Investigation of how the quality of service provided in private gyms is perceived by users (example of Yalova province)

Investigação de como a qualidade do serviço prestado em academias particulares é percebida pelos usuários (exemplo da província de Yalova)

Ferdağ Özaras¹
Ercan Ayılgan²
Yeliz Ay Yıldız³
İbrahim Şahin⁴

Abstract
The purpose of this study is to examine how the quality of service provided in private sports halls in Yalova is perceived by users. The sample of our study consists of a total of 121 people, 69 women and 52 men, who are voluntarily participated the study, over the age of 18 who is using private GYM’s in Yalova. The study was carried out with the survey model, which is one of the quantitative research methods, and the survey method was used. Data regarding the study were collected with the Service Quality Assessment Scale. The analysis of the data was made with the SPSS 25.0 program, and 5 sub-dimensions were analyzed according to gender data from demographic variables. According to the normality test results, suitable non-parametric tests, Mann Whitney-U test and Kruskal Wallis-H test were used(p<0.05). It was observed that female members had higher perceptions about personnel, programs, locker rooms, training facilities and physical facilities than male members. As a

¹ Ph.D in Physical Education, Yalova University, Faculty of Sports Sciences, Yalova, Türkiye. E-mail: ferdag.ozaras@yalova.edu.tr Orcid: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3540-2037
² Ph.D in Physical Education, Youth and Sport Ministry, Ankara, Türkiye. E-mail: ercanayilgan1978@gmail.com Orcid: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0601-0379
³ Ph.D in Physical Education, Turkish Blind Sports Federation, Ankara, Türkiye. E-mail: yelizayyildiz1977@gmail.com Orcid: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2002-0389
⁴ Professor in Physical Education, Yalova University, Faculty of Sports Sciences,Yalova, Türkiye. E-mail: ibrahim.sahin@yalova.edu.tr Orcid: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5956-6274
result of this, marketing and target audience orientation, environmental, service quality and personnel as well as individual differences can be considered to cause this perception.

**Keywords:** Gym. Customer. Satisfaction. Sport. Workout.

**Resumo**
O objetivo deste estudo é examinar como a qualidade do serviço prestado nos ginásios privados de Yalova é percebida pelos usuários. A amostra do nosso estudo é composta por um total de 121 pessoas, 69 mulheres e 52 homens, que participaram voluntariamente do estudo, maiores de 18 anos e frequentadores de academias privadas em Yalova. O estudo foi realizado com o modelo de pesquisa, que é um dos métodos de pesquisa quantitativos, e foi usado o método de pesquisa. Os dados referentes ao estudo foram coletados com a Escala de Avaliação da Qualidade do Serviço. A análise dos dados foi feita com o programa SPSS 25.0, e foram analisadas 5 subdimensões de acordo com os dados de gênero das variáveis demográficas. De acordo com os resultados do teste de normalidade, foram utilizados testes não paramétricos adequados, teste de Mann Whitney-U e teste de Kruskal Wallis-H (p<0,05). Observou-se que os membros do sexo feminino tinham percepções mais altas sobre pessoal, programas, vestiários, instalações de treinamento e instalações físicas do que os membros do sexo masculino. Como resultado disso, marketing e orientação do público-alvo, meio ambiente, qualidade do serviço e pessoal, bem como diferenças individuais, podem ser considerados como causadores dessa percepção.


**Introduction**

The nature of physical activity and GYMs are closely related. Regular physical activity is essential for the preservation of human health and general well-being. GYMs and Sport Centers play a very important role in enabling individuals to perform physical activity effectively by providing them with the necessary facilities, equipment, and guidance. The needs of humans to physical activity is gradually increasing and also the need of recreational areas in the cities (Öcal, Cengiz, & Metin, 2022); (Metin, Kılıç, & Ayan, 2020). Because of that over the past 30 years, the fitness industry has experienced a remarkable increase in participation and interest, along with significant growth worldwide (García-Fernández, Gálvez-Ruiz, Fernández-Gavira, & Vélez-Colón, 2016) ; (Lagrosen & Lagrosen, 2007).
Customer satisfaction and customer loyalty remain a key success factor in the fitness industry, and quality of the service has a strong influence on this member loyalty. Quality of the service in a fitness club or a GYM is directly related to profit margin and overall club development in a competitive market (Fragoso & Espinoza, 2017); (Omar, Abu, Sapuan, & Aziz, 2010); (Lam, Zhang, & Jensen, 2009). It has been shown that customers from different cultural backgrounds may have different expectations and needs in the GYMs, so it turns out that no single model can universally measure service quality (Haghdoost, Yektayar, Moradi, & Faramarzi, 2015); (Clemes, Gan, Kao, & Choong, 2008) With the expansion of services globally, it is becoming increasingly more important to understand how to measure the service quality in different countries. Improving the quality of the service results is ensured by ensuring that customers who experience high-quality customer-employee and customer-to-customer interaction become loyal customers (Eskiler & Safak, 2022). Quality of the service is considered as an essential component of an organization's effort to gain a competitive advantage (Wilson, Zeithaml, Bitner, & Gremler, 2016) and has a significant impact on the organization's financial performance and profitability (Kyoonyoo & Ah Park, 2007). Research findings shows that positive perceptions of service quality are significantly and positively associated with increased customer engagement, repurchase intent, recommendation to others (Cronin, Brady, & Hult, 2000) customer retention (Venetis & Ghauri, 2004), and loyal behaviors toward the business (Roostika, 2011). When consumers perceive that the gap between the actual quality of the provided service and their expectations of the service quality is decreasing, they become highly satisfied (Singh, 2013) and are more willing to accept a price premium for excellent quality service (Buell, Campbell, & Frei, 2016). The purpose of this study is to determine how the service offered in private fitness centers and GYMs are perceived by users.

**Methodology**

In this study, one of the quantitative survey methods which is general survey model, was used. Screening models have past or current situations. In another words, they are all processes for personal learning and the realization and development of desired behaviors (Karasar, 2011). This type of research is divided into three different categories. These are general research, relationship research and causal research, and the research used in this study is general research (Gürbüz & Şahin, 2018). The general survey model has many important
elements. The population might investigated as a whole or on a group of samples or samples to be taken from it (Karasar, 2011)

2.1 Population and Sample / Study Group

The study population of the research consists of individuals who has been using private gyms in Yalova province.

The sample of the research consists of 121 participants who is over the age of 18 and also using private gyms in Yalova province, which constitutes the study population of the research, and selected by random sampling method.

2.2 Data Collection Tools

In this study, SQAS (Service Quality Assessment Scale) which developed by (Lam, Zhang, & Jensen, 2009) and validated and reliability study in Turkey by (Gürbüz, Koçak, & Lam, 2005) was used as a data collection tool in order to evaluate the service quality of health and fitness clubs. This scale consists of personnel, program, locker room, physical facility, training facility sub-dimensions. The SQAS scale consists of 34 items and 5 sub-dimensions. These; staff, schedule, locker room, physical facilities, training facility, childcare dimensions. However, the child care dimension was excluded from the scale because it was not found in the sports facilities surveyed.

2.3 Analysis of Data

As a statistical method; Data on demographic variables were examined by frequency analysis. The averages for perceived service quality and sub-dimensions were evaluated as '1.00-1.79 Very Poor, 1.80-2.59 Poor, 2.60-3.39 Intermediate, 3.40-4.19 Good, 4.20-5.00 Excellent' as the 5-point likert type scale was used. In the normality test to determine which test statistic to perform, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was examined because the sample of the study was more than 50.

Variables with two values (gender, marital status) were analyzed by Mann Whitney-U test among non-parametric tests, and those with more than two variables (campus, branch, age, income level, education status, frequency of facility use, duration of facility use) were analyzed by Kruskal Wallis-H test. As a result of the analyzes performed as a result of Kruskal
Wallis-H tests, the results of a variable with a significant difference were evaluated by Tamhane test from post-hoc tests. The reason why the tamhane test was chosen, is that it is one of the tests that is suitable under conditions where the sample numbers and variances are not both equal (Kayri, 2009). SPSS 26 statistical program was used. The significance value was determined as p<0.05.

**Results**

In this part of the study, the findings of the normality test are presented in table 1. This test was carried out to learn what kind of statistical tests the scale used to collect data and the data obtained will be subjected to.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kolmogorov-Smirnov</th>
<th>Value of static</th>
<th>Sd</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality of the service</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personel</td>
<td>.205</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program</td>
<td>.206</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locker room</td>
<td>.222</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Facility</td>
<td>.201</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training facility</td>
<td>.219</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 1: Normality Test**
Source: Research Results

As can be seen in table 1, in the normality test of the Service Quality Assessment Scale, a normal distribution could not be determined (p<0.05). Because of that, non-parametric tests were applied in this study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Row Mean</th>
<th>Total Row</th>
<th>Mann-Whitney U</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>77.37</td>
<td>4565.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>.000**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>45.42</td>
<td>2816.00</td>
<td>863.000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>121</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2: Mann Whitney-U Test Results According to the Gender Variable of the Staff Sub-Dimension from the Perceived Service Quality Sub-Dimensions of the Sports Facilities of the Participants**
Source: Research Results

As seen in table 2, it was concluded that there was a statistically significant difference in the Mann Whitney-U test result from the perceived service quality sub-dimensions of sports facilities according to the gender variable of the personnel sub-dimension (p=, 000**>.05)
Table 3: Mann Whitney-U Test Results According to the Gender Variable of the Program Sub-Dimension from the Perceived Service Quality Sub-Dimensions of the Sports Facilities of the Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Row Mean</th>
<th>Row Total</th>
<th>Mann-Whitney U</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>77.25</td>
<td>4558.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>45.53</td>
<td>2823.00</td>
<td>870.00</td>
<td>,000**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Mann Whitney-U Test Results According to the Gender Variable of the Locker Room Sub-Dimension from the Perceived Service Quality Sub-Dimensions of the Sports Facilities of the Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Row Mean</th>
<th>Row Total</th>
<th>Mann-Whitney U</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>76.53</td>
<td>4515.50</td>
<td>912.500</td>
<td>,000**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>46.22</td>
<td>2865.50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Mann Whitney-U Test Results According to the Gender Variable of the Physical Facility Sub-Dimension from the Perceived Service Quality Sub-Dimensions of the Sports Facilities of the Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Row Mean</th>
<th>Row Total</th>
<th>Mann-Whitney U</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>75.98</td>
<td>4483.00</td>
<td>945.000</td>
<td>,000**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>46.74</td>
<td>2898.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: Mann Whitney-U Test Results According to the Gender Variable of the Training Facility Sub-Dimension from the Perceived Service Quality Sub-Dimensions of the Sports Facilities of the Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Row Mean</th>
<th>Row Total</th>
<th>Mann-Whitney U</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>77.25</td>
<td>4558.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>45.53</td>
<td>2823.00</td>
<td>870.00</td>
<td>,000**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion and Conclusion

In this study, it was concluded that the perceived service quality of sports halls or GYM’s was significantly different according to the gender variable. In line with this result, similar studies have been reached. In their study, (Uslu & Yıldırım, 2021) found that the
average scores of the Sports Enterprises Customer Satisfaction Scale management, services and sports instructors qualification according to gender sub-dimensions results were statistically significantly differed. They found that the level of satisfaction of women from management and the qualification of sports instructors was higher than that of men, and the level of satisfaction in the service dimension was less than men. In the sports enterprises where women are customers they have determined with their answers that the necessary information and guidance are given, and that they communicate easily with the management in terms of who and how they can reach when they have problems. They stated that the level of satisfaction of men did not cause any problems in terms of communication between them and the management, that they were more comfortable in this respect and therefore lower than women. However, they stated that the fact that women pay more attention to details such as being polite, respectful, experienced, reliable, fair, sincere, motivating, helpful and watching their development more closely than men while receiving services is a sufficient and important reason for their satisfaction with that business.

On the other hand, they stated that women had lower satisfaction in the sub-dimension of services compared to men that because they did not see enough of sports programs, other services, emergency and security measures in sufficient diversity in the sports enterprises where they were customers of. In his research, (Yıldırım, 2018) statistically stated that when the average scores of the customer satisfaction sub-dimensions of sports facilities in terms of gender were considered, the overall satisfaction levels of women were higher than men. (Süllüoğlu, 2018), stated in his research that women were statistically more satisfied than men with the sport facilities where they have membership.

(Şahin, 2018), found that women had higher levels of satisfaction than men in their research. In parallel with the results of this study, (Sabırlı, 2018) found that female participants had higher levels of satisfaction than male participants in terms of gender.

It was concluded that there was a significant difference from the perceived service quality sub-dimensions of sports facilities according to the gender variable of the personnel sub-dimension. In the study conducted by (Senakham, 2008), customers show that they have significant differences in the perception of service quality in terms of general personnel, general program and physical condition of the facility in the results of his research. According to the results of the study conducted by (Özkan, 2013), one of the most important conditions in customer satisfaction is the trainer-customer relationship. The fact that the trainers are educated at a very good level, that they do their jobs fondly, and their interest on the customer is at a high level will increase the quality of service. The vast majority (81.8%) of the facility
customers who participated in (Saraç, 2018)’s study stated that the sports instructors were reliable, that the trainers adhered to the schedules and hours, that the sports instructors treated everyone equally, that they motivated the members and that the sports instructors were experienced. As it is understood from the findings of our study, the knowledge-skills, experience and professional competence of the coaches working in the pool are among that factors what positively affect the customer’s perception of service quality. In the study of (Aksoy, 2018); It is possible to say that the operators who have sports education academically are more idealistic than others and the expectations of the users are higher than those who do not have sports education. Accordingly, it is obvious that the selection of sports business personnel and managers from those who have received academic sports training will increase the quality of service.

It was concluded that there was a significant difference from the perceived service quality sub-dimensions of sports facilities according to the gender variable of the program sub-dimension.

In the study of (Aslan, 2017), the most expected services from the fitness and sports centers program were listed in order of importance; The quality and content of the programs are indicated as the appropriateness of the program duration and the presence of programs of the appropriate level. Of these, the quality and content of the programs did not rank in the top three in the ranking of perceived service items.

One of the most important factors affecting the quality of service are the principle of inseparability and immutability, which is the general characteristic of the services. According to this feature, the services should be offered to customers should be provided on the specified day and time, and the commitments made in this respect are the responsibility of the enterprise. In our study, users sometimes complained about that the announcements of the closure of the pool for various reasons (official holidays, technical failure, power cuts, etc.) were not communicated to them or that timely announcements were not made. This situation creates a feeling of negativity by the customers, in the quality perception of the service provided. It was concluded that there was a significant difference from the perceived service quality sub-dimensions of sports facilities according to the gender variable of the dressing room sub-dimension. In (Aslan, 2017)’s study the most important services expected from the locker rooms of fitness and sports centers are in order of importance; security, cleanliness of showers and the presence of lockers. Of these; security ranked 1st in perception as well as 1st in expectations. However, the presence of changing rooms and the cleanliness of the showers are considered to be not fulfilled to the desired extent, and this situation remains in the last
two places of the perception list. Therefore, these have attracted attention as very important problems. Similar to Aslan's results, the findings of this research show that one of the determining criteria of service quality for customers is the quality of the dressing room. (Yüzgenç & Özgül, 2014), in their studies of for youth center members, they stated that the perceptions of the service quality of the members were positive, but there was also some needs for improvements in terms of employees, program, dressing rooms and facilities. The cleanliness of dressing rooms, their wideness of cabinets and the sufficient number of cabinets have shown to have a positive effect on customers' perception of the quality of the services provided. In the study of (Tüfekci, 2010), the results which were found supports the findings of our study. When the service quality perceptions were evaluated in terms of dimensions, it was seen that all dimensions had a negative difference, and the dimension with the lowest quality level among the all dimensions was the "dressing room" dimension.

Also to improve the perceived quality of service, priority should be given to being consistent in the service provided, giving individual attention to customers, paying attention to cleanliness and clothing and being willing to help, responding to complaints, communication with members, the presence of changing rooms and the cleanliness of showers.

It was concluded that there was a significant difference from the perceived service quality sub-dimensions of sports facilities according to the gender variable of the physical facility sub-dimension. In the master's thesis study conducted by (Eser, 2015) in the Pamukkale University Sports Center sample, it is found that cleanliness, safe environment and quality of the tools and equipment that used are important in the quality perception of the members. (Howat & Crilley, 2011)'s research on public aquatic centers in Australia found that customers gave high priority to well-maintained and clean facilities. As the literature consistent with the findings of this research that shows, cleanliness and hygiene are a very important criterion in the perception of service quality for customers. In (Aslan, 2017)’s study, there are common aspects of the attitude behavior, cleanliness and dress of the staff that are similar to the findings of this study. However, these did not rank in the top three in the ranking of perceived service items.

That is, the level of their fulfillment has not been to the expected extent. (Akkoyun, 2016)’s research has reached similar conclusions which support our study. The quality of the ambient conditions, which are closely related to the physical environmental conditions, usually refers to the adequate provision of ventilation, lighting and heat of the fitness center. "The fitness centers seem to have well met the expectations of members in terms of ambient
conditions." (Gürbüz C., 2019) was determined that the people who received services had the highest satisfaction with the "quality of the working environment". In our study, it was stated by the users that the physical features of the pool such as heat, light, the size of the facility, the plates used, the waiting room and the parking lot are sufficient and satisfactory. It is also can understood from the literature review that these features are ethical in the perception of service quality. In our research, there have been users who have reported satisfaction with the physical characteristics mentioned above. By the way, there are members who express some negative opinions regarding the physical condition of the facility.

It was concluded that there was a significant difference from the perceived service quality sub-dimensions of sports facilities according to the gender variable of the training facility sub-dimension. In another study by (Ergin, İmamoğlu, Tunç, Akpınar, & Çon, 2011).

The importance that the participants gave to the factors affecting the quality of service according to the types of facilities they used was examined. It turns out that the physical appearance of the facilities and staff are the most important factors.

4.1 Suggestions

- It is necessary to increase the number of personnel and in-service and out-of-service educations which will improve the quality of the personnel should be planned.
- Problems that occur in general and local maintenance and repairs of the facility should be intervened quickly.
- Feedback should be obtained from the members regarding the quality of service through questionnaires to be organized periodically by the facility management.
- Units should be established where the customers can forward their requests and complaints.
- Training activities for the development of personnel should be planned regularly and systematically.
- Care should be taken to implement practices that will increase the motivation and organizational commitment of the personnel.
- In order to the personnel to feel valuable and to increase their organizational commitment, their opinions should be taken in the decisions to be taken in the pool management and it should be ensured that the personnel are included in the decisions which been taken.
References


Revista Gestão e Secretariado (GeSec), São Paulo, SP, v. 14, n. 10, 2023, p. 17090-17102.


Investigation of how the quality of service provided in private gyms is perceived by users (example of Yalova province)


Submetido em: 01.09.2023
Aceito em: 06.10.2023

Revista Gestão e Secretariado (GeSec), São Paulo, SP, v. 14, n. 10, 2023, p. 17090-17102.