

## **COMPARISON OF SERVICE QUALITY BETWEEN PRIVATE AND PUBLIC MUNICIPAL SPORTS CLUBS OF TEHRAN FROM CUSTOMER'S PERSPECTIVE BASED ON THE SERVAQUAL MODEL**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The main purpose of this study was to comparison of service quality between private and public Municipal Sports Clubs of Tehran from customer's perspective based on the SERVAQUAL model. Participant of this study consisted of all customers of private and public Municipal Sports Clubs of Tehran that selected through Cochran sampling formula and 400 questionnaires distributed among customers. In this study, the measuring tool was SERVAQUAL questionnaire. The results indicate that there is significant difference between expectation and tangible, confidence, responsiveness, guarantee and empathy dimensions of service quality on private and public sport complexes. In general, the service quality of the outsourced private sport clubs was better than the public clubs under the supervision of Sports Organization of Tehran Municipality.

**Keywords:** *Service Quality, SERVAQUAL Model, Customer, Municipal Sports Clubs of Tehran*

### **INTRODUCTION**

High and unique quality is a way to win customers and makes them loyal for a long time. Management literature proposes many concepts and approaches concerning how to deal with service quality. There are also many different concepts how the notion "service quality" should be understood (Urban, 2009). Service quality is perceived as a tool to increase value for the consumer; as a means of positioning in a competitive environment (Mehta *et al.*, 2000) and to ensure consumer satisfaction (Sivadas and Baker-Prewitt, 2000). Basic study on the quality of service by Parasuraman and colleagues took place in 1998. Based on the definition of service quality, Parasuraman SERVQUAL words in a five-dimensional scale (feelings, reliability, response capabilities, ensures and guarantees, empathy) were spread widely within the various organizations has been used (Zeithaml *et al.*, 2006). Research has shown SERVQUAL to be an effective and stable tool for measuring service quality across service industries (Bebko, 2000). While the consumption of most services is primarily driven by functional motives the consumption of leisure services appears to also be driven by emotional motives, such as the excitement and stimulation of the experience. In the case of leisure services, especially those in which customers must stay in the facility for an extended period of time (perhaps for several hours), Bitner (1992) suggested that the facility itself, or "servicescape", may have a substantial effect on customers' satisfaction with the service experience and for this reason, it will play an important role in determining whether customers will consume from the service provider again. As service quality received considerable attention, sport participants and spectators raised their expectations for more benefits (Howat *et al.*, 1996). In this environment, according to Papadimitriou and Karteroliotis (2000), phrases like "define your customer", "explore customer expectations" and "meet the customer's needs" have attained a predominant role within a management philosophy. Organizational success is inherently linked with the ability of the sport service provider to identify and respond to needs, but also to influence what is perceived as quality service by the targeted segment of the market. For this reason, sport managers are searching for tools to effectively measure service quality (Tsitskari *et al.*, 2006) and researchers from the field of sport and leisure management and marketing have started to conceptualize and measure the service quality construct and presented studies that model service quality in various sport settings. Nuviala *et al.*, (2012) indicate that users of public and private sports organizations in Spain have high scores on quality of sport service. Afthinos *et al.*, (2005)

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found that significant differences of desires exist between males and females as well as between users of public and private sports centers. Lorin *et al.*, (2013) found that tangible, responsiveness; guarantee, confidence and empathy have lowest score on Perceived Service quality of public health care services. Therefore, the main purpose of this study was to comparison of service quality between private and public Municipal Sports Clubs of Tehran from customer’s perspective based on the SERVAQUAL model.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

**Participant**

Participant of this study consisted of all customers of private and public Municipal Sports Clubs of Tehran. Since there was not any formal data about Municipal Sports Clubs customers then Cochran sampling formula is used and 400 questionnaires distributed among customers.

**Measures**

The questionnaire is designed by researcher and it contains 22 item that measure customer’s expectations and satisfactions. Participants were required to indicate, on a 5-point Likert scale, whether the statement was true of them. Also, the face validity of this questionnaire was determined by 14 experts in this field. The reliability of this questionnaire was 0.944 for expectation of sport complex and 0.936 for satisfaction with sport complex.

**Methods**

The method of the study is descriptive correlational. The data was collected using questionnaires and through field study procedure. Descriptive statistics were used for describing and categorizing raw data and for measuring Mean, frequency, SD and table drawing. T-test, Mann Whitney’s U Test, Kruskal Wallis, Fisher tests. For analyzing data the SPSS software was applied and 93% of confidence level was considered.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

As the table 1 indicates that 96 (50%) of customers on private and public sport complex are women and 96 (50%) of customers are men. Also, the highest frequency is belonging to ages 20-25 years. Again, at private sport complex 111 single individuals are and 81 individuals are married. Also, at public sport complex 121 are single and 71 individuals are married.

**Table 1: Descriptive statics of participant**

Characteristic		Private		Public		Total
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	
Gender	Women	96	50	96	50	192
	Men	96	50	96	50	192
	Total	192	100	192	100	384
Age	20-25	69	35.9	42	21.6	111
	26-30	50	26	61	31.4	111
	31-35	19	9.9	22	11.3	41
	36-40	29	15.1	35	18.1	64
	41-45	25	13	32	16.5	57
	Total	192	100	192	100	384
	Marital status	Single	111	57.8	121	62.4
Married		81	42.2	71	36.6	152
Total		192	100	192	100	384

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**Table 2: Results of Mann-whitney u test for differences between expectation and satisfaction of service quality**

Dimension	Complex type	Mean	Mann-whitney	W	Sig
Tangible	Private	216.4	14227	23142	p≤0.001
	Public	170.84			
Confidence	Private	208.04	15832	34747	0.011
	Public	179.11			
Responsiveness	Private	211.36	15194.5	34109.5	0.002
	Public	175.82			
Sympathy	Private	203.64	16678	35593	0.075
	Public	183.47			

As table 2 indicates there are significant differences between all dimensions of service quality and on private and public sport complexes.

**Conclusion**

The main purpose of this study was to comparison of service quality between private and public Municipal Sports Clubs of Tehran from customer’s perspective based on the SERVAQUAL model. The result of this study indicates that there is significant difference between expectation and tangible dimension of service quality on private and public sport complexes. It means that private sport complex customers have higher expectation and satisfaction of tangible service quality. This finding is line with Lorin *et al.*, (2013). One of the most important factors in service quality is facilities, tools, cleanliness, appearance that cause to meet customer’s satisfaction. The other result of this study indicates that there is significant difference between expectation and confidence dimension of service quality on private and public sport complexes. It means that private sport complex customers have higher expectation and satisfaction with confidence dimension of service quality. This finding is in line with the Afthinos *et al.*, (2005), but this result is inconsistent with Lorin *et al.*, (2013). Personnel ability and their attention in deliver service is very important factor in satisfaction. Therefore, sport complexes required to human resource with high ability and knowledge. The other result of this study indicates that there is significant difference between expectation and responsiveness dimension of service quality on private and public sport complexes. It means that private sport complex customers have higher expectation and satisfaction with responsiveness dimension of service quality. Existence of appropriate verbal communication is important factor to maintain an increase of customers. This finding is in line with the Lorin *et al.*, (2013). Results indicate, also, that there is significant difference between expectation and guarantee dimension of service quality on private and public sport complexes. It means that private sport complex customers have higher expectation and satisfaction with guarantee dimension of service quality. This finding is in live with the Lorin *et al.*, (2013). Again, the result of this study indicates that there is significant difference between expectation and empathy dimension of service quality on private and public sport complexes. It means that private sport complex customers have higher expectation and satisfaction with empathy dimension of service quality. This finding is in line with the Lorin *et al.*, (2013).

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