

THE EFFECT OF SERVICE QUALITY ON BASKETBALL SPECTATORS' SATISFACTION

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Abstract

Aim of abstract

The aim of the paper is to analyse the importance of service quality dimensions in predicting basketball spectators satisfaction.

Literature review:

Research about service quality is increasing in the professional sport context but in Spain is still limited. The preliminary approach analysed the perceived quality of the spectator through the TEAMQUAL scale. This model considers that there are five dimensions of service quality: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, security and empathy. The first dimension refers to facilities and physical appearance. The other dimensions relate to the staff of the event.

However, considering that spectators attending a sporting event have little contact or interaction with employees of the event, the four dimensions of quality relating to personnel proposed in the TEAMQUAL lose their meaning and the tangible elements and facilities emerge as very important attributes to be evaluated. Hence, other models have developed new measures to evaluate the spectators perception.

In this regard, Hightower, Brady and Baker (2002) found that tangibles are valuable predictors of satisfaction and future behaviour of spectators. Yusof and See (2008) agreed in the tangibles role and added the team quality to the equation as predictor of satisfaction.

Recent researches have introduced the outcome and game quality dimensions in defining service quality in sport and recreation centres (Ko, Zhang, Cattani, & Pastore, 2011; Yoshida & James, 2010). This dimension refers to what spectators look for when attending a sporting event. The introduction of this variable in research on sporting events in Spain is new and this work tries to shed light on the issue using an exploratory method.

Methodology:

Data was collected during four games in a stadium of the ACB basketball league. 483 useful surveys were returned during four matches. Sample respondents are predominantly male (68.1%) with an average age of 36,62 years ($\pm 12,30$).

Perceived service quality was measured following the suggestion of Calabuig, Mundina and Crespo (2010) with a modified version of the scale. In order to measure de outcome quality, the scale of Alexandris, Kouthouris and Meligdis (2007) was adapted to the specific event.

Overall satisfaction was measured with the scale of Hightower et al. (2002). Reliability was performed as internal consistency and all the scales obtained an acceptable Cronbach's alpha coefficient (0.856 - 0.923).

Validity of the service quality scale was assessed through an external criterion related to the concept valued (service quality) using a Pearson's correlation. We found positive and significant correlations ($p < .001$) between quality dimensions and overall service quality (0.352 - 0.656).

Results:

The first step in order to know the relationship between quality dimensions and spectators satisfaction was to perform a correlation analysis. A positive and significant correlation among all variables was established ($r = .384 - .489$; $p < .001$). The strongest correlation was between game quality and overall satisfaction ($r = .489$; $p < .001$).

The next step was to perform a multiple regression analysis with the aim to determine the influence of each dimensions of quality on predicting spectators satisfaction. Then, quality dimensions were established as independent variable and overall satisfaction as dependent.

The resulting model was significant explaining the 46.8% of the satisfaction variance. Regression coefficients indicated that outcome quality ($\beta = .323$, $p < .001$) and game quality ($\beta = .310$, $p < .001$) have the most important effect on spectators satisfaction. The staff has a non-significant influence on satisfaction.

Discussion and conclusions:

In most cases, tangibles have been confirmed as strong predictors of spectators satisfaction. According to our results, the most important dimension predicting satisfaction is the outcome quality. It should be noted that staff has non-significant effect on satisfaction. This last result differs from Yoshida and James (2010), who found that employees had the highest influence on overall

satisfaction in two different samples (USA and Japan). These results may be explained because sporting events in Spain differ from these in USA and Japan. In Spain, for example, during time-outs or breaks there is barely entertainment, and therefore there is little contact with the employees of the event.

Sport managers should consider these results to offer their spectators what they really look for in an event. Accordingly, they should increase the quality of both the outcome and the tangibles, since obviously the management of the game quality cannot be controlled.

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