

PREDICTING CUSTOMERS' BEHAVIORAL INTENTIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF HEALTH AND FITNESS CENTERS IN GREECE

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to examine those variables that positively influence customer's behavioral intentions in Greek health and fitness centers. Five hundred and seventy seven members from eight public and private health and fitness centers participated in the study, and completed: a) a service quality scale (measuring physical environment quality, interaction quality and outcome quality; b) a four-item scale based on Zeithaml's (1988) notion of value; c) a four-item scale measuring satisfaction; and d) a four-item scale measuring behavioral intentions. Results indicated that the outcome dimension and value significantly influenced satisfaction, which, in turn, had a stronger influence on customer's behavioral intentions.

Key Words: Service quality, value, satisfaction, behavioral intentions, health and fitness centers

INTRODUCTION

Researchers found that service quality, value and customer satisfaction influences customer's behavioral intentions in a variety of service settings (Cronin, Brady and Hult, 2000; Brady, Knight, Cronin, Tomas, Hult and Keillor, 2005). Most service scholars define quality as the consumers' expectations of service attributes and their evaluation of the service experience relative to these attributes (Brady & Cronin, 2001; Berry, Parasuraman, & Zeithaml, 1988). Value is defined as the comparison of what the customer has received from the offered service compared to what has given (Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman, 1996). Satisfaction is the overall attitude that shapes the consumer for a product or service that has used, after using his/her (Westbrook & Oliver, 1991). In this study, we adopt the conceptualization of service quality as presented by Brady and Cronin (2001).

OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this study was to examine the role of service quality dimensions, value, and customer satisfaction in the prediction of customers' behavioral intentions. More specifically we hypothesized that models of consumers' decision-making which include service value and satisfaction, in the context of health and fitness centers, explain significantly more variance in purchase intentions than models which include only service quality.

METHODS

Sample and study context

Almost 312.000 customers are members of the 1450 health and fitness centers in Greece. 188 of them located in the second largest city as small businesses that are independently owned and managed, employing 1.220 employees. Five hundred and seventy seven (N=577) members (50,3 % males and 49,7 % females) of eight health and fitness centers (with similar characteristics and services) of the second largest city of Greece, participated in the study. Most of them were single (61,7%), with secondary education (73,9%), aged from 17 to 75 years old. Finally, 65,5 % of the sample visits the centers over three times per week, spending over one and a half hour (66,8%) training.

Instrumentation

The questionnaire used to track customers' perceptions of service quality adopted from Alexandris, Zahariadis, Tzorbatzoudis & Grouios (2004) having three dimensions: physical environment quality (4 items, i.e. "clean facilities"), interaction quality (4 items, i.e. "well-trained staff") and outcome quality (5 items, i.e. "programs helped me increase my energy"). A 7-point Likert – type scale, ranging from 1 (very strongly disagree) to 7 (very strongly agree), was used for each attribute of service quality. To assess value 4 items based on Zeithaml's (1988) notion of value were developed (i.e. "what I get from this health and fitness center, and its cost, makes it a great value"). Satisfaction was measured using 4 items (i.e. "I am satisfied with my decision to become a member of this health and fitness center") adopted from Brady, Voorhes, Cronin & Bourdeau (2006). Using a 7-point Likert –type scale ranging from 1 (not at all likely) to 7 (extremely likely), participants were asked to answer four items (i.e. "If asked, I would recommend this health and fitness center") related to their behavioral intentions (Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman, 1996).

RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

Descriptive statistics for all study variables can be found in Table 1. All correlation coefficients of the variables examined were statistically significant ($p < .001$) and ranged from .503 (physical environment – outcome) to .787 (satisfaction – behavioral intentions)

Table 1. Correlation coefficients, internal consistency reliabilities, means, and standard deviations for service quality dimensions, value, satisfaction and behavioral intentions

	1	2	3	4	5	α	M	SD	Items
1 Physical Environment Quality						.81	5.94	.921	4
2 Interaction Quality	.596*					.93	6.48	.797	4
3 Outcome Quality	.503*	.584*				.92	6.46	.703	5
4 Value	.649*	.570*	.578*			.89	5.81	1.03	4
5 Satisfaction	.635*	.614*	.674*	.754*		.92	6.24	.888	4
6 Behavioral Intentions	.548*	.562*	.644*	.620*	.787*	.92	6.33	.855	4

* $p < .001$

A regression analysis was used to examine the role of service quality dimensions, value and satisfaction, on the prediction of customers' future behaviors. Following results from the service literature (Cronin et al., 2000; Fornell, Johnson, Anderson, Cha & Bryant, 1996; McDougall and Levesque, 2000; Whittaker, Ledden & Kalafatis, 2007), the study's variables entered in the model in three steps. On the first step, all three service quality dimensions entered simultaneously as the independent variables and behavioral intentions as the dependent variable. On the second step and third step, value and satisfaction entered in the model as independent variables respectively. Results of the analysis are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Regression Analysis for the Prediction of Behavioral Intention

Variables	Beta	t	P	R ²
Step 1				
Physical Environment Quality	.22	5.86	.001	.502*
Interaction Quality	.18	4.49	.001	
Outcome Quality	.43	11.5	.001	
Step 2				
Physical Environment Quality	.11	2.85	.005	.534*
Interaction Quality	.14	3.50	.001	
Outcome Quality	.36	9.47	.001	
Value	.26	6.26	.001	
Step 3				
Physical Environment Quality	.03	.91	ns	.647*
Interaction Quality	.07	1.94	ns	
Outcome Quality	.19	5.28	.001	
Value	.00	.07	ns	
Satisfaction	.59	13.5	.001	

* $p < .001$

Data analysis showed that the three dimensions of service quality explained a large proportion of the variance (50,2%) of customers behavioral intentions. These results are in agreement with those results from other studies in various sports contexts (Theodorakis and Alexandris, 2008; Lee, Kim, Ko and Sagas, 2011; Murray and Howat, 2002).

On the second step only the outcome dimension and value offered significant contribution in the prediction of customers' future behavior. Finally, when satisfaction added in the model, it was the only variable along with the service outcome that predicted customer's behavioral intentions (64.7%). The results suggested that all three variables are important for influencing customers' future behavior in the context of health and fitness centers in Greece, highlighting the importance of the outcome and customer satisfaction. Future studies could combine perceptions about service quality with cultural and socioeconomic factors and compare differences between countries.

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