

Perceived quality as predictor of satisfaction and future intentions of sporting event spectators

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Aim of paper and research questions

This study intends to provide new data to show how service quality dimensions have an influence on the general satisfaction (GS) and future intentions (FI) of sporting event spectators.

Literature review

The relation between service quality, satisfaction and repurchase intentions is a recurrent subject in the literature of services and is spreading to sporting events (Cronin, Brady & Hult, 2000). In this sense, some works analysed the perceived quality of spectators and determined that the strongest dimensions predicting spectator's satisfaction are reliability and the tangibles (Theodorakis, Kambitsis, Laios & Koutelios, 2001). Greenwell, Fink, and Pastore (2002) found that tangibles had influence on the satisfaction of spectators. Other works pointed out that the most important attribute is related to the sportive competition itself, known as game experience, although they accepted that this is not viable to be changed by managers (Kelley & Turley, 2001). Tsuji, Bennet, and Zhang (2006), found that peripheral service quality and satisfaction were predictors of FI, but the core service quality (related to game experience) was not significantly related to FI.

Research design and data analysis

In order to know the relative influence of the service quality dimensions on GS and FI of spectators of sporting events, a multiple regression analysis was carried out. Sample. The sample consisted of 660 spectators of athletics competition out of which 64.7% were male and 35.3% were female, with an average age of 35.21 years (± 10.89).

Instrument. The instrument used for the analysis of the perceived quality was an adapted version of the EVENTQUAL scale (Calabuig & Crespo, 2009) consisted of 20 items. Five items of the scale were eliminated as they indicated either an item-total correlation below .40 or poor reliability. General satisfaction and future intentions of spectators were valued through the scales of Hightower, Brady, and Baker (2002). All scales obtained an acceptable Cronbach alpha index. Construct validity was assessed in two steps: exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and also with the correlation between perceived quality scale and overall service quality scale showing an acceptable construct validity ($r = .754$; $p < .001$).

Results

An EFA showed the following quality dimensions (variance explained is in parenthesis): tangibles, such as physical elements and environment, (18.40%), with an alpha of .780, staff working at the event (17.96%), with an alpha of .836, complementary services (14.13%), with an alpha of .782, and accessibility (10.94%), with an alpha of .630. The CFA indicates

an acceptable fit to this factorial structure ($X^2/df=3,29$, $p<.001$; $RMSEA=.059$; $NFI=.918$; $TLI=.915$; $CFI=.941$). The correlation analysis between the studied variables showed that all quality dimensions, GS and, FI correlated in a positive and significant manner ($p<.001$). The dimension of tangibles show the highest correlation with satisfaction ($r=.610$) and the staff dimension with FI ($r=.529$).

A regression analysis was conducted taking quality dimensions as independent variables, and GS as dependent. It was observed that quality dimensions were predicting 46.5% of the variance of SG. The coefficients indicated that both tangibles ($\beta=.356$, $p<.001$) and staff ($\beta=.203$, $p<.001$) had the strongest influence on satisfaction, and the staff had the strongest effect ($\beta=.200$, $p<.001$) on FI.

Discussion and conclusion

The results suggest that both tangibles and staff in a sports event are crucial to explain the GS of spectators. These results are similar to those obtained by other authors (Calabuig, Urdangarin, Mundina & Crespo, 2008; Theodorakis et al., 2001) as they look into the same effect of tangibles on spectator's satisfaction, although there is a difference regarding the role of accessibility and staff. Other work state that both reliability and security have the strongest influence on satisfaction and both tangibles and security are the best predicting repurchase intention (Hyun-Duck, Jeoung-Hak & LaVetter, 2006). Such discrepancies could be caused by the different features of each sport. Therefore, this subject should be studied in greater depth so results could be generalised.

In our study, all dimensions of quality are predictors of FI of spectators except the accessibility that has a non significant relation. However, the quality dimensions only explain the 18.5% of the variance of the FI. In fact, we think that research should be intensified in order to find the variables that increase the amount of variance explained. Consequently, sport events managers should make every effort to improve the quality of tangibles and the staff in their venues as this will improve spectators' satisfaction and will keep them coming back.

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