

Examination of the service quality perception in private and public sports centers: Konya example

Selçuk BUĞDAYCI

Selçuk University, Faculty of Sports Sciences, Konya, Turkey.

Address Correspondence to S. Buğdaycı, e-mail: sbugdayci@gmail.com

Abstract

This is a descriptive research study, which was conducted to evaluate the perceptions and expectations of the members of sports centers concerning the service quality in the private or public sports centers. The universe of the study is comprised of individuals, who were members of private or public sports centers within the borders of Konya province. The sample group is comprised of 365 individuals from private and 371 individuals from public sports centers. Service Quality Assessment Scale was used as the data collection tool, which was developed by Lam (13) and adapted into Turkish by Gürbüz et al. (10). The data obtained from the scales were coded into computer environment, and statistical analyses were conducted via SPSS 22.00 program. As the conclusion, it was observed that the service quality perceptions of the research group concerning both private and public sports centers were negative. It was also determined that the service quality scores were negative in all of the subdimensions. In the comparison of the both types of the centers, it was determined that the service quality scores perceived in the private sports centers were higher.

Key words: Service quality, sports centers.

INTRODUCTION

We encounter the word 'service' in different forms in our daily life. It is reported that the concept of 'service' was started to be examined systematically and technically since the 1700s. Having been developed since then, the concept of service is defined as a phenomenon comprised of social activities, which are determined to meet the needs of individuals and societies. These activities are sold for a certain price, provide a benefit and a satisfaction, and that do not need the possession of any goods (9).

Firstly, the concept of service, which was included in the marketing concept, began to change after the article named "Breaking Free From Product" published in 1997 by a New Yorker banker, Lynn Shostack, helping the emergence of the service marketing field (17).

Today, the founding philosophy of the businesses is to provide service for the customers. Famous expressions such as "the customer is our benefactor" or, in different countries, the ones like "the customer is the king" draw attention to the

concept of service. However, rather than the famous expressions on the signboards, it is important whether the businesses are market-oriented (19).

The service sector has started to become an important commercial activity on the international arena and its importance has increased by time. Service sector has a significant share in the market concerning economical activities, and it plays a vital role in development of economies. From this point of view, it is reported that, in service sectors, the number of analyses about human resources, cost analyses, classifications, assessment of problems, finance, and marketing has increased, as well as the number of the studies on the determination of the service quality (11).

Sports draws the attentions of individuals from different age groups and it is defined as a social concept, which is turned into an industry involving the big economies (2).

Sports can be defined as a biological, pedagogical, and social activity, which aims at developing physical activities, motoric skills, mental, spiritual, and social behaviors (4). In order

for people to maintain their lives healthfully, it is known by all segments of society that sports should be a life philosophy for them, it should be a regular habit, and it makes significant contributions to the development of skills (3).

The business concept is defined as the units, which aim at providing a service or a product that are comprised of agents of production systematically brought together. In other words, a business is a profit-oriented combination of economical, technical, social, and judicial units, through which the agents of production are brought together in accordance with the needs of the consumers in order to increase the sales, grow, develop, and fulfil the social responsibilities (12).

Sports centers/facilities are the institutional structures that are built for shaping the social lives of individuals and societies, and to host various sportive activities. These institutional structures are the places, which provide individual satisfaction for the users of their services by delivering services in different branches without sacrificing quality (15).

In these businesses it is industrially possible to sell a number of sportive products, but in general, the sports product provided to the users is evaluated as the service. In this sense, it is stated that the delivery style of sports services can be accepted different from the services in other fields and in this respect, the term 'sports service' should be given special attention (12).

The gradual increase in the sports centers created a competition among the centers and the quality service understanding of the individuals increased as well. However, considering from the points of product, production, consumption, service, and education sectors, it has become an important field of investigation for the business science (2).

In order for the businesses to provide a high quality service to their followers, it is necessary for them to act with a philosophy open to new ideas. For creating a corporate culture, the best quality should be taken as reference, innovations and developments should be followed closely. The crucial point here is that the customer behaviors should not be overlooked while following the innovations and developments in the market (16).

This study, which was conducted under the light of these pieces of information, aimed at examining the perceptions of service quality in private and public sports businesses.

METHOD

This is a descriptive research study, which was conducted to evaluate the perceptions and expectations of the members of sports businesses concerning the service quality in the private or public sports centers in Konya province.

Universe and Sample

The universe of the study is comprised of individuals, who are members of private or public sports centers within the borders of Konya province. The sample group is comprised of 365 individuals from private and 371 individuals from public sports centers.

Data Collection Tools

In this study, Service Quality Assessment Scale (SQAS) was used as the data collection tool, which was developed by Lam (1) and adapted into Turkish by Gürbüz et al. (2). The scale is consisted of 40 articles and 6 sub-dimensions. These sub-dimensions are personnel, program, change room, physical features, exercise facility, and child care, respectively. However, since there was no child care service delivery in the sports centers that this study was conducted, it was not included as a sub-dimension in this study, similar to numerous other research studies.

Statistical Analysis of the Data

The data obtained from the scales were coded into computer environment, and statistical analyses were conducted via SPSS 22.00 program. Statistical results were analyzed at 5 % margin of error, 95 % confidence interval, and $p < 0.05$ significance level. Independent t test was used in the comparison of dual groups, and One_Way ANOVA test in the comparison of multiple groups. The Post Hoc LSD test was used in order to detect the source group of the significant difference. In order for reaching the SERVQUAL scores, the expected service scores were extracted from the perceived service scores, obtaining the SERVQUAL score which can have either + or - value.

FINDINGS

Table 1. Distribution of the service quality scores of the research group

Sub-dimensions	Private		Public	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Personnel	-0.41	1.13	-1.63	1.15
Program	-0.33	1.21	-0.87	1.32
Change Room	-0.32	1.14	-1.68	1.25
Facility	-0.45	1.12	-0.67	1.31

The distribution of the SERVQUAL scores of the research group is given in Table 1. It is observed that the mean SERVQUAL scores of all of the sub-dimensions are negative. Accordingly, it is determined that the expectations of the members of the both (public and private) kinds of centers are higher.

Table 2. Business-type comparison of the service quality scores of the research group

Sub-dimensions	Business Type	N	Mean	SD	t	p
Personnel	Private	365	-0.41	1.13	9.165	0.000
	Public	371	-1.63	1.15		
Program	Private	365	-0.33	1.21	4.312	0.000
	Public	371	-0.87	1.32		
Change room	Private	365	-0.32	1.14	11.418	0.000
	Public	371	-1.68	1.25		
Facility	Private	365	-0.45	1.12	2.321	0.002
	Public	371	-0.67	1.31		

Business-type comparison of the service quality scores of the research group are given in Table 2. Significant differences are observed in all of the sub-dimensions in favor of the private sports centers ($p < 0.05$). The service quality scores of the individuals who are members of public centers are determined to be lower.

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

In this part of the study, the comparison results are given concerning the level of the service perceptions of the individuals, who are members of private and public sports centers, based on the service provided for them.

Firstly, considering the Servqual scores, which we evaluate as the service quality level, it was determined that the Servqual scores of the individuals using both kinds of sports centers were negative in all of the sub-dimensions. Therefore, we can mention that the service expectations of the participants concerning the sports centers were higher than the service they perceived and that the sports centers could not sufficiently fulfil the expectations of their customers.

When previous studies in the literature are examined, it is observed that the service quality scores (perception scores/Servqual) of the individuals, who are members of centers, are generally negative (16, 1, 14).

These results do not indicate that the sports centers that we conducted the study have a low service quality, because it is mentioned that the individuals, for whom the service is delivered, will

always be elite level (6). Chelladurai and Chang (8) stated that the quality perception of each individual may differ.

Considering the service quality scores based on the center type, a significance was determined among all sub-dimensions in favor of the private sports centers. It was concluded that the service quality perceptions of the individuals, who were members of public centers, were lower. Therefore, it can be mentioned that the services delivered in the private sports centers are more positively perceived by the customers. This result can be attributed to the fact that the private centers, based on commercial concern, act carefully about certain issues such as approaching the customers and facility opportunities etc.

In a study conducted by Bıyıklı (5), it was determined that the service quality perception levels of the customers of private sports centers were higher compared to the public ones. In another study conducted by Üzümlü et al. (18), it was reported that the service quality scores perceived by the individuals, who were members of private sports centers, were higher. Previous studies support our research study.

As the conclusion, it was observed that the service quality perceptions of the research group were negative for both the public and private sports centers. The Servqual scores were determined to be negative in all sub-dimensions. In the comparison of the two type of businesses, it was determined that the service quality scores of the private sports centers were higher.

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