Assessment of expectations and perceptions of sport business customers for service quality: a study of sport business sector in Sivas, Turkey

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Abstract

In this study, it is aimed to evaulate the sport customers' perceptions of the service quality and the sport businesses'performance in Sivas, Turkey and with the gained data to improve some advices for sport businesses to give more effective service quality. The data which is used in this study have been gained from the customers of 10 sport businesses in Sivas, Turkey. SQAS (Service Quality Assessment Scale) instrument, which was developed by Lam et al., (2005), to measure the service quality of Fitness Centers, was used as a means to collect data. The data used in the research were obtained from the customers (n=316) of 10 sport businesses in Sivas province. To find the difference between groups, "irrelevant-modelling t test" and "paired-modelling t test" have been used. The difference between them has been accepted as meaningful if p<0.05. When the service expectations according to the gender are compared, it is seen that the females have higher expectation levels in all aspects than the males. When the service perceptions according to the gender are compared, it is seen that the females in all aspects except "physical establishment" have found the service quality more satisfying than the males. The results indicate that the expectations of the customers of sport businesses in Sivas, (Turkey) province are not met completely. All the customers that get service from the sports institutions in the city of Sivas have the satisfaction more than the avarege, but their expectations haven't been fully met. It has been determined that there is a meaningful difference between the expectation and perception scores in the negative direction. It is seen that the aspect that has the lowest expectation level is "undressing room". "Training center", "personnel", "program" and "physical establishment" aspects follow "undressing room" aspect in order.

Keywords: Sport businesses, service quality, perception, expectation

INTRODUCTION

Developments in sports and increasing people's interest over the sports in Turkey as in the World have increased the amount of the sport businesses that serve sport materials and give sport services. That increase naturally causes the competition in sport businesses as every sector. For that reason, sport businesses as other businesses have to meet the customers' expectations even go beyond that expectations to have the competition superiority and continue their existences. The sport businesses that can succeed in doing that may continue their existences.

There have been many international researches in the field of measuring the quality of service in many service sectors. It is possible to see those researches in many service sectors like tourism, medicine, transportation, education, local administration etc. (Eleren et al., 2007). But it is thought that there are not enough researches in the subjects of how the service qualities are perceived by the customers and how much importance is given to it by them.

In this study, it is aimed to evaulate the sport customers' perceptions of the service quality and the sport businesses'performance in Sivas and with the gained data to improve some advices for sport businesses to give more effective service quality. For that aim, the questions below are wanted to be answered;

    a. In which level are the customers'expectations of the service quality?
    b. In which level are the qualities of service that are perceived by the customers?
    c. Are there any differences according to the sexes between the expectations and the perceptions of service qualities?

This study has been seen an important subject of research for the sport businesses in Sivas to give effective services and to continue their existences thanks to it.

Conceptual Framework

Sports Management

Generally the concept of business means the units that produce service or materials and/or sell it and are aimed to earn money by gathering production factors (Mutlu, 2009). In another definition, the concept of businesses is defined as units that change the data taken from the

environment in a particilar condition to the market productions and services and sell those at a particular price existed in the market (Kocel, 2011).

The concept of sport business comes out as a kind of business in which people's needs, aims and expectations about sports are met. In a narrow meaning, it gives information about how the open and closed sports facilities in or out of the settled areas should be established and run. In a wide meaning, it means to plan and apply the sportive services and programs that can be come true by using the environments outside of the facilities like mountains, rivers, lakes, seas, beaches and even the sky (Ekenci and İmamoğlu, 2002).

In this context, sports businesses are defined as the institutions that gives different sport activities and services to shape people's social lives (Ramazanoğlu and Öcalan, 2005) and to meet different sportive needs and wishes (Ekenci and İmamoğlu, 2002). Its aim is to be able to supply productions peculiar to some branches and to serve them to the people who want to use (Ramazanoğlu and Öcalan, 2005).

According to a similar definition, the sport businesses are the institutions that try to meet the customers needs and wishes by putting some kinds of sports equipments into the sport markets (Argan and Katırcı, 2008).

Sports Product

The production means an equipment, a service, a person, a place, an organization, an idea or the mixture of those that are aimed to meet people's needs and wishes and to put into the market to be useful (Argan and Katırcı, 2008).

In this context, a sport product is a material that is produced to meet the needs of the sport customers or a service that is not physical (Argan and Katırcı, 2008).

The goods as the concrete materials that are used to meet people's needs are defined as the touchable products (Mutlu, 2009). Some of the sport products are touchable materials, too (Argan and Katırcı, 2008). Footballs, tennis rackets, sport clothes are some examples of those products.

As to the services as some abstract actions that also meets people's needs but are not concrete, they are defined as the products that are not touchable (Şimşek, 2008). Watching a sportive match, doing sports in the fitness center or in a swimming pool are the examples of those.

Quality of Service

The quality of the service is defined as " the general idea of the customers about a product or a service's superiority or perfection "(Eleren et al., 2007). On the other hand, it defines the quality of service as the difference between the customers'expectations and their perceptions about the quality of the service (Mutlu, 2009).

The customers who are satisfied with the quality of the service will continue to buy the service and as to the unsatisfied customers, they will stop buying the service and probably will talk about their dissatisfaction to their friends (Kotler, 2001). For that reason, businesses need to try to make their customers satisfied with their services.

The sport businesses as the instutitions focused on the satisfaction of the customers have to provide satisfaction for the customers. If the customers are satisfied with the service given in the sport center, they will come again. So the qualities of the products, services and the activities have vital importance fort he sport businesses, as the other businesses do too. For the customers are waiting for their expectatins to be met, not giving that exptected qualities will end up losing customers (Ergin et al., 2010).

For that reason, it is important to determine how the services given are perceived by the customers, in which criteria those are evaluated, which of the quality components are awared and given importance by the customers or what quality componants are paid insufficient attention by the businesses (Ergin et al., 2010).

MATERIALS and METHODS

Model Research

This study has been carried out according to the combing model.

Universe and Sample

The data which is used in this study have been gained from the customers of 10 sport businesses in Sivas. They do business and have trade status. With the permission of those businesses managers, the scale forms have been given out by the researchers giving the necessary explanations to the 400 customers who take services from that businesses and they

have been wanted to fill out those forms. 316 of those scale forms collected have been found usefuland the analyses have been done according to those forms.

Data Collection Tools

In this study , SQAS (Service Quality Assessment Scale) that has been developed by Lam, Zhang and Jensen, (2005) for the aim of assessing the qualities of fitness and health clubs has been used as the data collectiion tools (Lam et al., 2005). SQAS consists of 40 articles and 6 dimensions. Those are dimensions of personnel, programs, undressing rooms, physical properties, exercise facilities and children care. For the dimension of children care hasn't been existed in the sport businesses where the research has been done, it hasn't been used.

For the aim of assessing the articles in the scale, the perceptions and expectations that are in the SERVQUAL Model which has been developed by Parasuraman et al., (1988). According to that model, the quality of the service is the result of the expectations and perceptions. In another Word, the SERVQUAL model bases on the difference between the expected quality and the perceived quality (perception (A) -expectation (B) = the service quality) (Parasuraman et al., 1998).

If A >B, it has high quality, If A = B, it is satisfactory, If A<B, it has low quality (Parasuraman et al., 1998).

Data Collection

In the data obtained, frequence, percentage rate, arithmetic average and standard deviation analyses have been done and the Cronbach Alpha safety coefficient has been measured for inner consistency to be able to determine. In general, to be able to determine the service quality, the differences between the the expectations scores and perception scores have been determined by subtracting one from the other. To find the difference between groups, "irrelevant-modelling t test" and "paired-modelling t test" have been used. The difference between them has been accepted as meaningful if p<0.05.

RESULTS

Table 1. The dispersion of people according to their demographic properties

Gender	F	%	Age	F	%
Female	116	36.7	17 years old and under	11	3,5
Male	200	63.3	18-30 years old	241	76,3
Total	**316**	**100**	31years old and over	64	20,2
			Total	**316**	**100**
B.M.I.	**F**	**%**	**Occupation**	**F**	**%**
Thin	14	4.4	Public	47	14.9
Normal Weight	188	59.5	Private sector	56	17.7
Overweight	91	28.8	House wife	13	4.1
Obese	23	7.3	Student	200	63.3
Total	**316**	**100**	**Total**	**316**	**100**
Education			**F**		**%**
Primary education			10		3.2
High School			49		15.5
University			236		74.7
Graduate			21		6.6
Total			**316**		**100**

In table-1, the dispersion of the research participants has been given according to their demographic properties. According to it, it is seen that an important part of the participants consists of women (36.7%), 76.3% of them is between 18-30 years old and more than one – third of them is overweight and obese. It is also understood that more than three-fourth (81.3%) of the participants are college graduate and 63.3 % of them are students (Table 1).

Table 2. The dispersion of members' participations to the sport centers

The Fitness Center Type	F	%	Participation Period	F	%
Fitness Center	221	69.9	Less than 1 Year	119	63
Pool	54	17.1	1 Year	53	16.8
Tennis Court	41	13.0	2 Years	20	6.3
Total	**316**	**100**	3 Years	15	4.7
			4 Years and Over	29	9.2
			Total	**316**	**100**

Fitness Center Weekly Arrival Frequency	F	%	Fitness Center Arrival Time	F	%
1-2 Times	79	25	06^{00}-10^{00}	19	6
3-4 Times	151	47.8	10^{00}-14^{00}	61	19.3
5-6 Times	77	24.4	14^{00}-18^{00}	105	33.2
7 and above	9	2.8	18^{00}-24^{00}	131	41.5
Total	**316**	**100**	**Total**	**316**	**100**
Benefiting from the fitness center Purpose				**F**	**%**
Recreation Activity				33	10.4
Maintain a Healthy Life				134	42.4
Recovery from Weight				42	13.3
Having a fit body				87	27.5
Social Relations Development				20	6.3
Total				**316**	**100**

In the table 2, the dispersions of the participants'going to the sports center who are in the study, have been given. According to it, it is seen that most of the participants, (69.9%) have gone to those centers for one year or less than it, almost half of them (47.8%) g oto the sport centers 3-4 times a week, nearly one-fourth of them use the centers in the afternoosn and in the evening. When the using aims of the sport centers are examined, it is understood that the first aim of an important parts of the participants (42.4%) is leading a healthy life and the first aim of the 27.5% parts of them is having fit bodies (Table 2)

Table 3. The values of perceptions and expectations about the service quality

Material	Perception		Expectation				
	X	**SS**	**X**	**SS**	**P-E**	**t**	**P**
Personnel	**3.97**	**0.90**	**4.53**	**0.45**	**-0.56**	**10.426**	**0.00***
1. Possession of required knowledge/skills	4.05	1.08	4.77	0.53	**-0.71**	11.221	0.00*
2. Neatness and dress	4.16	0.96	4.49	0.74	**-0.34**	5.274	0.00*
3. Willingness to help	4.05	1.08	4.63	0.62	-0.58	8.955	0.00*
4. Patience	3.98	1.08	4.55	0.65	-0.58	8.612	0.00*
5. Communication with members	4.00	1.07	4.54	0.60	-0.55	8.976	0.00*
6. Responsiveness to complaints	3.93	1.09	4.65	0.62	**-0.72**	10.260	0.00*
7. Courtesy	3.97	1.06	4.61	0.66	-0.65	9.577	0.00*
8. Instructors provide individuals attention to member	3.82	1.15	4.30	0.90	-0.48	6.352	0.00*
9. Provision of consistency	3.83	1.14	4.24	0.91	-0.41	5.143	0.00*
Cronbach's alpha	0.823		0.945				
Program	**3.82**	**0.88**	**4.42**	**0.45**	**-0.50**	**11.544**	**0.00***

	P		E				
10. Variety of program	3.90	1.13	4.21	0.97	**-0.32**	4.159	0.00*
11. Availability of programs at appropriate level	3.91	1.05	4.52	0.65	-0.60	8.915	0.00*
12. Convenience of program time/schedule	3.86	1.22	4.54	0.69	-0.68	9.065	0.00*
13. Quality/Content of programs	3.89	1.09	4.56	0.66	-0.67	9.260	0.00*
14. Appropriateness of class size	3.73	1.15	4.26	0.88	-0.53	7.105	0.00*
15. Background music (if any)	3.63	1.31	4.24	0.98	-0.61	7.786	0.00*
16. Adequacy of space	3.86	1.22	4.64	0.56	**-0.78**	10.218	0.00*
Cronbach's alpha	0.672		0.872				
Locker Room	**3.95**	**1.00**	**4.66**	**0.41**	**-0.71**	**11.939**	**0.00***
17. Availability of lockers	4.15	1.09	4.73	0.48	-0.58	8.983	0.00*
18. Overall maintenance	3.96	1.17	4.73	0.52	-0.77	10.975	0.00*
19. Shower cleanliness	3.70	1.42	4.71	0.60	**-1.01**	11.605	0.00*
20. Accessibility	4.04	1.11	4.52	0.75	**-0.47**	6.173	0.00*
21. Safety	3.90	1.23	4.66	0.62	-0.76	9.987	0.00*
Cronbach's alpha	0.731		0.889				
Facility	**3.76**	**0.92**	**4.19**	**0.68**	**-0.43**	**6.929**	**0.00***
22. Convenience of location	3.96	1.22	4.50	0.78	-0.54	6.781	0.00*
23. Hours of operation	3.80	1.27	4.36	0.90	**-0.55**	6.484	0.00*
24. Availability of parking	3.44	1.37	3.66	1.31	**-0.22**	2.163	0.03*
25. Accessibility to building	3.76	1.26	4.16	1.05	-0.40	4.582	0.00*
26. Parking lot safety	3.46	1.28	3.91	1.21	-0.46	4.942	0.00*
27. Temperature control	3.83	1.23	4.35	0.87	-0.52	6.519	0.00*
28. Lighting control	4.10	1.07	4.42	0.74	-0.32	4.419	0.00*
Cronbach's alpha	0.812		0.866				
Training Facility	**3.94**	**1.03**	**4.53**	**0.48**	**-0.59**	**9.984**	**0.00***
29. Pleasantness of environment	4.06	1.09	4.47	0.68	-0.41	6.069	0.00*
30. Modern looking equipment's	3.99	1.12	4.36	0.81	**-0.37**	5.226	0.00*
31. Adequacy of signs and directions	3.85	1.19	4.45	0.78	-0.59	7.901	0.00*
32. Variety of equipment	3.92	1.19	4.65	0.63	-0.73	9.887	0.00*
33. Availability of workout facility/equipment	3.89	1.23	4.66	0.60	**-0.78**	10.309	0.00*
34. Overall maintenance	3.96	1.20	4.62	0.60	-0.66	9.144	0.00*
Cronbach's alpha	0.791		0.943				
Overall Service Quality	**3.89**	**0.38**	**4.47**	**0.84**	**-0.58**		**0.00***

P= Perceptions, E= Expectations, Significance Level = *p<0.05

When the reliability coefficiencies of the aspects of the service quality are examined, it is seen that its "personal" aspect has 0.82, its "program" aspect has 0.67, its "undressing room" aspect has 0.73, its "physical establishment" aspect has 0.81 and its "training establishment" aspect has a 0,79 of Cronbach Alpha values. The level of 0.60<a<0.80 means that the aspects are reliable, the level of .0.80<a<1.00 are highly relaible (Akgül and Çevik, 2003).

When the differences between the perception and the expectation scores are examined in the aspects of articles, valuable differences in every component of all aspects have been determined. Those differences' being negative shows the low quality of all articles.

The article of personnel's being tidy and well-dressed of the personnel aspect forms the lowest difference with the "34 units of difference" in this aspect, the articles of "personnel's being concerned with the complaints and having the necessary qualities " form the highest difference with the "72 and 71 units of difference".

The article of "having program kinds" forms the lowest difference with the "32 units of difference " the article of "having enough place" forms the highest difference with the "78 units of difference".

The article of "easy access to the undressing room" forms the lowest difference of "47 units of difference", the article of "showers'being clean" form the highest difference with the "101 units of difference".

The article of " having parking lot of the phsical eslablishment aspect" forms the lowest difference with "22 units of difference" in this aspect, and the article of "having suitable activity timing" forms the highest difference with "55 units of difference".

Table 4. The service expactations of irrelevant groups' t-test, according to the sexes

Dimensions	Groups	Expectation			
		X	**SS**	**t**	**P**
Personnel	**Male**	4,50	0,48	1,714	0,08
	Female	4,58	0,38		
Program	**Male**	4,38	0,47	1,960	0,05
	Female	4,49	0,42		
Locker room	**Male**	4,60	0,30	4,221	0,00*
	Female	4,78	0,45		
Physical facilities	**Male**	4,11	0,72	2,622	0,00*
	Female	4,32	0,59		
Training facility	**Male**	4,49	0,52	2,305	0,02*
	Female	4,61	0,39		
General Quality of service	**Male**	4,41	0,40	3,139	0,02*
	Female	4,55	0,33		

*p<0,05

When the service expectations according to the gender are compared, it is seen that the females have higher expectation levels in all aspects than the males. While the highest

expectation of both females and males is in the aspect of undressing room is (X=4,78;4,60), their lowest expectation is in the aspect of physical establishment (X=4,32;4,11). While there is no meaningful connection statistically in the aspects of "personnel and the program", it is seen that there are meaningful differences in the aspects of "undressing room, physical establishment and the training center". When the expectations of the service quality are examined in general, it is seen that there is a meaningful difference stattistically between the females (X=4,55) and the males (X=4,41) and the females have higher expectation level with 0,14 units than the males (Table-4).

Table 5. The perceptions of the service quality of ırrelevant groups' t-test, according to the sexes

Dimensions	Groups	Perception			
		X	SS	T	P
Personnel	**Male**	3,94	0,84	0,799	0,42
	Female	4,02	0,98		
Program	**Male**	3,80	0,82	0,503	0,61
	Female	3,85	0,96		
Locker Room	**Male**	3,89	0,96	1,260	0,20
	Female	4,04	1,07		
Physical facilities	**Male**	3,79	0,90	-0,786	0,43
	Female	3,71	0,96		
Training facility	**Male**	3,90	1,01	1,003	0,31
	Female	4,02	1,06		
General quality of service	**Male**	3,86	0,80	0,625	0,53
	Female	3,93	0,92		

*p<0,05

When the service perceptions according to the gender are compared, it is seen that the females in all aspects except "physical establishment" have found the service quality more satisfying than the males. It is seen that there are meaningful differences in all aspects statistically. It is determined that the females' most satisfying aspect (X=4,04) is the aspect of "undressing room", the males' most satisfying aspect (X=3,94) is the aspect of "physical establishment". , both females and males' most unsatisfying aspect (X=3,71;3,79) is the aspect of "physical establishment".. When the perceptions of the service quality are compared in general, it is seen that there are no meaningful differences statistically between the females (X=3,93) and the males (X=3,86). (Table-5).

DISCUSSION and CONCLUSION

When the differences between the scores of perceptions and expectations are examined in the aspects of both articles and aspects, it has been determined that there is a low service quality

in those sport centers. When the service quality is examined in general, it is seen that there is also a low service quality.

It is seen that an important amount of the participants of the study consists of the females (36.7%), 76.3% of them are between the ages of 18 and 30, more than one-third of them (36.1%) are overweight and obese (Table 1). When member participants in two fitness centers are examined according to the gender in the study of Soyguden et al., (2015) it is seen that 75% of them are males and 25% of them are females. In another study of Yildiz and Tüfekci, (2010) the female participants are higher with the 48% rate.

In the study having been done by Soyguden et al., (2015) It is seen that 76.3% of the participants are between the ages of 18 and 30. In addition, the most amount of the participants are university students with the rate of 34%.

Yildiz and Tufekci, (2010) express in their study that 76% of the participants have graduated from the university. Additionally, it is seen that 78% of the participants of the members of fitness center are between the ages of 15 and 25. Afthinos et al, (2005) in their study have determined that the 67% rates of the members of sports centers are below 19 years old and between the ages of 20 and 29. They have found a similar result as in our study.

When the service expectations are compared according to the sexes, it is seen that females have more expectation in al aspects than the males. While the highest expectation of both females and males is İn the aspect of "undressing room" is (X=4,78;4,60), their lowest expectation is in the aspect of "physical establishment" (X=4,32;4,11). In the study of Soyguden et al., (2015) the highest expectation level of the participants has been found in the "personel" aspect, the lowest expectation of them has been found in the aspect of "program". Additionally, in the same study, it is seen that the expectation level of the females are higher than of the males. The result of that difference means that the females have more expectations than the males. It has a similar result as in our study.

When the differences between the scores of perceptions and expectations are examined in the aspects, there is a meaningful difference among all the aspects in negative direction. It is seen that the undressing room aspect has the lowest quality level with the difference of -0,71 units. This aspect is followed by "training center" aspect with the difference of -0,59 units, "personnel" aspect with the difference of -0,56 units, "program" aspect of -0,50 units and "physical establishment" aspect with the difference of -0,43 units.

When the differences between the perceptions and expectations scores are examined in the aspects, it has been determined that all aspects have difference in negative direction. Statistically, it is seen that there is a meaningful difference in the level of p<0.05 in the all aspects of personnel, program, undressing room and physical establishment.

Yıldız and Tufekci, (2010) study, it is seen that the personnel aspect has the least emptiness with the units of -0,06 and in the lowest quality level, the undressing room has the highest emptiness with units of -0,47.

Aslan and Kocak, (2011) have found in their study that the undressing room aspect has the highest expectation and the physical establishment has the lowest expectation as in our study.

Yildiz and Tufekci, (2010) have found in tehir study that the females have more service quality expectation than the males. Gurbuz et al., (2012) has found that the females have more undressing room expectation.

Those results obtained, all the customers that get service from the sports institutions in the city of Sivas have the satisfaction more than the avarege, but their expectations haven't been fully met. It has been determined that there is a meaningful difference between the expectation and perception scores in the negative direction. It is seen that the aspect that has the lowest expectation level is "undressing room". "Training center", "personnel", "program" and "physical establishment" aspects follow "undressing room" aspect in order.

Recommandations

For it is important that the customers expectations should be met for them to continue buying the service, the sport businesses need to increase the quality of their service. For that, it is needed to increase the qualities of all the aspects starting with the articles of the undressing room with the lowest quality mentioned above.

It has vital importance how the expectations and perceptions of those businesses' customers and they need to try to increase their quality by determining the deficiencies for the aspects of developing the sector and the businesses' having competition superiority.

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