

THE IMPACT OF THE QUALITY OF SERVICE ON CUSTOMER LOYALTY IN THE SPORTS FITNESS AND LEISURE MARKET

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Abstract

This study reviewed the research theory of quality, commitment, satisfaction, trust, customer loyalty of the Chinese sports fitness leisure market service, and conducted credibility and effectiveness test of the measure. The study uses descriptive statistics, verification factor analysis, related analysis, structure equation model analysis and other methods to verify the analysis framework of the relationship between the quality of sports fitness and leisure services and the loyalty relationship of consumers, the test results showed that the equation is well-adapted, confirming the relation between quality of service and customer loyalty.

Keywords: Service Quality, Commitment, Satisfaction, Trust, Customer Loyalty.

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, with the improvement of the standard of living of Chinese people, the sports fitness and leisure industry has developed rapidly. The reason is that sports consumption is playing an increasingly important role in people's lives, and the demand for leisure fitness is growing. Although the domestic and foreign theoretical community of customer loyalty is more research, however, the quantitative study of China's fitness consumption is relatively few, the analysis and research of the sports fitness consumer industry is still relatively lacking, especially based on the consumer level of customers in the fitness consuming market. Since there is relatively little research on the formation of customer loyalty mechanisms, we will study the relationship between the quality of service and the loyalty of consumers in the Chinese sports fitness leisure market, explore the mechanism of service quality affecting consumers' loyalty, and enrich the theory of sports fitness consumption. At the same time, theoretical guidance is provided for the operation and marketing of sports fitness and leisure market in China to improve the quality of services.

After many years of development, at present, the competition in the Chinese fitness market is very fierce. Although the fitness customer industry in China has achieved rapid development, according to relevant surveys, the customer satisfaction of the Chinese fitness customer market has not reached the expected effect. At the micro-management level, although fitness enterprises focus on improving customer satisfaction and loyalty, there is still a large gap with the management and service levels of world-renowned fitness consumer sites. For companies, the main source of profit is customers. How to attract customers to long-term exchange of products or services, and then create long term profit, is the goal of the enterprise pursue. Compared to managed manufacturing, most of China's service industries remain on the "customer first" and "client is God" slogans. Few really recognize the importance of customer loyalty and take customer loyalty as a business philosophy and management skills.

Quantitative research on the quality of service and customer loyalty in the sports fitness consumer industry is not sufficient, especially the research results on the effects of fitness consumption are not rich enough. The industry is not doing well enough in terms of service quality and customer loyalty. It is therefore necessary for the theoretical community to conduct in-depth systematic analysis and study of this reality problem.

2. DOCUMENTATION OVERVIEW

2.1 Related studies on the quality of services

According to Levitt (1972) the evaluation of service quality should be determined on the basis of whether it meets pre-established criteria. Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1985) define service quality as the gap between customer expectations and actual perceptions. Sasser, Olsen and Wyckoff (2003) defined the quality of service in terms of personnel, materials and equipment, including not only the means of service but also the results of service. In other words, the quality of service is equivalent to the expected service minus the perceptual service.

From previous literature, it can be seen that scholars have completely different views on the dimension of service quality. Sasser, Olsen and Wyckoff (1978) pointed out that service quality should consist of seven attributes: displacement, security, consistency, attitude, integrity, environment, convenience, and timeliness. Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1985) presented ten dimensions of service quality, including reliability, responsiveness, competence, accessibility, politeness, communicability, trust, security, understanding and tangibility. Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1998) subsequently reduced the ten dimensions of quality of service, of which the tangibility, reliability and responsiveness remained unchanged, while the other two dimensions were certainty and care. This study is to explore the 5 dimensions of the quality of Chinese sports fitness and leisure market service with the same five dimensions and types studied by foreign scholars, cognition and understanding are consistent. Materiality, reliability, responsiveness, certainty, care.

2.2 Research on customer satisfaction

Customer Satisfaction is a very important concept in customer behavior and marketing theory, and is one of the goal performance a company is committed to pursue. Howard and Sheth (1969) viewed customer satisfaction as a state of customer awareness of the price paid for the product and whether the return received was appropriate. Oliver (1980) argues that customer satisfaction is caused by uncertainty between expectations and actual perceptions. Westbrook (1990) pointed out that customer satisfaction is a process of cognition and evaluation in which customers compare the actual performance of a product with their previous expectations. Kotler (2000) noted that the customer would expect a post-sale evaluation of product quality prior to purchase. Kristensen et al. (2019) believes that customer satisfaction is the evaluation and reaction of customers to product purchase and consumption experience, which is derived from a comparison of customer expectations and actual feelings. We can therefore assume that customer satisfaction refers to the customer's expectations in advance of the performance of the product.

2.3 Research on commitments

Commitments are the core concepts of building and dining relationships. Anderson and Weitz (1992) argued that the commitment included the desire and will to develop a stable relationship, making short-term sacrifices in exchange for the maintenance of the relationship and confidence in its stability. Moorman et al. (2012) viewed commitment as the customer's desire or will to maintain a value relationship, reflecting a positive assessment of the relationship. Gundlach et al. (2005) The commitment is an important factor in the success of a long-term relationship. Wilson (2004) believed that commitments represented the importance of the trade partnership and the desire to continue such a relationship in the future, and that the commitment was an important variable to measure future relations. According to previous literature, commitments include expectations of relationship continuity, a willingness to sacrifice short-term interests for the maintenance of the relationship, and confidence in the durability of the trading partnership. The study defines commitments as the desire of one of the trading partners to maintain and strengthen relations with each other.

2.4 Research on customer loyalty

Reich Held (2006) pointed out that the pursuit of customer loyalty is the focus of enterprise market planning strategies and the basis for establishing competitive advantages. Newman and Werbel (1973) defined customer loyalty as a customer who does not consider buying a brand again or seeking information from another brand. Tellis (1988) considered customer loyalty to be the relative number of customers who consistently or frequently purchased the same brand. Selnes (1993) defines customer loyalty as a customer's behavioral tendency towards a product or service, also known as brand loyalty. Griffin (2006) emphasized that customer loyalty affects customer purchasing behaviour, and customer satisfaction is just an expression of attitude. Lee and Cunningham (2011) defined service loyalty as a customer's willingness to re-consume an existing service provider based on past experiences and future expectations.

Bowen and Shoemaker (2013) believe that the meaning of customer loyalty is very broad, including not only the possibility of a customer returning to the company, but also the customer's willingness to become a member of the company. Jacoby and Kyner (1973) suggested that customer loyalty is a preferential attitude that affects a customer's continued and repeated purchasing behaviour over a certain period of time. Dick and Basu (2004) argue that customer loyalty cannot be fully explained simply by discussing customer behavior, but must be considered from the customer's psychological dimension.

Pritchard and Howard (2007) argued that customer loyalty is a combination of brand attitudes and behavior that can be used to measure how much customers like a brand and how much they buy again. Oliver (2007) thinks that customer loyalty refers to the fact that customers may be tempted by environmental influences or external marketing means. Fullerton (2005) measured customer brand loyalty to the retail service industry in terms of both willingness to buy and support. Therefore, based on previous literature, the present study suggests that the findings of the Fullerton (2005) study should be used to measure the characteristics of loyalty, fitness and leisure.

2.5 Research on trust

From the perspective of relationships, trust is that another person does not sacrifice others for his own benefit (Gambetta, 1988; Bradach and Eccles, 1989). Trust is that neither of the parties in the transaction will harm the trust of the other (Sabdl, 1993). Trust is the expectation that the other party will do its utmost to fulfil an oral commitment or explicit obligation (BroMily and Cumming, 2005). When a person exposes himself to the risk of other people's opportunistic behaviour, he has reason to believe that the other party will not take advantage of the opportunity (Humphrey and Schmitz, 2014).

From a marketing perspective, trust refers to the company's belief that the other party will implement a plan that will benefit both parties and will not commit unexpected acts that will harm the trading partner (Anderson and Naru, 2000). From the point of view of organizational behavior, trust refers to confidence in the actions or intentions of an individual or group (Carnevale and Wechsler, 1992). Confidence is the expectation of a party in a trade relationship or other interaction towards its partner (Hosmer, 2005).

Trust is the willingness of a group to take the risk of harm, regardless of its ability to monitor or control the behaviour of the other party (Mayer, 2005). According to the definition of Zaltman and Deshpande (1993), they believe that the core of trust is will. Doney, Cannon and Mullen (1998) consider trust to be a subjective concept of the individual. This study defines trust as the belief that the opponent of the transaction is credible, reliable and honest, and that both parties have an opportunity to interact.

2.6 Research Hypothesis

Based on the relevant research literature, the purpose of this study is to understand how the quality of services in the Chinese sports fitness and leisure market affects customer loyalty, and 6 research assumptions are proposed.

- H1) Confidence in the Chinese sports fitness and leisure market has a significant positive impact on the quality of service.
- H2) The commitment of the Chinese sports fitness and leisure market has a significant positive impact on the quality of service.
- H3) The satisfaction of the Chinese sports fitness and leisure market has a significant positive impact on the quality of service.
- H4) Trust in Chinese sports fitness leisure consumption has a significant positive impact on customer loyalty.
- H5) China's commitment to sports fitness and leisure consumption has a significant positive impact on customer loyalty.
- H6) The satisfaction of consumers in China has a significant positive impact on customer loyalty.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 Research design

This study uses a combination of economics, management and statistics methods, mainly quantitative research, qualitative research as an auxiliary, using measuring economics analysis and statistical analysis to validate assumptions, including descriptive statistics, differential analysis, related analysis, factor analysis, multiple regression analysis, structural equation model analysis and so on. The purpose of descriptive statistical analysis is to conduct exploratory research prior to test analysis, providing an intuitive data reference to the establishment of assumptions; ANOVA is a clarification of questionnaire issues; relevant analysis and factor analysis are the fundamental relationships between the investigative factors; and structural equations are used to test established models and potential theoretical hypotheses.

3.2 Questionnaire design

This study uses the 7-Likert questionnaire as a survey tool and is based on past research.

3.3 Sampling

The customer questionnaire survey conducted in this study is a cross-face static data collection method that uses a combination of layered samples and generally random samples. Four cities were selected, respectively, in Shanghai, Hangzhou, Nanjing and Chengdu, and each city selected four larger recreational sports gyms to conduct a questionnaire survey. Selection of government department leaders, expert scholars and fitness facility operators. The sample volume totalled 645 persons. For example, table 1.

Table 1: Frequency statistics of Demographic

Items	Categories	N	Percent (%)	Cumulative percentage (%)
Gender	Male	348	53.95	53.95
	Female	297	46.05	100.00
Age	Under 26	81	12.56	12.56
	26-35	253	39.22	51.78
	36-45	214	33.18	84.96
	Above 45	97	15.04	100.00
Education Level	High school or below	174	26.98	26.98
	College student	471	73.02	100.00
Career	Civil servant	171	26.51	26.51
	Self-employed	119	18.45	44.96
	Other	355	55.04	100.00
Marital Status	Unmarried	172	26.67	26.67
	Married	384	59.53	86.20
	Other	89	13.80	100.00
Monthly Income	Under 10000	201	31.16	31.16
	10000-20000	371	57.52	88.68
	Above 20000	73	11.32	100.00
Total		645	100.0	100.0

4. EVALUATION RESULT AND FOUND

4.1 measurement model

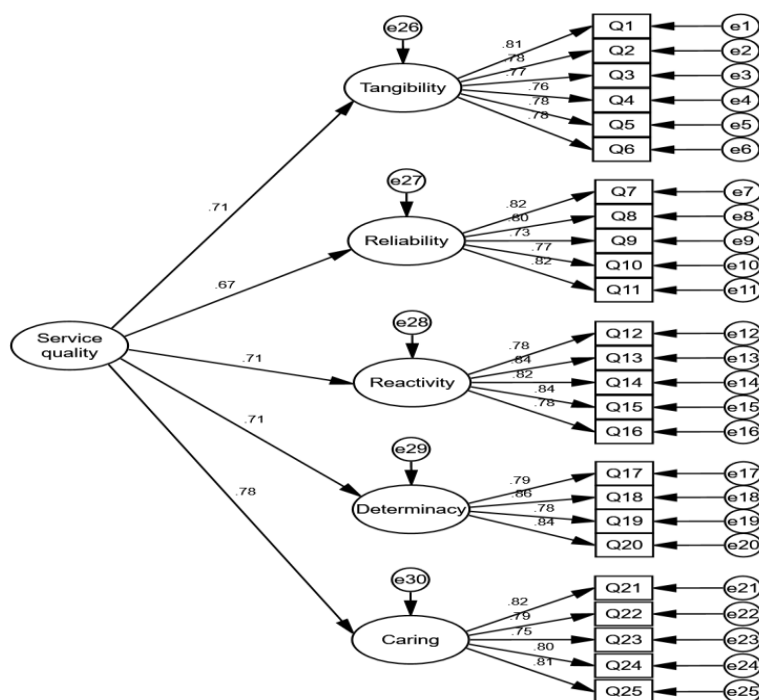
In order to further test the relationship between the concepts described by the theory, it is necessary to analyze the structural equation model. Discussion on the overall model According to the suggestions of scholars such as Anderson and Gerbing (1988) and Williams and Hazer (1986), the structural equation model analysis of the two-stage method is carried out: in the first stage, the Cronbach α coefficient is calculated for each research factor and its measurement items Analysis and confirmatory factor analysis to understand the reliability, convergent validity and discriminant validity of each factor ; in the second stage, structural equation modeling was used for analysis to verify the various hypotheses in the study. Next, a detailed analysis will be carried out.

4.1.1 Confirmatory Factor Analysis(CFA)

From Table2 that the χ^2 /df value is 2.200, which is less than 3; the RMSEA is 0.043, which is less than the standard level of 0.08, indicating a good fit; the GFI value is 0.926, the IFI value is 0.969, the CFI value is 0.968, and the RFI value is 0.968. The value is 0.938, the NFI value is 0.944, both of which have reached the excellent standard, and the PNFI value is 0.849, which is greater than 0.5. All goodness-of-fit indicators met the common standards, and the model fitted well.

Table 2: Model fitting Confirmatory Factor Analysis of service quality

Index	Judgment criteria	Statistical value	Fitting situation
CMIN	-	593.918	-
DF	-	270	-
CMIN/DF	<3	2.200	Yes
RMSEA	<0.08	0.043	Yes
GFI	>0.90	0.926	Yes
IFI	>0.90	0.969	Yes
CFI	>0.90	0.968	Yes
RFI	>0.90	0.938	Yes
NFI	>0.90	0.944	Yes
PNFI	>0.50	0.849	Yes



From Table 3 that all AVE values are greater than 0.5, and all CR values are greater than 0.7. It shows that the questionnaire structure model has good convergent validity.

Table 3: Convergent validity Confirmatory Factor Analysis of service quality

Path	Estimate	SE	CR	P	Std. Estimate	AVE	CR
Tangibility <--->	1				0.713	0.513	0.840
Reliability <--->	0.991	0.083	11.962	***	0.673		
Reactivity <--->	0.922	0.076	12.154	***	0.706		
Determinacy <--->	0.968	0.079	12.183	***	0.711		
Caring <--->	1.12	0.086	12.974	***	0.776		
Q1 <--->	1				0.809	0.610	0.904
Q2 <--->	0.95	0.043	21.927	***	0.782		
Q3 <--->	0.956	0.044	21.565	***	0.772		
Q4 <--->	0.893	0.042	21.128	***	0.76		
Q5 <--->	0.959	0.044	21.814	***	0.779		
Q6 <--->	0.933	0.042	22.004	***	0.784		
Q7 <--->	1				0.819	0.624	0.892
Q8 <--->	0.927	0.041	22.787	***	0.802		
Q9 <--->	0.848	0.042	20.252	***	0.734		
Q10 <--->	0.862	0.04	21.467	***	0.767		
Q11 <--->	0.975	0.041	23.572	***	0.823		
Q12 <--->	1				0.784	0.662	0.907
Q13 <--->	1.13	0.049	23.148	***	0.84		
Q14 <--->	1.104	0.049	22.569	***	0.823		
Q15 <--->	1.118	0.048	23.064	***	0.837		

Q16	<---		1.019	0.048	21.192	***	0.782		
Q17	<---	Determinacy	1				0.79	0.671	0.891
Q18	<---		1.08	0.046	23.667	***	0.862		
Q19	<---		0.998	0.048	20.988	***	0.779		
Q20	<---		1.089	0.047	23.09	***	0.843		
Q21	<---	Caring	1				0.817	0.633	0.896
Q22	<---		0.93	0.042	22.287	***	0.787		
Q23	<---		0.897	0.043	21.07	***	0.755		
Q24	<---		0.938	0.041	22.95	***	0.805		
Q25	<---		0.966	0.042	23.215	***	0.812		

As can be seen from the above figure, because it is a saturated model, the chi-square degree of freedom is 0. We do not discuss its model fitting index, but only focus on its path coefficient. Analyzing discriminant validity, the AVE square root value of each factor is greater than the maximum absolute value of the correlation coefficient between factors, which means it has good discriminant validity.

4.2 Structural Equation Model(SEM)

The previous analysis results show that the reliability, convergent validity and discriminant validity of each dimension and factor of this study have reached an acceptable level. Therefore, this study has been in the service quality, commitment, trust, satisfaction and customer loyalty. On the basis of measurement, according to the theoretical model of the research, a structural equation model is established.

Table 4: Structural Equation Model Parameter Estimation

Path	Estimate	SE	CR	P	Std. Estimate	AVE	CR
Tangibility <---	1				0.713		
Reliability <---	0.991	0.083	11.962	***	0.673		
Reactivity <---	0.922	0.076	12.154	***	0.706	0.513	0.840
Determinacy <---	0.968	0.079	12.183	***	0.711		
Caring <---	1.12	0.086	12.974	***	0.776		
T1 <---	1				0.866		
T2 <---	0.882	0.041	21.505	***	0.776	0.689	0.869
T3 <---	0.99	0.043	22.99	***	0.845		
S1 <---	1				0.827		
S2 <---	0.988	0.046	21.406	***	0.81	0.681	0.865
S3 <---	0.955	0.044	21.827	***	0.838		
V1 <---	1				0.864		
V2 <---	0.867	0.039	21.961	***	0.783	0.696	0.873
v3 <---	0.988	0.042	23,511	***	0.853		
C1 <---	1				0.8		
C2 <---	1.056	0.047	22.533	***	0.845	0.704	0.877
C3 <---	1.079	0.047	22.859	***	0.871		

In the overall structural equation model, they are Service quality 0.84, Trurs 0.869, Satisfaction0.865, Commitment0.873, Customer Loyalty0.877, except that the commitment is slightly lower in the overall model, all other indicators meet the requirements of being greater

than 0.7. The AVEs of the overall structural equation model are Service quality 0.513 and Trusts respectively. 0.689, Satisfaction 0.681, Commitment 0.696, and Customer Loyalty 0.704, all exceeding the minimum acceptable level, so the internal structure matching of the structural equation model is good. The model diagram of the structural equation model AMOS is shown in Figure 2.

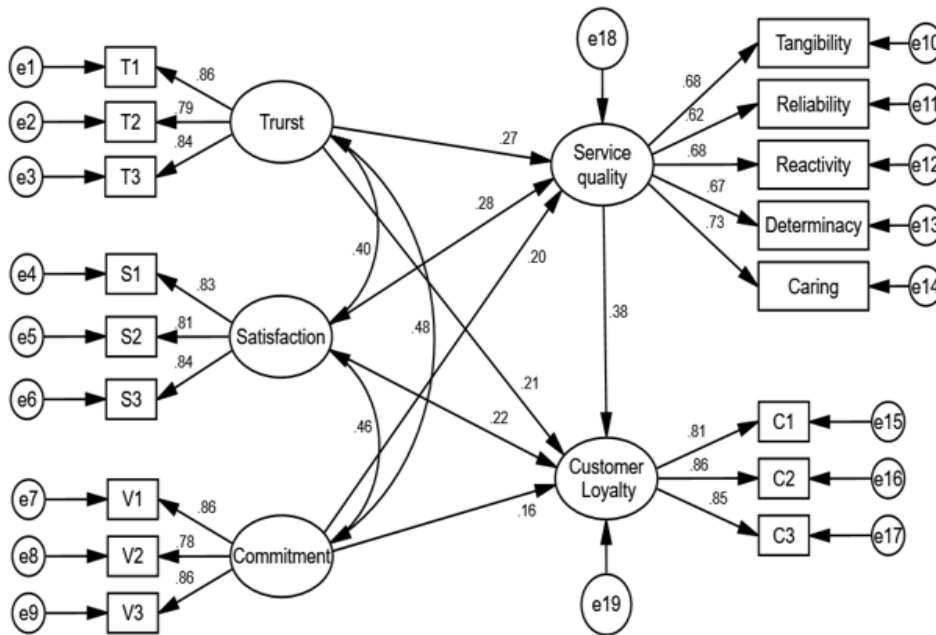


Figure 2: Calculation results of structural equation model

Table 5: Model fitting

Index	Judgment Criteria	Statistical Value	Fitting Situation
CMIN	-	145.271	-
DF	-	109	-
CMIN/DF	<3	1.333	Yes
RMSEA	<0.08	0.023	Yes
GFI	>0.90	0.975	Yes
IFI	>0.90	0.994	Yes
CFI	>0.90	0.994	Yes
RFI	>0.90	0.969	Yes
NFI	>0.90	0.975	Yes
PNFI	>0.50	0.781	Yes

From Table 5 that the χ^2/df value is 1.333, which is less than 3; the RMSEA is 0.023, which is less than the standard level of 0.08, indicating good adaptation; the GFI value is 0.975, the IFI value is 0.969, the CFI value is 0.994, and the RFI The value is 0.994, the NFI value is 0.975, both reaching the excellent standard, and the PNFI value is 0.781, which is greater than 0.5. All goodness-of-fit indicators met the common standards, and the model fitted well. See Table 6.

Table 6: Model Path Regression Results

Path			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Std. Estimate
Service quality	<---	Trust	0.173	0.032	5.357	***	0.272
Service quality	<---	Satisfaction	0.173	0.032	5.463	***	0.276
Service quality	<---	Commitment	0.123	0.032	3.811	***	0.198
Customer Loyalty	<---	Trust	0.191	0.039	4.892	***	0.211
Customer Loyalty	<---	Satisfaction	0.193	0.038	5.02	***	0.216
Customer Loyalty	<---	Commitment	0.146	0.038	3.802	***	0.164
Customer Loyalty	<---	Service quality	0.538	0.071	7.587	***	0.377

From Table 6 that if $P < 0.05$, the path is significant, and when the path is significant, the coefficient is positive, and the independent variable of this path has a significant positive impact on the dependent variable. As can be seen from the table above, the P values of all paths are less than 0.05, which means that all paths of the model are established.

Table 7: Mediation test

Path	Effect type	Estimate	Lower	Upper	P
Trust => Service Quality => Customer Loyalty	Direct	0.211	0.121	0.312	0.001
	Indirect	0.103	0.062	0.155	0.001
	Total	0.314	0.219	0.41	0.001
Satisfaction=>Service Quality=>Customer Loyalty	Direct	0.216	0.134	0.303	0.001
	Indirect	0.104	0.057	0.16	0.001
	Total	0.319	0.23	0.41	0.001
Commitment => Service Quality => Customer Loyalty	Direct	0.164	0.071	0.251	0.001
	Indirect	0.074	0.036	0.123	0.001
	Total	0.239	0.141	0.327	0.001

In the bootstrap method, because the confidence interval does not contain the number 0, it is significant. From Table 7 that all mediation paths are established, and the direct effect is significant, indicating that the mediation variable service quality plays a partial mediation role between the independent variable trust, satisfaction, commitment and the dependent variable customer loyalty.

5. RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The analysis and data validation of the structural equation model between the quality of service and customer loyalty was carried out in this study, using the data collected to test the overall matching of the model of the structure equation, the test results showed that the equation adaptation effect was good, and the final application of structural Equation model to the analysis framework established by the Institute of sports fitness and leisure market service quality and customer loyalty relationship was validated, under the influence of confidence, commitment, satisfaction and other influence factors, confirmed the relationship between quality of the service and the loyalty of the consumer.

5.1 Research Conclusions

This research study delves into the relationships between service quality, trust, commitment, satisfaction, and customer loyalty within the sports, fitness, and leisure market. Utilizing structural equation modeling and collected data, the study explores these connections and provides valuable insights.

1) Test of the Relationship Between Service Quality and Trust, Commitment, and Satisfaction

Service Quality and Trust: The study reveals a positive link between service quality and consumer trust in the sports, fitness, and leisure market. Trust is crucial for building strong customer relationships, aligning with prior research.

Service Quality and Commitment: Commitment is identified as a precursor to service quality, and it significantly influences service quality. This reinforces the idea that higher service quality fosters greater consumer commitment.

Service Quality and Satisfaction: Consumer satisfaction is found to precede service quality in this market. Higher satisfaction levels are associated with higher service quality, emphasizing that good service quality is a fundamental requirement for positive consumer relationships.

This implies that improving service quality can lead to increased trust, commitment, and satisfaction among consumers in the sports, fitness, and leisure market.

2) Examination of the Relationship Among Trust, Commitment, Satisfaction, and Customer Loyalty

Trust and Customer Loyalty: Distrust negatively impacts commitment, indicating the pivotal role of trust in establishing customer loyalty. This finding aligns with prior research emphasizing trust's importance in long-term customer relationships.

Commitment and Customer Loyalty: Commitment is positively correlated with customer loyalty, as satisfied and committed customers are more likely to exhibit loyalty. This underscores commitment's significance in driving customer loyalty, which confirms the idea that committed customers are more likely to exhibit loyalty to a brand or service. This finding supports existing research on the importance of commitment in driving customer loyalty.

Satisfaction and Customer Loyalty: The research validates a positive relationship between satisfaction and customer loyalty. Satisfied customers are more likely to demonstrate loyalty, reinforcing the notion that improving service quality can elevate customer satisfaction. This supports the idea that satisfied customers are more likely to be loyal and that improving service quality can enhance customer satisfaction.

3) Examination of the Relationship Between Service Quality and Customer Loyalty

The study affirms a positive impact of service quality on customer loyalty. The study suggests that service quality has a significant positive impact on customer loyalty, which aligns with previous literature. This finding supports prior research that positions service quality as a crucial antecedent to customer loyalty in the sports, fitness, and leisure market.

5.2 Future Research

This study explores whether there are other variables that can affect the relationship between customers and, follow-up studies can consider adding or replacing the variable of the study model, so that the model can more fully reflect the relation between consumers and sports leisure enterprises.

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