

Association Between Service Quality and Motivation to Engage with Sports Facilities: A Study Among University Students

*Ellail Ain Mohd Aznan¹, Mohd Khairulanwar Md Yusof¹, Ahmad Fikri Mohd Kassim¹, Al Hafiz Abu Bakar¹, Norfaezah Mohd Rosli¹

¹Faculty of Sports Science and Recreation,
Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM)
Perlis Branch, Arau Campus
02600, Arau, Perlis, Malaysia

*Corresponding author's email: ellailain@uitm.edu.my

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ABSTRACT

The concept of service quality embodies a service provider's adeptness in efficiently gratifying customers, thereby enhancing business performance. In contrast, motivation is an internal impetus stemming from needs, desires, or goals, propelling individuals towards desired objectives. This research aims to delve into the interconnection and repercussions of distinct service quality facets on the motivational drive of individuals utilizing sports facilities especially among university students. A total of 453 surveys were meticulously completed as part of this inquiry, utilizing item constructs derived from Parasuraman (1988) and Kodric et al. (2013). The findings underscore a noteworthy and positively moderate correlation between the components of service quality and the motivation level of users in their sports facility engagement ($r = .793^{**}$, $p < 0.001$). This study offers a fresh vantage point, shedding light on the singular impact of service quality on sports facility utilization.

Keywords: *service quality, user's motivation, sports facility*

INTRODUCTION

Past research on service quality has delved into the multifaceted concept of how service providers meet customer expectations and needs, ultimately impacting business performance. Scholars like Ramya, Kowsalya, and Dharanipriya (2019) as well as Ozbekler and Ozturkoglu (2020) have defined service quality as the ability of service providers to effectively satisfy customers' demands, thereby enhancing overall business outcomes. This viewpoint underscores the inseparable link between service and quality, emphasizing their potential to provide intangible yet valuable benefits to recipients (Welthagen & Lötter, 2020). A pivotal contribution in this field was made by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985; 1988), who developed a comprehensive scale for measuring service quality. This scale identified key dimensions that are instrumental in assessing the quality-of-service delivery by various providers (Parasuraman et al., 1988; 1985).

However, scholars have recognized that defining and evaluating service quality presents challenges, leading to ongoing debates within the scholarly community (Han, Al-Ansi, Chi, Baek & Lee, 2020). This challenge is particularly pronounced in the realm of sports services, where the diverse and unique aspects of each service offering contribute to customers' perceptions (Han et al., 2020). Service quality has been distilled into distinct dimensions, including tangibility, dependability, assurance, responsiveness, and empathy (AlOmari, 2022). These dimensions collectively offer a structured framework for evaluating the quality of services, focusing on both objective and subjective aspects of customer experiences. Notably, positive service experiences have been shown to evoke not only customer satisfaction but also intrinsic motivation, driving individuals to participate actively in the services being offered. The concept of attendee motivation has gained prominence in this context. Researchers such as Chen, Baird, and Straub (2019) have examined attendee motivation, which refers to the internal impetus that drives individuals or groups to engage in specific activities or attend events. Specifically, within the sports facility context, Zarei and Ramkissoon (2021) have highlighted attendee motivation as the driving force behind individuals visiting and using sports facilities. Drawing from these perspectives, Li and Shang (2020) conceptualizes motivation as a complex interplay between internal needs, desires, or motives and external stimuli that push individuals toward achieving goals. While Kurniawan, Saputa, and Kusmaedi (2021) demonstrated the positive impact of improved service quality on user satisfaction at a sports facility, they did not explore the relationship between service quality and the motivation to attend. This research strives to bridge this gap by investigating the intricate link between service quality and attendees' motivation at a university sports facility. In doing so, this study aims to contribute a more nuanced understanding of how service quality influences individuals' motivations to engage with sports facilities, shedding light on the interplay between these critical factors.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Service Quality

Service quality has emerged as a crucial determinant of customer satisfaction, loyalty, and business performance across a myriad of industries (Himawan et.al, 2023). Over the years, researchers and practitioners alike have recognized the significance of delivering high-quality services to meet customer expectations and maintain a competitive edge. This literature review synthesizes the key findings and insights from prior research to underscore the importance of service quality in driving organizational success. Service quality is a multidimensional construct that reflects the customer's perception of the overall excellence of a service (Zhang et.al, 2019). Slack, Singh and Sharma (2020) mentioned that service quality encompasses a variety of dimensions that include reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles, which collectively influence customers' perceptions of the quality of their service interactions.

Researchers have established that service quality directly affects customer satisfaction and loyalty, leading to positive word-of-mouth, repeat business, and enhanced brand reputation (Karim & Rabiul, 2022; Marcos & Coelho, 2022). Numerous studies have established a strong link between service quality and customer satisfaction (Chien & Chi, 2019; Nunkoo et.al, 2020; Ali et.al, 2021). Additionally, Wang et.al, (2021) specified that organizations that consistently provide high-quality services tend to exceed customer expectations, fostering a positive emotional connection.

Moreover, satisfied customers are more likely to become loyal patrons, reducing churn rates and contributing to sustainable revenue growth (Doga & Neylan, 2022; McDonald et.al, 2023). In today's dynamic business environment, where products and pricing can be easily replicated, service quality serves as a distinct competitive differentiator. It is proven that companies that excel in providing exceptional customer experiences create a competitive advantage that is challenging for competitors to imitate, thereby securing a unique market position (Priliska, Kurniadewi & Winarno, 2023). Unequivocal, exceptional service quality not only retains existing customers but also turns them into advocates who enthusiastically promote the brand to their social circles (Sharif & Sidi, 2021; Chen et.al, 2022). Li et.al, (2023) added that positive word-of-mouth generated by satisfied customers amplifies the brand's reach, reducing customer acquisition costs and boosting credibility. Nonetheless, studies also reveal a positive correlation between service quality and financial performance (Dam & Dam, 2021). When customers perceive value in the services received, they are often willing to pay premium prices, contributing to higher profit margins. Moreover, the reduced costs associated with retaining loyal customers and minimizing service failures positively impact the bottom line (Hawkins & Hoon, 2019). Service quality fosters stronger relationships between customers and service providers. Trust and rapport built through consistent, reliable, and empathetic interactions create a sense of partnership, leading to long-term collaborations and partnerships. The extensive body of research demonstrates the undeniable importance of service quality in achieving organizational success and customer satisfaction (Padlee, Thaw & Zulkiffli, 2019; Glaveli et.al, 2023). Understanding the multidimensional nature of service quality and investing in its enhancement can position businesses to thrive in a competitive landscape. As customer expectations evolve, maintaining a relentless focus on service quality remains paramount for sustaining growth, fostering loyalty, and ensuring long-term profitability.

Attendees' Motivation

Understanding the factors that motivate and engage attendees in sports facilities is crucial for facility managers, event organizers, and stakeholders. Motivated and engaged attendees contribute to the success of sports events, enhance the overall experience, and generate positive outcomes for both participants and organizers. This literature review aims to synthesize and analyze previous research on attendees' motivation and engagement towards sports facilities, highlighting key findings, trends, and implications. Motivation, a multifaceted construct driving attendee engagement, is shaped by a combination of intrinsic factors such as personal interest and enjoyment, and extrinsic factors including social interactions and recognition (Despotovic, Hutchings & McPhail, 2022; Bukhari et.al, 2023). Intrinsic factors, such as personal interest in the sport, enjoyment, and the desire for skill development, play a significant role in motivating attendees to engage with sports facilities (Moradi, Bahrami & Amir, 2020). On top of that, attendees who are genuinely passionate about a particular sport are more likely to participate actively and remain engaged (Elliot et.al, 2021). Along with that, the external factors are known as the factors influence one's motivation from the environment and surrounding, including rewards, recognition, and social interaction, also impact attendees' motivation (Esra & Sevilen, 2021; Blynova et.al, 2020). Social interactions with friends, family, and fellow participants create a sense of belonging and community, enhancing motivation and engagement.

To conclude, attendees are motivated by the opportunity to experience new and unique sporting events or facilities. Providing a diverse range of activities, innovative programs, and special events can attract and retain attendees who seek novel experiences. Engaging attendees involves creating interactive experiences that go beyond passive observation, in addition, emotional engagement occurs when attendees form a deep connection with the sports facility or event (Oklevik et.al, 2022). Not only that, Brand et.al, (2023) revealed that, encouraging attendees to actively participate in sports activities, whether through amateur competitions, workshops, or skill-building sessions, enhances their engagement. Hands-on involvement fosters a sense of ownership and investment in the facility. This proved a statement by Backman et.al, (2023) which stated that attendees who are motivated and engaged tend to have more positive experiences, leading to increased satisfaction and loyalty and satisfied attendees are more likely to return to the facility and recommend it to others. Lee (2023) added that, motivated and engaged attendees are more likely to spend on tickets, merchandise, and concessions, contributing to the facility's revenue, this enhanced the repetitive of attendance and higher spending positively impact the facility's financial health. Therewith, engaged attendees contribute to the creation of a vibrant sports community. Shared experiences and interactions foster a sense of unity, encouraging attendees to become ambassadors and advocates for the facility (Daigo & Filo, 2020). Thus, this underscores the importance of understanding the multifaceted dynamics of attendees' motivation and engagement towards sports facilities. Recognizing the intrinsic and extrinsic factors that drive motivation, and implementing strategies to enhance engagement, can lead to successful events, satisfied attendees, and long-term success for sports facilities. As the sports industry continues to evolve, facility managers and organizers must stay attuned to attendee preferences and evolving trends to create meaningful experiences that resonate with diverse audiences.

Sport Facility

Sports facilities play a pivotal role in promoting physical activity, fostering community engagement, and contributing to the overall well-being of individuals and society. Sports facilities provide accessible spaces for individuals to engage in physical activities and sports. Research consistently shows that the availability of such facilities positively influences physical activity levels, helping combat sedentary lifestyles and associated health issues (Herbert, 2022; Chen et.al, 2022). In addition, sports facilities also serve as platforms for youth development, fostering teamwork, discipline, and leadership skills (Lakshminarayanan, 2020; Cotterill, Loighead & Fransen, 2022). Participation in organized sports within these facilities has been linked to improved academic performance and reduced risk of delinquency among young individuals (Howie et.al, 2020). Sports facilities are integral to educational institutions, serving as venues for physical education, research, and sports science. They support the advancement of knowledge in sports-related fields. Favourably, sports facilities serve as hubs for social interaction, bringing together people from diverse backgrounds. Participation in sports and recreational activities within these spaces fosters a sense of belonging, social cohesion, and community identity. Related to this, accessible sports facilities promote physical fitness and overall well-being as they provide opportunities for individuals of all ages to engage in regular exercise, reducing the risk of chronic diseases and promoting a healthier population (Diaz, Miller, Kraus & Fredericson, 2019; Marchigiani, 2021). Sports facilities are essential for enhancing the quality of life in communities. They provide spaces for leisure, recreation, and cultural events, contributing to the physical and mental well-being of residents. The economic significance of sports facilities also impacted the local communities. This was proven by a study which mentioned that sport facilities attract visitors, generate revenue through events, and stimulate local businesses, thus contributing to economic growth and employment opportunities (Daniels & Tichaawa, 2021; Wise, Perić, & Đurkin, 2019). Additionally, iconic sports facilities often become landmarks and tourist attractions, attracting visitors from around the world. Hosting major sporting events in these facilities enhances a city or region's global image and branding. Not only that, Güllich et.al, 2023 stated that, a world-class sports facilities are essential for nurturing talent and training athletes to compete at the highest levels.

These facilities provide the necessary infrastructure and coaching support for athletes to excel in their respective sports. Sports facility usage is integral to promoting physical activity, community engagement, and overall well-being. These facilities play a vital role in fostering a culture of health and fitness, enhancing economic development, nurturing talent, and strengthening community bonds. Recognizing the importance of sports facilities and investing in their development and maintenance is essential for reaping the numerous social, economic, and health benefits they offer to individuals and communities.

METHODOLOGY

Study design

This study employs a quantitative approach, utilizing a questionnaire-based survey. The primary objective of this research is to explore the relationship between the quality of services offered and the motivation to utilize the sports facilities at the university.

Study population and sampling

This research involved two public universities: Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Perlis and Universiti Sains Malaysia, with a combined student population of 19,059. According to Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) guidelines, the sample size required was determined to be 377 based on the total population. However, to accommodate potential dropouts and errors, an additional 20% was added (Suresh & Chandrasekara, 2012), resulting in a total of 452 respondents. Ultimately, 453 respondents completed the questionnaire. Data collection was conducted using Google Forms from March to August 2021. The selection of students from Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Perlis and Universiti Sains Malaysia was based on the diversity of student backgrounds and the availability of sports facilities at these universities.

Study Instrumentation

The study utilized a measurement instrument consisting of 21 items adapted from Parasuraman et al., (2002) to assess service quality and an additional 21 items drawn from Kondrič et al. (2013) to evaluate attendee motivation for engagement. Respondents were asked to rate these items on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

RESULTS

Table 1. Percentage of respondents separated by university

Institution	N(%)
UiTM	265(50)
USM	265(50)
Total	530(100)

Table 1 depicted the percentage of respondents in this study, with 530 respondents perceived as a cross-section of the population.

Table 2. Guildford Rule of Thumb (1973)

<i>r</i>	Strength of Relationship
<0.2	Negligible Relationship
0.2-0.4	Low Relationship
0.4-0.7	Moderate Relationship
0.7-0.9	High Relationship
>0.9	Very High Relationship

In Table 2, the researcher applied the Guildford Rule of Thumb (1973) to assess the strength of the correlation between the quality of service provided and attendees' motivation to engage with the university's sports facilities. This rule of thumb was instrumental in gauging the relationship's magnitude.

Table 3. Correlation between Service Quality and Motivation to Engage with Sports Facility

		Motivation to Engage
Service Quality	Pearson Correlation	.793**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001
	N	530

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 3 in the study illustrates a noteworthy and statistically significant high positive correlation between the quality of service provided and attendees' motivation to engage with the university's sports facilities, as indicated by the correlation coefficient (r) of 0.793** and a p -value less than 0.001. These findings suggest that when good service quality is provided, it tends to high positively motivate users to actively participate in sports facilities and related activities.

The findings of this study reveal a substantial and noteworthy relationship between service quality and the motivation of university students to engage with sports facilities. This discussion delved into the implications and importance of this observed relationship and how it aligns with existing literature and the broader context of sports facility management. On top of that, the study's results affirm that when sports facilities provide high-quality services, university students are more motivated to actively participate and engage in sports and recreational activities. This relationship underscores the critical role of service quality as a catalyst for increasing motivation among students. Exceptional service quality includes ensuring that sports facilities are easily accessible to all students, including those with disabilities. This may involve providing accessible entrances, parking spaces, ramps, and elevators.

Additionally, offering flexible operating hours and convenient booking systems for facility reservations enhance accessibility and cater to the diverse needs and schedules of students. Sports facilities should offer a diverse range of programs, classes, and activities that cater to the interests and skill levels of students. These may include intramural sports leagues, group fitness classes, instructional workshops, and recreational events. Providing engaging and varied programming encourages student participation and promotes a sense of community and belonging within the facilities. These findings are in line with previous research conducted by Duan, Liu, and He (2020), which highlighted the influence of service quality on spectators' motivation in the context of sports events. When students perceive that they receive excellent services, their motivation to make use of sports facilities is amplified. Excellent service quality includes providing well-maintained, clean, and safe sports facilities. This involves regular maintenance of equipment, facilities, and amenities such as courts, fields, gym equipment, locker rooms, and showers. A

visually appealing and comfortable environment contributes to a positive user experience and motivates students to return to the facilities. This study also indicated that the relationship between service quality and motivation can be attributed to the creation of positive emotional connections between students and the sports facilities. As evidenced in the study by Foroughi, Mohammad Shah, Ramayah, and Iranmanesh (2019), the actions and interactions of service providers play a pivotal role in generating positive emotions. When students experience courteous, efficient, and attentive service, it instills a sense of trust, satisfaction, and belonging. These positive emotions are powerful motivators, encouraging students to return to the facilities repeatedly and actively engage in sports and recreational activities. Moreover, this study also suggested that service quality not only motivates students to engage with sports facilities but also contributes to building loyalty and a sense of community (Chandra et.al, 2019). The positive experiences derived from high-quality services foster a sense of ownership and connection to the facilities. In this context, students are not just passive users but become active participants and advocates for the facilities. This sense of community can further motivate students to engage, as social interactions and shared experiences enhance motivation and reinforce the importance of sports facilities in their university experience.

CONCLUSION

This study has unveiled a compelling and robust relationship between service quality and the motivation of university students to actively engage with sports facilities. The evidence presented in this research underscores the profound influence that service quality holds in shaping students' enthusiasm and willingness to participate in sports and recreational activities within the university context. The observed significant relationship serves as a testament to the pivotal role of service quality as a catalyst for motivating students. When sports facilities consistently provide high-quality services, students are not merely passive users but become actively motivated participants. This motivation stems from the positive experiences created by courteous, efficient, and attentive service, as well as the sense of trust, satisfaction, and community that service quality fosters. The implications of these findings are far-reaching, extending beyond the immediate context of sports facilities. Universities and sports facility managers can leverage this knowledge to enhance student engagement, physical activity, and overall well-being. By prioritizing service quality, universities can create an environment where students are not only motivated but also enthusiastic participants who derive immense value from their engagement with sports facilities. In conclusion, the symbiotic relationship between service quality and motivation in the context of university sports facilities is not only significant but also transformative. It has the potential to shape a healthier, more engaged, and closely-knit university community. As universities continue to recognize the profound impact of service quality, they can embark on a journey of creating enriched experiences and stronger bonds among their students, ultimately reaping the myriad benefits that result from this synergy.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

EAMA-conceived and designed the study, collected, and analyzed data, and drafted the manuscript. MKMY-contributed to the study design, performed statistical analyses, and provided critical revisions to the manuscript. AFMK-assisted in data collection, conducted literature review, and contributed to the interpretation of results. AHAB-provided expertise in the field, reviewed, and revised the manuscript for intellectual content. NMR-contributed to the development of the theoretical framework, participated in data interpretation, and critically reviewed the manuscript.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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