Aristotle University of Thessaloniki Sports Centre: Students’ satisfaction about enrollment in sports and recreational activities.

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Introduction

In now days the importance of participating in university recreational and sports programs is increasing because sports has been instrumental. University sports and recreational programs provide a lot of benefits. Students, participation in those programs enhances the quality of student life (Ellis, Compton, Tyson, & Bohlig, 2002), brings students together to understand each other better (Gallien, 2007), provides the opportunity for students to continue participating in sports during their studies, and further develops the concept of maintaining a lifetime of physical activity (Byl, 2002). It has also been suggested that participation results in personal and social diversity enhancement, competence and mastery of leadership skills, and increased retention rates and students learning (Barcelona & Ross, 2002; Haines, 2001). The former president of the International University Sports Federation, Dr Claude –Lois Gallien says that: “One fundamental task for University today is to open new prospects, to impulse new bounding’s, to teach young people to choose system of society, to mould it and not just put up with it, to let them know they have to create their own age, and not just send back a reflect of the actual era. University sport can serve as an effective tool for giving a broader and more concrete dimension to this task”. Therefore, it is very important for the higher education administrators, to develop sustainable recreational and sports programs and ensured that these programs are contemporary, attractive, and meet the needs of the students.

In Greece campus recreational centers have been established in most higher education institutes. According to Tsiggilis, Masmanidis and Koustelios (2009) the objective of these centers is to develop and implement the recreation programs of the institutes. These programs involve all organized recreational events, physical activities, and competitive sports for students.

The Aristotle University of Thessaloniki is the largest university in Greece. It comprises 7 Faculties organized into 33 departments, 5 faculties with only department each, as well as 4 independent departments (a total of 42 departments). About 81,500 students study at the Aristotle University (72,140 in undergraduate programs and 9,360 in postgraduate programs). The sports center of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki is open to all students and the academic staff daily from 8:00 to 13:30 and from 15:00 to 22:00 and provides to them a wide range of recreational and sports programs. The aim of these programs is to improve the quality of life of students and personnel through sports, games and physical activity. Taking into consideration the fact that it caters for people with different needs and abilities, the university sports center in order to achieve its goals has designed a number of programs in the following fields: recreational sports, organized sports activities, classes, indoor championships, tournaments, sports workshops, competitive sports, nature day trips, long-distance running events, sports academies (for children 6 to 14 years old) and summer camp sports activities program for children 6 to 14 years old. The facilities of the university sports center were improved and modernized over the last eight years from 2008 to 2012 and include: football court, track and field court, tennis court and indoor sports hall. In addition, the program of sports center complemented with exercise machines with modern equipment, functionality of facilities, accessibility, facility cleanliness and modern ways of communication programs (website, free wireless network on the main facility, social media and mobile applications).

Although there are many research data linking participation in sports with satisfaction there are few research on student’s satisfaction with their participation in campus recreational programs. Despite the fact that the relationship between
satisfaction in sports and recreational program and service quality are more complex, there are evidences suggested that people who participated in sports and recreational programs and evaluated those programs in positive way are more likely to remain to continue to participate and say positive things about the program to others (Zeithaml et al., 1996, Alexandis et al., 2004a). Based on these evidence the purpose of this study was to examine the satisfaction of students about the quality of program services in the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki Sports Center and furthermore to identify which variables of the service quality evaluation affect their satisfaction.

Materials and Methods

Participants & Procedure

One hundred and ninety-four students (N=194), members of Aristotle University Sports Center participated in this study. Participants were randomly selected during the two weeks that the investigation lasted. They informed about the purpose of the investigation and the process of filling in the questionnaires. At the end of the filling process, they dropped the questionnaire in a box in the form of ballot box, to ensure anonymity.

Instrumentation

Demographic: The participants were asked about their demographic characteristics, the sports & recreational activities that they prefer to do (main & secondary) and how many times they visit the sports center.

Service Quality: the 28-item SERVQUAL (Parasurman et al, 1988) adopted to the Greek language based on the Greek adaptation (Alexadris et.al., 2004a) and was utilized to assess 5 underlying dimensions of service quality: (a) personnel (7-items), (b) reliability (5-items), (c) perceived outcomes (6-items), (d) facilities (5-items) and (e) responsiveness (5-items). A seven point Likert – type scale, ranking from strongly agree (7) to strongly disagree (1) was used. The factorial validity for this questioner was well documented by Alexadris et.al., (2004a, b.) in a Greek health club context.

Satisfaction: Satisfaction was measured using a three-item scale. The items of this scale were selected by Alexadris et.al. (2004b) to cover overall satisfaction. The items of the scale were adjusted to the context of the Aristotle University Sports Center as follow: “Overall I am satisfied with my decision to become member of the Aristotle University Sports Center”, “Overall I am satisfied with the quality of sports facilities of the Aristotle University Sports Center” and “Overall I am satisfied with the quality of services of the Aristotle University Sports Center”. A seven point Liker-type scale was used ranging from strongly agree (7) to strongly disagree (1).

Statistics: Descriptive statistics were performed for all variables, while the internal validity for all sub-scales of the questionnaires was tested with the cronbach α. Finally in order to test the relationship between service quality dimensions and overall satisfaction regression analysis was performed. All analyzes were carried out using the statistical package SPSS 21 for windows.

Results

Demographic information

The demographic information of the participant indicated that the gender of participants was about the same 51% male and 49% female. Most of the students, who took part in the study, were in the midst of their studies (figure 1).
Figure 1 somewhere here

Regarding the field of study, we see from Figure 2, that the physical education predominates, while followed by other schools with large participation of students, such as school of science.

Figure 2 somewhere here

The activity that prevailed in most students (Fitness room) included free exercise to treadmills, rowing machines and strength training. Also, soccer, aerobics in organized sections and dances, had significant participation by the students (figure 3,4).

Figures 3 and 4 somewhere here

Finally, in terms of the frequency of their participation, students with 5 times a week were 33%, 4 times 27%, 3 times 20%, 2 times 13% and 1 time 7% (figure 5).

Figure 5 somewhere here

Descriptive statistics and reliability analysis

Descriptive statistics are presented in (table 1). As shown perceived outcome (6,13 ±1,00), personnel (5,49 ±1,16), reliability (5,36 ±1,20), responsiveness (4,86 ±2,07), facilities (5,00 ±1,24), achieved relative high score and above the average range of the 7-point Likert scale. Students’ overall satisfaction about their enrolment in Aristotle University Sports Centre was high as well (5,74 ±1,03). The Cronbach’s alpha values for all service quality and overall satisfaction dimensions were satisfactory. Composite reliabilities were computed for the five services quality dimensions and for overall satisfaction. All values indicated good levels of reliability exceeding the 0.60 (table1.).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and reliability analysis for the services quality perceptions and overall satisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of items</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>Mean</th>
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<td>perceived outcome</td>
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<td>7.00</td>
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<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.87</td>
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<td>7.00</td>
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<td>1.20</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>7.00</td>
<td>4.86</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>0.69</td>
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<tr>
<td>facilities</td>
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<td>7.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
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<td>7.00</td>
<td>5.74</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>0.80</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The relationship between service quality and overall satisfaction

A multiple linear regression analysis was performed, with the five service
quality dimensions as the independent variable and overall satisfaction as the depended one, to identify those variables of quality of service that could predict satisfaction. The stepwise method of variable selection was used. Results showed that a model including personnel, facilities, and responsiveness as predictor variables provides the best fit to the data explaining almost 21% of the total variance in satisfaction. This prediction was statistically significant as confirmed by the large F value (F=51.48, p<.001). The regression equation can be presented as follows:

Overall Satisfaction = 3.27 + personnel*2.18 + facilities*2.12 + responsiveness*0.53

Discussion and Conclusions

This study was conducted to assess the service quality of Aristotle University Sports Centre and their students’ satisfaction. According to the demographic results, it is kind of expected that students, studying physical education and sports, to be more athletic and active. That’s why they dominate in relation to the participants. Also, the faculties of science, have traditionally more students in Greece, and so their proportion to the percentage of the Aristotle University Sports Center members is increased. In addition we observed that most students (80%), who participated in this study visited the sports center programs more than two times per week and they prefer to do as a main activity fitness exercise. Thus the results cannot be generalized to all students of the University and for all sports & recreational programs offered by the sports center.

Mean values of the service quality questioner were above the scale’s midpoint. This shows that the exercise programs and the services are offered in such a way so as to meet the expectations of the participants arising from the benefits of exercise in general. Overall satisfaction from participating was well above average, indicating that students are satisfied and they “say” positive things about the University Sports Center. This is very important issue about the Aristotle University Sports Center and should be consider by the managers and administrators of the university.

The study also indicated that the personnel, facilities and responsiveness dimensions were the most powerful predictors of overall satisfaction. These results are consistent with similar research findings on service quality (Afthinos, Theodorakis, & Nassis, 2005; Chelladurai 1999) and show how important is for the students satisfaction the employees’ behavior, knowledge, and willingness to provide attention to them, the facilities and equipment of the sports center and the ability of the sport center to provide prompt services.

In conclusion we can say that sports campus managers who desire to improve the levels of organizational effectiveness of the campus recreational programs may focus on the human resource training and life long education of the staff. Further more the sport centers must have the appropriate facilities with the necessary equipment and programs adapted to the student’s participation needs and responses.

Acknowledgments

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References


Figures and Illustrations

Figure 1. Year of study
Figure 2. Field of study

Figure 3. First choice activity (main activity)
Figure 4. Second choice activity (secondary activity)

Figure 5. Frequency of students’ participation in Aristotle University Sports Centre programs per week.