

Performance Measurement as a Management Tool for Sports Facility Managers

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Aim

Performance measurement is intensively used across the public sector in the western world (Bruijn, 2007). In sports facilities, performance measurement has primarily been used to hold managers accountable for the use of public resources, while the limited focus has been on performance measurement as a management tool for the individual manager. Using a survey of customer satisfaction in Danish sports facilities, we will show how performance measurement can be used as a management tool.

Theoretical Background and Literature Review

The CERM-PI and the National Benchmarking Service (NBS) were established in the 1990s in Australia and the UK and are examples of how performance measurement in sports facilities can be carried out (Howat, Murray, & Crilley, 2005; Taylor & Godfrey, 2003). An important driving factor behind the development and establishment of both CERM-PI and NBS has been political aspirations to enhance sports facility performance (Robinson, 1999). Market-oriented reforms of the public sector corresponding with New Public Management and the political initiatives of 'Compulsory Competitive Tendering' (CCT) and 'Best Value' (BV) have resulted in local governments and sports facility managers to undertake performance measurement in sports facilities (Howat et al., 2005; Robinson, 1999). Hence, the NBS and the CERM-PI have been constructed primarily to meet the need of politicians and bureaucrats. Consequently, the limited focus has been on the 'micro level' of the individual sports facility manager and research on performance measurement in relation to managers 'raises as many questions as answers' for managers (Robinson & Taylor, 2003).

Research Design and Data Analysis

We use data from a survey of customer satisfaction in 211 Danish sports facilities to show how the individual manager can use performance measurement to inform managerial practices. The data consists of 8,212 respondents who answered a questionnaire consisting of 13 service attributes and 4 motivation attributes in relation to both importance and satisfaction. The respondents were users or visitors in a multifunctional sports hall, a soccer pitch, a swimming pool and/or a fitness center – or a larger center (a combination of the aforementioned facilities). The descriptive results show that an equal number of men and women took part in the survey, almost half of the respondents have been using the sports facility for at least six years and that three out of four respondents used the facility for sporting purposes.

Results and Discussion

Statistical analysis of customer satisfaction data indicates that the customers are very satisfied with the sports facilities they use and are likely to recommend friends, family, and colleagues to use it. Factor analysis reveals five dimensions of satisfaction: 'Quality of building', 'staff', 'surroundings and impressions', 'advantages of use' and 'the exercise activities'. Gap-scores (satisfaction minus importance) show, that customers perceived importance correspond to their satisfaction regarding 'advantage of use' and 'surroundings and impressions'. Contrary, the customers perceived importance are lower than their satisfaction regarding 'quality of

building', 'staff' and 'the exercise activities'. A stepwise discriminant analysis shows that 'Quality of building' and 'the exercise activities' are the most important dimensions for the customers overall satisfaction and recommendation.

Conclusion and Implications

The survey data implies that the customers in sports facilities already have high levels of satisfaction. However, managers could raise the overall satisfaction of customers by improving 'quality of building' and 'staff'. The biggest gain for sports facilities might not be the customers already using the facility, but rather to attract more customers. In the presentation, we emphasis how a survey of customer satisfaction (i.e. performance measurement) can be used as a management tool and attract more customers. This idea originates from the theory of Creating Public Value (Moore, 1995). According to the theory, performance measurement system can increase the performance of public organisations and document achieved performance to politicians and bureaucrats. In addition, performance measurement can initiate debates with customer and citizens about the future priorities of the organisation. We argue that managers have not been expected to initiate such challenging debates. However, such debates seem increasingly to be expected to occur by politicians and bureaucrats in municipalities. To meet these expectations, performance measurement can assist managers in initiating such debates locally in their sports facility.

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