

IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF LEISURE AND SPORTS CLUB

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Decreasing physical activity encourages business organizations in the sports industry to establish more sports clubs and facilities, strengthen sports infrastructure. Organizations providing sports services face numerous challenges, which prompt decision-making aimed at encouraging customers to be interested in the services offered and to use them. Therefore, it is essential for all levels of management personnel and shareholders to remain creative, original, innovative, flexible, and most importantly – innovative (Howieson et al., 2019). Currently, an increasing number of studies show that the success of sports center management and maintaining competitiveness requires more effective and modern management (Álvarez – García et al., 2019). With increasing competition in the service sector of leisure and sports clubs, the satisfaction of customer expectations with the service becomes a priority. Managing a positive customer experience by increasing customer loyalty is an important aspect to stay in a competitive environment. Therefore, it is important that sports organizations dedicate time and effort to understand and assess the expectations and needs of their unique segment of customers when using the services of a sports club. Research problem question: What is the gap between customers' expectations and the actual quality of service, and what are the ways to address quality gaps? Research aim: To determine the quality of sports club services from the perspective of customers. Research objectives: define the factors influencing the quality of leisure and sports club services and improvement directions; evaluate the quality of leisure sports club services from the perspective of customer expectations and the actual service received. Research Methods: literature review and synthesis, quantitative research – questionnaire survey, statistical data analysis, descriptive statistical analysis. Conclusion: The service of the sports club is at a sufficiently high level, but quality improvement solutions are needed for modernization and expansion of premises and updating equipment. Additional services (nutritionist, masseuse, solarium service) and expand group workouts have been established. The study found that when assessing the quality of services in terms of tangibility, reliability, certainty, responsiveness, empathy for clients, empathy is the lowest valued empathy. The ability of employees to implement the needs of visitors, the allocation of individual attention to the visitor, the solution of problems that have arisen in the problems encountered by the client, the implementation and qualification of special needs, the provision of equipment for services are evaluated with lower scores.

Keywords: quality, service, leisure and sports club.

Introduction

The concept of quality of service is very broad and complex. The researchers agree that its definition is not unambiguous, since services can be varied and have different aspects depending on the context and customer needs. Most scientists share the opinion that the quality of service should be assessed from the perspective of the consumer, as this reflects the real experience of using the services and the expectations of customers. It is important to emphasize that each individual can perceive the quality of services differently. This creates challenges for organizations seeking to ensure a high quality of service, as it is important to delve into the needs and expectations of various customers.

The provision and offer of the highest quality services is the key to success in the service sector. In today's market of intense competition, improving and monitoring the quality of services is a priority task for service organizations. Attracting and retaining customers depends on meeting the expectations that satisfy consumers, on the perception of the quality of the service expected and received by consumers (Behman et al., 2020). If sports club organizations delve into and realize the need for services and can offer quality services that exceed customer expectations (Behman et al. 2020), the likelihood of increasing the demand for services and the number of customers increases. The quality of service becomes a key factor when organizations seek to gain a competitive advantage (Biscaia et al., 2017), quality services create greater added value for customers. The scientific literature presents models for assessing the quality of service: a model of generally perceived quality, a model of service quality gaps, a SERVQUAL service quality model, a 4Q quality model and other models (Al-Gasawneh et al, 2021; Hue Minh et al, 2015 ir kt.). One of the most popular and widely used models for assessing the quality of cus-

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customer service is the service quality model SERVQUAL, which is used to determine the quality of services when serving customers in various sectors. The study's problematic question: what is the gap between customer expectations and the real quality of service, and in what ways to address quality gaps? The aim of the study: to determine the quality of leisure and sports club services from the point of view of customers. The quality of the services of leisure and sports club is assessed in terms of customer expectations and the service actually received. Research objectives: define the factors influencing the quality of leisure and sports club services and improvement directions; evaluate the quality of leisure sports club services from the perspective of customer expectations and the actual service received. Research Methods: literature review and synthesis, quantitative research – questionnaire survey, statistical data analysis, descriptive statistical analysis. Research data processed in SPSS and Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel programs. The research data is analyzed using descriptive statistical methods (frequency table analysis, numerical characteristics of the sample data (mean, standard deviation, correlation analysis (Cronbach's Alpha, Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed))). The study involved 206 clients.

Results

When analyzing the quality of service, the statements in the questionnaire are evaluated on the Likert scale from 1 to 5 points, when 1 point is very bad, 2 points – bad, 3 points – average, 4 points – good, 5 points – very good. The quality of the study is rated as high (5-4 points), average level (three points) and low level (2-1 points).

1 table. Reliability of the questionnaires

Questionnaire scale	Cronbach's Alpha
Evaluation of the quality of services received	.953
Lūkesčiai dėl teikiamų sporto klubo paslaugų	.976

Before calculating the results, the reliability of the scale was checked using Cronbach's Alpha criterion. The results show that the questionnaire is reliable because Cronbach's Alpha value is greater than 0.7.

2 table. Average of consumer expectations and assessment of the service received

Scoring scales	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Evaluation of the quality of services received	206	4.0464	.58363
Expectations regarding the services provided by the sports club	206	4.6620	.47136
Result	206	.6156	.59602

Comparing the respondents' current experience of playing sports in a sports club with their expectations, it was found that the sports club does not sufficiently meet expectations. After calculating the averages of the quality of service received and the expected quality of sports services, it was found that consumer expectations were 0.61 points higher than the services received. Table 3 presents assessments of the criteria of tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, certainty and empathy from the point of view of respondents.

3 lentelė. The average of customer expectations and the assessment of the service received and the gap according to the elements of the service quality model

Claims	Average	Difference
Tangibility		
Customer expectations	4,585	0,505
Services received	4,08	
Reliability		
Customer expectations	4,69	0,602
Services received	4,088	
Responsiveness		
Customer expectations	4,655	0,682
Services received	3,972	
Certainty		
Customer expectations	4,655	0,682
Services received	3,972	
Empathy		
Customer expectations	4,646	0,778
Services received	3,868	

Analyzing the results of consumer expectations and the service received, we note that the biggest gap is in the statements of empathy, how employees serve the client, fulfill their needs, etc. The smallest gap is in tangible statements. This includes the arrangement of simulators in the sports club, modern equipment, the quality of training. As a result of a thorough study, it was noticed that the clients of the sports club most appreciate the politeness and helpfulness of employees, it is very important in serving customers. According to Siddiqi (2011), the attentiveness, sincerity, professionalism of employees, the ability to understand the needs of customers and meet them have a direct impact on customer satisfaction and loyalty (Siddiqi, 2011). This only proves that the competence and helpfulness of the staff are important factors for increasing customer loyalty, satisfaction and feedback. Leisure and sports clubs are increasingly looking for ways to retain existing customers and attract new customers. Studies show that high-quality customer service and professionalism bring profit, customers become more loyal (Polyakova & Ramchandani 2023). In addition, empathy and personal attention from

the employees of the sports club is one of the essential expectations of customers and has a great influence on the quality of the customer experience. Researchers, Aminuddin and Shah (2017), in their study, noticed that employee empathy affects customer stress and their satisfaction. Empathetic and personal communication with customers allows them to feel valued, understood and supported. Customers in leisure and sports clubs are looking not only for quality services, but also for a cozy and friendly environment in which they can feel comfortable. Empathy and personal attention from employees can help create this cozy atmosphere in which customers will feel respected, understood and supported. This includes not only empathetic behavior, but also petty things such as eye contact, a smile, a pleasant tone and attention to detail. Customers tend to return to sports clubs where they feel not only well served, but also understood and appreciated.

Conclusion

The quality of leisure and sports club services is determined by the main factors: strategy, marketing, communication, work environment, qualified employees, image and reputation of the organization, and technologies. These factors affect the experience and satisfaction of customers with the services provided by the sports club, therefore it is important to identify the most important factors in the case of assessing the quality of services of each organization and, in order to ensure a high quality of service, make targeted decisions. Measures to improve the quality of sports services are very diverse and are selected depending on the type and specifics of services of a particular sports organization. Improvement measures can cover various areas, ranging from staff training and competence development, modernization of sports clubs with innovative equipment, use

of social media to maintain communication with customers, offer of loyalty programs, creation of a cozy environment, maintaining the relationship of managerial staff with customers and other measures to ensure a positive customer experience.

The service of the sports club is at a sufficiently high level, but the gap between the services received and the expectations regarding the service indicate the need for quality improvement solutions for modernization and expansion of premises and renovation of equipment. The need of clients to receive additional services of a nutritionist, massage, solarium, to expand the options for group trainings in accordance with the needs of clients has been identified. It has been established that polite communication of employees, individual attention and satisfaction of special needs are very important for customers, therefore, in order to retain existing customers and increase the number of customers, it is important to constantly improve the competencies of the staff. The study found that when assessing the quality of services in terms of tangibility, reliability, certainty, responsiveness, empathy for clients, empathy is the lowest valued empathy. The ability of employees to implement the needs of visitors, the allocation of individual attention to the visitor, the solution of problems that have arisen in the problems that have arisen for the client, the implementation and qualifications of special needs, the provision of equipment for services are evaluated with lower scores. In order to increase the quality of service, it is appropriate to modernize training equipment, provide employee training and develop competencies for empathy and quality customer service, maintain feedback with customers through various means, give more individual attention to the clients of the sports club.

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ПІДВИЩЕННЯ ЯКОСТІ ДОЗВІЛЛЯ ТА СПОРТИВНОГО КЛУБУ

Анотація

Зниження фізичної активності спонукає підприємницькі організації спортивної індустрії створювати більше спортивних клубів і споруд, зміцнювати спортивну інфраструктуру. Організації, що надають спортивні послуги, стикаються з численними проблемами, які спонукають до прийняття рішень, спрямованих на заохочення клієнтів цікавитися пропонованими послугами та користуватися ними. Тому важливо, щоб усі рівні управлінського персоналу та акціонерів залишалися креативними, оригінальними, інноваційними, гнучкими, а головне – інноваційними (Howieson et al., 2019). В даний час все більша кількість досліджень показує, що успіх управління спортивними центрами і підтримання конкурентоспроможності вимагає більш ефективного і сучасного менеджменту (Álvarez – García et al., 2019). При зростанні конкуренції в сфері обслуговування спортивних клубів задоволення очікувань клієнтів сервісом стає пріоритетним завданням. Управління позитивним клієнтським досвідом шляхом підвищення лояльності клієнтів є важливим аспектом для збереження конкурентного середовища. Тому важливо, щоб спортивні організації присвячували час і зусилля для розуміння і оцінки очікувань і потреб свого унікального сегмента клієнтів при користуванні послугами спортивного клубу. Дослідницька проблема: який розрив між очікуваннями клієнтів і фактичною якістю обслуговування, і які існують шляхи усунення розривів у якості? Мета дослідження: визначити якість послуг спортивного клубу з точки зору клієнтів. Завдання дослідження: визначити фактори, що впливають на якість послуг розважально-спортивного клубу та напрями його вдосконалення; Оцініть якість послуг спортивного клубу з точки зору очікувань клієнтів і фактично отриманого сервісу. Методи дослідження: огляд та синтез літератури, кількісні дослідження – анкетування, статистичний аналіз даних, описовий статистичний аналіз. Висновок: сервіс спортивного клубу знаходиться на досить високому рівні, але необхідні якісні рішення з підвищення якості для модернізації та розширення приміщень та оновлення обладнання. Встановлено додаткові послуги (дієтолог, масажистка, послуги солярію) та розширено групові тренування. Дослідження показало, що при оцінці якості послуг з точки зору відчутності, надійності, визначеності, оперативності, емпатії до клієнтів емпатія є найменш цінною емпатією. З нижчими балами оцінюється здатність співробітників реалізовувати потреби відвідувачів, виділення індивідуальної уваги відвідувачу, вирішення проблем, що виникли в проблемах, що виникли у клієнта, реалізація та кваліфікація особливих потреб, забезпечення обладнанням для надання послуг.

Ключові слова: якість, сервіс, дозвілля та спортивний клуб.

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