

# THE SERVICE QUALITY IN OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES AND RECREATION PROGRAMS BETWEEN DIFFERENT AGES

Author:

Ioannis Trigonis

email:

itrigon@phyed.duth.gr

Co-authors:

Astrapellos Konstantinos, Costa George, Trigonis Ioannis, Yfantidou Georgia, Tsitskari Efstratia, Zorzou Amalia

University:

Democritus University of Thrace

Faculty:

Department of Physical Education & Sport Science

## Abstract

### Introduction

The quality has been used as a vehicle to describe the meaning of various leisure and recreation activities events, also called definitional research. Such research refers to the phenomenology, dimensionally and characteristics of leisure pursuits (Kleiber, Larson, & Csikszentmihalyi, 1986), the risk represented by various activities, and the symbolic or cognitive representation of travel (Nash & Smith, 1991). The quality of leisure and recreation can be described as the subjective mental state felt by participants. The facet of consumption has received some attention from researchers in the field, mainly those concerned with its sociological, anthropological and psychological signature (Otto, & Ritchie, 1996). Once recognizing the critical, yet delicate, interplay between the experience of, and satisfaction with, leisure and recreation activities, industry personnel are well advised to pay attention to former dimension. Perhaps the most straightforward manner by which to apply a service is to borrow general marketing measurement instruments directly from the field and apply them to outdoor activities. So, given the importance of experimental benefits to satisfaction with all facets of the outdoor and recreation industry general and also in Greece, further understanding of this construct is necessary, and this is the aim of this study.

## Methodology

### Subjects

One hundred and fifty three (153) men and women who participated in outdoor activities and recreation programs at the river Nesto in the region of Xanthi were asked to complete a questionnaire, after they participated at recreation and outdoor activities. The sample consisted of 80 men students (52,2%) and 73 women students (47,7%).

### Procedure

The questionnaires were collected during 3 weekends of March 2010. A total of 242 men and women participated in the recreation programs and 153 of them agreed to fill in the questionnaires.

### Questionnaire

To measure the quality of the service experience, the Service Experience Questionnaire was used on 5-point scale (Otto, & Ritchie, 1996). The questionnaire was translated into using back-to-back translation process. The validity of the questionnaire was taken through a pilot study to 60 sport recreation participants. The questionnaire consisted of 15 questions that created four factors hedonics, peace of mind, involvement, and recognition and four independent questions.

### Results

Using the Cronbach coefficient  $\pm$  internal consistency for the Service Experience subscales in the current study was estimated as .84 for the hedonics factor, .67 for the peace of mind factor, .68 for the involvement factor, and .71 for the recognition factor. To examine differences in factors because of the age of the participants used the variable variance analysis (One-way Anova). From this analysis, obtained statistically significant differences according to age of the participants only for the recognition factor  $F(3,147) = 7,01, p < .001$ , and did not reveal significant differences for other factors and independent questions. The factors related as most important were hedonics ( $M = 4.23, SD = 0.55$ ), involvement ( $M = 4.22, SD = 0.55$ ), and recognition ( $M = 4.00, SD = 0.75$ ). The outdoor activities can be the reason to choose this recreation agency again ( $M = 3,95, SD = 0.89$ ), peace of mind ( $M = 3,80, SD = 0.76$ ), and if I would choose the same recreation agency again, I will do the same activities I did this time ( $M = 3,78, SD = 1,03$ ) were a little less important.

### Discussion and Conclusions

According to these results, the participant's experience after their participation on recreation and outdoor activities was high positive for all the above factors. So we can conclude that all the participants through the four factors have replied that were satisfied. Participants in programs of outdoor activities, having the quality of service as a central reference point for assessment and evaluation, providing important information to companies that wish to have satisfied customers (Gerson, 1999). Moreover, the different levels of service and satisfaction of each participant in different activities give important information on companies. These results are important because visitor satisfaction has long been a major goal of recreation resource management, and as such has been one of the most studied indicators of quality in outdoor recreation opportunities (Williams, 1989). The results of this study have several theoretical and practical implications for the outdoor and recreation programs. It seems more than important for recreation service providers to understand the individuals who engage in certain tourist roles in order

to determine the needs they are trying to satisfy. By understanding their needs and wants, outdoor destinations could successfully target potential tourist populations by maximizing the destination's competitive advantage and so satisfy them.

References:

- Gerson, R. (1999). *Members for life: Proven service and retention Strategies for Health-Fitness and Sports Club*. Champaign, IL. Human Kinetics Publisher.
- Kleiber, D, Larson, R and Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1986). The experience of leisure in adolescence. *Journal Leisure Research*, 18, (3), 169-176.
- Nash, D. and Smith, V. (1991). Anthropology and tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 18, 12-25.
- Otto, J.E. and Brent Ritchie, J.R (1996). The service experience in tourism. *Tourism Management*, 17, (3), 165-174.
- Williams, D.R. (1989). Great expectations and the limits to satisfaction: A review of recreation and consumer satisfaction research. Pages 422-438 in A. Watson *Outdoor recreation benchmark, 1988: Proceedings from the national outdoor recreation forum assembly*. USDA Forest Service General Technical Report SE-52. Southeastern Forest Experiment Station, Asheville, North Carolina.