



Impact of Service Quality on Satisfaction, Loyalty and Intention to Revisit of Sport Customers: The Case Study of Swimming Pools in Alborz Province

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this research was to determine the effect of customer satisfaction and loyalty attitude and willingness of the pools was Alborz Province. The research methodology was correlational the field. The population of this study was all Alborz province pools, male customers were used for the completion of questionnaires. The samples of this study were 361 persons. The questionnaire used in the study consisted of Loyalty questionnaire of Su (2004), service quality and satisfaction scale of Liu (2008) and intention to revisit of Lim (2006). The face and content validity is confirmed by panel of experts and the reliability of components was estimated by Cronbach's Alpha in this way: Satisfaction (0.913), attitudinal (0.754), and attendance tendency (0.696). Data analysis was performed using LISREL software. In Diagram 1 LISREL software output is in standard mode. Results LISREL output indicates that the dimension of quality of services including tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy have the effect of 0.33, 0.16, 0.15, 0.21 and 0.27% on overall satisfaction respectively. Also attitudinal loyalty has the effect on 0.61% and behavioral loyalty has the effect of 0.24 on intention to revisit of customers.

Keywords: Satisfaction, Attitudinal Loyalty, Sport, Intention to Revisit

JEL Classifications: M31, M37, Z32

1. INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of the third millennium, the world of sports is experiencing a new period. Broad and quick developments at all aspects of sports call for application of marketing techniques in sports. Millions of dollars are daily spent in different countries for sports, and the needs for athletic activities in order to alleviate mental and physical problems are getting more and more pervasive. All these have caused more attempts to be carried out in sport marketing field (Yousefi et al., 2007). Sport marketing and customer satisfaction are universal issues that affect all organizations. Many countries intend to satisfy their customers. Those who are happy with a seller are less likely to change their channel (Homburg and Rudolph, 2001; Mahmoudi, 2011). Since there is a powerful positive relation between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty, and as satisfaction is taken as a prerequisite for loyalty, this is safe to declare that those who are decidedly happy with their sellers are less likely to go for other products available

in the marketplace (Mahmoudi, 2011). Furthermore, quality of present-day competitive economy has shattered the previously dominant monopoly in the area of product manufacturing so that customer-oriented principles are now one of the key business tenets and companies might be removed out of stage should they cast indifferent looks over this issue. If products and services offered by an organization are able to fulfill customers' expectations and provoke their satisfaction, they would not only choose to make repurchases, but also encourage their friends to refer to their organization (Dadkhah, 2009). Sharpening of competitions in present-age conditions goads sports service providers to make analyses on vital events and their impacts on customers' behaviors. Identification of customers' expectations from sports organizations allows service marketers to determine whether their services meet their customers' needs (Bolton and Drew, 1991; Gronroos, 1988; Parasuraman et al., 1985; Robledo, 2001). In services quality literature, the most dominant model for assessment of services is Servqual scale, which has five dimensions: (1) Tangible elements,

being physical elements and aspects of an organization to provide services, (2) reliability, being an organization's ability to provide services in proper and timely manners, (3) responsibility, being an organization's inclination to provide quick assistances to its customers, (4) confidence, being knowledge and courtesy of an organization's employees in making reliance in customers, and (5) sympathy, being the manner employees treat with customers (Hosainy et al., 2010).

According to Robinson, sports organizations are characterized by features which distinguish them from other companies. Firstly, they are luxury organizations, with whose prices people treat with caution. Secondly, customers refer to sports organizations when they are on their vacations. Thirdly, emotional investments such as supporting a team and sense of belonging to a club are involved in sports—the factors which possibly provoke more expectations from sports organizations than other service providers (Robinson, 2006). Sports customers are addressed as a special group of customers, who thus deserve more attention paid by sports service providers like pools (Hassanzadeh, 2005). Beyond any sports-associated endeavor, there is an outstanding decision-making process that requires further reconsiderations regarding how and what services and products to choose (Hassanzadeh, 2005). Pool managers well recognize importance of this issue, knowing that evaluation of services quality, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty is a foremost step in improvement and development of their organization.

Accordingly, the author undertook to identify satisfaction and loyalty factors through the solutions and outcomes made out of his research entitled “impact of quality of services on satisfaction, loyalty, and presence of customers at Alborz province pools” intended to enable better planning. Briefly, sports managers should pay sufficient attention to get a better understanding of issues related to their services, particularly services impacting on their customers' behaviors. They need to know what especial features affect their customers and lead to their loyalty (Seyed et al., 2010). Evaluation of quality of services in sports industry is still a controversial issue (Williams, 1998).

Several studies have been carried out in service organizations, especially in the field of sports, in different countries reaching at different outcomes. In his study “impact of quality of services on satisfaction and return of male and female customers in South Korean Golf Commercial Clubs,” Lee et al. (2010) concluded that tangibility and sympathy are two important elements in assessment of quality of services to determine male and female customers' satisfaction levels. Female golfers tend to attach importance to physical countenance and clearness of facilities—the factors which are highly significant in measurement of quality of services. Holding the same belief, Howat et al. (1996) conducted a research to measure quality of services in 15 Australian sports and recreation centers. He concluded that a model composed of four dimensions, i.e., main services, quality of employees, general equipment, and minor services, is suitable for such centers.

Presently, there is no doubt on the role of customer satisfaction in market share and development of organizations. In his study

“Measurement of Customer Satisfaction in Portuguese Fitness Clubs,” Theodorakis (2004) concluded that women were less satisfied than men regarding equipment of services. And, educated people had the least satisfaction respecting equipment and social issues. Among such studies, Hashemi (2007) is a prominent one. He compared customer satisfaction levels in public and private roofed pools. Results showed that there is a significant difference between public and private pools respecting health, social relations, facilities, equipment, HR quality, and management techniques. They also indicated that there is a significant difference between male and female customers' satisfaction. As outcomes show, quality of services and satisfaction are very important factors that guarantee customer loyalty. Being informed of importance of these factors, Chuan-Jao (2008) examined quality of services, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty, concluding that quality of services such as plans and club conditions are of effect on customer satisfaction. He also showed that there is a meaningful relation between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty in these clubs.

In his investigation of customer satisfaction in sports industry, Seyed et al. (2008) demonstrated that a good understanding of customers from quality of services in sports has given rise to their high satisfaction degrees, resulting in its turn in generation of loyalty.

Another variable in this research is customers' inclination to return. Dourandish (2011) is another scholar who analyzed the relation between services quality, customer satisfaction, and propensity of customers to attend body building clubs. He suggested that impacts by both services quality and customer satisfaction on propensity of customers to attend body building clubs are high. And, customer satisfaction is a more powerful predictor for propensity of customers to attend body building clubs. In his study “impacts of services quality on customer satisfaction, loyalty, and behavioral decisions in South Korean Fitness Centers,” Sei-Jun (2006) showed that services quality has direct positive or negative impacts on customer satisfaction levels. This study also indicated that customer satisfaction degree has direct impact on customer loyalty. Finally, results showed that high levels of customer loyalty have direct effects on customers' instantaneous decisions.

Studies by Gharechoo et al. (2011), Ziviar et al. (2012), Faryabi et al. (2013), Mogodi et al. (2014), and Sabzei et al. (2014) are also prominent in the area of services quality, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty. Gharechoo et al. (2011), in their study entitled “Loyalty of Employee in Interaction with Loyalty of Customers of Service Industries,” concluded that there is a positive and meaningful relationship between employee loyalty and quality of services, quality of services and customer satisfaction, and customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. In investigation of the factors impacting on customer satisfaction using Servqual scale, Ziviar et al. (2012) showed that four dimensions, i.e., confidence, responsibility, guarantee, and sympathy, have been of effect on customer satisfaction of Isfahan Province Mellat Banks. However, physical aspects have been of little impact on satisfaction of customers from quality of services. Moreover, Faryabi et al. (2013) conducted their SERVEQUAL scale-based study entitled

“assessment of quality of services and its relationship with market share” on Tabriz City Saderat Banks. Results demonstrated that there is a meaningful difference among services expected by customers and those presented by Saderat Banks branches in Tabriz City at all aspects besides credibility. Also, results linked credibility and responsibility to market share, while there was no meaningful relations among accessibility dimensions and sympathy, on the one hand, and tangible elements with market share, on the other.

Mogodi et al. (2014), in his study “investigation of impact of social responsibility and customer satisfaction, case study: Ahwaz Pasargad Bank,” concluded that there is a positive relation between satisfaction and behavioral/attitudinal loyalty of bank customers. Sabzei et al. (2014) made an analysis on customer loyalty field. In their study “investigation of factors impacting on customer satisfaction, case study: Bank Keshavarzi Customers,” they came to these conclusions: (1) There is a positive and significant relation between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty, (2) there is a positive and significant relation services quality and customer satisfaction, (3) there is a positive and significant relation between reliance and customer loyalty, and reliance is one of the factors which bring about customer loyalty. In these studies, customer satisfaction is normally evaluated based on their perceptive response to products. This is thus asserted that customer satisfaction generates attitudinal loyalty in customers, whose amount is different in different situations among different people. Definitely, customers’ satisfaction and attitudinal loyalty may be determining factors in successfulness or failure of service companies.

In this respect, the study by Saatchyan (2010) entitled “effects of services quality, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty on customers’ instantaneous decisions to attend fitness and aerobic centers,” concluded that there is a positive and meaningful relationship among the factors services quality, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty with return intentions. Regression results showed that satisfaction and loyalty are powerful predictors for return intentions by customers.

2. METHODOLOGY

According to nature of the present study, which intends to examine the model for impact of services quality on customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, and inclination of pool customers to return, it is a correlative research. Moreover, SEM method was adopted to determine impact of predictor variables on criteria variables. Statistical population of this study includes all male customers referring to Alborz province pools. Since accurate number of customers is unclear, MORGAN formula was used to determine the number of required samples. To do so, a pilot study was performed, whose variance value determined that statistical population of this study should be 6,000 peoples. Based on the table, volume of sample is 361. Questionnaire was used to collect require information. Chen Services Quality Questionnaire (2008), Shen Services Quality Questionnaire (2014), and Wu Services Quality Questionnaire (2005) were adopted.

It was adjusted by Liu Questionnaire (2008). In order to determine general satisfaction level of customers, Liu Questionnaire (2008)

was employed. Allen Attitudinal and Behavioral Questionnaire (1990) and presence inclination scale adjusted by Parasuraman (1996) were applied. In addition, McDougal and Lusco (2000) and Duncan and Gary (2002) used the same questionnaire for recreational and sport centers. This questionnaire was adjusted by Lim in 2006. Likert Scale was the basis of all questionnaires, in which each reply has a score among 1-5. In order to determine creditability of measurement tools in this study, (1) content creditability (face validity), and (2) structural creditability (factor analysis) were used. In face validity method, questionnaires were modified after the opinions made by experts and advisors were taken. In factor analysis method, conformity among theoretical and experimental structures of the study was addressed. This is important to note that confirmatory factor analysis technique was used along with Lisrel SEM model. Structural equations modeling software was used to analyze creditability of assessment tools, i.e., confirmatory factor analysis, goodness of fit, and hypotheses test.

3. RESULTS

In this part, conceptual model using LISREL software is tested. Standardized coefficients are shown in Figure 1. Also the T-scores of each path in the model are observable in figure. In Diagram 1 LISREL software output is in standard mode. Results LISREL output indicates that the dimension of quality of services including tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy have the effect of 0.33, 0.16, 0.15, 0.21 and 0.27% on overall satisfaction respectively. Also, overall satisfaction have the effect of 0.53 and 0.36 on attitudinal and behavioral loyal respectively, behavioral loyalty is impressive 0.36%.

Attitudinal loyalty has the effect on 0.61% and behavioral loyalty has the effect of 0.24 on intention to revisit of customers.

In the significant state of the model, results indicate that the effects of all dimensions of service quality on satisfaction are significant. Moreover, the impact of customer satisfaction on attitudinal and behavioral loyal is significant. The effect of attitudinal and behavioral loyalty on the intention to revisit of customers is significant.

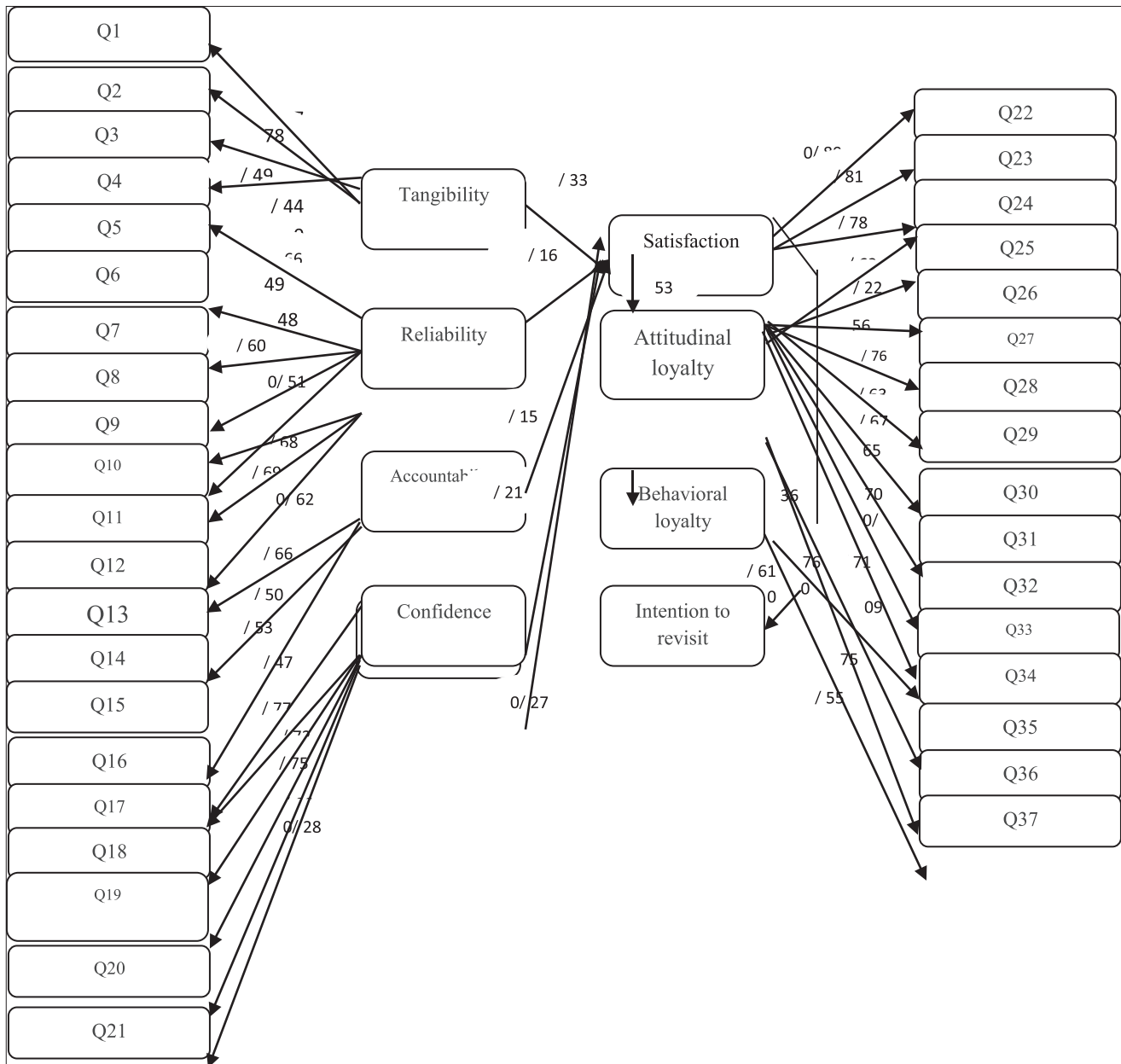
Due to the all amounts of t-value in Table 1 (between 1.96 and -1.96) we can say all causal relationship is significant.

According to the results Table 1, the amount df/χ^2 is 1.79 and smaller than 3, therefore this index indicates a fit model. The root mean square error of approximation must be <0.08 that in the proposed model is 0.045. GFI, NFI, CFI and AGFI should be <0.9 that are met in the fit model of this study. Consequently, all the indexes met the good of fitness of the model.

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

SEM results showed that elements of service quality have impacts on general satisfaction of customers. These elements include tangibility, credibility, responsibility, confidence, and sympathy whose impacts on general satisfaction of customers

Figure 1: LISREL output for causal relationship between independent and dependent variables



are 0.33, 0.16, 0.15, 0.21, and 0.27%, respectively. Customers' perceptions toward services quality performance related to fulfillment of their needs and demands might be declared to have a close relationship with customers' satisfaction and their inclination to return. This part of research findings are aligned with Ramezani (2004), Chen (2004), Shamsipour (2005), Bodet (2006), Sei-Jun (2006), Yi-Chin (2008), Bahlakeh (2008), Alidoost & Koozechian (2009), Saatchyan et al. (2011), and Dourandish (2011). Above studies were conducted in the area of sports services, and most of them reported a considerable relation among services quality and satisfaction variables, as well as their elements. In general, this is safe to indicate that services quality is the basis and one of the most important factors in increasing customer satisfaction levels.

SEM results showed that general satisfaction of customers influences on customers' attitudinal and behavioral loyalty. This

impact is 0.53% on attitudinal loyalty and 0.36% on behavioral loyalty. This is vital for managers and pool owners to get acquaintance on the factors which result in customers' attitudinal and behavioral loyalty, since these factors provide the path for further satisfaction of customers. Determining this satisfaction degree, managers are able to guarantee their customers' attitudinal and behavioral loyalty. This is aligned with Koozechian (2009), Bahlakeh (2008), Seyed et al. (2010), Rahmati (2011), Bodet (2008), Wu (2005), and Mahmoudi (2011). In these studies, customer satisfaction is measured based on their perceptive response to products and/or financial values of presented services. This is thus safe to declare that quality of presented services causes elevated customer satisfaction degrees, bringing about different attitudinal and behavioral loyalty levels in customers. Certainly, essential cores of marketing, i.e., customer satisfaction, attitudinal loyalty, and behavioral loyalty, end in failure or successfulness of service organizations.

Table 1: The results of structural equation modeling

The model	t-value	β
Tangibility on satisfaction	6.16	0.33
Reliability on satisfaction	3.46	0.16
Responsiveness on satisfaction	2.64	0.15
Assurance on satisfaction	3.69	0.211
Empathy on satisfaction	4.64	0.27
Satisfaction on attitude loyalty	10.33	0.51
Satisfaction on behavioral loyalty	6.53	0.35
Attitude loyalty on intention to revisit	11.96	0.61
Behavioral loyalty on intention to revisit	4.34	0.24

SEM results showed that attitudinal loyalty (0.61%) and behavioral loyalty (0.24%) influence on customers' inclination to make repurchases. Attraction of customers' loyalty through addressing their demands should be taken into vigilant account. Addressing customers' demands are golden opportunities to make them loyal and secure their repurchases. Most possibly, this would elevate customer loyalty levels and their inclination to return, with its results being pools' continued benefit-making. This is aligned with Rezai (2008), Kim and Kim (1995), Babakus (2004), Saatchyan et al. (2011), and Wu (2005). Wu (2005) indicated that the first encounter of employees with customers could produce a general customer judgment about pools. Since sports service organizations are different from other companies, most applicants tend to refer to them for passing their leisure hours in a tranquil atmosphere. Therefore, fulfillment of this demand is a foremost factor in customers' inclination to return.

SEM results endorsed the author-made conceptual model. Results showed that data are relatively aligned with the model, and indices are indicative of the fact that this model has a desirable goodness of fit and so-called experimental data is well aligned therewith. It means that impact of services quality on general satisfaction, satisfaction, and customers' inclination to return to Alborz province pools is positive and meaningful. Moreover, services quality influences on general satisfaction, loyalty, and customers' inclination to return.

Currently, customers' general satisfaction is not sufficient, and different organizations, including sports pools, should not rely only on high customer satisfaction levels. They, rather, have to assure that their satisfied customers are loyal, as well. This is intended to make long-term relations with customers to secure long-term benefits for pools. Consequently, pool managers should observe themselves from their customers' eyes, trying to understand their customers and make them happy within the competitions which are subject to increasing intricacies. Not only would this provoke customers to remain loyal to their pools, but also make them encourage their friends to make use of the same services.

Accordingly, this is noted that increase in pools' financial benefits is realized through increasing service quality, leading to customers' loyalty and their inclination to return. In fact, increase in quality of services at all levels results in higher customers' general satisfaction, attitudinal loyalty, and behavioral loyalty degrees, ending in reappearance of customers in pools. A satisfied customer would be loyal to, and reappear at, his/her pool—the fact which guarantees long-term profitability of pools.

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