

Original Article

Perceived quality, perceived value, satisfaction and future intentions in participants in swimming crossings

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Abstract:

In current society, the practice of physical activity has increased in a significant manner increasing the globalisation and diversification of sporting events, having among them open sea swimming crossings. This fact is fostering an increase in scientific studies which analyse these sporting events, particularly the assessment of perceived quality from the point of view of the participant. The goal of this study was to evaluate the perceived quality, perceived value, satisfaction and future intentions of participants in swimming crossings. The instrument used is made up of two scales, one of perceived quality of the event of 32 items and the other of general quality of 15 items. The questionnaire was distributed telematically to a sample of 93 swimmers in total, participants in a swimming crossing. The results showed that the best valued dimensions were, in terms of the scale of perceived quality the dimension of personal interaction with a value of 5.72 and in terms of the global scale the dimensions of future intentions and satisfaction, with scores of around 5.5 points. All dimensions obtained higher scores from the least experienced participants. The use of this questionnaire will help organisers and companies elaborate strategies which will allow the improvement of the event increasing the level of satisfaction and seeking the fidelity of the participants.

Key words: perceived quality, perceived value, satisfaction, future intentions, swimming crossings.

Introduction

In the last 10 years sporting events have experienced a great development increasing in globalisation and diversification, both in places dedicated to sporting competitions and through television. Attendance and/or participation in sporting events is being, more and more, the main occupation for free time and leisure in the population, having sports as one of the largest social phenomena in the world (Andam, Montazeri, Feizi and Mehdizadeh, 2015; Bouchet, Bodet, Bernahce-Assollant and Kada, 2011).

For this reason, sporting events are being used as part of the tourism sector (Allameh, Pool, Jaber, Salehzadeh and Asadi, 2015; Getz, 2008). Thus, most municipalities and/or companies wish to carry out sporting events, as all of them, independent of the nature they may have, are connected to a great political, economic and social influence. Sporting events can attract tourists breaking with the seasonality, in other words, encourage specific touristic appeal in periods of off-season, and be an efficient means to renovate recreational infrastructures, among others (Baena, Parra-Camacho, Pérez-Campos and García-Fernández, 2014; Bertella, 2014; Sung, Kim, Jae, Connaughton and Hak, 2011).

For the past few years there has been a development in Spain of a new discipline in swimming, that of open sea swimming. According to the Royal Spanish Swimming Federation (2017) “open sea swimming is defined as any competition taking place in rivers, lakes, oceans or canals, with the exception of 10 km tests which are considered marathon swimming” (p. 3) This development is mainly due to two factors: on one hand, Spain is a peninsula so the possibility of accessing open water environments is larger in comparison to other countries, and on the other hand, the good climatological conditions and high water temperatures allow the performance of these competitions in these open water environments (Cantón, Checa and Ortín, 2009). In this way, the sporting events of open sea swimming crossing have increased considerably in the last years, being of interest the evaluation of the perceived quality of these events to improve them in future editions.

The quality of service has attracted the interest of researchers and professionals in the field of sports increasing in the last few years the number of publications about sporting events. This is mainly due to their influence in the different decisions of the users in terms of their participation, identification, satisfaction and loyalty (Calabuig et al. 2016; Theodorakis, Kaplanidou and Karabaxoglou, 2015).

Quality of service has been defined by various authors throughout the years (Bitner and Hubbert, 1994; Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, 1985; Zeithaml, 1988), having the widest acceptance the one that considers quality of service as “the difference between expectations of service before consumption and what the user perceives after experimenting it” (Shonk and Chelladurai, 2008, p.588), suggesting that perceived quality may be

subjective and different to objective or real quality (Zeithaml, 1988). Various studies support the opinion that perceived quality is positively associated to perceived value, being this a precedent of it (Calabuig, Prado-Gascó, Crespo, Núñez-Pomar and Añó, 2015; Chen and Dubinsky, 2003; Nuviala, Grao-Cruces, Fernández-Ozcorta and Nuviala, 2015). In the same way, the reviewed literature shows that perceived value can be a good predictor of the satisfaction of the client. A high quality of service leads to an improvement in the perceived value, influencing in this way the satisfaction of the client when registering for a sporting event, as the client anticipates good service when signing up and assisting the event (Murray and Howat, 2002).

Zeithaml (1988) stated that perceived value is “the global assessment made by the consumer of the utility of a product based on their perception of what is received and what is given” (p. 13). While, Chen and Dubinsky (2003) claim that perceived value is “the perception the consumer has of the net benefits obtained in exchange for the costs incurred to obtain the desired benefits” (p. 326). In order to evaluate the perceived value, the benefits as positive dimensions and the costs as negative dimensions need to be collected (Gallarza) and have had a central role in the contemporary literature of services marketing and event management, mainly due to two reasons: on one hand, the satisfaction of the consumer depends on the subjective perception of the service, being this an important criterion to assess the quality of service, and on the other hand, satisfaction is a good predictor of the future intentions of the consumer (Anderson and Sullivan, 1993; Du, Jordan and Funk, 2015).

In the context of sporting events, Yoshida and James (2010), point out that the satisfaction of the spectators is “a pleasing and satisfactory response to the entertainment of a sporting competition and/or auxiliary services provided during the game” (p.340), therefore, a high satisfaction at a sporting event influences the future intentions of the spectator to assist an event with similar characteristics (Brown, Smith and Assaker, 2016; Calabuig, Crespo, Prado-Gascó and Núñez-Pomar, 2014), being this a key point in customer retention and loyalty strategies (Calabuig et al., 2015). The goal of this study is to evaluate the perceived quality, perceived value, satisfaction and future intentions of participants of swimming crossings.

Material and method

Participants

The sample was made up of a total of 93 swimmers, participants of the Bocaina International Crossing performed in October of 2017. The gender of the participants was 83.3% male (n=78) and 16.2% female (n=15). By age, 3.23% were under 18 years old, 34.41% between the ages of 19 and 39, meanwhile 62.37% were over 40 years old. Looking at the education level, 8.61% had elementary and secondary studies, 22.58% had finished high school or vocational training and 68.81% had university or postgraduate studies. Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of the sample.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the sample

		N	%
Gender	Male	78	83.8
	Female	15	16.2
Education level	University Studies	38	40.9
	Vocational Training	14	15.1
	Postgraduate (Master/Doctorate)	22	23.7
	Other studies	19	20.3
	Unemployed	3	3.2
	Student	5	5.4
Employment situation	Laborer	61	65.6
	Freelancer	18	19.4
	Other	6	6.4
Club or association	No	70	75.3
	Yes	23	24.7
Federal license	No	57	61.3
	Yes	36	38.7
Years of experience	Less than 3 years	43	46.2
	Between 3 and 6 years	25	26.9
	Between 6 and 10 years	11	11.8
	Over 10 years	14	15.1
Hours dedicated	0-3 hours	15	16.1
	3-6 hours	38	40.9
	6-10 hours	24	25.8
	More than 10 hours	16	17.2

Instrument

The questionnaire which was selected was the one validated by Angosto (2014) on perceived quality in participants in popular races, to which a series of items was added to adapt it to measure the perceived quality in open sea swimming crossings, having the questionnaire divided in the following manner:

- a) Socio-demographic (items from 1 to 10).
- b) Informative questions (items from 11 to 12).
- c) Communication (items from 13 to 15).
- d) Personal interaction (items from 16 to 19).
- e) Logistical infrastructure (items from 20 to 23).
- f) Complimentary services (items from 24 to 27).
- g) Technical aspects of swimming crossings (items from 28 to 40).
- h) Quality (items from 41 to 44).
- i) Perceived value (items from 45 to 48).
- j) Future intentions (items from 49 to 51).
- k) Satisfaction (items from 52 to 55).

Apart from the socio-demographic dimension and the informative questions, the rest of the dimensions were grouped in two big blocks in the questionnaire. On one hand, there is perceived quality, which includes the factors of communication, personal interaction, logistical infrastructure, complimentary services and technical aspects of swimming crossings. On the other hand, there is a second scale of general quality, which includes the items of global quality, perceived value, future intentions and satisfaction.

Table 2 shows each dimension of quality factors and what is measured by each one. Both the socio-demographic dimension items and the informative questions are closed-ended questions, except for 2 of the socio-demographics (age and residence). The remaining items are evaluated using the Likert scale with 6 tethers (1 – Completely disagree, 6 – Completely agree), with the goal of eliminating the central tendency bias. A complete reliability was obtained with the high value of Cronbach alpha of .96.

Table 2. Dimensions of the instrument

Dimension	Explanation
Communication (CO)	CO has the goal of evaluating the channels for promotion and diffusion which the organisation has for the crossing (flyers, press releases, radio or web, information which is provided...) and see if the distribution of the information is good.
Personal interaction (PI)	PI evaluates the function of the personnel of the organisation and the volunteers, as well as the social relations which are established when giving the cap and chip, and with the fulfilment of the timetables enforced by the organisation for the planned development of the event.
Logistical infrastructure (LI)	LI covers the aspects of signalling the event to tailoring it to its location, the foreseeing of sufficient parking spots for the number of participants and material elements such as banners, stands, exits, finish line, etc., as well as the design of the route of the test and its signage.
Complementary services (CS)	CS is the existence of parallel services to the test, such as changing rooms, stands, cafes or physiotherapy, evaluation of the contents of the swimmer's bag, the visibility of the results and podium in terms and where they are presented or how are the provisioning points, if any.
Technical aspects of swimming crossings (TS)	TS has the goal of evaluating the security means used during the crossing, as well as the aspects of the outlet chamber and finish line.
General quality (GQ)	GQ seeks the general evaluation of all the previous dimensions in their ensemble.
Perceived value (PV)	PV shows the generic evaluation which the swimmer makes when it comes to the price-quality relationship.
Future intentions (FI)	FI serves to measure the intentions of swimmers to return the following year or not and if they would recommend the participation in said event to colleagues or friends in future editions.
Satisfaction (SA)	SA measures the satisfaction of the swimmer with the swimming crossing and if it has fulfilled the expectations with which the participant arrived before competing.

Source: Angosto (2014).

Procedure

First of all, the questionnaire was redesigned and validated for the perceived quality of the participant in swimming crossings taking into account the indications made by Carretero-Dios and Pérez (2005, 2007) for the validation of measuring instruments. Once the validation of the content was done by a panel of expert judges, the

pilot study was carried out to validate the construct, for this a swimming crossing taking place in the Region of Murcia was sought out, for which the research team got in contact with the administration of said event transmitting the goal and aim of the research.

Once permission was obtained from the administration, the questionnaire was sent to them telematically through the tool Forms of GDrive. The administration sent the questionnaire by email to the participants 24 hours after the end of the event and was open for 14 days to send responses.

Data analysis

The statistical package SPSS v19.0 was used to process the data. Different data analysis techniques were carried out, such as the descriptive analysis of variables calculating the descriptive statistics: mean, standard deviation, frequency and percentages, the ANOVA analysis of a factor to verify the significant statistical differences between groups, and finally a linear regression analysis having as a dependent variable the future intentions of the participant and was independent variables the dimensions of personnel, perceived value and satisfaction. The level of significance was established as the value of $p < .05$.

Results

The results of the evaluation of the different dimensions is shown in Table 3. In terms of the scale of perceived quality it was observed that the factor which obtained the best values was the personal interaction dimension with a score of $5.72 \pm .51$. Followed by the dimension of technical aspects of crossings (5.36) and the infrastructure dimension ($5.34 \pm .99$), having as the worst valued dimension that of complimentary services with a score of 4.79 ± 1.05 . Regarding the scale of global quality, future intentions and satisfaction were the best valued dimensions with scores around 5.5 points ($5.45 \pm .83$ and $5.54 \pm .68$, respectively). Meanwhile perceived value was the worst valued dimension with a score of 4.81 ± 1.38 .

Addressing the evaluations according to years of experience, it can be observed that swimmers with less experience gave a better evaluation of all the dimensions than the swimmers with more experience. Highlighting the values obtained in personal interaction and satisfaction by part of the swimmers with less experience with scores higher than 5.5 points. There were no significant statistical differences according to the level of experience in any dimension.

Table 3. Evaluation of the dimension according to the previous experience of the swimmer

Dimension	Less than 3 years		Between 3 and 6 years		Between 6 and 10 years		Over 10 years		F	Sig.
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
Communication	5.20	.81	5.12	.74	5.09	1.09	5.07	.87	.12	.946
Personal Interaction	5.72	.51	5.59	.58	5.48	.45	5.50	.61	.96	.413
Logistical Infrastructure	5.34	.89	5.10	.74	5.39	.50	4.96	.98	1.07	.362
Complementary Services	4.79	1.05	4.72	.94	4.94	.88	4.67	1.16	.17	.913
Aspects of Crossings	5.36	.86	5.29	.71	5.09	.76	5.06	1.19	.59	.622
Quality	5.11	.93	5.13	.72	5.05	.82	4.75	1.33	.59	.618
Perceived Value	4.81	1.38	4.56	1.10	4.70	1.22	4.38	1.75	.43	.732
Future Intentions	5.45	.83	5.25	.70	5.12	1.05	5.02	1.04	1.1	.351
Satisfaction	5.54	.68	5.38	.69	5.20	.97	5.13	1.40	1.00	.396

The results of the linear regression (Table 4) show that the model had a high level of correlation with a value of $r = .798$, with an explanation of the variance of the dependent variable future intentions of 63.7%. The ANOVA test showed significant levels of the regression model making its eligibility suitable. The Durbin-Watson test obtained suitable values close to 2.

Table 4. Summary of the regression model

Model	R	R ²	R ² adjusted	Error estimation	tip.	Durbin-Watson
1	.798	.637	.624	.53		2.3
Regression	43.13	df	Square Mean	F		Sig.
Residues	24.62	3	14.38			
Total	67.74	89	.28	51.97		.000
		92				

Note: predictors: satisfaction, personnel and perceived value; dependent variable: future intentions.

The lineal regression values (Table 5) obtained that the future intentions dimensions was explained by the constant ($\beta = .80$; $t = 1.34$; $p = .182$) and the variables of satisfaction ($\beta = .35$; $t = 4.14$; $p = .000$), personnel ($\beta = .24$;

$t=2.01$; $p=.048$) and perceived value ($\beta=.27$; $t=4.99$; $p=.000$), allow to predict the variance of the dependent variable of future intentions at 63.7%.

Table 5. Coefficients of lineal regression in function to future intentions

Model	Non-standardised coefficients		Standardised coefficients	t	Sig.	Correlations			Statistics of colineality	
	B	Standard Error	B			ZValue	Partial	Part	Tol	VIF
(Constant)	.80	.59		1.34	.182					
Personnel	.24	.12	.15	2.01	.048	.51	.21	.13	.75	1.34
1 Perceived Value	.27	.05	.43	4.99	.000	.72	.47	.32	.56	1.78
Satisfaction	.35	.09	.36	4.14	.000	.71	.40	.26	.54	1.86

Note: dependent variable: future intentions

Discussion

The goal of the study was to evaluate the perceived quality, perceived value, satisfaction and future intentions of participants of swimming crossings. The results of the study show that the adapted questionnaire allows the evaluation of perceived quality by participants in sporting events related to open sea swimming crossings. Moreover, it is an easy tool to deliver, being able to complete it in person during a short period of time or telematically.

Knowing the opinion of the participants may efficiently help the organisers of the sporting event to elaborate efficient and new strategies in future editions of the event, with the intention of changing and improving those aspects which had been valued negatively, without fulfilling the previously established quality requirements, which is why the participants satisfaction with the offered service must be taken into consideration.

In terms of the results obtained by the study the personal interaction dimension was the best valued, having a score above 5.5 points over a maximum of 6. Similar values were obtained in the study carried out by Angosto, López-Gullón and Díaz-Suárez (2016) even if in this case it was not the best valued dimension. In other studies, carried out by Alexandris, Kouthoris and Meligdis (2006) it was obtained that the personal interaction dimension was the second most valued, although having a score which was a lot lower than the previously mentioned studies, including the current study. Furthermore, Theodorakis et al. (2015) on the evaluation of runners in a sporting event, the personal interaction dimension was the third best valued with a mid-high score. The human factor is important within the sports sector as has been stated by Bodet (2006).

Complimentary services was the worst evaluated dimension by far in comparison to the rest in the current study, obtaining inferior results to those obtained by Angosto et al. (2014) in the II Edition of the half marathon, the same as in the articles by Angosto et al. (2016) where in both this dimension obtained a lower value, even though it was higher than the score obtained in this article.

Regarding the scale of global quality, the perceived value dimension was the worst valued coinciding with the study by Calabuig et al. (2014). On the contrary, in the study carried out by Angosto et al. (2014) the perceived value was the dimension with the highest score, obtained values above 5.5 points over 6, with similar results also in the research carried out by Calabuig, Burillo, Crespo, Mundina and Gallardo (2010).

Lastly, the dimensions of future intentions and satisfaction were the best valued within the global quality, with a score of 5.5 over 6, agreeing with the results obtained of the perceptions of the spectators of a basketball championship in the study by Calabuig et al. (2014). Furthermore, in the study carried out by Angosto et al. (2014) the future intentions dimension obtained quite a high score, values above 5.5 points over 6, being the second best valued dimension. In addition, studies carried out by Theodorakis et al. (2015) and Calabuig et al. (2010), satisfaction was the dimension with the best score, with a value a lot higher than the rest.

Looking at the assessments according to the years of experience, better scores were obtained in all the dimensions by the participants with less experience, this fact coincides with the article by Angosto et al. (2016) on perceived quality in a triathlon event, where different results were also obtained according to the experience of the participants, and those with more experience were more critical than those with less, all this may be due to the participants with less experience not having participated in enough events as to be able to better discriminate the different factors to be evaluated in sporting events, which athletes with more time competing in this type of events produces a greater demand for them in the administrative level in order to obtain better scores and be able to innovate each year in the organisation of events. The organisers should carry out this type of surveys regularly to know the perception of participants and be able to establish improvement strategies to help improve in future editions and make a difference in contrast to the rest of the existing competitions.

Finally, the lineal regression analysis established that the dimensions with greater influence show at the moment of determining the intention of participants returning to the event in future editions or recommending are influenced by the personnel dimension, where human resources assume an important role in the success or failure of any event or sporting events (Bodet, 2006), perceived value, which even though it was the worst

valued dimension, the opinion that the participant has on the quality-price relationship of an event or fulfilment of initial expectations is a very considered factor and should be paid special attention to, satisfaction being the element of highest influence when determining intentions to return, since if the participant is completely happy and satisfied both the obtained results and the whole administration of an event be factors which makes a difference when deciding to repeat a service.

Conclusions

Once all the results of the study have been presented and discussed, the main conclusions extracted from this study is that participants with experience of less than 3 years gave a better rating in all dimensions respecting swimmers with more experience. Within the factors of perceived quality, the best valued was personal interaction, being the worst valued the dimension of complimentary services, meanwhile the factors of the scale of global quality the best valued dimension was future intentions, and the perceived value was the worst valued. Lastly, the future intentions of a participant can be explained in over 60% having the satisfaction variable the largest weight in prediction, followed by the variables of perceived value and personnel.

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