Measuring service value in the context of public swimming pools in Portugal

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Introduction

In marketing the key for achieving organizational goals depends on a company's ability to be more effective than its competitors in creating, delivering, and communicating customer value to its chosen target markets (Kotler 2002). Despite its importance for sport organizations, service value has received relatively less attention from sport management researchers. In sport management literature, service value has been usualy used as an independent variable in various service quality/satisfaction models (Murray & Howat, 2002). Zeithaml (1988) defined perceived service value as "the consumer's overall assessment of the utility of a product based on perceptions of what is received and what is given". Perceived value is most commonly measured by using a self-reported unidimensional measure asking respondents to rate the value they receive for their purchase. However, as mentioned by Zeithaml (1988) unidimentional measures provide no specific direction to managers on how to improve value. The purpose of this study was twofold: First to test the applicability of a multidimensional scale of service value (SERV-PERVAL, Petrick, 2002) in the context of public swimming pools in Portugal, and second to measure participants' perceptions of service value in this context, and to provide practical insights to municipal sport authorities.

Methodology

The sample of the study consisted of 182 individuals, who participated in swimming and water aerobic activities in the three public swimming pools of the city of Vila Nova de Gaia. They were 79 men and 103 women. The mean age was 37.9 years (SD=13.8, 16 to 74 years). Service value was measured using SERV-PERVAL (Petrick, 2002). SERV-PERVAL is a 24-item scale that originally included five dimensions of service value: Reputation (five items, i.e. is well thought of), Emotional response (five items, i.e. gives me a sense of joy), Behavioural price (four items, i.e. required little energy to purchase), Monetaty price (six items, i.e. is reasonably priced), and Quality (four items, i.e. has outstanding quality). Respondents rated agreement by each item on a 5-point scale from totally false to totally true. SERV-PERVAL translated into Portugeuse by a professional translator, and was further adjusted and proof read by a panel of judges, in order to be used in the context of public swimming pools in Portugal.

Results

A principal component analysis with varimax rotation was performed to test the factorial structure of the scale. Only factors with an eigenvalue greater than 1 were retained. Six factors were emerged from this analysis, which accounted for 82% of the total variance (Table 1). Cronbach alpha coefficients for internal consistency of the six sub-scales were ranged from .72 to .96. Mean scores and standard deviations of the six sub-scales of SERV-PERVALp are presented in Table 1.

Discussion

Results from the factor analysis and reliability estimates seem to support the applicablity of the SERV-PERVAL (Petrick, 2002) to other sport and leisure settings. It is to be noted that five of the six factors correspond directly to the original model. However, the existence of a six factor (consisted by only two items, which, originally loaded in the Moneatry price dimension) calls for further examination of the model. In this study, descriptive statistics revealed high scores for five dimensions of value, suggesting that customers perceived service and programs offered to them in public swimming pools, to have good value. These results are good news for municipal sport authorities since service value found to influence satisfaction of customers in sports and leisure settings (Murray & Howat, 2002). This study gathered and analyzed service value perceptions at a specific moment in time. Longitudinal studies might be more appropriate for providing public sport authorities with more accurate information and assist them to formulate sport strategies.

Table 1. Principal components analysis of the SERV-PERVALp scale

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Reputation (RP)						
RP1	.90	.13	.20	.18	.23	.02
RP2	.87	.13	.13	.17	.25	.02
RP3	.87	.14	.22	.21	.23	.01
RP4	.85	.20	.11	.15	.28	.09
RP5	.83	.19	.18	.18	.19	.13
Emotional Response (ER)						
ER1	.12	.85	.15	.18	.16	.07
ER2	.23	.84	.10	.14	.14	.15
ER3	.09	.80	.11	.26	.26	-.03
ER4	.17	.79	.14	.06	.03	.29
ER5	.16	.69	.18	.33	.35	-.14
Behavioural price (BP)						
BP1	.13	.11	.86	.20	.05	-.02
BP2	.11	.13	.85	.06	.06	.11
BP3	.22	.21	.83	.15	.19	.00
BP4	.18	.08	.79	.09	.05	.09
Monetary Price (MP)						
MP1	.18	.17	.23	.83	.21	.17
MP2	.25	.27	.02	.77	.28	.05
MP3	.21	.17	.25	.74	.07	.30
MP4	.32	.35	.11	.64	.20	-.11
Quality (Q)						
Q1	.30	.19	.08	.12	.83	-.03
Q2	.31	.13	.10	.25	.82	.11
Q3	.27	.30	.09	.14	.79	.12
Q4	.38	.24	.17	.31	.66	.17
Opportunity-Price (OP)						
OP1	.07	.14	.03	.12	.11	.89
OP2	.08	.15	.30	.53	.12	.63
Eigenvalue	10.9	2.4	2.3	1.6	1.3	1.0
% of Variance	45.8	10.2	9.5	6.8	5.2	4.5
Cumulative % of Variance	45.8	55.9	65.5	72.3	77.5	82
Mean scores	4.31	4.29	4.17	4.20	4.24	3.10
Alpha scores	.96	.91	.90	.89	.92	.72

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