

# Evaluating the Service Quality of the Hotel Establishments in Sports Tourism With Regard to the Athletes

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the service quality of the hotels which are provided sport tourism by athletes according to some variables.

The research was conducted with cross-sectional research method as one of the general survey models and relational screening model. Target group of the study also constituted the sample group. This sample was formed of 389 athletes in total as 247 males and 142 females from team sports in Turkish Football, Volleyball, Basketball leagues in years 2016-2017 and individual sports.

“Sport Tourism Service Quality Scale” (STSQS) developed by Osmanoglu et al. (2017) was employed as data collecting tool in this study. The scale was formed of 28 items and 5 sub-dimensions as “Sport facilities,  $\alpha=0.96$ ”, “Staff,  $\alpha=0.82$ ”, “Entertainment,  $\alpha=0.90$ ”, “Hygiene,  $\alpha=0.85$ ” and “Room quality,  $\alpha=0.80$ ”. The data was analysed by applying one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), Tukey’s Post-Hoc test and Pearson Correlation analysis. The level of significance for this study was decided as  $p<0.05$ .

In conclusion with the study, service quality perception scores of the athletes were established to be high-level at room quality, hygiene and staff sub-dimensions and medium level at sport facilities and entertainment sub-dimensions. It was noted that service quality perception of the individual sports athletes is higher than the team sports athletes at staff and hygiene sub-dimensions ( $p<0.05$ ). Regarding duration of stay, the mean of the ones that stay for 5 nights and above was observed to be significantly higher than the ones that stay one-two days and three-four days at sport facilities and staff sub-dimensions. Between the sport facilities, staff, hygiene and entertainment sub-dimensions of hotel classification and service quality, a significant distinction was seen in favor of the five star hotels ( $p<0,05$ ).

**Keywords:** service quality, sports tourism, athlete

## 1. Introduction

In our day, the developments in transportation and communication technologies cause an increase in the tourism shares of disposable income and the growth of tourism sector around the world. This growth trend accelerated especially since the second half of the 19th century. According to Kozak et al. (2006), nowadays tourism is considered to be an important field of industry. Factors such as the increase in leisure times, people’s freedom of travel, social security laws, gaining the rights of paid vacation, population growth and longer human life “span etc”. Were very influential at this stage of tourism.

Correspondingly to these changes in life standarts, the search for innovation and variety in tourism has been risen. Tourism styles such as culture, history, local values, adventure and entertainment, eco tourism, nature tourism are preferred over classic tourism understanding that contains sea, sand, sun (Mansuroglu, 2006). Turkey harbours quite important potentials in terms of tourism. A coastal band over 8000 km, an enormous history and relics left from varied civilizations, unique natural beauties and climate distinctnesses can be considered as some of those potentials. Also, Turkey is one of the rare countries for being a fit ground of both summer and winter sports because of experiencing all four seasons. In this regard, it can be seen that the investments intended for sports tourism is started even they are limited. With these investments in sports tourism, sport facilities at hotels are increasing rapidly and these hotels prioritize the high quality service along with the publicity of their sport

facilities while they are determining marketing strategies (Bektaş, 2010). Because there is an intense competitive environment. In this environment, service businesses have to develop customer-driven strategies in order to survive. Otherwise they fail and be forced to quit the market. This situation brings up the service quality effect on the customer to the agenda (Yıldız & Tüfekçi, 2010).

Quality is unclear and heterotopic with respect to cognoscibility, applicability, manageability, continuity. Therefore it's perceived differently. Quality in service business happens to be different from person to person who provides the service and who receives the service. This difference means that the services have scarcely any standardization in comparison with the goods (Kılıç & Eleren, 2009).

Service quality can only be measured by ways of customer perception while the quality of concrete products can be measured by objective indicators (Kim & Kim, 1995; Zeithalm & Bitner, 2000). For the reason that the services are in an intangible state, service quality is in an intangible state as well. Therefore "perceived service quality" term is being used instead of service quality (Uyguç, 1998). Parasuraman et al. (1985), define the perceived service quality as "the magnitude and direction of the gap between expected service and perceived service". In recent years, there have been a lot of researches regarding the measurement of service quality and customer satisfaction. The purpose of measuring the service quality and the customer satisfaction is to increase them by setting all units of the business in motion to meet the customer expectations (Lapa & Baştaç, 2012). Because of this, lots of sectors that are producing goods and services care about the studies regarding the service quality and trying to create an awareness between their rivals (Polat et al. 2013). The consumers interpret the quality in their own way by discerning lots of factors, and evaluate the service quality by comparing the services that were offered to them and the services that they were expecting (Kayral, 2015). The most important factor for designating the measurement of service quality is the level of anticipating the consumer expectations. Within this context, level of anticipating the customer expectations is quality too. It is possible to explain service quality as the customer's opinions about the perfection or superiority of the service (Duygulu, 2015; Yağmur et al., 2015). For this reason, the concept of service quality can be defined as the needs and the expectations of the buyer, the specifics which the service should have with respect to these needs and expectations, and the service's purveyance rate for these specifications (Ünver, 2015). Satisfying these needs and expectations of the buyers effects the repurchase behaviour in sports tourism as well.

According to Ross (2001), with the simplest term, "sports tourism" means making a journey for joining or watching activities about sports. While Weed (1997) explains the sports tourism as the travels which is being made with the aim of joining or viewing sport activities far from home and without any commercial purpose, it was stated as the vacation based upon joining a sport activity as audience or participant by Standeven & DeKnop (1999). Sports Tourism is referred to the total travel experiences of being a participant or being engaged in sports activities as an athlete, a manager, a fan and etc. (Göksel, 2012). Primary goal of the tourist in sports tourism is a temporary visit of spending at least 24 hours at the venue to attend a sports event. In other words, sports tourism is the all tourism movements which include travels of people who are aiming for spending leisure time or wishing for competition which are basically about joining a sportive activity such as national or international organizations of sports activities, tours, championships etc. (Kurtzman & Zauhar, 2001). "Sports tourism is also defined as all of the experiences of travel to engage in or view sport-related activities as athletes, managers and fans" (Stephen, 2001). As it's understood from this definition, the concept of sports tourism which is gaining importance as a new industry around the world and which have considerable revenues consists of tourism, sports and transportation facts. With this structure, sports tourism has the speciality of being an economy all by itself. Sport-related events such as olympics, football and basketball championships ensure respectable mass travels to these hosting countries of such events. Also, a sizable amount of revenue is being acquired. And the attention of national and foreign press creates the opportunity of free publicity (Çankaya, 2011).

Here with, service quality which is subjected to this research draws attention as an important matter in sports tourism hotels. Detection of service quality is seen as a crucial starting point for determining and improving the service quality levels in terms of hotels in sports tourism. Thus, the athletes' expectations from the hotels will be clearly revealed and hotel establishments will take measures to meet these expectations. Thereby this research is quite important in regard to designating the quality level of sports tourism hotels in Turkey and reshaping the facilities in compliance with the athletes.

With this study conducted in that direction, it was aimed to give feedbacks to hotels, sports clubs and athletes in accordance with acquired findings by analysing the service quality which the athletes received at the hotels they stayed within the scope of (Sport Facilities, Staff, Entertainment, Hygiene, Room Quality) dimensions.

## 2. Method

This research was conducted by employing cross-sectional research method as one of the general survey methods and relational screening model with respect to the goal (Karasar, 2003).

### 2.1 The Population and the Sample Group of the Study

Target group of the study also constituted the sample group. This sample group was formed of athletes who competed in Turkish 2016-2017 Football, Volleyball, Basketball leagues and stayed in sports tourism hotels. Disproportioned element sampling method was used to select 389 athletes as 247 males and 142 females (Alpar, 2001).

### 2.2 Data Collecting

“**Sport Tourism Service Quality Scale**” (**STSQS**) developed by Osmanoğlu et al. (2017) was employed as data collecting tool in this study. The scale was formed of 28 items and 5 sub-dimensions (Sport facilities,  $\alpha=0.96$ , Staff,  $\alpha=0.82$ , Entertainment,  $\alpha=0.90$ , Hygiene,  $\alpha=0.85$  and Room quality,  $\alpha=0.80$ ). Cronbach Alpha internal consistency value of the total scale was found as ( $\alpha=0.96$ ). On service quality scale; sport facilities sub-dimension consists of items (1,2,3,7,8,10,11,12,13,15,17,19 and 28), staff sub-dimension consists of items (9, 16, 18, 21, 23 and 26), entertainment sub-dimension consists of items (14, 20, 22 and 25), hygiene sub-dimension consists of items (4, 5 and 6), and room quality sub-dimension consists of items (24, 27). The developed scales were applied to participants directly or emails.

### 2.3 Data Analysis

To analyse the data at hand, primarily homogeneity tests such as Shapiro Wilks, Kurtosis and Skewness were applied and it was decided to use parametric hypothesis tests by determining that the groups are normally distributed. In this direction, percentage (%) and frequency (f) analysis were used to designate the demographic data distribution, Independent Sample t-test to compare two groups, One-Way Variance Analysis (ANOVA) for more than two groups and Pearson Correlation tests to find the relationship between ungrouped data. Level of significance for the study was set to  $p<0,05$ .

## 3. Findings

Findings about the research data are presented as tables in this section.

Table 1. Percentage and frequency distributions of the athletes in accordance with various variables

		f	%	Total
<b>Gender</b>	Male	247	63.5	389
	Female	142	36.5	
	<b>Branch</b>	Football	172	44.2
Basketball		66	17.0	
Volleyball		69	17.7	
Individual		82	21.1	
One or Two Stars		35	9.0	
<b>Hotel Classification</b>	Three or Four Stars	128	32.9	389
	Five Stars	226	58.1	

When Table 1 is examined, according to the gender variable, 63,5 % of the athletes (n=247) are male and 36,5 % of the athletes (n=142) are female. It can be seen that the athletes' 44,2 % (n=172) are in football, 17 % (n=66) in basketball, 17,7 % (n=69) in volleyball and 21,1 % (n=82) are in individual sports branches. With regard to hotel classification, it's noted that 9 % (n=35) of the participants stayed in one or two star hotels, 32,9% (n=128) stayed in three or four star hotels and 58,1 % stayed in five star hotels. Also, 24,4 % (n=95) of the athletes stayed at the hotel for one or two days, 22,1 % (n=86) stayed three or four days, 53,5 % (n=208) stayed for five days or more.

Table 2. Means and standart deviations of the sub-dimensions forming the service quality

Sub-Dimensions	Sport Facilities	Staff	Entertainment	Hygiene	Room Quality
<b>Arithmetic Mean</b>	6.67	7.63	5.87	7.68	7.85
<b>Standard Deviation</b>	2.17	2.09	2.76	2.75	4.58

At Table 2 it's observed that the athletes' means and standart deviations of the service quality sub-dimensions are

as in following order : “Room Quality” (7,85±4,58), “Hygiene” (7.68±2.75), “Staff” (7.63±2,09), “Sport Facilities” (6.67±2.17), “Entertainment” (5.87 ± 2.76).

Table 3. The difference between branch variable and service quality sub-dimensions

	<b>Sub-Dimensions</b>	<b>Groups</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Sd</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>P</b>
<b>Branch</b>	<b>Sport Facilities</b>	Football	172	6.90	2.01	2.36	0.70
		Basketball	66	6.87	1.80		
		Volleyball	69	6.14	2.66		
		Individual	82	6.49	2.27		
	<b>Staff</b>	Football	172	7.52	1.96	5.25	<b>0.01</b>
		<b>*Basketball</b>	66	7.94	1.62		
		<b>*Volleyball</b>	69	6.94	2.15		
		<b>*Individual</b>	82	8.19	2.4		
	<b>Entertainment</b>	Football	172	6.00	2.39	0.47	0.70
		Basketball	66	5.56	2.51		
		Volleyball	69	5.95	3.91		
		<b>*Football</b>	172	7.36	2.06		
<b>Hygiene</b>	Basketball	66	7.90	1.63	5.55	<b>0.00</b>	
	<b>*Volleyball</b>	69	7.12	2.41			
	<b>*Individual</b>	82	8.66	4.33			
	Football	172	7.93	6.34			
<b>Room Quality</b>	Basketball	66	8.30	1.93	0.62	0.60	
	Volleyball	69	7.25	2.49			
	Individual	82	7.82	2.60			

\*p<0,05

After looking at Table 3, it’s seen that there is significant differences at Staff ( $F_{(3;385)}=5.25;p<0.05$ ) and Hygiene ( $F_{(3;385)}=5.55;p<0.05$ ) sub-dimensions regarding the branch variable. As a result of the Tukey analysis which was performed to determine among which groups there are differences, it’s noted that there are differences at Staff (8.19±24) and Hygiene (8.66±4.33) sub-dimensions in favor of the individual sports athletes.

Table 4. Correlation between age, sports years, income of the athletes and service quality sub-dimensions

		<b>Sport Facilities</b>	<b>Staff</b>	<b>Entertainment</b>	<b>Hygiene</b>	<b>Room Quality</b>
<b>Age</b>	<b>cor</b>	<b>0,16**</b>	0,06	0,07	0,07	0,05
	<b>p</b>	0,00	0,21	0,15	0,16	0,29
<b>Year of Sports</b>	<b>cor</b>	<b>0,10*</b>	0,03	0,03	0,09	0,06
	<b>p</b>	0,03	0,47	0,51	0,05	0,17
<b>Income</b>	<b>cor</b>	<b>0,16**</b>	0,06	0,08	0,04	0,02
	<b>p</b>	0,00	0,20	0,08	0,43	0,62

By looking at Table 4, it can be said that there is a significantly positive oriented low level correlation between athletes’ age (r=0,16), year of sports (r=0,10), level of income (r=0,16) and sports branch sub-dimension.

Table 5. Comparison of the service quality sub-dimensions with regard to duration of stay

	Sub-Dimensions	Groups	n	Mean	Sd	F	P
Duration of Accommodation	Sport Facilities	*1-2 days	95	6.11	2.16	8.21	<b>0.00</b>
		*3-4 days	86	6.32	2.02		
		*5 and above	208	7.08	2.17		
	Staff	*1-2 days	95	7.17	1.96	5.33	<b>0.00</b>
		3-4 days	86	7.38	1.90		
		*5 and above	208	7.94	2.17		
	Entertainment	1-2 days	95	5.49	2.53	2.11	0.12
		3-4 days	86	5.65	2.31		
		5 and above	208	6.13	3.01		
	Hygiene	1-2 days	95	7.61	2.01	0.67	0.51
		3-4 days	86	7.42	2.12		
		5 and above	208	7.82	3.23		
	Room Quality	1-2 days	95	7.28	2.54	2.20	0.11
		3-4 days	86	7.38	2.24		
		5 and above	208	8.30	5.82		

\*p<0,05

When Table 5 is investigated, with respect to duration of accommodation variable, significant differences can be seen at sport facilities ( $F_{(2;386)}=8,21;p<0.05$ ) and staff ( $F_{(2;386)}=5,33;p<0.05$ ) sub-dimensions of the service quality. In the wake of Tukey Post Hoc analysis conducted to find in which groups the difference originated from, it was decided that the distinction is in favor of the ones stayed 5 days or above at Sport facilities ( $7,08 \pm 2,17$ ) and Staff ( $7,17 \pm 1,96$ ) sub-dimensions.

Table 6. Comparison of service quality sub-dimensions with regard to hotel classification

	Sub-Dimensions	Groups	n	Mean	Sd	F	P
Hotel Classification	Sport facilities	*1-2 star	35	5.57	2.66	22.62	<b>0.00</b>
		*3-4 star	128	5.93	2.35		
		*5 star	226	7.27	1.76		
	Staff	*1-2 star	35	6.53	2.44	10.46	<b>0.00</b>
		*3-4 star	128	7.29	2.14		
		*5 star	226	7.99	1.91		
	Entertainment	1-2 star	35	5.29	2.68	8.79	<b>0.00</b>
		*3-4 star	128	5.16	2.59		
		*5 star	226	6.36	2.78		
	Hygiene	*1-2 star	35	6.60	2.64	3.20	<b>0.04</b>
		3-4 star	128	7.65	3.83		
		*5 star	226	7.86	1.87		
	Room Quality	1-2 star	35	6.37	2.92	2.08	0.12
		3-4 star	128	7.88	7.43		
		5 star	226	8.06	1.83		

p<0,05

By inspecting Table 6, a significant difference can be seen at sport facilities ( $F_{(2;386)}=22,62;p<0.05$ ), staff ( $F_{(2;386)}=10,46;p<0.05$ ), entertainment ( $F_{(2;386)}=8,79;p<0.05$ ) and hygiene ( $F_{(2;386)}=3,20;p<0.05$ ) sub-dimensions. Tukey Post Hoc analysis results show that the difference is in favor of five star hotels at sport facilities ( $7,27 \pm 1,76$ ), staff ( $7,08 \pm 1,91$ ), entertainment ( $6,36 \pm 2,78$ ) and hygiene ( $7,86 \pm 1,87$ ) sub-dimensions.

In this research, significant discrepancies weren't confirmed between gender, level of education, athletes' classification and service quality.

#### 4. Discussion

Findings about the athletes' -who performe in Turkish football, basketball, voleyball and individual sports leagues- service quality perception scores of the hotel that they stayed in discussed and interpreted in this section.

In consequence of the analysis, it's seen that the athletes have means and standart deviations in the order of "room quality", "hygiene", "staff", "sport facilities" and "entertainment" sub-dimensions (Table 2). When the literature regarding these results is investigated, it was found that Gencer et al. (2008) ranged the sub-dimensions that form the service quality perception of sports tourists towards ski resorts as ski instructors, ski pistes and equipments, employees, ambiance and entertainment. We can say that these sub-dimensions support the obtained findings regarding "room quality", "staff", "sport facilities", and "entertainment" sub-dimensions in our study. Besides that, Brady & Cronin (2001); Grönroos (1984) emphasized that the dimension which affects the quality perception in sports services is interaction quality. Papadimitriou & Karteroliotis (2000) said that physical environment (modern environment, cleanliness, safety, optimum temperature and light) which means hygiene and sport facilities are very important. And this result coinsides with hygiene and sport facilities sub-dimensions of this study According to these results, we can say that the athletes are generally satisfied with the room qualities in hotels providing services in related to sports tourism. Also it's observed that the participants don't care much about entertainment activities for the reason of staying at hotels for training and performance purposes. Because sports tourists care much more about the services providing them the necessary conditions to exercise their sport branch of interest and the services which are affective during relaxation period afterwards rather than entertainment.

With regard to branch variable, service quality perception of the athletes show significant difference in favor of the individual athletes at staff and hygiene sub-dimensions (Table 3). In studies about service quality, it was determined that there is differentiation in service quality perceptions of hotel customers with different status (Özçelik, 2007; Ertürk, 2011). When these results evaluated together, we can say that service quality perception of athletes from different branches changes in accordance with the specifics of their branch.

It was confirmed that there is a positive directed low level significant correlation between athletes' age, year of sports and sport facilities sub-dimension (Table 4). According to this result it can be said that as the athletes' age increase their quality perception of the sport facilities at the hotel get higher. In previous researches about the subject, there are outcomes which indicated that older sports tourists perceived the service quality of the hotel they stayed in higher than the younger ones (Yıldız et al., 2013; Gençer et al., 2008; Göksel, 2012; Arat et al., 2015; Yılmaz, 2017). By evaluating the results together, it can be said that older athletes –derived from the experience that comes with the age- might find the service quality regarding sport facilities in hotels better than the young athletes because they can compare with past experiences. Because the older athletes with higher sports years might have found more opportunities of staying at sportive camps or hotels in comparison with young athletes and are able to compare the old and the new establishments, their perception of modern day hotels might scale up.

In the wake of the conducted analysis, positive directed low level significant correlation between the athletes income and sport facilities was found (Table 4). In previous studies, it's noted that there is a significant correlation between income and service quality (Yapraklı & Sağlık, 2010; Göksel, 2012; Kenzhebayeva, 2012; Yüzgenç & Özgül, 2014). One of the biggest determinants which affects the quality of human life is the level of income. In this context, it is possible to say that there is a direct proportion between the people's level of income and the quality of life; and as the income increases the life quality might rise as well. Therefore service quality perception of people with high level of income might differ from the people with low or mid level of income. Because of the reason that the participants of this study are professional athletes and their yearly level of incomes are high, their level of quality perception towards sport facilities at hotels might change.

With respect to duration of stay variable, significant distinction at sport facilities and staff sub-dimensions of service quality are being observed. When the source of differentiation is investigated, it was established that in both sub-dimensions the mean of the participants staying 5 days or more is higher than the mean of the participants staying three or four days and one or two days (Table 5). Similar results can be seen when the literature is investigated. In their research, Yapraklı and Sağlık (2010) established that there is significantly positive oriented correlation between service quality and frequency of coming to the hotel and number of the nights spend in the hotel. Emir et al. (2010) noted in their study that regarding the duration of stay, service quality perception of the people who stay at the hotel between 8 to 15 days are higher than the ones who stay 4 to 7 and 1 to 3 days. Thus, we can conclude that athletes who are staying for longer periods use the sport facilities more compared to the athletes staying for short periods. Likewise, it can be imagined that people who are staying longer have more communication with the employees.

When the differences between classification of the hotel that the athletes stayed in and service quality sub-dimensions investigated, it was confirmed that there are significant distinctions at sport facilities, staff, entertainment, hygiene sub-dimensions of service quality. As a result of the analysis to determine the source

group of distinction, it's seen that the means of the athletes staying in five star hotels are high in all sub-dimensions (Table 6). In their study, Yapraklı & Sağlık (2010) found the quality of hotel establishments which offers full board service better than the ones offering half board or bed and breakfast services. Which means, for five star hotels where the athletes stay to have better facilities than other hotels with less stars regarding sport facilities, staff, entertainment, and hygiene is considered to be the reason for the result at hand.

## 5. Conclusion and Suggestions

Conclusively, we can say that sports branch, duration of stay, hotel classification, age, years of sport and income of the athletes who stay at the hotels in Turkey are affective on service quality perception. In light of these results, hotels offering sport services should organize activities of entertainment to make them relaxed while having fun by considering the athletes' relaxing times after intense and tiresome training sessions. Also, they should work on renovations and modernizations regarding sport facilities. Hotels especially need to update the sports tools and equipments for young athletes to find the quality of the sport facilities better. Other than the five star hotels should make new investments to increase the quality of sports tourism. Hotels should care about the employments of the staff with professional competency by using human resources more actively, and resolve the low quality perception about staff and hygiene.

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