



## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE, SERVICE QUALITY AND MANAGERS' INNOVATION IN CLUBS

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### ABSTRACT

Focusing on customer needs means to pay attention to product quality and customer service. Any organization that tries to be customer-oriented should be able to meet consumer expectations, otherwise they will lose the competition. As customer experience leads to their revisit to private clubs and given the importance of managers' creativity and their service quality, it is necessary to conduct such a study to investigate the relationship between managers' creativity, service quality and customer experience in private sports clubs in Sanandaj.

**Material and Method:** This research is a correlational field study with an applied objective. The study population was all athletes of Sanandaj private clubs in 2013 (N = 900). Based on Morgan table, the number of samples for the study population was 269 subjects. After distributing 300 questionnaires among 29 private clubs, the sample size became 273 people. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data. The reliability was tested through Cronbach's alpha and the values of 0.825, 0.833 and 0.90 were obtained for customer experience, service quality and managers' creativity, respectively.

**Findings** The results showed that the quality of services includes tangibles (14.84), reliability (19.40), accountability (15.53), and reassurance (16.20). Customer experience includes the categories of attitude (4.30), behavior (4.02), and hygiene (4). Managers' creativity includes politics (21.24), flexibility (20.37), innovation (19.44), and generalization of details (19.96).

**Discussion:** it can be concluded that there is a significant relationship between service quality and managers' creativity, and service quality and customer experience but there is no significant relationship between managers' creativity and customer experience.

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### Introduction

Change is inherent in life and is the bottom stone of creation. Accelerated evolution formed in all facets of human life requires that any firm in any business consider changes, conditions and transformations with precision and acuity and, further, create the potential to keep pace with these changes. In today's competitive market, customer retention is vital for the success of any business, and since maintaining the current customers is easier and cheaper than attracting new ones, paying attention to customers' demands for goods and after sale services not only solves current problems, but also is a way to build customer satisfaction and loyalty [1].

Accordingly, in recent years, focusing on customer needs and meeting their demands, both in manufacturing and service sectors, has become one of the most essential goals of organizations. As more than half of GDP of most countries of the world comes from the service sector, and because of the special features of this sector such as direct communication with customers, it is important to pay attention to this sector [10]. Despite the fact that a long time has passed since the proposition of the issue of service quality and its measurement and evaluation, not only has its importance not decreased, but it has gained importance due to the growing importance of services in the economy of countries [9]. Since attracting new customers costs six times more than keeping current ones, it can be said that loyal customers spend more than typical customers for services and products

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[6]. In line with this, many studies have shown that service quality leads to customer satisfaction and loyalty [6]. Rabinson (2006) has pointed out that sports organizations have some characteristics that distinguish them from other organizations. First, given that the concept of sport services is new to the public, people spending on these services is relatively high. Second, throughout life, customers spend their most valuable leisure and recreation time in clubs. Third, in most sports clubs, there is some kind of emotional investment like customers' sense of belonging to the club which raises the expectations from these clubs. The main objective of the management of sports clubs is to obtain customer satisfaction, to give a good experience to them, and to keep a good relationship with them. Laminga and Keith (2014) concluded that customer experience is effective when it raises service quality because customer experience is a set of collective experiences of a customer with the organization at any point in time.

According to the above mentioned points and given the importance of private clubs, this study attempts to answer the following questions: What is the status of customer experience in Sanandaj clubs? How is the quality of services in these clubs? What is the status of managers' innovation in Sanandaj clubs?

#### Material and Methods

This research is a correlational field study with an applied objective. Data was collected through two standard questionnaires including SERVQUAL and Torrance creativity questionnaires, and a researcher-developed questionnaire to assess the experience of customers. In order to confirm the content validity of the researcher's questionnaire, it was distributed among 10 professors of management and sports management. After evaluation and correction of the questionnaire, in a pilot study with 30 subjects the Cronbach's alpha reliability was calculated to be 0.825 for customer experience, 0.833 for service quality, and 0.90 for managers' innovatio

#### Statistical Population and Sample

Due to the limited number of the people in the population, all the customers and managers of the clubs were selected as sample. According to the managers of sports clubs, the number of regular customers in the previous year was 900 people. Based on Morgan table, sample size for this number of customers is 269. After distributing 300 questionnaires among 29 private clubs, the sample size became 273 persons which was acceptable with regard to Morgan sampling table.

#### Data analysis

Descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation, frequency, percentage frequency, graphs, etc. was applied to analyze data. Also, inferential statistics, including Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test, correlation and regression tests with SPSS20, was used to evaluate the hypotheses. LISREL and its structural equations were used to explain the research model.

#### Findings

In this section, findings are presented in the form of tables and figures.

Question 1: What is the status of customer experience in Sanandaj private clubs?

Single sample t-test was used to answer this question.

**Table 1.** Statistics related to customer experience in Sanandaj private clubs

Mean	Standard deviation	Standard error of the mean
12.109	2.128	0.091

**Table 2.** The results of the single sample t-test for customer experience in Sanandaj private clubs

Test criterion = 9					
t	df	p	Mean difference	Confidence interval of 95% difference	
				Minimum	Maximum
33.813	272	0.001	3.109	2.928	3.29

According to the one-sample t-test results in Tables 1 and 2, the significance level is at 0.001 which is less than 0.01. So the null hypothesis that the mean score of customer experience equals 9 is rejected. The results also show that customer experience in private clubs of Sanandaj is more than the average (12.109).

Question 2: What is the status of managers' innovation in Sanandaj private clubs?

Single sample t-test was used to answer this question.

**Table 3.** Statistics related to managers’ innovation in Sanandaj private clubs

Variable	Number	Mean	Standard deviation	Standard error of the mean
Managers’ innovation	29	81.578	15.05	0.64

**Table 4.** The results of the single sample t-test for managers’ innovation in Sanandaj private clubs

Variable	Test criterion = 80					
	t	df	p	Mean difference	Confidence interval of 95% difference	
					Minimum	Maximum
Managers’ innovation	2.450	28	0.015	1.578	0.312	2.844

Based on the results of single sample t-test in Tables 3 and 4, the significance level is at 0.015 which is less than 0.05. So the null hypothesis that the mean score of managers’ innovation equals 80 is rejected. The results also show that managers’ innovation in private clubs of Sanandaj is more than the average (81.578).

Question 3: How is the quality of services delivered in Sanandaj private clubs?

Again, single sample t-test was used to answer this question.

**Table 5.** Statistics related to service quality in Sanandaj private clubs

Variable	Number	Mean	Standard deviation	Standard error of the mean
Service Quality	273	85.65	16.827	0.725

**Table 6.** The results of the single sample t-test for service quality in Sanandaj private clubs

Variable	Test criterion = 75					
	t	df	p	Mean difference	Confidence interval of 95% difference	
					Minimum	Maximum
Service Quality	14.680	272	0.001	10.650	9.22	12.075

According to the one-sample t-test results in Tables 5 and 6, the significance level is at 0.001 which is less than 0.01. So the null hypothesis that the mean score of service quality equals 75 is rejected. The results also show that service quality in private clubs of Sanandaj is more than the average (85.65).

**Table 7.** Indices of the model of the relationship between customer experience and managers’ innovation

Model	Correlation coefficient	Coefficient of determination	Adjusted coefficient of determination	Standard deviation of error
1	0.060 <sup>a</sup>	0.004	0.002	3.957

a: dependent variable: managers’ innovation

Based on Table 7, the correlation coefficient between customer experience and managers’ innovation is 0.06 which is very weak. Also, the coefficient of determination equals 0.004 which indicates that only 0.04% of variations in managers’ innovation is related to customer experience.

**Table 8.** The results of variance analysis of the dependent variable in the regression and remaining sources

Model	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	p
1 Regression	280.83	1	291.838	1.905	0.168 <sup>a</sup>
1 Remainder	8365.486	272	15.666		
Total	8395.324	273			

a: Predictor variable: Customer experience

b: Dependent variable: Managers' innovation

As indicated in Table 8, the sum of squares of the remainder is much more than that of regression. This shows that the model is weak in explaining the dependent variable. Also, in this table, F equals 1.905 which is not significant based on the value of p because p is greater than 0.05. Thus, according to the results presented in Tables 15 and 16, it can be concluded that there is no significant relationship between managers' innovation and customer experience in Sanandaj sports clubs and customer experience can not predict managers' creativity.

**Table 9.** Model adequacy indicator of the relationship between customer experience and managers' innovation

Model	Correlation coefficient	Coefficient of determination	Adjusted coefficient of determination	Standard deviation of error
1	0.258 <sup>a</sup>	0.065	0.067	3.848

a: dependent variable: customer experience

Based on Table 9, the correlation coefficient between customer experience and service quality is 0.258 which indicates a good correlation. Also, the coefficient of determination equals 0.065 which indicates that 6.5% of variations in customer experience is related to service quality.

**Table 10.** The results of variance analysis of the dependent variable in the regression and remainder sources

Model	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	p
1 Regression	5571.010	1	5571	37.601	0.001 <sup>a</sup>
1 Remainder	4791.990	272	17.617		
Total	10362.000	273			

a: Predictor variable: Service Quality

b: Dependent variable: Customer experience

As indicated in Table 10, the sum of squares of the remainder is less than that of regression. This shows that the model is strong in explaining the dependent variable. Also, in this table, F equals 37.601 which is significant based on the value of p because p is less than 0.01. Thus, according to the results presented in Tables 17 and 18, it can be concluded that there is a significant relationship between customer experience and service quality in Sanandaj sports clubs and service quality can predict customer experience.

**Table 11.** Regression coefficients of service quality and customer experience

Model	Non-standardized coefficient		Standardized coefficient	t	p
	B	Standard error	Beta		
1 Constant	6.962	0.893		7.796	0.001
1 Service quality	1.063	0.010	0.253	6.132	0.001

a: Dependent variable: Customer experience

Table 11 illustrates regression coefficients of the impact of service quality on customer experience Based on the constant and the non-standard coefficient B, the linear regression equation is as follows:

(service quality)  $1.063 = \text{customer experience} + 6.962$

**Table 12.** Model adequacy indicator of the relationship between managers' innovation and service quality

Model	Correlation coefficient	Coefficient of determination	Adjusted coefficient of determination	Standard deviation of error
1	0.331 <sup>a</sup>	0.109	0.111	6.831

a: dependent variable: managers' innovation

Based on Table 12, the correlation coefficient between managers' creativity and service quality is 0.331 which indicates a good correlation. Also, the coefficient of determination equals 0.109 which indicates that 10.9% of variations in service quality is related to managers' creativity.

**Table 13.** The results of variance analysis of the dependent variable in the regression and remainder sources

Model	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	p
1 Regression	6612.497	1	6612.497	17.376	0.041 <sup>a</sup>
1 Remainder	5904.808	272	21.708		
Total	12517.305	273			

a: Predictor variable: Service Quality

b: Dependent variable: Managers' innovation

As indicated in Table 13, the sum of squares of the remainder is less than that of regression. This shows that the model is strong in explaining the dependent variable. Also, in this table, F equals 17.376 which is significant based on the value of p because p is less than 0.05. Therefore, according to the results presented in Tables 20 and 21, it can be concluded that there is a significant relationship between managers' innovation and service quality in Sanandaj sports clubs and service quality can predict managers' creativity.

**Table 14.** Regression coefficients of service quality and managers' innovation

Model	Non-standardized coefficient		Standardized coefficient	t	p
	B	Standard error	Beta		
1 Constant	8.671	0.413		8.603	0.001
1 Service quality	2.36	0.068	0.331	4.552	0.041

a: Dependent variable: Managers' innovation

Table 1-14 illustrates regression coefficients of the impact of service quality on managers' creativity Based on the constant and the non-standard coefficient B, the linear regression equation is as follows:  
(service quality) 2.36 = managers' innovation + 8.671

### Discussion and Conclusion

The results of statistical analysis indicate that there is no significant relationship between managers' creativity and customer experience and its components in Sanandaj private clubs. Also, there is a significant relationship at the level of 0.05 between service quality and customer experience and its components in these clubs. This suggests that to the extent that service quality is high/good, customers will be attracted to the club and contribute to its promotion and progress. Moreover, improvement of service quality in private clubs can predict increased and improved customer experience. Also, there is a significant relationship at 0.05 level between managers' innovation and service quality and its components in these clubs. This shows that applying new methods in the clubs by the managers can be helpful in improving service quality.

In fact, higher quality is a key to uniqueness and productivity. As customer experience leads to their revisit to private clubs and given the importance of managers' creativity and their service quality, it is necessary to conduct such a study to investigate the relationship between managers' creativity, service quality and customer experience in private sports clubs in Sanandaj. Creativity is the practice of an individual against stress caused by life, daily work and emergency issues which develops and strengthens the sense of loyalty and commitment to the organization, motivates employees to work harder, and makes one more willing to meet the demands of one's job. Managers of private clubs are no exception from this rule. They must have the necessary innovation in their work so that they can offer services that are adequate, diverse and cost-effective. Several reasons can be cited because of which private organizations and especially sports clubs should seek to provide more quality services to their clients: 1. Increased customer expectations. 2. Activity of competitors. 3. Environmental factors. 4. The nature of the service. Customers assess the quality of services according to the physical evidence surrounding the service as well as attitude

and behavior of employees. In addition to the above-mentioned points, benefits of service quality is another factor that encourages organizations to provide quality services and this increases the effectiveness of service delivery. People base their judgment about the quality of services they have never received so far on the statements of acquaintances or promotional programs of the service firm. Of course customers need to actually experience a service before having feelings of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the service. The results of this study indicate that there is no significant relationship between managers' creativity and customer experience in Sanandaj private clubs. Also, the results show that there is a significant relationship between service quality and customer experience. This suggests that to the extent that service quality is high/good, customers will be attracted to the clubs and contribute to their promotion and progress. Moreover, improving the quality of services in private clubs can be a predictor of increased and improved customer experience. Also, there was a significant relationship between service quality and managers' creativity. This suggests that applying new methods in the clubs for service delivery can be helpful in improving service quality. If managers can apply new methods, the employees become more motivated to serve customers and the club would have a better progress. And if clubs can meet the needs of customers in terms of sports equipment and devices as well as sanitary facilities, ventilation, etc., they can attract more customers.

### Overall Conclusion

The results of this study generally suggests that, if the strategies obtained in the present study be used by managers of the clubs and a strong and national determination be formed to please customers and absorb them to the clubs, the grounds for the progress and promotion of sports clubs will be provided. Using the factors related to service quality and managers' innovation as well as identifying the characteristics of customers referring to sports clubs can help to attract more clients. Therefore, such an approach can have a positive impact on various clubs so that every year we would observe higher quality services, more satisfied customers, and more innovative managers in private sports clubs.

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