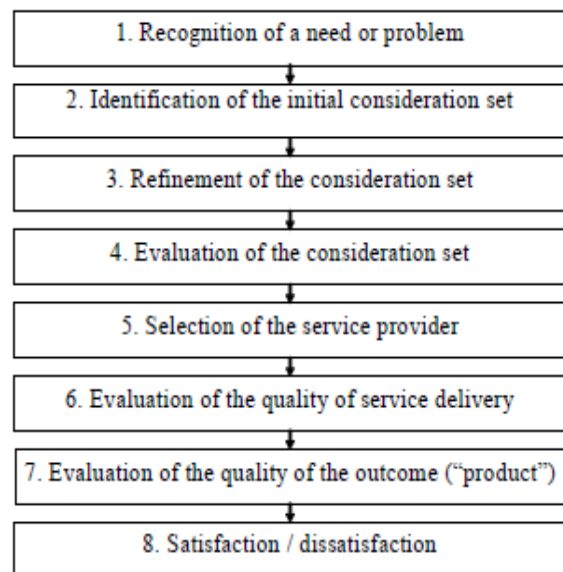


Figure 2 - Decision process for selecting a service provider (Day and Barksdale, 1994)

selection stages. Subsequent to these two stages described above, the authors also

defined the post purchase evaluation stages as a two stage process involving evaluation of service delivery and the evaluation of the final service outcome.

### 2.1.5 Service Supplier Selection

As such when the consumer was in a position to make a decision regarding a service provider, under time pressure, other elements needed to be considered.

Gabbot and Hogg (1999) referred to previous research which had shown that when consumers were involved in purchase decisions, the absolute number of alternatives available were not as important as the perceived differences between those alternatives. It was also extremely difficult to assess differences between service products before the consumption of the services.

Darby and Karni (1976) described credence qualities as those which, although worthwhile, could not be evaluated in normal use. Instead the assessment of their value required additional costly information. Arora and Stoner (1996) also mentioned ‘credence’ services where a credence service depended much on the placing of the consumers’ trust in the service provider since the individual user could not properly evaluate the outcome (at least in the short term). Credence played a vital part in understanding the decision making process, particularly in times of distress. This was because the consumer needed to locate a supplier and in the absence of

adequate time to search comfortably for a service provider or past experiences to guide them, immediate trust needed to be placed in the hands on the service supplier. This trust was as a result of the consumer assuming that the service provider was a trained non professional with the required knowledge to undertake a service requirement.

This was echoed by Gabbot and Hogg (1999) who proposed that some services could be distinguished from other services. These services were either too difficult or too technically complex for the consumer to carry out, or required specialised knowledge. Consumers therefore required the services of a service provider who can aid them in performing these specialised tasks and more so while the consumer is under conditions of time pressure.

#### *2.1.6 Service Supplier Selection Criteria*

Previous researched focused on a number of different selection criteria for professional, service shop and non professional service suppliers. Kugytė and Šliburytė (2005), having undergone previous research, determined that based on a model drawn up by Keaveney (1995) in which the criteria for service provider selection in the event of customer switching, required the following service provider criteria for professional services:

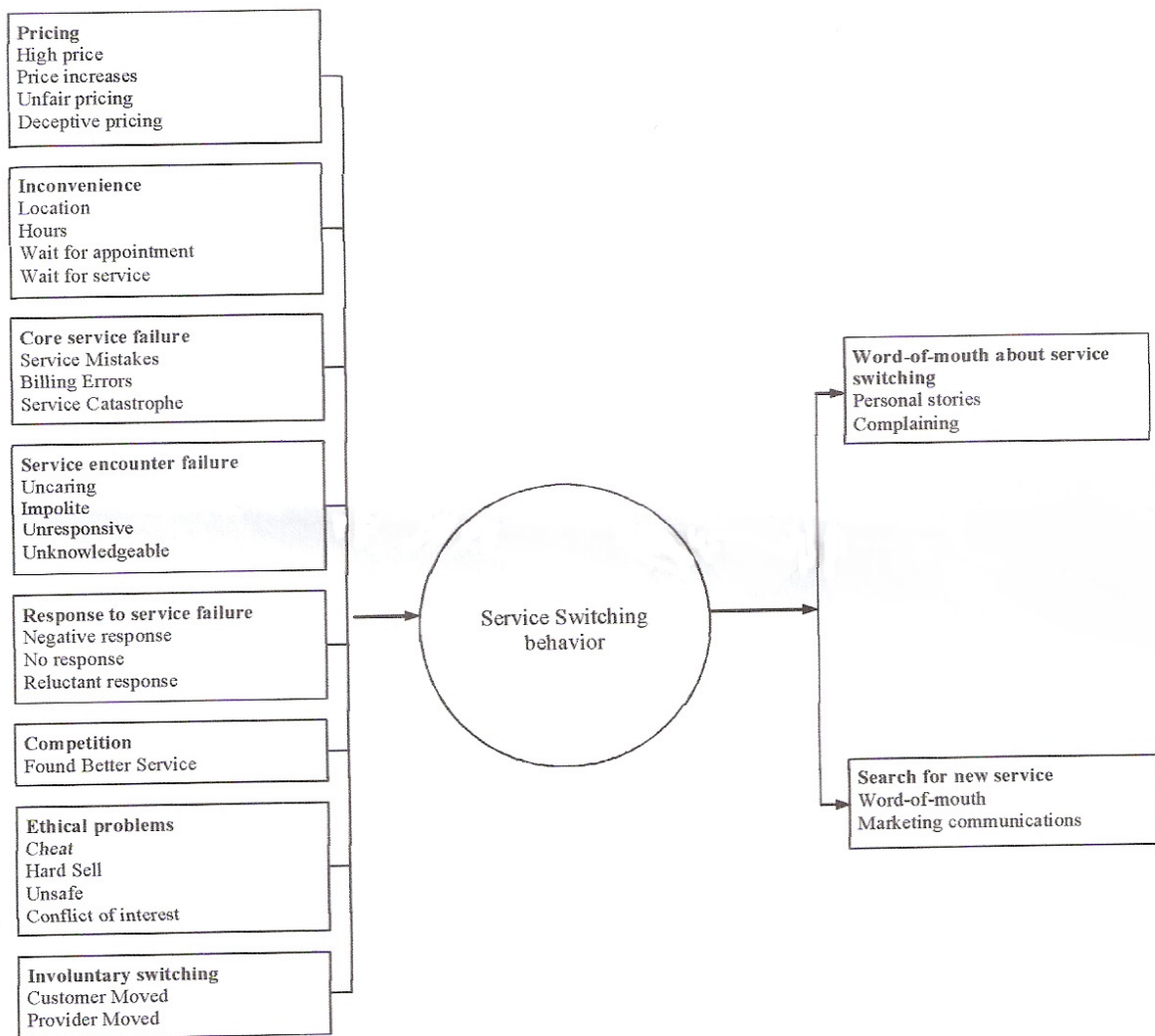
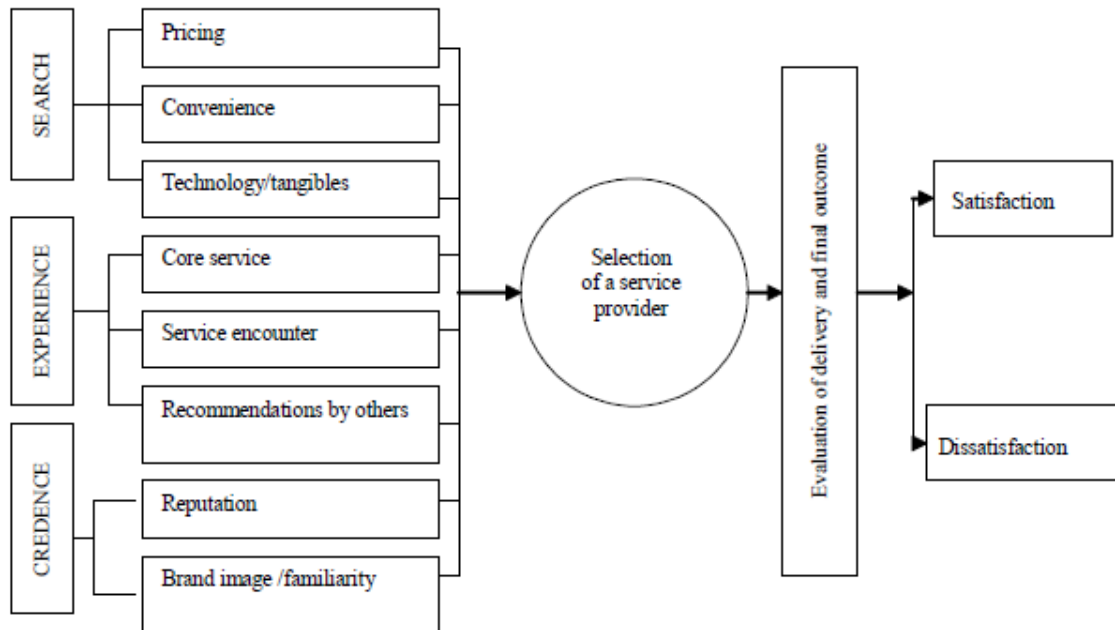


Figure 3 - Keaveney's model for determinants of switching service providers

The authors then went further and adapted the model. The model would now be a base for the selection of a service provider for all three types of services described above.



**Figure 4 - Kugytė and Šliburytė (2005) adapted model of service provider selection**

The authors described how the selection of a service provider could be simplified into three broad categories (Again no distinction was drawn between professional and non professional services). These categories were search, experience and credence and were based on the degree of risk perceived, information search conducted and information sources used and behavioural intentions associated with each criteria category. The three categories were associated with a stage of the decision process for service providers.

The search category was based on attributes that could be accurately evaluated prior to making the choice of service provider. The experience categories were attributes that could only be assessed after a service has been purchased and used. The credence category was attributes that were the hardest to assess because the user may lack the necessary experience and knowledge needed to assess these attributes.

Based on the above literature this research included the following individual criteria for service supplier selection all of which found a place amongst the three broad categories of service provider selection criteria described above.

Service quality, (Keaveney, 1995; Arora and Stoner, 1996; Verman and Pullman, 1998; Chao and Scheuing, 2001; Smeltzer and Ogden, 2002; Bogomolova, 2010) referred to the quality of the work provided by the service provider to the user. The consumer judged the quality of work based on the ability of the service to provide the desired function that the service was specifically purchased for.

Past performance and Memory, (Sheth and Parvatiyar, 1995; Arora and Stoner, 1996) referred to the consumer's ability to recall previous services provided by the provider that met with satisfactory results. These satisfactory results provided the memory, for the consumer, of a suitable and satisfactory provider who will be able to provide the same service if required.

Price, (Arora and Stoner, 1996; Verman and Pullman, 1998) was a factor for selecting a service provider when there were no conditions of time pressure. Once time pressure became a factor in the decision making the complexity of the decision was increased and price might not have played as an important role as when there was no time pressure.

Word of Mouth, (Sheth and Pravatiyar, 1995; Smeltzer and Ogden, 2002; Schumann, Wagenheim, Strongfellow, Yang, Blazevic, Praxmarer, Shainesh, Komor, Shannon and Jimenez, 2010; Bolkan, Goodboy and Bachman, 2011) was important both for a consumer considering a service provider and for the recommending a service provider to other consumers. There was a definite link between service quality (and satisfaction) and word of mouth which assumed that if a consumer was not satisfied with the previous service offered by a provider there appeared to be no reason to either recommend or take note of others recommending a service provider.

Convenience, price and availability, (Keaveney, 1995) are conditions that occur under the definition of rational boundaries i.e. with no time pressure. These factors are important in selecting a service supplier, however, under conditions of time pressure availability might be considered the only important factor since the complexity of the decision has increased.

### *2.1.7 Time Pressure*

According to Suri and Monroe (2003) time pressure could be viewed as a perceived limitation of the time available to consider information or make decisions. Their research also expanded upon previous research where the authors described three levels of time pressure that exist namely: low time pressure, moderate time pressure and high time pressure. The goal of any decision maker was to make the most optimal decisions possible with a minimal amount of cognitive strain or effort, but many situations existed that required individuals to make decisions under deadlines such as time pressure (Young, Goodie, Hall and Wu, 2009).

### *2.1.8 Decision making and time pressure*

Research has also been carried out regarding the decision making process and time pressure specifically regarding the effects of time pressure on the consumer's decision making. (Svenson and Maule, 1993)

Dhar and Nowlis (1999) explained how consumers under time pressure were likely to simplify their selection decision by using a less effortful non compensatory decision strategy. The authors also discussed based on previous literature how the consideration decision (selection criteria) might be fundamentally different than the choice decision.

The authors also explained how, if consumers perceived that the time available was completely insufficient to consider all alternatives carefully they might opt out of the decision altogether. For the purpose of this research opting out could not be an option for the consumer.

Sheth and Parvatiyar (1995) described how consumers reduce their available choices and engaged in relational market behaviour because they wanted to simplify their buying and consuming tasks, simplify information processing, reduce perceived risks and maintain cognitive consistency and a state of psychological comfort.

Further research by Tétard and Collan (2009) described the ‘lazy user’ as an individual (user) who made a selection of a solution to fulfil a need (user need) from a set of possible solutions (that fulfilled the need). The set of possible solutions was a subset of universal solutions that was constrained (limited) by the user state (circumstances). The position that the lazy user theory of solution selection took was that from the possible available solutions a user selects the solution that demanded the least effort.

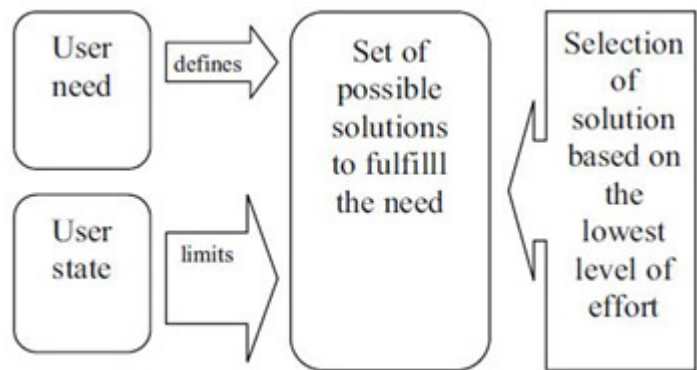


Figure 5- Lazy user theory of solution selection

The same principle was applicable in the case of the consumer who was under conditions of time pressure and as such needed to make a decision with the lowest possible effort.

According to Maule, Hockney and Bdzola (2000) time pressured participants (of their study) were more anxious and energetic and used a number of different strategies to cope with time pressure. Svenson and Maule (1993); Maule (1997) and Maule and Edland (1997) identified a number of ways in which the outcomes, processes, underlying judgments and decision making changed when time available was limited. For instance, time pressure was shown to reduce the quality of decision making (Payne, Bettman and Johnson, 1993, 1995) induce less extreme judgments (Kaplan, Wanshula and Zanna, (1993) and reduce propensity to take risks (Ben-Zur and Breznitz, 1981)

Maule and Edland (1997) indicated in their studies that time pressured decision makers adapted in terms of relatively small scale or micro changes in decision making strategy. Examples included acceleration (increasing the speed or tempo or information processing) and filtration (increased selectivity of processing).

Lin and Wu (2005) also explained how consumers who were under moderate time pressure were more likely to make a decision (as opposed to being under high time pressure).

Further, the same authors explained how under the considerations of cost and benefit (under high time pressure), the products and services of the business were for satisfactory quality, and not the best quality. Consumers made a trade off among alternatives or attributes to make their final purchasing decision.

Vlasic, Jankovic and Kramo-Caluk (2011) found that both high and low quantity of information led to poor decision making. The decision in a time pressured situation was likely to be made at a very low level of considered information, therefore leading to lower quality decisions.

Rahman and De Feis (2010) found that decision makers became more susceptible to cognitive biases in the face of additional complexity such as time pressure. Such conditions prompted decision makers to be anything from extra careful and conservative to reckless and daring. Therefore complexity (such as the conditions around which a decision was made) also influenced decision making because complex situations led to very complex and uncertain decision conclusions. Time pressure added to the complexity and therefore impacts decision making as bounded rationality and satisficing (Definition: Concept that consumers were inclined more toward satisfactory decisions instead of the 'best' decisions due to lack of (1) information, (2) information processing ability, and (3) time to do all that for every purchase decision.) played a role when the clock was ticking, particularly when stress came into the picture.

Maule et al (2000) found in their research that under time pressure there was an increase in the proportion of the overall decision time devoted to the processing of general information about the problem. This may reflect the greater priority given to developing a broad understanding of the decision problem than to developing a detailed evaluation of particular alternatives and their outcomes. This was consistent with previous suggestions that under time pressure people preferred to have a relatively small amount of knowledge about all alternatives than detailed information about just some of them (Payne *et al.*, 1993).

## *2.2 Conclusion*

The literature review set out to provide a review on the current thinking around different types of service providers. These service providers are explained as professional service providers, non professional service providers and service shops. The author noted that there is little academia available describing the selection criteria of non professional services providers. Secondary findings of the literature review described time pressure as a perceived limitation of the time available to consider information or make decisions. The literature also indicated the effects of time pressure on the consumer's decision making abilities noting specifically the consumer's susceptibility to complexity which in turn makes the consumer consider less information, take less time to make decision and potentially opt out of decisions altogether. Ultimately the literature review has provided context for the propositions that are discussed in chapter three.

## Chapter 3:

### 3.1 Research Propositions

#### *3.1.1 Introduction*

The literature review has established that service supplier selection criteria, while largely covered for professional services, has not been established for the selection criteria for service providers considered to be non professional. A secondary finding of the literature review suggests that consumer's decision making under time pressure differs substantially from that of a consumer considered to be under normal conditions.

Thus the purpose of this study is to test whether the selection criteria of the consumer for the selection of a non professional service provider, under time pressure, remains the same as a consumer who is firstly selecting a professional service provider and secondly is not under conditions of time pressure.

#### *3.2.1 Proposition 1*

An emergency situation will place the consumer under conditions of time pressure when selecting a service provider to assist with the emergency. (Suri and Monroe, 2003)

#### *3.2.2 Proposition 2*

Consumers will decrease the length of time spent searching for information when purchasing a service, under conditions of time pressure. (Tétard and Collan, 2009; Gabbot and Hogg, 1999; Darby and Karni, 1976)

### *3.2.3 Proposition 3*

Consumers will consider less information regarding the actual job to be carried out when selecting a service provider under conditions of time pressure. (Lin and Wu, 2005)

### *3.2.4 Proposition 4*

Consumers will discard poor past experiences with a service provider when selecting a service provider under conditions of time pressure and simply select a service provider whom they believe can simply perform the service for them. (Sheth and Parvatiyar, 1995; Arora and Stoner, 1996)

### *3.2.5 Proposition 5*

Under conditions of time pressure consumers will select a service provider based on the provider's positive reputation and good name. (Sheth and Pravatiyar, 1995; Smeltzer and Ogden, 2002; Schumann, Wagenheim, Strongfellow, Yang, Blazevic, Praxmarer, Shainesh, Komor, Shannon and Jimenez, 2010; Bolkan, Goodboy and Bachman, 2011)

### *3.2.6 Proposition 6*

Under conditions of time pressure, service quality was an important factor in service supplier selection. (Keaveney, 1995; Arora and Stoner, 1996; Verman and Pullman, 1998; Chao and Scheuing, 2001; Smeltzer and Ogden, 2002; Bogomolova, 2010)

## Chapter 4:

### 4.1 Research Methodology:

The literature review regarding the consumers service supplier criteria for a non professional service provider and the effects that time pressure have on the consumers ultimate decision making processes allowed for the propositions described in chapter three to be formulated. As a result the following research methodology was applied in order to ascertain what the consumer's criteria for the selection of a service provider of a non professional service under conditions of time pressure were.

#### *4.1.1 Research Design:*

The research report was designed with the aim of providing descriptive research. Robson (2002) described the aim of descriptive research as to portray an accurate profile of persons, events or situations. Saunders et al. (2009) further explained that description in management and business research has a very clear place. However it should be thought of as a means to an end rather than an end itself. Thus the purpose of this research was to describe the selection criteria of a consumer for a non professional service provider under time pressure.

The research was conducted using a quantitative research methodology. Molhatra (2010) described quantitative research as a research methodology that seeks to quantify the data and typically applies some form of statistical analysis. Using this form of data collection the research would then be able to quantify the respondents behaviour, intentions, attitudes, awareness, motivations and demographic and lifestyle characteristics and would be able to provide valid data in answer to the propositions. The research aimed to answer questions relating to the consumers behaviours, intentions and attitudes regarding the selection criteria of non professional service providers.

### *4.1.2 Secondary Data*

Secondary data is data that has already collected for another purpose (Saunders et al. 2009). Advantages of using secondary data included cost savings, permanence of data and the ability to result in unforeseen discoveries. There were some disadvantages to secondary data including: Definitions may be unsuitable and access to the data may be difficult. The secondary data would provide the researcher with longitudinal (time series) data and area-based data.

For the purpose of this research secondary data was available that could be harnessed in order to begin the first phases of the research. This first phase consisted of defining the population group from which the sample for the survey could be taken from.

Secondary data was gathered using the AMPS Individual Survey 2011 obtained from <http://www.eighty20.co.za>. From this resource the researcher was able to define the city of Johannesburg as a target area from which the population would be drawn. The secondary data was also able to define the amount of rented and owned house there are within the Johannesburg region and how many of those houses had hot water geysers attached.

### *4.1.3 Primary Data*

The collection and use of primary data determined the relevant data required to facilitate the research. Saunders et al. (2009) defined primary data as data which was collected specifically for the use of the particular research and specifically data that was collected with the research objectives in mind. The authors further went on to explain that three types of primary data collection tools could be used namely observation, interviews and questionnaires. A survey questionnaire was chosen as the method of collection and the benefits and pitfalls of such a method are discussed later in the chapter.

#### *4.1.4 Population*

The population for the research consisted of home owners in South Africa who had experienced in the recent past a burst geyser or water pipe on their property. A secondary population included home renters who were also be in the position to be able to experience these circumstances and therefore were able to add to the research by relating their specific selection criteria for non professional service providers under time pressure. The population was selected as residents from the Johannesburg region who met the desired requirements of either home owners or home renters.

#### *4.1.5 Sample Frame Method and Size*

Respondents were selected using non probability 'Purposive Sampling'. Non probability sampling is based on judgment and the use of (non probability sampling) may be dictated by limited resources or the inability to specify a sampling frame (Saunders et al. 2009).

Purposive sampling enabled the researcher to exercise his/her judgement to select cases that would best enable the researcher to achieve answers that met the objectives specified (Saunders et al. 2009). This form of sampling enabled the researcher to find the required data for the analysis however downfalls of this type of sampling are that the data may not have been statistically representative of the population (Saunders et al. 2009).

For the purpose of this research it was vital to select respondents who had either been in a time pressured situation before i.e. they had experienced a burst geyser or pipe on the property on which they lived. As such the respondents had experience in determining the selection criteria for non professional service providers under time pressure or the respondents need to be home owners that might in the future experience this type of decision making under time pressure.

For convenience purposes respondents were selected from the Johannesburg region as there are a great number of houses owned by consumers and there was access to the home owners via internet surveys. Thus the control characteristic

required was ownership or renting of a property. The researcher made use of personal networks, [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com) as a platform to launch the survey. The researcher also made contact with 7 plumbing companies via email and telephonic conversations (see appendix A) requesting the use of their database in order to query customers as to their perceptions regarding the selection criteria.

A sample of 100 home owners who had experienced this particular situation was able to provide adequate data and a total of one hundred and thirty six responses were collected.

#### *4.1.6 Research Strategy*

For the purpose of this study using observational methods appeared to be the most pertinent method for collecting the data specifically relating to the criteria with which the consumer selected a non professional service provider under time pressure, however, due to the constraints associated with just such observation methods (time, cost and availability of respondents for observation), this type of methodology was eliminated from the collection methods.

Thus the author determined to make use of online surveys in order to collect the data required. Molhata (2010) explained the survey method as a way of obtaining information based on the questioning of respondents. The author further explained that the respondents were asked a variety of questions regarding their behaviour, intentions, attitudes, awareness, motivations, demographic and lifestyle characteristics. Further Molhata went on to describe the advantages of the survey as being simple to administer, the answers obtained were reliable because answers are limited to the alternatives stated, the variability in results caused by different interviewers would be minimised and lastly coding, analysis and interpretation of the data were relatively simple.

Sanders et al. (2009) also explained that surveys tend to be used for exploratory or descriptive research (such as the stated research), and the data was both easily explained and understood. In addition the data collected using a survey strategy could be used to suggest possible reasons for particular relationships between variables and to produce models of these relationships. Coupled with these characteristics the author also went on to explain that when the correct sampling was

used, it was possible to generate findings that were representative of the whole population.

Saunders et al. (2009) described how the choice of questionnaire would be influenced by a number of objectives including:

- Characteristics of the respondents
- Importance of reaching a particular person as a respondent
- Importance of the respondents answers being uncontaminated
- Size of sample required for analysis
- Types of questions
- Number of questions.

With these functions in mind the author chose to make use of self administered questionnaires in the form of internet surveys. Saunders explained that self administered questionnaires are normal questionnaires carried out by the respondent themselves. A disadvantage of such a questionnaire type was that selected respondents might not be the ones to actually answer the survey, specifically in the case of corporate surveys where personal assistants and secretaries might be tasked with filling them out, however since this particular survey focused on consumers themselves; it was the personal response of the consumer that would be sought. Advantages of the survey included: Reliability of responses as there were no social influences on the respondents however discussion amongst respondents is a possibility which could have led to contamination of results.

The author chose to make use of internet surveys in order to collect the data required because the advantages of the internet survey included speed of collection, cost effectiveness and real time data capturing advantages (Zikmund, 2003). These advantages were also in line with the resources available (Saunders et al. 2009) including time available, financial implications of data collection and entry, availability of interviewers and field workers and ease of automating data entry. There was one major disadvantage to the internet survey which included security for the respondent. This issue of security was dealt with by the survey instrument which was used namely <http://www.surveymonkey.com> which was a regularly used internet survey tool with the relevant security measures in place.

Puleston (2011) described eight ways in which the survey could be made better and these eight ways were implemented in the survey used.

The eight ways included:

- Start by looking at a survey as a form of creative communication
- Engage respondents from the beginning
- Adoption of more creative questioning methods
- Understanding the critical role of imagery
- Learning from social psychology
- Learning from qualitative researchers
- The value of piloting
- The power of game play

#### *4.1.7 Questionnaire Design*

The questionnaire was loosely based on previous surveys found by the researcher and followed both the format and question types of those previous surveys. (see appendix B)

Firstly the respondents were required to recall an incident whereby they were in a time pressured situation and the respondents had to make a decision as to which criteria, for a non professional service provider, they would select the service provider by (Daunt and Harris, 2012; Dhar and Nowlis, 1999).

In terms of potential questionnaires or surveys that would be used in the researching of the consumer decision making process, the author relied on previous research regarding the selection criteria for a non professional service provider.

Malhotra (2010) explained how buyer behaviour is a central component of the environmental context. He further explained that in most marketing decisions, the problem could ultimately be traced to predicting the response of buyers to specific actions by the marketer. Thus the questionnaire covered the following factors:

- Product consumption habits and the consumption of related products categories
- Price sensitivity

- Buyer preferences

These factors could be found in respect of the purchase of a product however many common factors were found that influence both the purchase of products and services. The obvious ones to examine are: Product consumption habits and the consumption of related products categories; Price sensitivity and Buyer preferences.

Ratings questions were used in the form of five point Likert-Style rating scales where respondents were asked on a scale whether they agree or disagree with a statement (Saunders et al. 2009). In previous research varying scales have been used ranging from nine, seven and five point scales and in the case of this research a five point Likert-Style rating was chosen to ensure the ease of coding.

#### *4.1.8 Data Analysis*

The data collected was analysed firstly according to the data types and secondly according to the distribution.

The data was prepared and inputted as categorical data. According to Saunders et al. (2009) categorical data refers to data whose values cannot be measured numerically but can either be classified into sets (categories) according to the characteristics that identify or describe the variable or placed in ranked order. Once the data has been named accordingly (categorical) it can further be divided into descriptive, nominal or ranked categories. For the purpose of this research ranked categories will prove to be the most useful form of data type and will prove to be a more precise form of categorical data. Ranked data was based on rating or scale questions where a respondent is asked to rank for example from highest to lowest or how strongly they agree or disagree with a statement.

The categorical data was then be coded as coding saved time and historically were normally well tested and allowed for comparisons of results with other (often larger) surveys (Saunders et al. 2009)

Significance testing was then employed to test the probability of a pattern such as a relationship between variables occurring by chance alone (Saunders et al. 2009). The data was then tested using the paired sample t-test. Weiers (2011) described how samples were tested to determine whether the selection process for one

variable is related to the selection of another variable. Further the author explained how the variables tested could often be used for before and after scenarios. Since the aim of the research was to test the consumers selection criteria for non professional services whilst under what are considered normal conditions and also under conditions of time pressure the paired sample t-test was determined to be the best method of analysis. Saunders et al. (2009) also described how numerical data can be divided into two distinct groups using a descriptive variable you could assess the likelihood of these groups being different using the independent groups t-test. This would compare the difference in the means of the two groups using a measure of the spread of the scores. If the likelihood of any difference between these two groups occurring by chance alone is low, this would be represented by a large t statistic with a probability less than 0.05 and would therefore be termed statistically significant. Alternatively there might be a situation where numerical data for two variables that measure the same feature but under different conditions.

#### *4.2 Research Limitations*

The research was limited by the number of respondents. Although a large sample was taken, the sample was confined to a small geographic region of Gauteng, South Africa. The results could be said to be fairly accurate for the specified geographic region however the research largely ignored a large population of South Africa in terms of rural residents. Other limitations of the research included the non ability of the researcher to conduct the research using the historically preferred method of time pressure tests namely observation. While the research aimed to test the consumer's attitudes towards time pressure and the criteria for service supplier selection for non professional service providers, it is the opinion of previous researchers that only by placing consumers in actual test conditions, could accurate findings be achieved.

## Chapter 5

### 5.1 Results

#### *5.1.1 Introduction*

Chapter four outlined the research design approach and methodology. The research approach was as quantitative and descriptive using primary data as the design of analysis. The research methodology referred to the target population, research procedure, measuring instruments and statistical procedures used in the analysis of the data.

This chapter refers to the statistical analysis obtained from the research questionnaire which had the objectives of understanding the criteria with which consumers selected service providers determined to suppliers of non professional services.

The statistical analysis was performed on the raw data obtained from the collection tool being [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com)

#### *5.1.2 Population*

The population was determined to be residents of the Johannesburg region who either own or rent a property that had the relevant water heating apparatus and/or running water. Although no data could be found relating specifically to the Johannesburg region, according to StatsSA 97.9% of the population of Gauteng enjoyed access to piped water and 83.5% enjoyed access to electricity (at least to power their lights) (Community Survey 2007)

Johannesburg has a population of 3.2 million people spread across 1 006 930 households. Due to the geographical nature of Johannesburg and its burgeoning traffic problems the research was focused on the Sandton, Randburg and Northern Suburbs areas of Johannesburg.

According to the AMPS survey (2011) in the Sandton, Randburg and Northern suburbs of Johannesburg there are a total of 633,361 owned and rented houses in those suburbs, specifically 465,101 owned houses and 168,260 rented houses.

### *5.1.3 Statistical Analysis*

The questionnaire made use of a five-point Likert scale questions with a rating of five (5) being disagree and one (1) being agree and three (3) being neutral. The mean of each statement was calculated and a paired sample t-test was conducted to compare the agreement to different statements under normal circumstances and when under pressure.

A paired sample t-test is used when there are two samples, which are not independent but paired. The procedure involved computing differences of individual matched pairs. In this study, a pair was made up of a rating under normal circumstances and a rating under pressure by the same respondent.

The paired t-test then examined if the mean of the differences is not equal to zero (no difference). Thus, the underlying methods of one-sample t-test and paired t-test are identical. Saunders et al. (2009) described how numerical data can be divided into two distinct groups using a descriptive variable you could assess the likelihood of these groups being different using the independent groups t-test. This would compare the difference in the means of the two groups using a measure of the spread of the scores. If the likelihood of any difference between these two groups occurring by chance alone is low, this would be represented by a large t statistic with a probability less than 0.05 and would therefore be termed statistically significant. Alternatively there might be a situation where numerical data for two variables that measure the same feature but under different conditions.

### 5.2.1 Proposition 1

**A burst geyser/pipe will put the consumer under urgent time pressure to employ a plumber to fix it.**

In order to assess whether a geyser burst will put a consumer under pressure a paired samples t-test was carried out to compare the respondent's level of agreement with the following statements "When my geyser burst, I felt like I was under urgent time pressure to employ a plumber to fix it", against "When my geyser burst, I felt like I had adequate time to assess the situation". The findings are shown in the tables below;

Paired Samples Statistics				
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Pair 1	When my geyser burst, I felt like I was under urgent time pressure to employ a plumber to fix it	1.33	119	.714
	When my geyser burst, I felt like I had adequate time to assess the situation	3.51	119	1.377

From the results "When my geyser burst, I felt like I was under urgent time pressure to employ a plumber to fix it" had a mean of 1.33 and "When my geyser burst, I felt like I had adequate time to assess the situation" had a mean of 3.51. The table below shows whether the two means are statistically different.

Paired Samples Test						
		Paired Differences		t	df	Sig. (2 tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation			
Pair 1	When my geyser burst, I felt like I was under urgent time pressure to employ a plumber to fix it - When my geyser burst, I felt like I had adequate time to assess the situation	-2.185	1.751	-13.609	118	.000

The mean of the "When my geyser burst, I felt like I was under urgent time pressure to employ a plumber to fix it" plus "When my geyser burst, I felt like I had adequate time to assess the situation" is negative and the significance level of the t-test is

0.000, which is less than 0.05. Since the significance value is less than the 0.05 required to reject any large variations in what the respondents replied it is implied that the respondents agree to a larger extent with the fact that bursting of a geyser will put them under urgent time pressure to employ a plumber to fix it and hence the respondents also agreed to a larger extent that once under time pressure they did not have adequate time available to assess the situation. (see appendix C)

### 5.2.2 Proposition 2

#### **Consumers will decrease the length of time spent searching for information when purchasing a service, under conditions of time pressure.**

To evaluate this proposition a paired sample t-test was conducted to assess whether there is a difference in the length of time spent searching for information under normal circumstances and when under time pressure. A paired sample t-test is used when there are two samples, which are not independent but paired. The procedure involves computing differences of individual matched pairs.

The paired t-test then examines if the mean of the differences is different from zero (no difference). Thus, the underlying methods of one-sample-test and paired t-test identical.

The questions used to assess the difference were “Under normal circumstances, I search widely for information about suitable plumbers to use” against “When my geyser burst, I searched widely for information about suitable plumbers to use” The results are shown below;

<b>Paired Samples Statistics</b>				
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Pair 2	When my geyser burst, I searched widely for information about suitable plumbers to use	3.54	121	1.373
	Under normal circumstances, I search widely for information about suitable plumbers to use	2.66	121	1.339

Paired Samples Test						
		Paired Differences		t	df	P-Value
		Mean	Std. Deviation			
Pair 2	When my geyser burst, I searched widely for information about suitable plumbers to use -Under normal circumstances, I search widely for information about suitable plumbers to use	.876	1.631	5.909	120	.000

The results revealed that there is a significant decrease in the length of time spent searching for information when purchasing a service, under conditions of time pressure. This is so because the value for under pressure minus normal condition is positive and the p-value is less than 0.05 (significance level).

### 5.2.3 Proposition 3

**Consumers will consider less information when making a purchasing decision under conditions of time pressure.**

To evaluate this proposition a paired sample t-test was conducted to assess whether there is a difference in information considered by consumers when making a purchasing decision under normal circumstances and when under time pressure.

The results are show in the tables below;

Paired Samples Statistics				
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Pair 7	When my geyser burst, I needed to know everything about how a plumber was going to complete the job before employing the plumber	3.18	117	1.512
	Under normal circumstances, I need to know everything about how a plumber is going to complete the job before employing the plumber	3.04	117	1.373

Paired Samples Test						
		Paired Differences		t	df	P-Value
		Mean	Std. Deviation			
Pair 7	When my geyser burst, I needed to know everything about how a plumber was going to complete the job before employing the plumber -Under normal circumstances, I need to know everything about how a plumber is going to complete the job before employing the plumber	.137	1.383	1.070	116	.287

There is no significant difference in the agreement to the statement “I needed to know everything about how a plumber was going to complete the job before employing the plumber” under normal circumstances and when a consumer’s geyser has burst. Although the mean difference is positive, the p-value is greater than 0.05. This implies that there is no sufficient evidence to conclude that consumers will consider less information when making a purchasing decision under conditions of time pressure. (see appendix D)

#### 5.2.4 Proposition 4

**Consumers will discard poor past experiences with a service provider when selecting a service provider under conditions of time pressure and simply select a service provider whom they believe can simply perform the service for them.**

To evaluate this proposition a paired sample t-test was conducted to assess whether there is a difference in the extent to which consumers drew on their previous experience for information about suitable plumbers to use under normal circumstances and when under time pressure. The results are show in the tables below:

Paired Samples Statistics				
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Pair 1	When my geyser burst, I drew on my previous experience for information about suitable plumbers to use	1.69	117	1.013
	Under normal circumstances, I draw on my previous experience for information about suitable plumbers to use	1.43	117	.834

Paired Samples Test						
		Paired Differences		t	df	P-Value
		Mean	Std. Deviation			
Pair 1	When my geyser burst, I drew on my previous experience for information about suitable plumbers to use -Under normal circumstances, I draw on my previous experience for information about suitable plumbers to use	.265	1.199	2.390	116	.018

The respondents disagreed to the statement that “When my geyser burst, I drew on my previous experience for information about suitable plumbers to use” significantly more than the statement “Under normal circumstances, I draw on my previous experience for information about suitable plumbers to use”. The mean difference is positive and the p-value of 0.18 is less than 0.05. Thus, it can be concluded that consumers will forget poor past experiences when placed under conditions of time pressure and select the supplier that they believe can simply perform the service for them. (see appendix E)

### 5.2.5 Proposition 5

**Under conditions of time pressure consumers will select a service provider based on the provider's positive reputation and good name.**

Paired sample t-tests were conducted on the statements about whether the consumer selected a service provider based on their positive reputation and good name. The results are shown below:

Paired Samples Statistics				
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Pair 1	When my geyser burst, I selected a plumber based on their positive reputation and good name	1.98	116	1.230
	Under normal circumstances, I select a plumber based on their positive reputation and good name	1.38	116	.730

Paired Samples Test						
		Paired Differences		t	df	P-Value
		Mean	Std. Deviation			
Pair 1	When my geyser burst, I selected a plumber based on their positive reputation and good name -Under normal circumstances, I select a plumber based on their positive reputation and good name	.603	1.318	4.931	115	.000

The respondents agreed with the statement "When my geyser burst, I selected a plumber based on their positive reputation and good name"

It can thus be concluded that that consumers are in agreement with the statements since the p-value is less than level of significance required of 0.05

A secondary test to ascertain the results required to reinforce this claim:

Paired Samples Statistics				
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Pair 2	I would recommend the plumber who provided the service when my geyser burst	1.69	117	1.054
	Under normal circumstances, I would recommend a plumber, who has provided a satisfactory service, to others	1.26	117	.515

Paired Samples Test						
		Paired Differences		t	df	P-Value
		Mean	Std. Deviation			
Pair 2	I would recommend the plumber who provided the service when my geyser burst - Under normal circumstances, I would recommend a plumber, who has provided a satisfactory service, to others	.427	1.053	4.390	116	.000

Consumers tend to re-use and recommend plumbers who provided them a satisfactory good service under normal circumstances rather than the plumber who provided them a service when my geyser burst.

### 5.2.6 Proposition 6

**Under conditions of time pressure, service quality was an important factor in service supplier selection.**

Pair 2	When my geyser burst, I selected a plumber based on their ability to complete the job to acceptable quality standards	1.96	117	1.192
	Under normal circumstances, I select a plumber based on their ability to complete the job to acceptable quality standards	1.46	117	.836
Pair	When my geyser burst, I selected a plumber	2.07	117	1.230

3	based on their ability to complete the job to the highest quality standards possible			
	Under normal circumstances, I select a plumber based on their ability to complete the job to the highest quality standards possible	1.55	117	.815

Pair 2	When my geyser burst, I selected a plumber based on their ability to complete the job to acceptable quality standards -Under normal circumstances, I select a plumber based on their ability to complete the job to acceptable quality standards	.496	1.215	4.41 3	116	.000
Pair 3	When my geyser burst, I selected a plumber based on their ability to complete the job to the highest quality standards possible -Under normal circumstances, I select a plumber based on their ability to complete the job to the highest quality standards possible	.521	1.310	4.30 4	116	.000

Under conditions of time pressure, with the statements “When my geyser burst, I selected a plumber based on their ability to complete the job to the highest quality standards possible” is significantly more than under normal circumstances. In all cases the mean difference for the “Under pressure value” minus the “under normal circumstances” is greater than zero and the p-values are less than 0.05.

## Chapter 6

### 6.1 Results

This chapter will aim to analyse the results of the findings from chapter 5 in terms of the research objectives as laid out in chapter 1. In order to do so effectively reference will be made to the research propositions laid out in chapter 3.

#### *6.1.1 Evaluation of the findings*

As mentioned above the findings will be evaluated by means of addressing the original research objectives. Therefore the stated research objectives are to test the attitudes of the consumer toward what the criteria for the selection of a non professional service provider, under time pressure, will be.

A quantitative online survey was administered whereby one hundred and thirty six responses were collected and a total of one hundred and twenty six completed questionnaires were collected.

#### *6.2.1 Proposition 1*

An emergency situation will put the consumer under conditions of time pressure when selecting a service provider to assist with the emergency.

The first proposition as defined in chapter 3 was to discover if the respondents agreed that they were under conditions of time pressure when faced with a decision that influenced by an emergency situation. A secondary finding was attempted by discovering whether the consumer felt that they had adequate time to assess a situation whilst under conditions of time pressure. Questions ten and eleven of the questionnaire directly aimed to discover the consumer's agreement with the statements about whether the consumer felt they were under conditions of time pressure when they found themselves in a plumbing emergency. The evaluation below will expound on the findings.

Firstly a simple descriptive analysis of the percentages of responses shows that consumers who responded to the questionnaire were mostly in agreement with the

statement “I felt like I was under urgent time pressure” with seventy nine percent of the respondents choosing that they totally agreed with the statement while the respondents who answered the question around the statement “I felt like I had adequate time to assess the situation” both somewhat and totally disagreed with the statement with a combined percentage of sixty two point two percent.

When the two tailed significance test was carried out on the two independent statements the following results occurred. “I felt like I was under urgent time pressure” had a mean of 1.33 while “I felt like I had adequate time to assess the situation” had a mean of 3.51. Because the research was trying to test the agreement of the respondents to both statements statement one’s mean was added to statements two’s mean. The resulting mean was -2.185 which indicates skewness to the right. These findings fell within the two tails showing that there was no statistical significance and therefore the findings were in line with the expected outcomes. The negative mean shows respondents’ agreement with the statements and thus the consumers agreed that they felt themselves to be under time pressure and subsequently did not have adequate time to assess the situation. These findings were further compounded with a negative t-value of -13.609 and a t-test of 0.000, which is lower than the required significance levels of 0.05 indicating that the respondents were in agreement with the two statements in that they perceived themselves to be under time pressure and thus had no adequate time to assess the situation.

These findings are in line with Suri and Monroe’s (2003) statements regarding time pressure where time pressure is considered a perceived limitation on the time available to consider information or make decisions. The consumer, whilst faced with an emergency plumbing situation, appears to be, in what the literature considers, a time pressured situation.

### *6.2.2 Proposition 2*

Consumers will decrease the length of time spent searching for information when purchasing a service, under conditions of time pressure.

The second proposition as defined in chapter three aimed to understand the consumer's length of time taken on an information search when purchasing a non professional service, under conditions of time pressure. Questions two and thirteen of the questionnaire specifically tested the consumer's attitude towards searching for information under normal conditions and under conditions of time pressure.

Respondents were firstly asked to rate how they viewed the time spent on the information search under normal conditions. There were a range of answers regarding this question however the highest responses were for somewhat agree with a percentage of thirty nine percent. The mean for this question was 2.66 with a standard deviation of 1.339.

Respondents were then asked to rate how they viewed the time spent on the information search under conditions of time pressure. Again there were a range of answers regarding this question however the highest responses were for disagree with a percentage of thirty three point six percent. The mean for this question was 3.54 with a standard deviation of 1.373.

A paired sample t-test was applied which gave a positive value of 5.909 which represents an agreement by the respondents that under conditions of time pressure consumers spent less time searching for information about a service provider. This was compounded by the p-value which 0.000 which is lower than 0.05.

These findings are in line with Tétard and Collan (2009) who describe the lazy user as one who selects a solution from the possible available solutions but specifically a user selects the solution that demands the least effort. Further Dhar and Nowlis (1999) also described how the consumer was likely to simplify their selection decision in order to minimise the efforts required in order to make the decision. The findings concurred with both previous findings in that the consumer is likely to consider far less information while under time pressure in an attempt to minimise the information search since there are conditions of time pressure.

As a result of these findings the research is also able to determine that since the consumer requires less information in order to select a non professional service provider, the selection criteria from which the consumer draws in order to come to a decision will be far less than those criteria of a consumer under normal conditions.

### *6.2.3 Proposition 3*

Consumers will consider less information regarding the actual job to be carried out when selecting a service provider under conditions of time pressure.

The third proposition as defined in chapter three aims to understand how the consumer tries to understand the actual job that needs to be carried out before selecting a service provider under conditions of time pressure. Questions seven and question eighteen of the questionnaire specifically tested the respondent's attitude toward understanding the job to be carried out before selecting a service provider.

Respondents were first asked how they rate knowing about everything the service provider was going to do before completing the job under normal circumstances. There were a range of answers given to this question with a split to the highest percentage with somewhat agree (30.8%) and somewhat disagree (33.8%) being the highest percentages of responses. The mean of this statement was 3.04 and the standard deviation was 1.373.

Respondents were then asked how they rate knowing about everything the service provider was going to do before completing the job under conditions of time pressure. Again there was a wide range of answers to this question with somewhat disagree having the highest percentage of 25.8 percent. The mean of this question was 3.18 and the standard deviation was 1.512.

A paired sample t-test was applied to these findings and as a result the t-value was concluded as a positive 1.070 which indicates that consumers do not need to know everything about how the job was going to be completed both under normal circumstances and under conditions of time pressure. This was amplified by the p-value which was 0.287 which is greater than the level of significance required of 0.05.

These findings are in line with both Darby and Karni's (1976) findings and Gabbot and Hogg's (1999) findings whereby both previous researches describe credence qualities that consumers find in service providers. These qualities allow the consumer to simply put their faith in the service provider that the service provider will be able to complete a job because of their technical knowledge (knowledge that the consumer does not have) and therefore the consumer relies on the service provider without needing to know exactly how the job has been completed.

There seems to be agreement with Maule et al (2000) who found in their research that under time pressure there was an increase in the proportion of the overall decision time devoted to the processing of general information about the problem. The authors further explained that this may reflect the greater priority given to developing a broad understanding of the decision problem. The findings of this research detailed how consumers were not specifically interested in knowing every detail of how the job was going to be completed but rather focused on the broader problem. The broader problem could be defined as recognising an emergency situation when it occurs and acquiring the knowledge of who the best service provider would be in order to attend to the problem.

#### *6.2.4 Proposition 4*

Consumers will discard poor past experiences with a service provider when selecting a service provider under conditions of time pressure and simply select a service provider whom they believe can simply perform the service for them.

The fourth proposition as defined in chapter three aims to understand to what extent consumers will draw on their past experiences with service providers when searching for suitable service providers under conditions of time pressure. Questions three and fourteen of the questionnaire specifically tested the consumer's attitude towards the respondent's previous experiences with a non professional service provider as an appropriate source of information and hence the actual decision.

Respondents were first asked whether they drew on previous experiences for information about suitable plumbers to use under normal circumstances. In response to this question respondents were for the most part in agreement with the statement

with a sixty seven point four percentage selecting totally agree. The mean for this statement is 1.43 and the standard deviation 0.834.

Respondents were then asked whether they drew on previous experiences for information about suitable plumbers to use under conditions of time pressure. There were somewhat varying responses to this question however over half the respondents (fifty four point eight percent) responded that they totally agreed with a further twenty eight point two percent responding that they somewhat agreed. The mean for this question was 1.69 and the standard deviation was 1.013.

A paired sample test was applied to the above statements and as a result a positive-value was found as 2.390 and the p-value was concluded to be 0.018 which is significantly less than the 0.05 level of significance required. Therefore the research concludes that based on the respondents answers consumers will far quicker forget about their poor experiences with a service provider while under conditions of time pressure than under normal conditions. Consumers simply need to find a provider who is able to complete a job for them and this is a possible reason for their forgetfulness.

These findings disagree with Sheth and Parvatiyar, 1995; Arora and Stoner, 1996, all of whom advocate that a service provider is selected based satisfactory previous experiences. The research concludes that under conditions of time pressure a consumer is willing to accept a service which he deems unsatisfactory (from a previous experience) just to get the job done.

#### *6.2.5 Proposition 5*

Under conditions of time pressure consumers will select a service provider based on the provider's positive reputation and good name.

The fifth proposition as defined in chapter three aims to understand whether consumers, while under conditions of time pressure, rely on the service provider's positive reputation and good name. Question four and fifteen of the questionnaire specifically tested the respondent's attitude toward a service provider's positive reputation and good name under normal conditions and under conditions of time pressure.

Respondents were first asked under normal conditions if they selected a service provider based on their positive reputation. The vast majority of respondents agreed (seventy one point nine percent) with this statement. The mean for this statement was 1.38 and the standard deviation was 0.730.

Respondents were then asked, under conditions of time pressure, if they selected a service provider based on the positive reputation and good name. There was some agreement amongst respondents to this statement whereby forty four point eight percent totally agreed with the statement and thirty three point six percent of the respondents somewhat agreed with the statement. The mean for this statement was 1.28 and the standard deviation was 1.230.

A paired sample t-test was applied to these statements where the t-value was found to be 4.931 which represent a positive value which implies that the respondents were in agreement with both statements. This was compounded by the p-value which was 0.000 which is lower than the required level of significance of 0.05. The research therefore concludes that the respondents were in full agreement with both statements that despite being under time pressure (and under normal conditions) consumers place the positive reputation of a service provider amongst the highest values considered when selecting a service provider. Therefore it can be concluded that despite the time pressure faced by consumers, the consumer still wishes to employ a service provider that is tried and tested and known to provide quality service.

These findings are in line with the literature that considers Word of Mouth (Sheth and Pravatiyar, 1995; Smeltzer and Ogden, 2002; Schumann, Wagenheim, Strongfellow, Yang, Blazeovic, Praxmarer, Shainesh, Komor, Shannon and Jimenez, 2010; Bolkan, Goodboy and Bachman, 2011) and therefore an implied positive reputation based on others past experiences as a deciding factor around selection of service provider even under conditions of time pressure.

In order to supplement these findings respondents were further asked to rate the following statements: "Under normal conditions I would recommend the plumber who provided a satisfactory service, to others" and "When my geyser burst I would recommend the plumber who provided the service". Respondents were in agreement that under normal conditions they would recommend the service to others thus

fostering the service providers good name and reputation (75.4% were in total agreement and 22.4% somewhat agreed). Respondents were widely in agreement that under conditions of time pressure they would recommend the service provider (58.5% totally agreed and 23.6% somewhat agreed) assuming that the service provided was of the highest quality standard.

### *6.2.6 Proposition 6*

Under conditions of time pressure, service quality was an important factor in service supplier selection.

The sixth proposition as defined in chapter three aims to understand whether perceived service quality is an important decision criteria when selecting a service provider under conditions of time pressure. Questions five and sixteen and questions six and seventeen of the questionnaire specifically aimed to understand the respondent's attitude to perceived service quality when selecting a service provider under conditions of time pressure.

Questions five and sixteen aimed to understand whether consumers selected a service provider based on acceptable quality standards. Respondents were first asked "under normal circumstances I selected a plumber based on their ability to complete the job to acceptable quality standards", sixty eight point two percent of the respondents totally agreed with the statement while a further twenty four point two percent somewhat agreed with the statement. The statement has a mean of 1.46 and a standard deviation of 0.836.

Next respondents were asked "when my geyser burst I selected a plumber based on their ability to complete the job to acceptable quality standards. Forty four point eight percent of the respondents totally agreed with the statement while a further thirty four point four percent somewhat agreed with the statement. The statement has a mean of 1.96 and a standard deviation of 1.192.

With question six respondents were asked "under normal circumstances, I select a plumber based on their ability to complete the job to the highest quality standards possible" and with question seventeen they were asked "When my geyser burst, I selected a plumber based on their ability to complete the job to the highest quality

standards possible” With regard to question six respondents largely agreed with the statement with fifty seven point nine percent totally agreeing and thirty three point eight somewhat agreeing with the statement. The statement has a mean of 1.55 and a standard deviation of 0.815. With regard to question seventeen forty point two percent of the respondents totally agreed and thirty seven point seven percent somewhat agreeing with the statement which shows to a large extent agreement with the statement. The statement has a mean of 2.07 and a standard deviation of 1.230.

A paired t-test was applied to both sets of statements and the results for the first statements were a positive t-value of 4.413 and a p-value of 0.000 which is lower than the level of significance required of 0.05. The same tests were applied to the second set of statements which yielded a positive t-value of 4.304 and a p-value of 0.000 which is lower than the level of significance required of 0.05. These results indicate that consumers, while under time pressure, still place a high value on service quality standards and simply because the need for a service provider is urgent, does not mean that the consumers overlook perceived levels of service quality simply to get a job done.

These findings are in line with the findings of Keaveney, 1995; Arora and Stoner, 1996; Verman and Pullman, 1998; Chao and Scheuing, 2001; Smeltzer and Ogden, 2002; Bogomolova, 2010 who all stipulate that service supplier selection is undertaken with service quality levels in mind and the consumer will not undertake the acquisition of a service at the expense of perceived service quality. The assumptions of the researcher based on previous literature (Lin and Wu (2005) explained how under the considerations of cost and benefit (under high time pressure), the products and services of the business are for satisfactory quality, and not the best quality) were disqualified in this instance whereby the researcher had preconceived notions around the consumer and their desire to see that a problem was attended to in their dwelling but rather the research proves that the consumer, despite time pressure, still required the knowledge that the best quality work would be carried out before selecting a non professional service provider.

Lin and Wu (2005) described how under the considerations of cost and benefit (under high time pressure), the products and services of the business were for

satisfactory quality, and not the best quality. Consumers made a trade off among alternatives or attributes to make their final purchasing decision. The findings of the research seem to contradict these statements since the respondents indicated that despite time pressure considerations, the consumer still required the best quality service available from a non professional service provider and possibly would continue to search for a suitable supplier despite potential damage being inflicted on the consumer's property.

## Chapter 7

### 7.1 Conclusion

#### *7.1.1 Introduction*

The following chapter provides a summary and conclusion for this research report.

The research report aimed to understand the selection criteria which the consumer made use of when deciding upon a non professional service provider whilst under conditions of time pressure.

A non professional service provider was defined as mass or generic services were those services did not have a recognised group identity and required little or no training and advanced studies (Kugytė and Šliburytė, 2005). Therefore non professional services were consumed by consumers on an individual basis. Thakor and Kumar (2000) suggested that services involving simple, repetitive, low paid, manual work were not considered professional and thus could not be defined as professional but rather non professional. Time pressure could be viewed as a perceived limitation of the time available to consider information or make decisions (Suri and Monroe, 2003).

The research made use of secondary data in order to define the population and sample while making use of online surveys as a collection tool for the primary data. The data was analysed statically using a two tailed significance test and paired t-test in order to generate the relevant findings.

Six propositions were determined to test whether the same conditions and selection criteria apply whilst under conditions of time pressure.

### *7.1.2 Summary of the Findings*

The findings of the research served to corroborate previous findings from the literature.

Proposition one aimed to understand whether the consumer felt themselves to be under time pressure at the time of a plumbing emergency and subsequently did the consumer feel like they had enough time to assess the situation. As a result of the primary data collection and analysis it was determined that since the consumer did indeed consider themselves to be under time pressure the remainder of the propositions were plausible to establish.

Proposition two aimed to understand whether consumers, who felt themselves to be under time pressure, decreased the amount of time spent searching for information. The results seemed to agree with previous literature whereby consumers who felt themselves to be under time pressure decreased the length of time they spent searching for information.

Proposition three aimed to understand whether consumers would consider less information as a result of time pressure. At this point the findings tended to go away from the initial assumptions of the researcher. Regarding proposition three the respondents disagreed with the statements and the research found that despite there being conditions of time pressure the respondents still felt that they would consider all the information.

Proposition four aimed to understand whether despite poor past experiences of service from a non professional service provider would a consumer re-use the service provider under conditions of time pressure. From the findings it appeared that the respondents would tend to forget poor past experiences under conditions of time pressure and re-use a non professional service provider.

Proposition five aimed to understand how the consumer tended to view the non professional service providers reputation under conditions of time pressure. The findings were in agreement with the literature in that despite conditions of time pressure a non professional service providers good name and positive reputation were still of importance to the consumer.

Proposition six aimed to understand whether despite conditions of time pressure, service quality was of importance to the consumer as a criteria for selection of the service provider. The consumers tended to agree with the statements and these findings were in line with the previous research.

### *7.1.3 Managerial Implications*

What might seem to all business people and decision makers as common threads in successful businesses tend to fall away in the day to day operations of a business. These characteristics such as service quality, reputation and general customer management need to be ingrained in the business and as a result need to be marketed to and reminded to the consumer at every available opportunity. In the case of the consumer needing to select a non professional service provider under conditions of time pressure, it is these very characteristics that consumer relies on to make their selection.

### *7.1.5 Implications for Companies*

Companies need to focus on the core elements of their service offering including their reputation, the service quality offered and general customer management in order to keep their brand top of mind for the consumer. It is only through past experiences of the consumer and subsequent word of mouth marketing that allows a company to place itself above its competitors in the mind of the consumer.

### *7.1.4 Research Shortcomings*

The criteria for the selection of a non professional service supplier seem to be many and one of the shortfalls of this research was the ability of the researcher to test only some of those criteria. Further research needed to be carried out regarding all the selection criteria and the researcher hopes to leave these further elements available for further research. A second short coming of the research is the previous literature's notion that the optimal way to test decision making under time pressure was to implement an observational strategy. This research was conducted using online surveys in the hope of testing the consumer's attitudes however the

researcher would to see observational research undertaken in order to verify the findings of this research paper.

### *7.1.6 Future Research*

Future research should consider that although in academia those industries that have been defined as non professional service providers, members of those industries would disagree with its definition entirely. Parts of the very definition of a professional service provider, namely years of experience and belonging to a recognised group, apply without exception to trades such as plumbing, electrical and carpentry. Firstly future research can include the redefinition of non professional service providers. It would appear that from all the previous research that although there is a major distinction drawn between professional and non professional service providers, the consumer's decision making process including the information search and selection criteria remains unchanged between the two. Thus there is a need for a redefinition of a non professional service provider.

Secondly further research can include the understanding price as criteria for the selection of a non professional service provider. In this research price, although touched on by the literature review was untouched by the primary research for the reason that it was determined that the sample drawn were more interested in service quality characteristics than price. This may have seemed short sighted by the researcher and thus the need to further research price as a criterion for the selection of a non professional service provider.

### *7.2 Conclusion*

The purpose of this research paper was to try and determine the consumer's attitude towards the selection criteria for a non professional service provider under conditions of time pressure. As such the research question was outlined in chapter one while previous research regarding the topic was outlined in chapter two. The propositions regarding the research objectives were detailed in chapter three. Chapter four outlined the research methodology used in collecting the primary data in the form of online surveys, required to try and understand the consumer's attitudes towards the subject. Chapter five outlined the research findings via statistical analysis. Chapter

six attempted to explain these findings while placing them among the previous research as defined in chapter two.

As such the research objectives have been met and critically analysed in the most appropriate, reliable and valid fashion.

The analysis has contributed to the theory regarding the consumer's selection criteria for non professional service providers under conditions of time pressure.

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## Appendices

### A: Example of an e-mail sent to plumbing companies requesting the use of their database

#### MBA Research for plumbers

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Lior Solomons <solstank@gmail.com>

Fri, Jun 29, 2012 at 11:19 AM

To: simeon@proplumbing.co.za

Hi,

My name is Lior and I am an MBA student through the Gordon Institute of Business Science and I am conducting a survey regarding the consumer's decision making process when choosing a plumber under time pressure (i.e. when a geyser has burst).

I was hoping to set up a meeting with the owner regarding the use of your database (I will not gain access to the database however if it is acceptable to you, you could possibly send the mail for me) so that your customers can fill out the short survey.

Please can you reply whether we can have a meeting to discuss the possibility of such an arrangement?

The link for the survey is: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/6M3ZGX8>

I have also attached a letter from the university to confirm my participation in the MBA program so that you may find my email credible

--

Kind Regards

Lior Solomons  
083-601-7982  
[solstank@gmail.com](mailto:solstank@gmail.com)

## **B: Questionnaire used for collection of data**

This research is for the purpose of completing a Masters in Business Administration. All respondents will remain anonymous however the data collected in this survey will be used to carry out research which will remain open to the public.

I am conducting research on the consumer decision making process for the purchase of services specifically under time pressure and therefore I am trying to find out more about the way in which consumers make a purchase decision under time pressure. The survey should take around 15 minutes to complete and will help us to understand the attitudes of and motions gone through that the consumer undergoes in order to purchase a service. Your participation is voluntary and can be withdrawn at any time without penalty. All data collected will be kept confidential. Should you have any concerns please do not hesitate to contact either me or my supervisor.

Before completing this survey please read the following paragraph:

Please think back to a time in your recent past where you were woken up by or called home to deal with a crisis situation where your geyser had burst. This would have taken the form of water running through your ceiling or down your walls which may have started to cause damage to your furniture and carpets whilst most certainly damaging your ceiling. Try and recall your first thoughts and the processes that you went through whilst trying to find a plumber to fix the problem

Please express your agreement or disagreement with each one of the statements below, reflecting on your normal usage of plumbing services.

1. Under normal circumstances, I know when to call a plumber, without being prompted to do so by a plumber or other service provider
2. Under normal circumstances, I search widely for information about suitable plumbers to use
3. Under normal circumstances, I draw on my previous experience for information about suitable plumbers to use
4. Under normal circumstances, I select a plumber based on their positive reputation and good name
5. Under normal circumstances, I select a plumber based on their ability to complete the job to acceptable quality standards
6. Under normal circumstances, I select a plumber based on their ability to complete the job to the highest quality standards possible
7. Under normal circumstances, I need to know everything about how a plumber is going to complete the job before employing the plumber
8. Under normal circumstances, I would re-use a plumber who has provided a satisfactory service
9. Under normal circumstances, I would recommend a plumber, who has provided a satisfactory service, to others

For the next set of statements, please consider a recent situation where you experienced an unexpected burst geyser.

10. When my geyser burst, I felt like I was under urgent time pressure to employ a plumber to fix it
11. When my geyser burst, I felt like I had adequate time to assess the situation

12. When my geyser burst, I knew when to call a plumber, without being prompted to do so by a plumber or other service provider

13. When my geyser burst, I searched widely for information about suitable plumbers to use

14. When my geyser burst, I drew on my previous experience for information about suitable plumbers to use

15. When my geyser burst, I selected a plumber based on their positive reputation and good name

16. When my geyser burst, I selected a plumber based on their ability to complete the job to acceptable quality standards

17. When my geyser burst, I selected a plumber based on their ability to complete the job to the highest quality standards possible

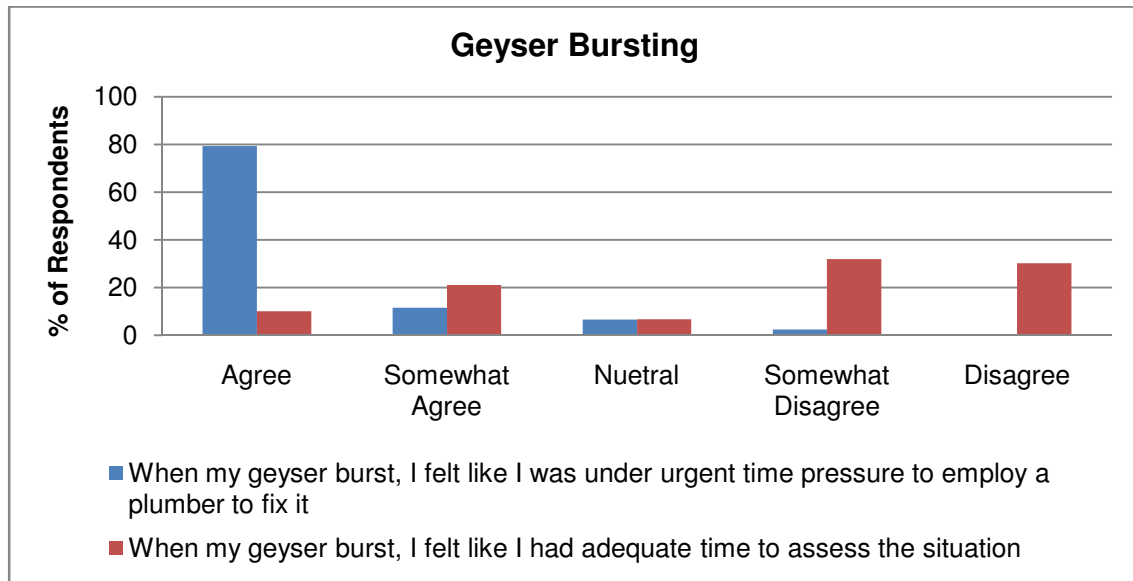
18. When my geyser burst, I needed to know everything about how a plumber was going to complete the job before employing the plumber

19. I was satisfied with the service provided by the plumber I selected when my geyser burst

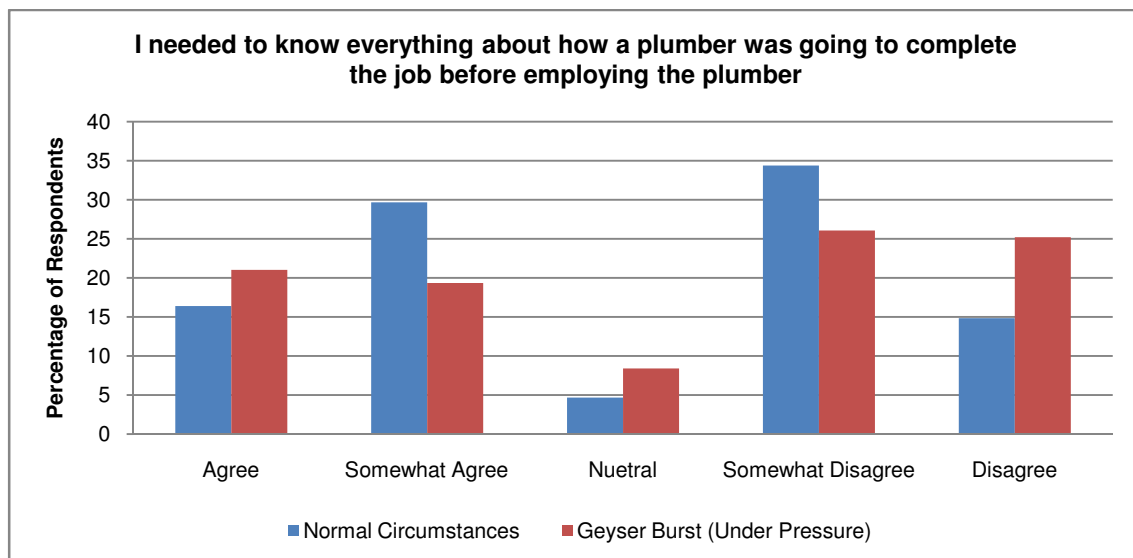
20: I would re-use the plumber who provided the service when my geyser burst

21: I would recommend the plumber who provided the service when my geyser burst

### C: Descriptive Statistics for Time Pressure



### D: Descriptive Statistics for Consideration of Less Information



## E: Descriptive Statistics for Past Experiences

