

# BOOK OF PROCEEDINGS

## II International Congress on Interdisciplinarity in Social and Human Sciences

11th - 12th May 2017



Research Centre for Spatial and Organizational Dynamics  
University of Algarve  
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## INTRODUCTION

Interdisciplinarity is the main topic and the main goal of this conference.

Since the sixteen century with the creation of the first Academy of Sciences, in Napoles (Italy) (1568), and before that with the creation of the Fine Arts Academies, the world of science and arts began to work independently, on the contrary of the Academy of Plato, in Classical Antiquity, where science, art and sport went interconnected. Over time, specific sciences began to be independent, and the specificity of sciences caused an increased difficulty in mutual understanding.

The same trend has affected the Human and Social Sciences. Each of the specific sciences gave rise to a wide range of particular fields. This has the advantage of allowing the deepening of specialised knowledge, but it means that there is often only a piecemeal approach of the research object, not taking into account its overall complexity. So, it is important to work for a better understanding of the scientific phenomena with the complementarity of the different sciences, in an interdisciplinary perspective.

With this growing specialisation of sciences, Interdisciplinarity acquired more relevance for scientists to find more encompassing and useful answers for their research questions.

CIEO (Research Centre for Spatial and Organizational Dynamics) organises this conference, being Interdisciplinarity an important issue.

It is focused on social sciences with an integrative focus in the questions of well-being in society, and it is funded by the Foundation for Science and Technology. FCT rated CIEO with a classification of “Very Good” and one of the main reasons for this good evaluation was surely our potential for Interdisciplinarity.

CIEO has researchers from various scientific fields, and one of its main features is to develop knowledge from the interactions between complementary scientific areas of interest.

This conference was an excellent opportunity for strengthening and enriching our interdisciplinary systematic approach, not only for the CIEO members, but also for all the delegates researching in different scientific fields.

It was also an opportunity to show innovative research in social and human sciences, and to improve networks between researchers from different scientific disciplines.

The conference themes included topics from the following scientific fields: Economics, Management, Sociology, Psychology, Education, Sport, Tourism, Landscape Architecture, Geography and Political Sciences, just to mention a few.

As the CIEO is structured along three research areas, we have tried to organize the communications in parallel sessions corresponding to these three areas: 1) Cities and Spatial Dynamics; 2) Organizations, Innovation and Learning Spaces; 3) Tourism, Communities and Behaviour. There was also a significant number of communications included in the category of “Other topics”.

In this conference we had more than 300 communications presented in symposiums, parallel sessions, conferences and posters.

The diversity of papers and communications submitted enabled us to compile a scientific program which builds a bridge between theory and application. With its multidisciplinary focus, the scientific program covered a large number of topics, which we hope will provide many opportunities for stimulating exchange between participants in an interdisciplinary perspective.

Participants came from several countries, namely from Spain, Brazil and Portugal, and so, although the official language of the congress was English, presentations in Portuguese and Spanish were permitted.

In this “Book of Proceedings” papers could be written in English, Portuguese and Spanish.

101 of the communications presented at the conference are published here. They are organized in six parallel sessions and posters, corresponding to the structure of the conference program.

We believe this book can be an important contribution to establish the state of the art in the field of Interdisciplinarity in Social and Human Sciences.

The editors  
Saul Neves de Jesus  
Patrícia Pinto

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# IMPACT OF SERVICE QUALITY, BRAND IMAGE, PERCEIVED VALUE, CUSTOMERS' SATISFACTION AND BEHAVIOURAL INTENTIONS IN THE TRADITIONAL RETAILING IN THE NORTH OF PORTUGAL

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## ABSTRACT

In the service sector mainly in the traditional retailing, customers and the employees are key actors in service interplay. The quality and performance of any service are dependent on customer expectations and the efficiency the company is able to serve its customers. The crucial point of customer satisfaction is to identify the important attributes, considered by customers as their needs and expectations. The purpose of this study is to suggest the adaptation of SERVQUAL in evaluating the perceived quality of service offered by traditional retailing, namely in traditional retail stores in the North Region of Portugal. The proposed conceptual model aims to analyse if: (1) perceived service quality (five dimensions of SERVQUAL) directly contribute to customer satisfaction, customer-perceived value and brand image; (2) brand image and customer-perceived value directly contribute to customer satisfaction; (3) brand image directly contribute to customer-perceived value; (4) customer satisfaction directly influences the intention to return and WOM recommendation (Word-of-Mouth communication intention); and (5) the intention to return has a direct impact on WOM recommendation. This research is of particular interest to the literature on the retailing and to the practitioners, since there are few studies in this field which apply to the Portuguese traditional retailing.

Keywords: Customer Satisfaction, Traditional Retailing, North of Portugal, Service Quality.

JEL Classification: M10, M31

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The term quality is very present in the business segment, where all organizations aim to provide quality to their customers, suppliers, partners and others. But it is not as simple as it sounds, because to benefit from quality, organizations must be ready to meet the expectations of their customers. With this, we can define that, in order to stay in the market more and more competitive, companies from all sectors have already adhered to quality, and be it consumer goods or services. Presently, providing quality of service is seen as the way to remain competitive in markets where global competition and technology have turned products and services into commodities (Nadiri and Gunay, 2013). Globalisation, strong competition, instable consumer demands and changes both in economic, technological and political systems force enterprises to learn faster and to adopt themselves to environmental changes (Ginevičius and Gudačiauskas, 2004). Some of the fastest growing sectors of the global economy are related to the focus on customer satisfaction. In a period of economic recession, remarkable performance will depend on those retailers who are able to create customer loyalty by answering to consumer demand (Ghosh, Tripathi and Kumar, 2010). Furthermore, customer needs and buying patterns have altered enormously. To meet several needs, enterprises to adopt customer-oriented marketing strategies and differentiated to rise a competitive advantage in the market, which allows them to stand out in the competition (Ko, Kim, Kim and Woo, 2007). Additionally, Ko *et al.* (2007) advocate that improved relationships with consumers can main to better customer loyalty, retention, effectiveness and profitability. Consequently, it is central to make a durable, strong and consistent relationship with customers in today's competitive society.

The replacement of small family owned, traditional stores with modern retailing is a universal phenomenon. However, traditional retail systems exist as well in less developed countries as in developed economies where traditional retail formats often operate alongside modern retailing. In recent years, the retail industry has drastically changed, with consumers increasingly informed and varying their route to purchase between in- traditional store, online and modern retailing. Therefore it is crucial for traditional retailers to offer an experience to someone going into their store that they could not receive via another

channel or in modern retailing. Some of the fastest growing sectors of global economy are related to the consumption of experiences (Pine and Gilmore, 2008). Despite the increasing variety of ways in which we can purchase merchandises, the in-store experience is still the first thing that springs to mind for the majority of people when thinking about a retailer; so whether it be through great customer service, a nice shopping atmosphere, cutting advantage in-store technology or an pleasant checkout experience, retailers are looking to create an in-store environment which will offer something different to their customers. During this evolution, quality has acquired a very important weight in all industries of the economy and has become a key factor of business survival. Undoubtedly, the term quality is very present in the retailing industry, where all organizations aim to provide quality to their customers. But it's not as simple as it sounds, because to benefit from quality, organizations must be ready to meet the expectations of their customers. With this, we can define that, in order to remain in the market increasingly competitive, companies from traditional retailing have already adhered to quality.

The traditional retail industry is not indifferent to customer loyalty and satisfaction with the service. Although most customers do not immediately associate a commercial surface with a service, the service is one of the main tools in obtaining consumer satisfaction and loyalty (Yuen and Chan, 2010). Continued aggressive promotion based in price, such as the creation of coupons, temporary discounts, and others, while widely used, often have a minimalist effect on company results, as they tend to attract the wrong customers, and this does not always mean profit (Sirohi, McLaughlin and Wittink, 1998). Somewhat, the retail store must find a way to differentiate itself so it can stand apart from other retailers and drive more consumers to its store. Service quality is one way to accomplish this. Retailers need an efficient way to assess the service quality of their store (Simmers and Keith, 2015). However, the focus on customer retention in this area of business is one of the right strategies to generate profits (Sirohi *et al.*, 1998). Loyalty is an important step in ensuring that consumers perform something that is beneficial to the firm, whether through purchase or simple word of mouth (WOM). It is believed that satisfaction is a consequence of the quality of the service, and guaranteeing it, increases the likelihood of involving the customer and loyalty. Several studies have shown that there is a positive relationship between quality of service and consumer loyalty (Yuen and Chan, 2010).

In a highly competitive industry, as is the retailing sector, it is critical that organizations have a good knowledge of the business aspects that are important to their customers (Yuen and Chan, 2010). Only with a deep understanding, is it possible to respond positively to the expectations of customers regarding the services offered. To this extent, the strategy for creating competitive advantage resides in providing a high quality of service which results in satisfied customers (Shemwell, Yavas and Bilgin, 1998) and customer retention (Callan and Kyndt, 2001), dimensions which are essential for the survival of the retail industry.

From the review of literature on quality, it has been found that research efforts are concentrated on defining and measuring quality in the manufacturing sector. Since service quality is an elusive concept, there is considerable debate in relevant literature concerning which is the best way to conceptualize this phenomenon. Although an all embracing definition of service quality is not yet possible, definitions of service quality proposed by researchers revolve around the idea that it is the result of the comparison customers make between their expectations about service and their perceptions of the way the service has been performed (Grönroos, 1984; Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, 1985, 1988). If service quality is to be improved, it must be reliably assessed and measured. According to the SERVQUAL model (Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, 1988), service quality can be measured by identifying the gaps between customers' expectations of the service to be rendered and their perceptions of the actual performance of the service.

Numerous authors have studied the relationship between perceived service quality and customer satisfaction in the services industry (Al Khattab and Aldehayyat, 2012; Chiou, Droge and Hanvanich, 2002; Cronin and Taylor, 1992; Ekinci, Dawes and Massey, 2006; Jamal and Naser, 2002; Mohsin & Locker, 2009; Monteiro & Veloso, 2013; Zaibaf, Taherikia and Fakharian, 2013; Zhang and Prybutok, 2005), confirming that service quality is an important antecedent of satisfaction. In this regard, Dabholkar, Thorpe and Shepherd (2000) argue that traditionally, most researchers conclude that customer satisfaction resulting from a particular experience of consumption, leads to an evaluation / attitude about the quality of service over a period of time. However, the reverse situation has stood out as the most relevant. The services sector is one of the most important sectors of the Portuguese economy. About 68.4% of the employed population work in this area of activity in 2016, with 21.2% of the Portuguese active population working in the trade, hospitality and catering sector (INE, 2017). Only in 2016 did the services sector actively contribute 76.9% to the national gross value added, with trade, accommodation and catering contributing 21.6% to the national wealth (INE, 2017).

While the quality of service in the retail industry has been extensively researched internationally (Dabholkar *et al.*, 2001; Das *et al.*, 2010; Durvasula and Lysonski, 2010; Khare *et al.*, 2010; Martinelli and Balboni, 2012; Mahfooz, 2014; Minh and Huu, 2016; Nadiri and Gunay, 2013; Simmers and Keith, 2015; Tang *et al.*, 2015; Yuen and Chan, 2010; Yu and Ramanathan, 2012), there has been little research done in Portugal to examine service quality as an antecedent of satisfaction and behavioural intention of customers in the Portuguese retail industry. The choice of this topic is due to the need for retailers to properly understand whether the service meets customer perceptions in the different dimensions of SERVQUAL, contribute to their satisfaction and behavioural intention (intention to return and recommend services), since they are determinant variables in maximizing profit, market share, and return on investment (Hackl and Westlund, 2000).

In the Portuguese retail industry, few research has been undertaken to directly evaluate the relationship between service quality, customer satisfaction and behavioural intentions. In this context, the main objective of this paper is to propose a methodology that allows for the examination of the antecedents and consequences of customer satisfaction, in traditional retailing sector in North of Portugal. We specifically intend to present a conceptual model is used as a framework to identify the dimensions of service quality and examining the interrelationships among customer satisfaction, perceived value, brand image and behavioral intentions and service quality in the traditional retail industry.

In this paper, after this present introduction, a review of the main literature on customer satisfaction, service quality, brand image, perceived value and their behavioural intention is made, then we propose the conceptual model and research hypotheses, ending with the presentation of the findings and the contribution of the research. This research is mainly important for retail managers (survival and growth of retail companies), politicians (wealth creation, economic growth, etc.) and for the development of the literature in the Portuguese traditional retail industry.

## 2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### 2.1 Service Quality, Perceived Value, Brand Image, Consumer Satisfaction and Behavioural Intentions

#### 2.2.1 Service Quality

In these last decades there has been several research in the area of service quality (e. g. Amin *et al.*, 2013; Ladhari, 2009) and it is discussed lots for the aim that no consensus has been reached thus far on its definition and measurement. Early studies on service quality defined it as a measure to which a service provides customer needs, and implicates a comparison of customer expectations with their perceptions of actual service performance (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985; Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988). Service quality has assumed a major role both in public and private institutions, as an indispensable requirement to the costumers' satisfaction. There are two basic ways to define quality: one from the viewpoint of the service provider and the other from the costumer's perspective. Firstly, it should be noted that the measurement of service quality is an important area of academic and scientific interest, which has assumed special prominence after the contribution of various authors (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985). These authors, who represent the American school, have designed an instrument for measuring quality of service, called SERVQUAL. Initially, the proposed model incorporated 10 dimensions of quality (tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, professionalism, courtesy, credibility, security, access, communication and customer understanding). However, these dimensions were revised and subsequently reduced to five (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988). The dimensions of courtesy, credibility, security, competence and communication have led to a new dimension: assurance, while the dimensions of understanding/knowing customers generated the dimension of empathy. A Parasuraman *et al.* (1988) suggested the following definitions for the five dimensions:

- Tangibles: Physical facilities, equipment and appearance of personnel;
- Reliability: Ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately;
- Responsiveness: Willingness to help customers and provide prompt service;
- Assurance: Knowledge and courtesy of employers and their ability to inspire trust and confidence;
- Empathy: Caring, individualized attention the firm provides its customers.

SERVQUAL measures service quality from the customer's perspective of customer perceptions, through the amplitude of the discrepancy that exists between the expectations and perceptions of customers. Cronin and Taylor (1992) view that the validity of the use of expectations in the SERVQUAL model was called into question when consumers had no well-formed expectations and developed the SERVPERF scale which consists of the same 22 "items" of SERVQUAL, although centered only in measuring consumer perceptions regarding the quality of service. Despite the criticisms of SERVQUAL (Buttle, 1996; Cronin and Taylor, 1992), it remains the most widely used theoretical framework for measuring the quality of services so that, in the literature there are numerous studies that apply the SERVQUAL scale to assess quality of services across physical (Donnelly, Hull and Will, 2000; Mukherjee and Nath, 2005) and in digital environments (Wang and Tang, 2003; Kuo, 2003). Despite the diversity of studies in many fields, in this study, SERVPERF will be applied to the traditional trade in the North of Portugal in a similar manner as that of other studies realized at an international level, in the area of the trade industry (Abd-El-Salam *et al.*, 2013; Durvasula and Lysonski, 2010; Khare *et al.*, 2010; Martinelli and Balboni, 2012; Tang *et al.*, 2015; Yu and Ramanathan, 2012; Yuen and Chan, 2010). According to Nadiri and Hussain (2005) service quality increases customer satisfaction, stimulates intention to return, and inspires recommendations.

#### 2.2.2 Customer satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is the outcome of the customer's perception of the value received in a transaction or relationships, where value equals perceived service quality, compared to the value expected from transactions or relationships with competing vendors (Zeithaml, Parasuraman and Berry, 1990). Customer satisfaction is a mighty immaterial asset like to service quality and can be attained through the compliance of customer expectations (Jayasankaraprasad and Kumar, 2012; Oliver, 1980). Also, customer satisfaction is a function of the disagreement between a customer's expectations previous to buying and their perception of the same service subsequently Anderson and Sullivan (1993) and Oliver (1980) will be significant if the perception is placed at a higher level than the expectation. More value for customer incomes great satisfaction, which can benefit the retail enterprise in the long term (Cronin, Brady and Hult, 2000) and generate higher profits. Customer satisfaction is found to be dependent on the quality of service presented to the customer and is one of the instruments to enhanced value for customers. The major challenges for service industry are service quality and customer satisfaction. According to Gundersen *et al.* (1996) the central point of customer satisfaction is to identify the crucial attributes, considered by customers as their needs and expectations. As Valdani (2009) points out, enterprises exist because they have a customer to serve. The key to customer satisfaction lies in identifying and anticipating customer needs and especially in being able to satisfy them. Enterprises which are able to rapidly understand and to satisfy customers' needs, make greater profits than those which fail to understand and satisfy them (Dominici and Guzzo, 2010).

In order to be successful, especially in the service industry, managers must concentrate on retaining existing customers by implementing effective strategies towards customer satisfaction and loyalty, since the cost of attracting new customers is higher than the cost of retaining existing (Dominici and Guzzo, 2010). On the other hand Bennett and Rundle-Thiele (2002), argued that for customers to escalate their loyalty, their perceived value of the good or service presented need be at par with reality, forming an integral part of the corporate aims of the organization.

Additionally, Sirdeshmukh *et al.* (2002), reported that customers' satisfaction has close relationship to brand loyalty as well as service quality. Analogous claim is presented by Hoq and Amin (2010), who postulated that customer satisfaction is the emotional tendency of a customer towards repurchase of products and services offered by a retail store. In order to be successful, especially in the retail industry, managers must concentrate on retaining existing customers by implementing effective strategies towards customer satisfaction and loyalty, since the cost of attracting new customers is higher than the cost of retaining existing ones (Yuen and Chan, 2010).

### 2.2.3 Brand Image

The concept of brand image has been widely studied by researchers in the area of marketing (Abd-El-Salam *et al.*, 2013; Kim and Kim, 2005; Kim and Lee, 2010; Sahin and Baloglu, 2011; Yu and Ramanathan, 2012). For Kim and Kim (2005) a "brand symbolizes the essence of the customers' perceptions of the organizations". Also, Keller (1993) defined corporate image as perceptions of an organization reflected in the associations held in consumers' memory. Corporate image is defined as the "general impression" left in the customers' mind as a result of accumulative impressions or feelings, attitudes, ideas and experiences with the firm, saved in memory, transformed into a positive/negative sense, retrieved to rebuilding image and recalled when the name of the firm is heard or brought to ones' mind (Bravo, Montaner, & Pina, 2009). According to Sahin and Baloglu (2011) brand image is defined as the perception of customers about a brand or a product labelled with that brand. Different authors consider brand image as an important component of strong brands and a determinant in the obtainment of competitive advantages (Lim and O'Cass, 2001).

An overall assumption is that a promising corporate image will have a positive impact on consumers' behaviour towards the brand, such as the opportunity to command premium prices, buyers who are more loyal, and more positive word-of-mouth reputation (Martenson, 2007). Some researchers developed in last years, have tested the effect of corporate image on customer satisfaction and loyalty (Kim and Lee, 2010; Yu and Ramanathan, 2012). Their empirical findings showed that corporate image plays the important role in founding and retaining customer loyalty in the markets. Additionally, these authors found that customer satisfaction and corporate image perceptions positively influence service loyalty, with satisfaction having a greater influence on loyalty than image.

Thus, corporate image is believed to create a positive effect on customers' satisfaction. When customers are satisfied with the service provided of company, their attitude toward the company is enhanced (Srivastava & Sharma, 2013).

### 2.2.4 Perceived Value

Nowadays the retailers are more worried with the pricing strategy attached the effectiveness and the competitiveness of the market. A broad pricing model is largely a crucial requirement for achieving a unique corporate success, this argument has been supported by many researchers as Ailawadi and Keller (2004). These authors proved that the application of a pricing strategy improves the volume of sales and profit margin. Also, the study developed by Hinz *et al.* (2011) showed up to 20% rise in revenue due to the execution of a price setting, thus strengthening customers' satisfaction and loyalty. According to Matzler *et al.* (2006) the pricing strategy is a main determinant to strengthen and improve the customers' satisfaction and loyalty, indeed in the retail industry, the pricing strategy and the value perceived is as much or even more important than the perceived service quality in the corporate strategy. Therefore, it can be contended that a suitable pricing model and a favourable perceived value positively strengthen the business's global success in the retail industry (Nikhashemi, Paim, Sidin and Khatibi, 2014). Some research have also related that perceived value variation has beyond the close relationship with quality service adopts a significant relationship with product delivery and customers' expectations and loyalty (Hellstrand, 2010). Several authors have also found numerous perceived value influences on quality service. This does not mean that the perceived value will have be low to exist satisfaction, but that the value perceived by the customer will take into account the received and its relationship with the price paid. Previous studies on goods have showed that the perceived value relationship was considered enough important for customer satisfaction (Qin and Prybutok, 2008).

### 2.2.5 Behavioural intentions

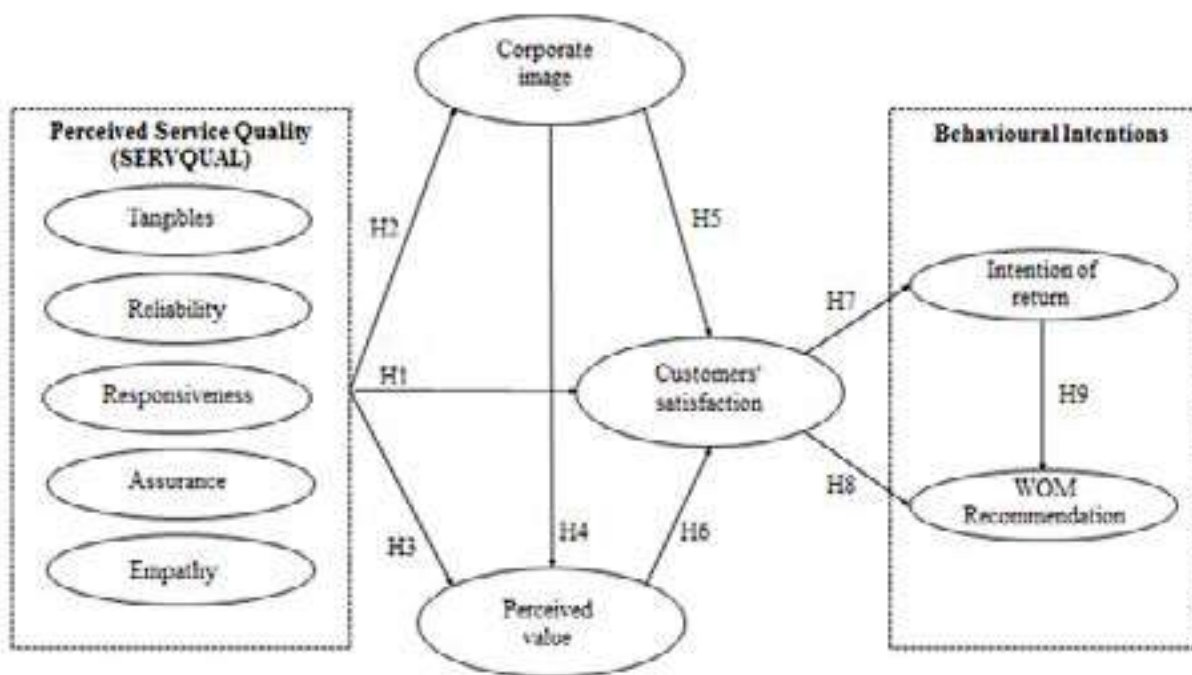
The literature suggests behavioural intentions as a construct which permits the evaluation of customer loyalty (Yang and Peterson, 2004). These are behaviours related to the intention to repurchase and even to the intention of recommending the product/service (Clemes *et al.*, 2008; Lai and Chen, 2011; Sumaedi *et al.*, 2012; Yuen and Chan, 2010; Zeithaml *et al.*, 1990). Some studies developed in service industry have found the positive relationship between perceived service quality and loyalty (De Ruyter and Van Birgelen, 1998; Wong *et al.*, 1999). Customers frequently develop an attitude toward purchasing based on a prior service experience or, still, this attitude can also be influenced by previous information, based on the image of the retail in the market and even by word of mouth (WOM recommendation). With reference to the previous conception, customer loyalty has been usually defined as occurring when customers repetitively buying goods or services over time and retain positive attitudes towards the enterprise delivering the goods or services (Yuen and Chan, 2010). Service providers are increasingly developing loyalty, as they consider that it helps to rise income, and leads to largest market share, effectiveness and profitability (Al-Wugayan, Pleshko, and Baqer, 2008). In this sense, behavioural intentions can be define as the customer's judgment about the likeliness to repurchase in this firm or the willingness to recommend the firm

to others. We conceptualize behavioural intentions as a higher-order construct consisting of (1) positive word of mouth (Boulding, Kalra, Staelin and Zaithaml, 1993), (2) willingness to recommend (Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, 1991), and (3) intentions to continue buying from a particular service provider (Bowen and Shoemaker, 1998). Based on previous definition, behavioural intention in this study may be described as a stated likelihood to repurchase in the hypermarkets in the North of Portugal and to recommend the hypermarkets to family, friends and others in the future. Research has established the many benefits of behavioural intention, such as making it a tendency for retailers to follow, as well as developing and maintaining a loyal customer base (Yuen and Chan, 2010). There is also ample evidence of the influence of service quality on behavioural intentions, a huge body of research has demonstrated the significant relationship between service quality and customers' behavioural intentions (Parasuraman *et al.*, 2005; Sousa and Voss, 2010). According to Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001), behavioural intentions, and not attitudinal intentions, can be related to increased market share. Zeithaml *et al.* (1996), compiled a list of specific positive behavioural intentions, included loyalty, switching intentions, willingness to pay more, external response, and internal response. In a multi-industry study, the authors later provided evidence of the significant effect of perceived service quality on customers' favourable behavioural intentions, such as repurchase, tendency to say positive things and recommend the company (Zeithaml, Berry and Parasurama, 1996). In addition Cronin and Taylor (1992), find a favourable association between service quality and repurchase intentions. Also, Zeithaml *et al.* (1996) and Fullerton (2005), find a positive relationship between service quality and behavioural intentions. Moreover, preceding research has demonstrated associations between service quality and particular dimensions of behavioural intentions, like as Parasuraman *et al.* (1988), find a favourable relationship between service quality and willingness to recommend the firm, and Boulding *et al.* (1993), find a positive correlation between service quality and repurchase intentions, saying positive things, and willingness to recommend. Several authors point out that customers may not necessarily buy the greater quality service and that there may be other factors that define consumer choice, such as satisfaction (Ryu and Han, 2010; Wang *et al.*, 2004). Therefore, we expect customers who perceive the quality of the service as high to be more likely to demonstrate intentions, and we again believe that this relationship will hold regardless of the buyers' collectivist orientation. Loyal customers are main assets to firms, they make proportionally more purchases at their' first choice' store than customers who shift (Knox & Denison, 2000). Usually, great service quality leads to customer loyalty, as it increases customer confidence towards and satisfaction with the company. It is supposed that positive perceptions of service quality enhances the possibility of customers being dedicated in supporting the company and developing and strengthening loyalty behaviour (Yuen and Chan, 2010).

### 3. CONCEPTUAL RESEARCH MODEL AND HYPOTHESES

In according this theoretical background, the aim of this study is to, as Figure 1 indicates, propose a model that consists of evaluating the impact of: (1) service quality on customer satisfaction, brand image and customer-perceived value; (2) brand image on customer-perceived value; (3) brand image, customer satisfaction and customer-perceived value on behavioural intentions (intention to return and WOM recommendation) and (4) intention to return on WOM recommendation.

Figure 1. Research model



The retail managers should focus their attention on customer service quality evaluation as they must have actual knowledge that the service quality perceived by the client meets their expectations, as contended by Parasuraman *et al.* (1985, 1988). Based on these assumptions the purpose of this study is to examine whether the perception of the services provided in the different dimensions of SERVQUAL, exceeds the customer expectations.

However, the main objective of this study is to test the conceptual model shown in Figure 1, which includes four research hypotheses, as explained below.

The relationship between service quality and satisfaction has not been consensual in the literature as several authors argue that, on the one hand, both concepts are identical, while others consider them as distinct (Dabholkar, 1995; Dabholkar *et al.*, 2000; Oliver, 1993). According to Dabholkar (1995), while evaluation of service quality is essentially cognitive, for its part, satisfaction integrates both cognitive and affective components. This author claims that these two concepts are distinct for recent consumers of a product. However, in the long run, the affective dimension tends to be blurred and to that extent, the concepts tend to overlap. Meanwhile, Ngobo (1999) also reinforces the distinction between perceived quality and satisfaction level of the three dimensions. Assuming that these two concepts are distinct, a question that immediately arises relates to the order of their occurrence in the mind of the consumer and as such, the causal relationship between them. In this regard Dabholkar *et al.* (2000) argues that, most investigators traditionally hold that consumer satisfaction results from a particular consumer's experience of a service which leads to an evaluation/attitude on the overall quality of service over a given period of time (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988). Recently, however, the reverse situation has stood out as the most relevant. This position is particularly evidenced by Oliver (1993) who suggested that the quality of service should be an antecedent of consumer satisfaction irrespective, of the experiential or the time factor. Similarly, Cronin and Taylor (1992) analysed the effect of these concepts in both directions and concluded that the quality of service perceived exerts a greater impact on customer satisfaction than otherwise. Recently, several authors have considered service quality as an important antecedent of satisfaction (Chiou *et al.*, 2002; Ekinici *et al.*, 2008; Mahfooz, 2014; Martinelli and Balboni, 2012; Nikhashemi *et al.*, 2014; Saleh and Ryan, 1991; Yuen and Chan, 2010; Zhang and Prybutok, 2005). Most studies assessing the relationship of service quality on customer satisfaction demonstrate the existence of a statistically significant level in studies of the service industry. Moreover, the literature suggests that perceived service quality positively influences perceived brand image (Oh, 1999; Yu and Ramanathan, 2012) and the perceived value (Howat and Assaker, 2013; Nikhashemia *et al.*, 2016; Ryu *et al.*, 2008). In line with this, and based on SERVQUAL, the following hypotheses are proposed in the present study.

**H1:** The quality perceived by the customers has a positive influence on their satisfaction.

H<sub>11</sub> – The higher the tangibility, the greater the degree of the customers' satisfaction.

H<sub>12</sub> – The higher the reliability, the greater the degree of the customers' satisfaction.

H<sub>13</sub> – The higher the assurance, the greater the degree of the customers' satisfaction.

H<sub>14</sub> – The higher the responsiveness, the greater the degree of the customers' satisfaction.

H<sub>15</sub> – The higher the empathy, the greater the degree of the customers' satisfaction.

**H2:** The perceived service quality by the customers has a positive influence on perceived brand image.

**H3:** The perceived service quality by the customers has a positive influence on perceived value.

The study of image has received increasing attention in the literature on marketing (Chen and Tsai, 2007; Ryu *et al.*, 2008; Wu, Yeh and Hsiao, 2011), since it affects the individual's subjective perception (Chen and Tsai, 2007). In the area of service industry, Ruy *et al.* (2008) confirm that the corporate image of a restaurant positively and significantly influences the perceived value. Thus, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

**H4:** The brand image perceived by the customers has a positive influence on the perceived value.

The relationship between image and perceived value on customer satisfaction has gained little attention in the services industry literature (Ryu *et al.*, 2008). These authors have evaluated the impact of the image of a restaurant and perceived value on customer satisfaction and they found a positive and significant relationship between these constructs. In the area of retail industry, Yu and Ramanathan (2012) confirm that the corporate image of a retail store positively and significantly influences customer satisfaction. In this sense, we intend to propose the following hypotheses:

**H5:** The perceived brand image by the customers has a positive influence on their satisfaction.

**H6:** The perceived value by the customers has a positive influence on their satisfaction.

In reviewing the literature, we have found that marketing services have extensively researched behavioural attitudes (e.g. Andreassen and Lindestad, 1997; Bobbitt and Dabholkar, 2001; Dabholkar, 1996; Zeithaml, Parasuraman and Berry, 1996). These are behaviours related to the intention to repurchase and even to the intention of recommending the product/service (Clemes *et al.*, 2008; Lai and Chen, 2011; Sumaedi *et al.*, 2012; Yuen and Chan, 2010; Zeithaml *et al.*, 1990). Several concepts have been examined as antecedent factors of behavioural intentions, such as service quality (Brown, Churchill and Peter, 1993; Zeithaml *et al.*, 1996) and satisfaction (Andreassen and Lindestad, 1997; Oliver, 1999). According to Liang and Zhang (2011, p. 156), "*it is generally believed that satisfaction leads to repeat purchases and positive WOM recommendations*", assuming that if customers are satisfied with a product/service, they are more likely to continue to purchase it, and are more willing to spread positive WOM. Thus, we propose our seventh and octave hypotheses:

**H7:** Customer satisfaction positively influences intention to return.

**H8:** Customer satisfaction positively influences WOM recommendations

According to Nadiri and Hussain (2005, p. 471), “service quality promotes customer satisfaction, stimulates intention to return, and encourages recommendations”. Oh (1999) found a positive and significant relationship between intention to return and WOM recommendations. In this study we intend to uphold the following hypothesis:

**H9:** Intention to return positively influences WOM recommendations.

#### 4. METHODOLOGY

A questionnaire was designed as the survey instrument, which were included all the constructs of the proposed model. The questions in the questionnaire were based on a review of the literature in the area of the service industry, described above in the theoretical background. This study was applied to customers from of traditional retail stores during the months of February and March 2017. It was used a non-probabilistic sampling using convenience technique. The questionnaires were distributed online and the answers came from several cities and places of the north of Portugal. In this study, respondents were required to fill out a three-page three sections. The first section consisted of a standard demographic profile of respondents. The second section contained the characterization of purchase process. The last section includes the statements of dimensions and their sub dimensions. The measurement items to measure primary and sub-dimensions of service quality were adapted from several researchers (Chen *et al.*, 2011; Cronin and Taylor, 1992; Dabholkar *et al.*, 1996; Wu *et al.*, 2011) and a series of items focusing on the behavioural intentions, customer satisfaction, perceived value and corporate image, which were adapted on the basis of several researchers’ results (Nadiri and Gunay, 2013; Nikhashemi *et al.*, 2014; Nikhashemia *et al.*, 2016; Ryu *et al.*, 2008; Wu *et al.*, 2011; Wu, 2013; Yu and Ramanathan, 2012; Yuen and Chan, 2010; Zeithaml *et al.*, 1996). Respondents were asked to use a five-point Likert-type scale (where 5–point scales anchored 1 = “strongly disagree” and 5 = “strongly agree”) to record their perceptions. Construct reliability will assessed by using the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient.

Data analysis will be conducted using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) for Windows (version 20.0). For the descriptive analysis it will used absolute and relative frequency tables. The Spearman correlation coefficient it will used to measure the intensity of the linear correlation between variables. Multiple linear regression will used in order to estimate models that could identify the determinants of the behaviour of the variables under analysis. The significance level of 5% will assumed. Additionally, to test the causal relationship between different constructs, we will use the structural equation model, given that the theoretical model includes the complex relationships between latent variables measured with different items that are presented simultaneously as independent and dependent variables.

#### 5. FINDINGS AND CONTRIBUTION OF RESEARCH

The objective of this study was proposes a conceptual model to identify the dimensions of service quality and examining the interrelationships among customer satisfaction, corporate image, perceived value and customer loyalty and service quality in the traditional trade, in addition to investigate the impact of customer satisfaction, service quality, perceived value and corporate image on customer loyalty in the traditional commerce in the North of Portugal. This methodological approach is similar to that used by some researchers, mentioned in the theoretical background to analyse those constructs in other service industries. So, it is believed that the model proposed will permit to evaluate the hypotheses presented, as well as to contribute to the retail managers better understand the implications of the dimensions of service quality, of perceived value, of corporate image on the customer satisfaction and on behavioural intentions, and the consequently on the profitability of the retail stores.

The customer satisfaction and the customer loyalty process allows for significantly increased revenue from traditional retail store by obtaining sales growth and a better return of investments. With this in mind, the manager retail needs to know the real customer service needs and expectations, so that the service is tailored to the customer’s satisfaction, in order to retain them and attract potential new customers. Thus, this study proposes to develop and analyze a conceptual model that aims to explain the relationship between the five dimensions of SERVQUAL, brand image, perceived value, customer satisfaction and behavioural intentions (intentions to return and WOM recommendation).

Based on research conducted in bibliographic data bases, we have identified a gap in the literature about the retailing in Portugal, which relates to the knowledge of the factors affecting customer satisfaction and behavioural intention. It is hoped that this research will contribute to the development of the literature, politicians (wealth creation, economic growth, etc.) and managers of traditional retail stores (the survival and growth of traditional trade). From a practitioners’ point of view, the understanding of the factors that influence customers’ satisfaction and behavioural intentions, on the one hand, may contribute to the retail manager’s development when establishing strategies and contribute to the improvement of services provided by the traditional retail stores and consequently increase profit, market share, and improve return on investment (Hackl and Westlund, 2000).

Findings are expected to report high levels of perceived quality and a significant relationship between service quality dimensions and customer satisfaction and their behavioural intentions, and yet we expected to prove that the brand image, the perceived value and service quality dimensions are interrelated (Ryu *et al.*, 2008; Wu, 2013; Yu and Ramanathan, 2012). Furthermore we will try to show like as Ryu *et al.* (2008) also have demonstrated, that the relationships between brand

image and perceived value dimensions and the relative importance of the dimensions of service quality can provide useful insights for how firms should allocate resources in the traditional retail stores. Retail service providers need to recognize the importance of service quality dimensions in order of their significance, and implement appropriate strategy for competitive advantage over domestic and international players competing for share of an expanding consumer base (Mahfooz, 2014). Moreover, we will try in this study, show that improving customers' perceptions of service quality can effectively increase satisfaction levels through high levels of value perceived and of brand image. In this way, the findings of this study will aid retailing management to identify that both customer satisfaction and value perceived directly affect behavioural intentions. Consequently, retail management should make more effort to increase perceptions of satisfaction and value perceived in order to build the favourable customers' behavioural intentions.

The study results will help traditional trade stores owners and managers to recognize and prioritize the primary and sub-dimensions of service quality. Trade management should realize that the significance customers accentuate is based on each of the primary and sub-dimension of service quality. Moreover, traditional trade management should structure their infrastructure, processes, operations and resource allocation in terms of the relative importance of the service quality dimensions to their target at specific customers. Simultaneously, the retail managers should dedicate special attention to the perceived value and the brand image that gives to the market, whether through communication actions or interaction with society where operate.

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