

Event satisfaction analysis in sports: A practical case of the Cycling Challenge Mallorca 2023

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Abstract

In recent years, the spectator experience has gained increasing prominence as a central theme in the domain of sports event management. This heightened attention stems from a growing awareness that optimizing the quality of the spectator experience is essential not only for enhancing immediate engagement but also for cultivating sustained loyalty among attendees. This study aimed to evaluate the satisfaction levels of 80 spectators Cycling Challenge Mallorca 2023, a popular sporting event held annually in Spain. To accomplish this, researchers used the Perceived Quality in Popular Sports Events Questionnaire, a validated instrument which consists 12 items distributed across seven core dimensions of service quality, including aspects such as accessibility, communication, and human resources. The results revealed a generally high level of satisfaction among respondents, with the Human Resources dimension receiving the most favorable ratings. This finding underscores the critical role of interpersonal interactions, staff professionalism, and volunteer engagement in shaping positive perceptions of the event. Moreover, the analysis identified statistically significant differences in satisfaction between regular and non-regular spectators, as well as between individuals with differing intentions regarding future attendance. These variations suggest that prior experience and future behavioral intentions are influential factors in how spectators evaluate event quality. The study's findings contribute meaningfully to the expanding body of literature on spectator satisfaction and experiential quality in sports contexts. They emphasize the importance of adopting a segmented approach to event planning, whereby organizers tailor services and communication strategies to meet the diverse expectations of different audience groups. Ultimately, the research highlights the necessity for continuous assessment and refinement of service quality dimensions to ensure the enduring appeal, competitiveness, and success of sports events in an increasingly experience-driven market.

Key words: Spectator experience, service quality, sports event management, customer satisfaction, cycling.

Introduction

In the competitive landscape of the sports industry, delivering a high-quality service is paramount to achieving success and sustainability. Service quality is a crucial factor in mass sports management, and it has been shown to positively influence spectators by increasing their perceived value, satisfaction, and likelihood of engaging further (Moreno et al., 2015; Theodorakis et al., 2013; Biscaia, Masayuki, & Kim, 2021).

The quality of sports service is a complex construct with important implications for consumer satisfaction and loyalty, which emerges as a fundamental pillar in sporting events (Shonk et al., 2017). In this context, the quality of the service becomes a strategic element for the organizers of sporting events, who must implement measures that guarantee positive and memorable experiences for the participants. This implicates a comprehensive management of all the aspects that make up the experience of the assistant, from the quality of the facilities and the efficiency of the service personnel to the general organization of the event and attention to the needs and expectations of the clients.

The quality of service in the sport field events has become a topic of great relevance for researchers and professionals, driven mainly by its remarkable influence on the psychological and behavioural reactions of consumers. This influence is manifested in key aspects such as active participation, sense of identification with the event or team, level of general satisfaction and long-term loyalty (Yoshida & James, 2011). Consequently,

sports organizations show a great interest in identifying and understanding the specific elements of quality that are decisive to achieve a positive evaluation of the service by users. However, it is essential to recognise that the quality of service cannot be assessed uniformly in all sports organisations and events. Each sport discipline has characteristics that influence the expectations and perceptions of users. In addition, it is essential to consider that the perception of quality can vary significantly depending on the role played by the individual in the sporting event. For example, a professional athlete can pay special attention to aspects such as competition schedules and results obtained, while a spectator can focus more on the quality of the facilities and the attractiveness of the show offered (Ko & Pastore, 2005).

The relationship between consumer satisfaction and service quality has been widely studied in various service sectors, and research consistently demonstrates a strong positive correlation between perceived service quality and user satisfaction (Larson & Steinman, 2009; Yoshida & James, 2011; Alonso & Selgado, 2013; Estret, 2015). Thus, there are several proposals for the development of measuring instruments to evaluate dimensions and obtain assessments. Among the most popular are the Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI), an index widely used to measure customer satisfaction at a general level that includes questions about general satisfaction, perceived quality, perceived value and loyalty; the Customer Satisfaction Scale (ESC), a generic instrument developed by Fornell et al. (1996) that evaluates customer satisfaction across multiple dimensions, such as product or service quality, price, customer service and brand image; the Net Promoter Score (NPS), a simple metric that measures customer loyalty, in addition to classifying them into different categories according to their response; and finally, there are the specific instruments designed according to the characteristics and dimensions relevant to their context.

In the sports field, several studies have examined spectator satisfaction in sport events, particularly in high-profile events such as the proposal of Gálvez and Morales (2011), the CECASDEP measurement scale aimed at municipal sports services; Hernández-Mendo (2001), elaborates the ICPAF instrument to evaluate the quality of general physical activity programs. It is also worth highlighting the importance of the quality and satisfaction rating scale EVENTQUAL, which was one of the first instruments aimed at spectators, prepared by Calabuig, Mundina and Crespo (2010). However, limited research has focused specifically on spectator satisfaction at cycling events such as the *Cycling Challenge Mallorca 2023*.

Furthermore, despite the general agreement on the importance of quality of service, there is no unanimous conceptualisation of the service. Several scales and dimensions have been proposed to measure the quality of service in mass sport (Biscaia et al., 2013; Ko et al., 2011; Theodorakis et al., 2001), but the conceptual differences between them make it difficult to compare and understand how to properly evaluate this aspect. For example, Moreno et al. (2015) observed that the overall quality of service is an ancestor of perceived value, while Byon et al. (2013) reported that perceived value was only predicted by the attributes of the local team and the quality of the site. Yoshida and James (2010) observed that the stadium's employees were important in increasing service satisfaction, while Biscay et al. (2013) reported that viewer satisfaction was not influenced by their perceptions of employee performance.

In this way, the different conclusions in the current literature, as well as the lack of consensus in the conceptualization and measurement of service quality, highlight the need to continue researching about service quality in spectator sport to understand the factors that influence on spectators' satisfaction to attend future games. Thus, the present study aims to address this gap by providing a detailed analysis of spectator perceptions using the CAPPEP scale, contributing to a deeper understanding of the relationship between service quality and spectator satisfaction in this unique event.

Material & methods

Participants

A total of 80 subjects participated in the survey, of which 46 were men and 34 were women. The age ranges from 15 to 60 years (32 ± 12.68). The sample of this study has the following studies: compulsory secondary education ($n = 7$), High School ($n = 14$), EGB ($n = 1$), BUP and COU ($n = 1$), vocational training ($n = 24$), university degree ($n = 30$) and postgraduate or university master's degree ($n = 3$). The current occupation of the sample includes students ($n = 31$) and workers ($n = 49$). Finally, in the degree of attendance of the spectators, we find spectators who have attended the event for the first time ($n = 39$), and spectators who have already attended the race twice or more ($n = 41$). Inclusion criteria for the participants in this study were: i) having attended the Mallorca Cycling Challenge 2023, ii) taking a spectator role during the competition, iii) participating in the satisfaction questionnaire.

Instruments

To assess the quality of Cycling Challenge Mallorca 2023, the Perceived Quality in Popular Sports Events (CAPPEP) questionnaire was used. CAPPEP is a validated tool that analyses the quality of the service offered (Angosto, 2015). This questionnaire consists of a total of 12 items and 7 dimensions, which are the following: i) Generals ii) Promotion and information iii) Accessibility iv) Logistics Organization v) Human Resources vi) Career vii) Complementary services. The Perceived Value and Sociodemographic dimensions, and

their respective items, were omitted because the competition is free for all viewers and only professional teams can participate in it. All the questions had been evaluated using the Likert scale, ranging from one (totally disagree) to five (totally agree). Moreover, Google Forms was used to collect data, and Microsoft Excel (Windows v.10) to analyse them.

Procedure

The following steps were carried out for the present study: i) design proposal, ii) collect data, iii) data analysis iv) results analysis (Fig. 1.):

- i) Design proposal: before starting to collect data, a desing proposal for the study was done. First, the competition to be analyzed was chosen, and the study methodology was developed. Moreover, CAPPEP questionnaire was selected.
- ii) Collect data: in order to get the data for the study, and having into account the validated questionnaire selected, Unisports Consulting, S.L. was contacted to propose the idea. The process to be followed, the tools, the study instrument, the subsequent processing of the data, as well as the purpose of the study and the objectives were exposed. Thus, the competition questionnaires were sent to participants via Unisport for completion. It was sent the Google Forms questionnaire prepared by the researcher.
- iii) Data analysis: once the answers were obtained, the company provided them to the researcher through a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. Then, data was prepared to be analysed.
- iv) Results analysis: after cleaning data, it was proceeded to analyse the results.

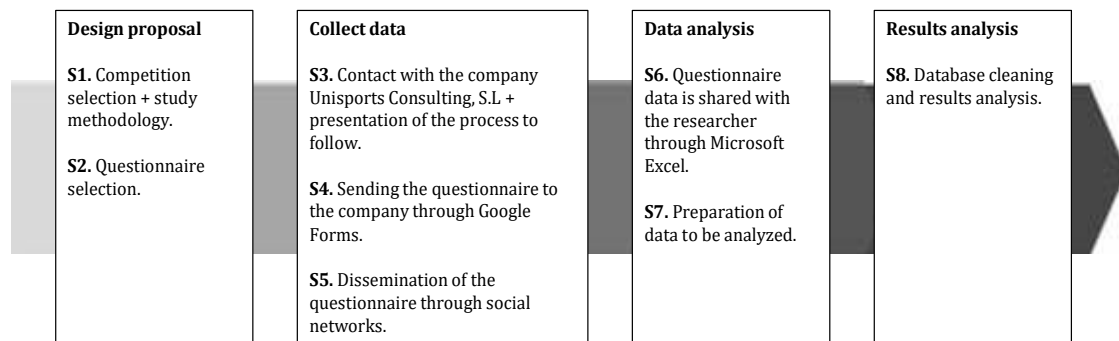


Fig. 1. Steps of the study

Statistical analysis

The Kolmogorov–Smirnov test was used to determine the normality of the data. The Mann–Whitney U test was used for two independent samples. Descriptive statistics are represented as mean $\pm$ standard deviation (SD) with standard mean difference data. Mann–Whitney U test was used for two independent samples. The effect size was calculated using Cohen’s d value. It can be interpreted as small ($0.2 < d < 0.5$), medium ($0.5 < d < 0.8$), or large ($0.8 < d$) (Cohen, 1992). The Spearman correlation coefficient was used to determine the relationships between the dimensions of the XXXXXX. The correlation can be interpreted as very weak ($0 < r_p < 0.2$), weak ($0.2 \leq r_p < 0.4$), moderate ($0.4 \leq r_p < 0.6$), strong ($0.6 \leq r_p < 0.8$), and very strong ($0.8 \leq r_p < 1$). All statistical analyses were performed with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, v.23.0 for Windows, SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL, United States).

Results

Descriptive statistics were calculated for each variable of the questionnaire (Table 1). The score given by the spectator on each dimension is shown, differentiating the results considering the user's sex. The type of attendance at the event has been answered in such a way that users 1 are those who have attended the competition for the first time and users 2 are those who have previously attended. The rest have been valued on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the value that represents the maximum satisfaction and quality, and 1 the lowest. It should be remembered that the sample is 80 subjects, where 34 are women and 46 are men.

About the “Human Resources” dimension, it has been the one that has obtained the most evaluation of the rest, where the item “Volunteers attend with kindness” is the best valued of the questionnaire (Female = 4.52; Male = 4.56). Secondly, there is the item “General satisfaction”, which belongs to the dimension “Generals” (Female = 4.39; Male = 4.27).

On the contrary, the item “There is sufficient parking near the start or finish area” is the one that has obtained the lowest rating (Female = 3.48; Male = 3.53) which belongs to the dimension “Accessibility”. Next, there is the item “During the event, clear and precise information is provided to know the development of the competition” (Female = 4.09; Male = 3.96) which is part of the dimension “Promotion and information”.

Table 1. Values obtained in the results of the CAPPEP questionnaire

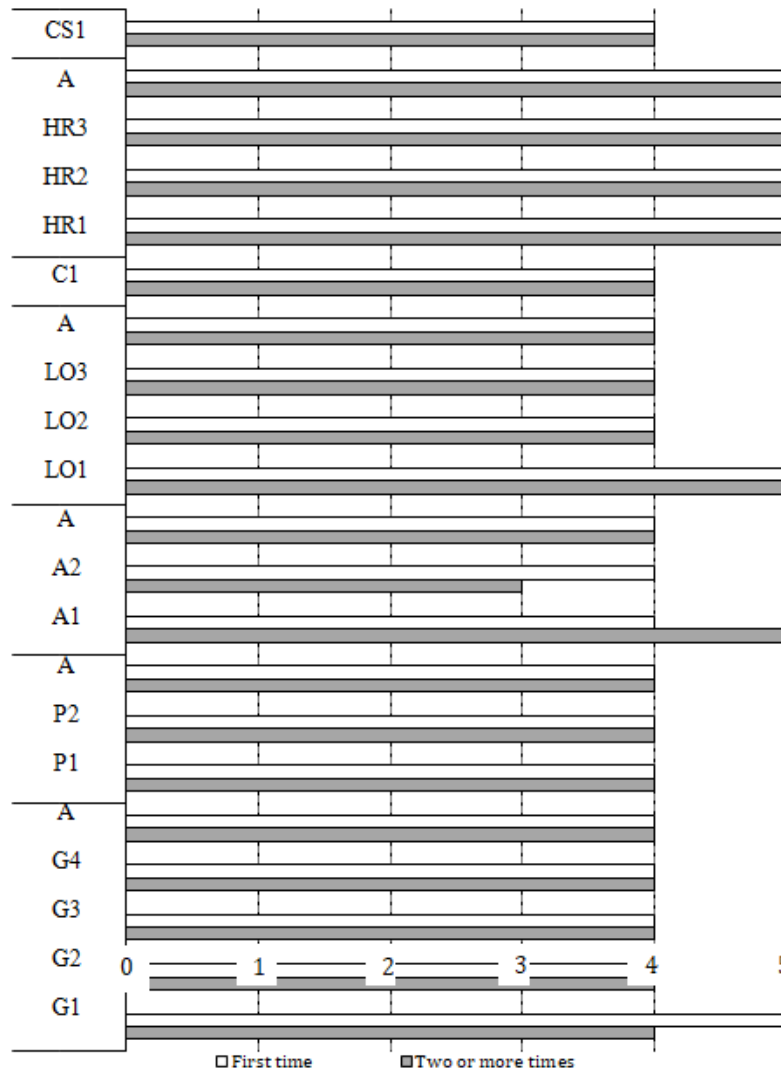
Key dimension	Item	Sex	N	Average	Median	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Generals	G1	F	34	4.39	5	0.827	2	5
		M	46	4.27	4	0.889	1	5
	G2	F	34	4.33	4	0.777	2	5
		M	46	4.18	4	0.886	1	5
	G3	F	34	4.30	4	0.684	3	5
		M	46	4.22	4	0.927	1	5
	G4	F	34	4.03	4	0.637	3	5
		M	46	4.11	4	0.959	1	5
	G5	F	34	1.52	2	0.508	1	2
		M	46	1.50	1.50	0.506	1	2
Promotion and Information	P1	F	34	4.18	4	0.950	1	5
		M	46	3.98	4	1.097	1	5
	P2	F	34	4.09	4	0.879	2	5
		M	46	3.96	4	0.976	1	5
Accessibility	A1	F	34	4.21	4	0.820	2	5
		M	46	4.18	4	1.029	1	5
	A2	F	34	3.48	3	1.034	2	5
		M	46	3.53	4	1.217	1	5
Logistical Organization	LO1	F	34	4.21	4	0.781	2	5
		M	46	4.24	5	1.048	1	5
	LO2	F	34	4.36	5	0.994	1	5
		M	46	4.24	5	1.048	1	5
	LO3	F	34	4.21	4	0.781	2	5
		M	46	4.31	4	0.874	1	5
	HR1	F	34	4.36	5	0.783	3	5
		M	46	4.29	5	0.991	1	5
Human Resources	HR2	F	34	4.52	5	0.712	3	5
		M	46	4.56	5	0.841	1	5
	HR3	F	34	4.39	5	0.747	2	5
		M	46	4.56	5	0.841	1	5
Career	C1	F	34	4.15	4	0.712	3	5
		M	46	4.24	5	1.048	1	5
Complementary services	CS1	F	34	4.12	4	0.781	2	5
		M	46	4.13	4	1.014	1	5

Note: N: Number SD: Standard deviation F: Female Male G1: General satisfaction G2: Intention to attend again G3: I will recommend attendance G4: The quality of the event can be considered superior compared to other popular G5: Type of participation P1: The race has a good promotion and dissemination, providing sufficient practical information of this P2: During the event, clear and precise information is provided to know the development of the competition A1: Signalling of the event allows you to arrive easily on your home site A2: There is sufficient parking near the start or finish area LO1: The organization meets the scheduled times LO2: The material elements used by the event are visually attractive LO3: The results and podium are visible to all spectators HR1: Organization staff are willing to help and give advice HR2: Volunteers attend with kindness HR3: I felt comfortable with the other spectators C1: The course of the race is well signposted and is safe CS1: Near the exit and the finish there are places of easy commercial accessibility.

Below, the difference in the evaluation can be observed between the users who have attended the event for the first time and those who have previously attended (Fig. 2). In the “Accessibility” dimension, we find significant differences between the two groups in the item “There is sufficient parking near the start or finish area”.

Those who have attended the event two or more times, have a worse rating than those who have attended for the first time. In the “Generals” dimension, in the “General Satisfaction” item, users who have attended for the first time show a higher score than the average awarded by those who have attended two or more times.

Fig. 2. Results of the CAPPEP questionnaire, in relation to the difference of the users who have attended for the first time at the event and those who have attended twice or more times



Note: A: Average G1: General satisfaction G2: Intention to attend again G3: I will recommend attendance G4: The quality of the event can be considered superior compared to other popular G5: Type of participation P1: The race has a good promotion and dissemination, providing sufficient practical information of this P2: During the event, clear and precise information is provided to know the development of the competition A1: Signalling of the event allows you to arrive easily on your home site A2: There is sufficient parking near the start or finish area LO1: The organization meets the scheduled times LO2: The material elements used by the event are visually attractive LO3: The results and podium are visible to all spectators HR1: Organization staff are willing to help and give advice HR2: Volunteers attend with kindness HR3: I felt comfortable with the other spectators C1: The course of the race is well signposted and is safe CS1: Near the exit and the finish there are places of easy commercial accessibility.

Finally, the results of the questionnaire can be observed, in relation to the types of intention of returning to attend the event (Fig. 3). In the comparison of the group that intends to attend very high again with the one that has high intention, we find significant differences in the dimension "Promotion and information", where the first group mentioned gives a better evaluation in the item "During the event, clear and precise information is provided to know the development of the competition", compared to the second. The same applies to the "Logistical organization" dimension, to the "The results and the podium are visible to all spectators" item, and to the "Generals" dimension, to the "General satisfaction" item.

Regarding the comparison of the group that has the intention to attend again with what has average intention, we find significant differences in the item "I will recommend attendance" of the "Generals" dimension, in all the items of the "Promotion and information" dimension, in the items "The material elements used by the event are visually attractive" and "The results and the podium are visible to all spectators" of the "Logistical organization" dimension, and in the item "I felt comfortable with the other spectators" of the "Human Resources" dimension. In all these items mentioned, the group that has high intention of attending again gives a higher score compared to the group that has an average intention.

In the last comparison, among the group that has a very high intention of attending with which it has a medium intention, we find significant differences in the item “The race has a good promotion and dissemination, providing sufficient practical information of this” of the dimension “Promotion and information”; and in the item “The material elements used by the event are visually attractive” of the dimension “logistical organization”, which are valued better by the group of very high intention with respect to the middle intention.

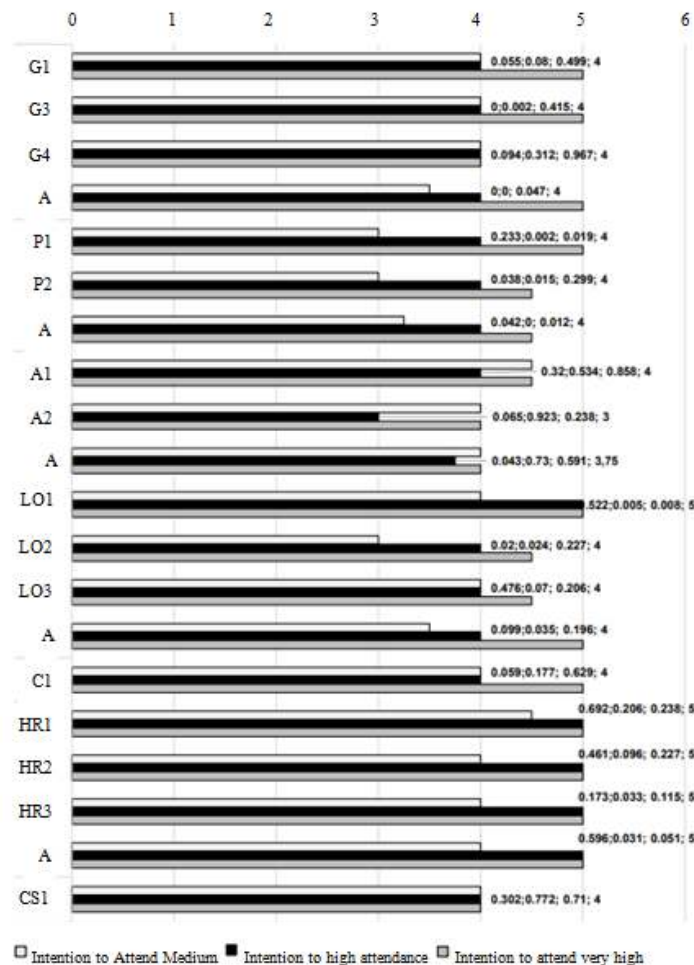


Fig. 3. Results of the CAPPEP questionnaire, in relation to the difference of the users that they intend to return to average attendance, intention to return to high attendance and intention to return to very high attendance

Note: A: Average G1: General satisfaction G3: I will recommend attendance G4: The quality of the event can be considered superior compared to other popular G5: Type of participation P1: The race has a good promotion and dissemination, providing sufficient practical information of this P2: During the event, clear and precise information is provided to know the development of the competition A1: Signalling of the event allows you to arrive easily on your home site A2: There is sufficient parking near the start or finish area LO1: The organization meets the scheduled times LO2: The material elements used by the event are visually attractive LO3: The results and podium are visible to all spectators HR1: Organization staff are willing to help and give advice HR2: Volunteers attend with kindness HR3: I felt comfortable with the other spectators C1: The course of the race is well signposted and is safe CS1: Near the exit and the finish there are places of easy commercial accessibility.

Discussion

The main objective of the study is to analyse the perceived satisfaction on the part of the spectator in the cycling race *Cycling Challenge Mallorca 2023*. There are several studies that analyse the perceived satisfaction of spectators in popular events (Crespo & Pérez, 2011; Navarro et al., 2014; Berenguer, 2015) to understand the influences that the different variables have in a service and subsequently could design improvement strategies with the aim of offering the consumer a quality service that guarantees their satisfaction.

The descriptive results show that the most valued dimension of the questionnaire is the area of Human Resources, where the treatment and friendliness of the organization staff together with the comfort of the spectators are the items that have obtained a higher score compared to the others. As stated by Blazquez and Feu (2010), Dorado (2006), Elasri, Triadó and Aparicio (2015), Martínez, Tordera and Ramos (1996), Pérez, Crespo and Calabuig (2008), Serrano, Rial, García & Hernandez-Mendo (2010), Tercero (2012), Triadó and Aparicio (2004), Triado and Rimbau (1999).

Human Resources are one of the fundamental pillars of services, and according to López (2010), they must be specialists with friendly and personalized treatment. Likewise, the results expose that the Human Resources dimension is the one that has the highest score. According to Fanega (2016), this good assessment of the service is directly related to the staff that offer it. Other authors, such as Judge and Zeithaml (1992) and Krüger (2001), also highlight the importance of Human Resources departments to achieve the highest possible quality that can be offered to the spectator.

Regarding comparative analysis, the results show significant differences between regular spectators and new spectators. Theodorakis, Kambitsis and Laios (2001) states that it is key to segment customers according to their degree of link with the event, to try to meet the expectations of both the usual and the non-normal spectators. Referring to perceived satisfaction, users who have attended the event for the first time have awarded a higher score compared to others. This assessment contradicts the results of research by authors such as Blanco (2001), which states that new spectators and unusual spectators tend to get much more bored and end up completely “disconnecting” from the competition, which would lead to a lower score on their part. This is reinforced by the one mentioned by León-Quismondo et al. (2021), which states that the group of people who had not previously attended the competition showed higher levels of dissatisfaction with previous experiences with spectators. In this analysis it can be said that the spectators who have already attended twice or more, are more demanding than the rest. This may be due, as indicated by other research such as Ornelas (2019), Moreno and Pomar (2015) or Fernández et al. (2012), because the expectations of the spectator in relation to the quality they can perceive increase increasingly as they regularly attend a certain event. In addition, Nogales (2006) states that spectators are constantly looking for high levels of demand and short-term satisfaction.

Regarding the intentions of the user to attend the event again, it can be observed that the group of users who have a very high intention to attend, show greater general satisfaction and recommendation to possible new users. Studies such as Staelin and Zeithaml (1993) reinforce this idea by stating that satisfied customers present beneficial behaviours for the organization, generating positive comments and recommending the service. Several authors (Crespo et al., 2012; Lanas, 2020; Alonso & Pérez, 2015) claim that one of the main reasons that influences the perceived quality and the intention of returning to attend a sporting event is the emotional aspect, which leads to loyalty and the fondness of competition and all the elements that make it up. According to the results of the present research, users who have an average intention to return to attend present scores equal to or lower than the rest, and it has clearly been possible to determine how in other investigations (Madrigal, 2000; Price & Arnould, 1999; Tsuji et al., 2007; Wangenheim & Bayón, 2007) the level of satisfaction in each of the items plays a fundamental role in determining the future intentions of returning to attend the competition.

Conclusions

This study underscores the importance of analysing the spectator experience at sporting events, as this has emerged as a crucial factor in cultivating engagement and loyalty. The results demonstrated the positive impact of staff interactions and comfortable conditions on satisfaction. Notably, first-time attendees reported higher levels of satisfaction compared to returning spectators, suggesting that expectations may evolve with experience. Furthermore, a strong correlation emerged between satisfaction levels and the intention to attend future events, emphasizing the importance of creating positive experiences to foster continued support. The effect of overall satisfaction on spectators' behavioural intentions indicates its central role in developing long-term advantages. Moreover, satisfaction surveys are pivotal for examining how spectators evaluate past experiences and their future intentions towards the teams. Thus, the present study provides valuable insights for event organizers seeking to enhance spectator engagement and cultivate long-term event loyalty.

Limitations

This study presents some limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the sample size of 80 spectators may not be representative of the broader population attending cycling events, limiting the generalizability of the findings. Second, the use of a single event and location restricts the applicability of results to other sporting contexts. Third, the CAPPEP questionnaire excluded dimensions such as perceived value due to the event's free access, potentially omitting relevant factors influencing satisfaction. Lastly, the cross-sectional design prevents analysis of changes in satisfaction over time or across different editions of the event.

Declaration of generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in the writing process

We declare with responsibility and transparency that the manuscript was entirely conceived, written, structured, and reviewed by human authors, without delegating the autonomous production of substantive sections of the content, results, discussion, or conclusions to generative AI tools (such as ChatGPT, Bard, or similar). The writing was carried out in accordance with the ethical and methodological principles of scientific research, following the standards of academic integrity established by the Journal of Physical Education and Sport. However, we acknowledge the occasional and limited use of automated assistance tools (such as grammar checkers or linguistic style suggestions, such as Grammarly or DeepL Write) to improve linguistic consistency in English, without this implying the replacement of critical judgement, empirical analysis, theoretical

interpretation or substantive academic writing by the researchers responsible for the work. This clarification is made in compliance with its policy on the use of AI, which we have reviewed at the link provided (<https://efsupit.ro/index.php/subscriptions>), and in full adherence to the principles of transparency, accountability, and traceability. We reiterate our commitment to the principles of scientific integrity, editorial ethics, and good research practices.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest related to the conduct, analysis, or publication of this study. All procedures were carried out independently and without any financial, institutional, or personal influence that could affect the integrity or objectivity of the research findings.

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