

Module 4. Perceived service quality

Unit 4.1

In this fourth and final module of the Managing Service Quality in Sport Events course, we will focus on an element of strategic importance for the prosperity of sport events, leagues, and competitions: the perceived service quality. This element, while often not discussed much, is directly linked with customer satisfaction, which, in turn, can ensure the success and longevity of a sport event, league, or competition, or of any service overall. In other words, if we understand the perceived service quality of a sport event better, then we can better manage it and ensure that our customers are satisfied; this allows us to continue delivering well-perceived sport events, leagues, and competitions, makes our job effective, and ensures that our sport events, leagues, or competitions are successful in the eyes of our consumers.

In this module, we will begin by capturing what is perceived service quality, as well as its key components. We will then introduce the highly influential SERVQUAL model to better appreciate service quality. Next, we will discuss a different conceptualisation of perceived service quality, to better identify the various elements it comprises. We will then move on to service failure and service recover in sports events, to better comprehend why they occur. After this, we will focus on the imbalance between demand and capacity in sport to better understand it and appreciate its managerial implications. Finally, we will focus on how to best manage capacity for sport events to achieve the optimum possible perceived service quality for the customers/fans.

Unit 4.2 Perceived service quality: SERVQUAL model

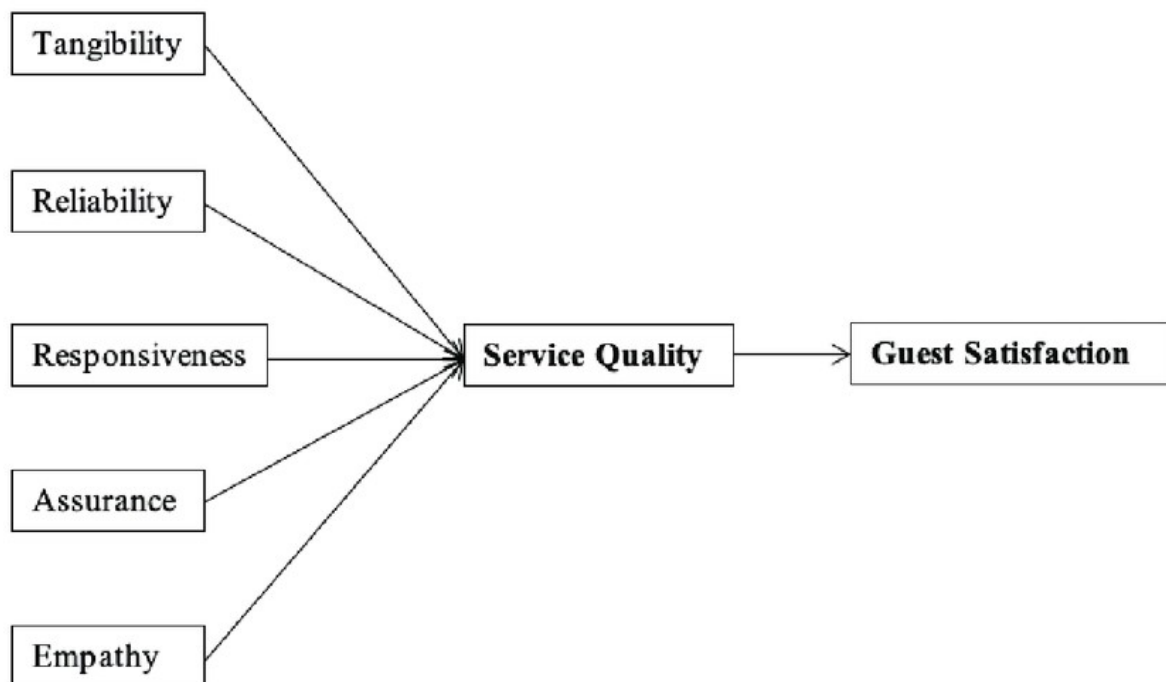
It is worth commencing the analysis of the term *perceived service quality* by focusing on its first word: 'perceived.' As we have noticed from the very first module of this course, since services are customer-centric, all aspects they have depend on the customer and, as such, the quality of the service cannot be an objective measure, but it is, instead, a very subjective one. Therefore, we are looking into the perceived service quality or the perceptions that the customers will have of a sport event, league, or competition. We can thus appreciate that perceived service quality refers to the subjective evaluation or assessment made by customers or attendees regarding the quality of a service they have received. It represents the customers' perception of how well the service meets their expectations, needs, and preferences.

This, in turn, means that two customers attending the exact same sport event might have completely different assessments, that would lead into them having very differing perceived service quality.

Our understanding of perceived service quality has been widely advanced by the extant academic literature on the matter. Academic literature has introduced us to possibly the most influential model of appreciating perceived service quality, the SERVQUAL model (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1998, as cited in Were *et al.*, 2020).

This model, depicted in the figure below, links service quality directly with customer satisfaction, while it also tells us that service quality is informed by five important aspects.

Figure 1. SERVQUAL management framework



Source: Parasuraman *et al.*, 1998, as cited in Were *et al.*, 2020, p. 194.

As the figure above shows, perceived service quality is influenced by five main factors:

1. Tangibility. It refers to the physical or tangible elements associated with the service, such as the appearance of facilities, equipment, or materials used. Customers may perceive higher service quality when they find the tangible aspects visually appealing, modern, and well-maintained (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1998, as cited in Were *et al.*, 2020). This, in the context of sport events, would include elements such as the condition, cleanliness, and functionality of the event venue facilities, seating comfort, restroom



cleanliness, ease of navigation, signage, and overall amenities available within the venue.

2. Reliability. Customers assess the reliability of a service by evaluating how well it is delivered consistently and accurately. This includes aspects such as punctuality, dependability, and the service provider's ability to fulfil promises made to customers (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1998, as cited in Were *et al.*, 2020). This aspect in the case of sport events would include elements such as schedule adherence, clear communication of event details and updates, accurate ticketing processes, and overall efficiency of event logistics.
3. Responsiveness. It relates to the promptness and willingness of the service provider to assist customers and address their needs or concerns. Customers perceive higher service quality when they receive timely responses and feel that their issues are being effectively resolved (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1998, as cited in Were *et al.*, 2020). The quality of interactions between attendees and event staff would be thus evaluated in the context of a sport event, with the attendees valuing the friendliness, helpfulness, and responsiveness of staff members, including ushers, ticketing personnel, security personnel, and customer service representatives.
4. Assurance. It refers to the knowledge, competence, and professionalism displayed by service personnel. Customers feel more confident and perceive higher service quality when they believe the service provider has the necessary skills, expertise, and credibility (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1998, as cited in Were *et al.*, 2020). As such, in the case of a sport event, attendees would evaluate the crowd flow, queue management, and crowd control measures in this element, as well as the quality, variety, and accessibility of various services offered in the event, such as concessions, merchandise sales, information desks, and fan engagement activities.
5. Empathy. It relates to the extent to which the service provider demonstrates understanding, care, and attention to customers' individual needs and circumstances. Customers perceive higher service quality when they feel that the service provider genuinely values and empathises with their concerns (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1998, as cited in Were *et al.*, 2020). In a sport event, attendees would therefore evaluate the friendliness, helpfulness, and responsiveness of staff members, including ushers, ticketing personnel, security personnel, and customer service representatives.

Having investigated our original conceptualisation of perceived service quality, it is now worth acknowledging what other studies propose a different conceptualisation and thus a restructure of the order of the elements contributing to perceived service quality.



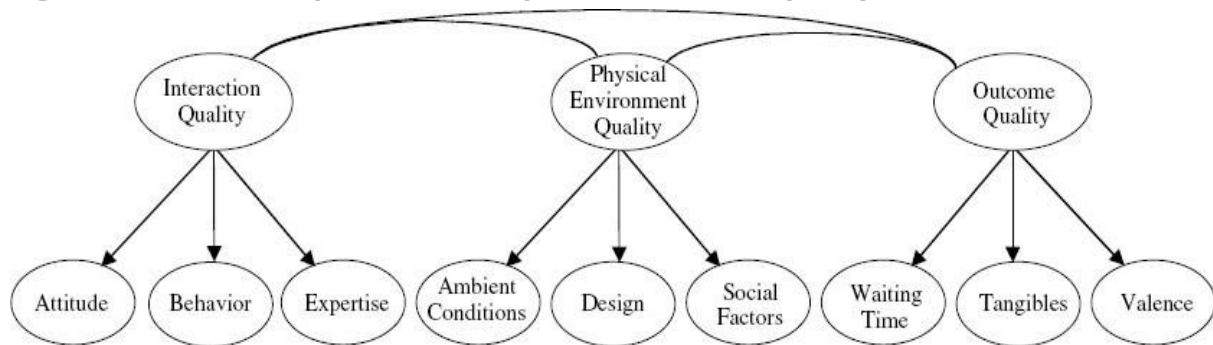
The perceived service quality refers to:

- **The subjective evaluation or assessment made by customers or attendees regarding the quality or service they have received.**
- The objective assessment made by organizers of the sport events regarding the quality of a service they have offered.

Unit 4.3 A new conceptualisation of perceived service quality

After years of being so heavily influenced by the SERVQUAL model in all perceived service quality academic literature, it is worth examining a different, yet not contradictory, new conceptualisation of perceived service quality, which is illustrated in figure two below and will be discussed in this section, to offer a more thorough appreciation of perceived service quality.

Figure 2. A new conceptualisation of perceived service quality



Source: Brady and Cronin, 2001, p. 37.

This conceptualisation breaks perceived service quality down into three wider categories. The first is the interaction quality, that refers to the quality of the interactions customers have with other customers whilst consuming the service and with the service providers themselves (Brady and Cronin, 2001). In the context of our analysis, this will refer to the attendees' interaction with other attendees, so sport fans with other sport fans who are attending the same event, and the interaction between sport fans/customers and event staff and volunteers. This interaction quality is informed by the attitude the individuals that are interacting have, the behaviour they exhibit, and the expertise they have when referring to event staff and volunteers.

So, let us consider an example: a sports fan that attends an event would value the quality of the event depending on, first, the interaction quality and on how the interactions they have are. Is the event staff knowledgeable? Can they answer their questions if they ask

any? Do they behave well? Are they smiling and being polite? At the same time, if other fans are being impolite, if their attitude is being antisocial, then this will impact on the service that another customer will receive. Let us think, for example, about the instances of violence amongst crowds attending a sport event. As it is possible to see in the photographs below, such instances of antisocial behaviour in stadia directly affects the perceived quality of the service other fans are receiving at the same event.

Antisocial or hooliganism behaviours, as the ones depicted below, come not from the past, but from research matches in French first division football (Smith, 2021). In a recent match between Marseille and Lyon, a fan/attendee threw a bottle at a player that then resulted in police and security staff intervening. Such an incident disrupted the service delivered for all fans, since the match had to be interrupted. In the first photograph, it is possible to see fans from Lens entering the pitch to confront fans from Lille, who were the visiting team. This interaction with other fans is directly influencing the service all fans are receiving and, as such, it will ultimately influence their perceived service quality. Equally, in the second photograph below, we see that fans used flares that produced smoke in another match, heavily affecting the service other fans received, since their visibility was obstructed.

Figure 3. Lens fans stormed the field in September to confront visiting rivals from Lille



Source: Smith, 2021, <https://bit.ly/3rkf9TB>.

Figure 4. Smoke from a flare in Montpellier, interrupting a football match



Source: Smith, 2021, <https://bit.ly/3rkf9TB>.

Let us move on into the second wider category that influences perceived service quality in this new conceptualisation, which focuses on the physical environment quality (Brady and Cronin, 2001). As we have previously mentioned, the environment in which it takes place—in our case, the stadium and the facilities—can directly influence how the attendees feel about the service overall.

In this case, the ambient conditions, the design of the stadium, and the social factors are considered. Does the stadium allow for interaction and positive engagement between fans and between fans and the athletes? Is it designed in a way that gives them proximity to the event or does it obstruct their view? What about the wider conditions? Is it clean and convenient? Does it allow for accessibility or not?

Let us again consider an example. Football stadiums, when designed only for football to be played within them, tend to have fans' seats very close to the pitch. This allows for a very direct and intense experience for the fans who are sitting in the front rows and thus a couple of meters away from the football players. An example of this can be seen in most of the football stadiums used for English football matches, such as the Old Trafford, the stadium used by Manchester United football club, pictured below.

Figure 5. Manchester United's stadium, Old Trafford



Source: Jones, 2023, <https://bit.ly/3sYc4ZS>.

At the same time, when non-football specific or multipurpose stadiums are being used for football matches, a wide gap seems to exist between the pitch and the seats for the fans. This can directly influence the perceived quality of the fans, who might feel more detached from the event and therefore suggest that they perceive the service quality received as different, less intense, and thus less pleasurable. An example of this can be seen in the photograph below, in which the Olympic Stadium of Athens is depicted (OAKA, n. d.). The stadium, created originally for the Athens 2004 Olympic Games, was designed to be a multipurpose stadium that can host numerous events, such as track and field. The stadium was since rented out to two football teams, AEK Athens and Panathinaikos, to host their home matches. Because of its multisport nature, however, as we can see below, there exists a wide gap between the fans' seats and the football pitch, allowing for the tracks of the races, but developing nonetheless a different physical environment that affects the service delivered and experienced by the fans.

Figure 6. The Olympic Stadium of Athens



Source: OAKA, (n. d.), <https://bit.ly/465FN00>.

The final element of this new conceptualisation of perceived service quality is the outcome quality, which refers to the actual service received by the fans (Brady and Cronin, 2001). This broader element depends on three main elements: the one of tangibles, which refers to some physical aspects of the service, including the wider environment, but mostly focusing on issues such as ticketing and potential memorabilia from sport events; the waiting time, referring to crowd management and punctuality, and the valence, which, in the case of a sport event, would refer to customers' subjective perception of the outcome of the service (in simple words, was it a good match or a bad match? Was it a good sport event or a bad event that they attended? Did their team or favourite athlete win or lose? Did they score many points?).

This conceptualisation analysed here allows us to categorise differently the various aspects that inform the perceived service quality. However, we can see that an overlap of categories and elements between the two models presented so far exists. As such, we can understand that, while the conceptualisation or order in which the elements are presented differs, the core aspects of them remain similar. It is worth appreciating though that theory has captured reality very accurately by incorporating elements that we can already see materialising in modern-day events. That being the case, we need to stress here that, whilst trying to manage the service quality of an event, we need to examine existing theory and try to learn lessons from what academic studies offer.

That is because we can already notice that several sport event, league, or competition organisers might not fully grasp the importance of the perceived service quality offered

and, as such, they are unable to manage the service quality of their events properly and strategically. Some examples of this, as well as service recovery incidents, will be discussed in the following section.

What are the three categories of the new conceptualisation of perceived service quality?

- **Interaction quality**
- **Physical environment quality**
- **Outcome quality**
- Sensation quality

Unit 4.4 Service failure and service recovery in sport events

While we can assume that all sport event, league, and competition organisers strive to provide excellent service, there have been instances in which service delivery fell short of expectations and, as such, we had a service failure. This could happen for innumerable reasons.

First, insufficient crowd control measures can lead to overcrowding, long queues, and delays in entering or exiting the venue. Inadequate crowd management can cause frustration among attendees and compromise their safety and overall experience. This can become an even bigger issue when ticketing systems that are prone to technical glitches or long wait times are used, since they can result in delays and frustration for attendees. Several issues of this type were reported in an academic study examining the 18th Asian Games 2018: "Some cases found in the multisport event were false seats and fictitious spectators allowed entrance to some arenas they did not have the right to enter, although they have gone through verification measures using line-of-sight barcoding technology" (Nugraha *et al.*, 2021, p. 1).

Second, insufficient communication regarding event updates, changes in schedule, or important information can leave attendees feeling uninformed and confused. Lack of clear communication channels or failure to promptly address inquiries or concerns can contribute to a negative experience. Even in an era of social media enabling for direct and instant communication, it is interesting to notice that fans/event attendees are still complaining about the poor service they received in major sport events due to the lack of communication on behalf of the event organisers (Topping, 2023).

In the case of the 2023 Wimbledon matches, arguably one of the biggest events hosted by the UK, complaints were once again made by the fans that the event organisers did not communicate the new tighter security measures implemented, resulting in long queues

for the fans (Topping, 2023). Fans argued that, had they been given this information before arriving at the event, they would have scheduled for their arrival time to be earlier to reflect it. Consequently, this service failure is not so much an issue of inadequate crowd control, as much as it is an issue of poor or insufficient communication, resulting in long queues and in fans receiving a service of poor quality.

Figure 7. Fans queuing for up to 10 hours to watch the Wimbledon matches



Source: Ghazzal, 2023, as cited in Topping, 2023, <https://bit.ly/3PERA1a>.

Another important aspect that can negatively affect the perceived service quality, and yet one that we see recently reported in sport event attendees' complaints, is the existence of inattentive or unfriendly staff. Service personnel who are disengaged, unresponsive, or unfriendly can significantly impact on the overall attendee experience, since rude or unhelpful staff can create a negative atmosphere and leave attendees feeling unwelcome or undervalued by the event organisers (Dawson, 2018).

An article leading to the 2018 Football World Cup which was held in Russia suggested that event organisers placed significant emphasis on ensuring that staff were perceived as friendly and helpful by the fans/event attendees, arguing that they were 'taught' how to smile to fans (Dawson, 2018). In the article, it was argued that, because of previously held conceptions about the sport organiser country Russia stating that Russians are not friendly, the event organising committee was worried that this would impact on the perceived service quality of the event and, therefore, it was eager to change it.

Moreover, another recent example of poor service quality delivered, which was also met with complaints by the fans attending the event, was running out of food (Lincoln, 2022).

Indeed, limited food and beverage options affect the perceived service quality, since—as we argued in a previous module—they are part of customer expectations. However, it is not only the limited or poor-quality food and beverage options which can lead to dissatisfaction among attendees; it is also the long queues, limited choices, high prices, or poor service in concessions areas can detract from the overall event experience.

In the recent match between the Nebraska Cornhuskers and the Northwestern Wildcats played in the Aviva Stadium in Dublin, Ireland, we saw such a service failure, highlighting above all the issue of bad logistics and planning, an interesting, yet costly solution (Lincoln, 2022). When the venue began experiencing issues with the internet connection offered, the event organisers realised that they could not get paid for offering drinks, so they decided to offer free beer to all attendees, thus bearing themselves the cost of this service failure to prioritise the perceived service quality and customer satisfaction. This was a notable effort of service recovery to maintain the perceived service quality high even after the service failure. This decision of the event organisers resulted in both the beer and the food of the event running out, with fans however not being displeased. This example illustrates well how the perceived service quality, that can lead to customer satisfaction, needs to be better understood by sport event, league, and competition organisers for their provisions to be developed accordingly and for losses to be avoided in potential future service recovery decisions.

Similar recent examples that we will not analyse here in detail, since they have been captured in our analysis in previous modules, include the inadequate provisions for individuals with disabilities or limited mobility, the inadequate facilities and malfunctioning amenities, and insufficient security measures. Nevertheless, it is important noticing that, while these examples illustrate instances of bad service delivery or of service failure which might result in losses for the sport event organisers and a bad perceived service quality for the fans, they cannot represent the norm in sport events. Instead, they represent examples through which sport event, league, and competition organisers can learn and improve their own practice, to address any shortcomings and ensure a positive and enjoyable experience of high-perceived quality for all attendees.

Having captured some common service failures in sport events, we can now move on to an important issue with practical managerial implications: the imbalance between demand and capacity in sport events, which we will analyse below.

Unit 4.5 Imbalance between demand and capacity in sport events

As we have discussed from the beginning of this course, services such as sport events are perishable and, as such, they need to be consumed the moment in which they are produced. This means that they cannot be stored away when they are produced while waiting for demand for them to grow; as such, the demand that they have lasts momentarily and, if it is not used appropriately, it will be lost.

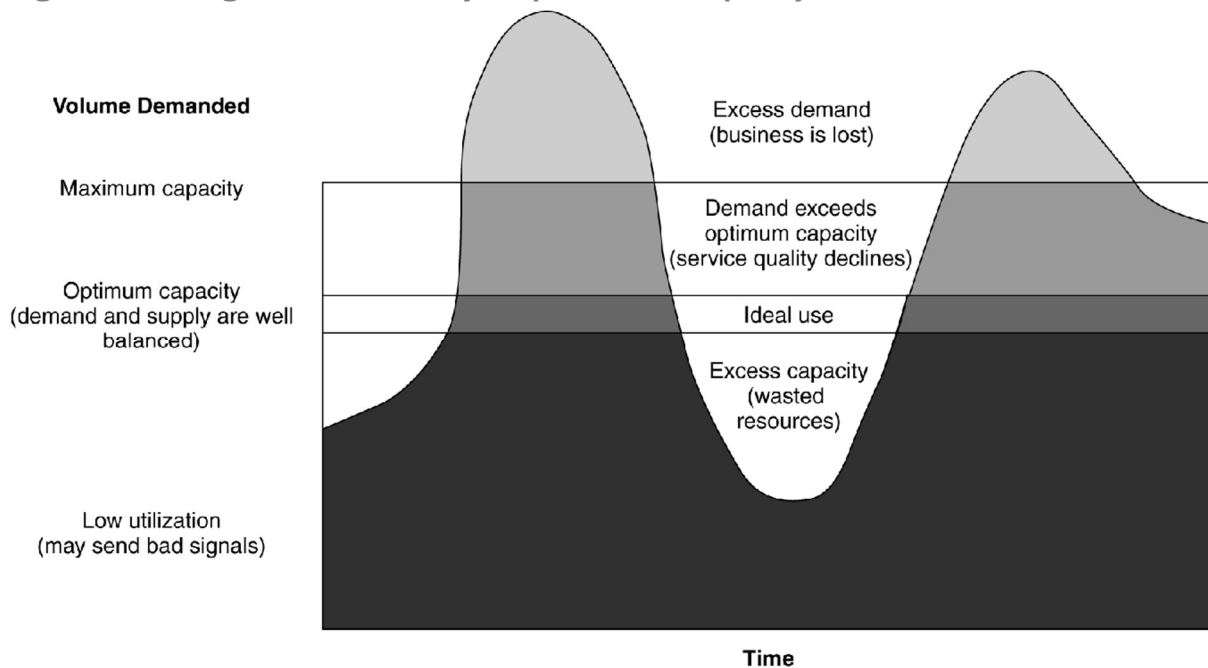
What does not change over time, however, is the capacity a sport event can have (Lovelock and Wirtz, 2016). Simply put, a sports stadium has an already specified and limited number of seats, which represents the main factor showing the capacity of a sport event.

Whilst this capacity does not change or cannot change unless significant investments are made, demand can fluctuate significantly over time. Let us think, for example, about the stadium of a sport team that participates in a particular sports league. As part of its participation, the stadium is being used once every two weeks approximately, for nine or ten months of the year. In some of those matches, we can assume that there is elevated demand because the team is playing against an important opponent. However, in some other matches, the team might be playing against less important opponents and, as such, the demand can be lower.

At the same time, in between matches, there appears to be no utilisation of the sport stadium, since no matches are being hosted, or, if it is used by for a non-sport related cause, for example, for some local events, then they might have significantly smaller demand.

To better explain this, let us examine the figure illustrating the fluctuations of demand over time, while juxtaposing them with the existing fixed capacity.

Figure 8. Getting the most out of your productive capacity



Source: Lovelock and Wirtz, 2016, p. 497.

If we are to look at the figure above, we can see three lines being drawn horizontally: these separate the four scenarios that can exist depending on the existing capacity and the volume demanded at each moment in time.

At the very bottom of our figure, we can see that, while there is a particular capacity set in which the demand and the supply are well-balanced, we have low demand for our event and thus low demand when compared with the existing capacity of the stadium in which our event will be hosted. As such, we will experience low utilisation, which can send bad signals about the organisation of the event and means that we have excess capacity and, thus, wasted resources (Lovelock and Wirtz, 2016). In a sports stadium, that means that seats are empty and that, even though we might be paying for all the services to be organised, such as expenses for music, sound, and staff, we are not optimising the capacity we have; as a result, this would indicate we are wasting part of these resources.

This can also directly affect our existing customers/fans, who might not be able to enjoy the event if the stadium is half empty and if there is only limited interaction with other fans.

Examples of this can be seen in numerous events around the world, with the most recent being the Qatar 2022 World Cup, in which a few matches were reported to have empty seats.

Figure 9. Empty seats in Qatar 2022 stadia



Source: The New India Express, 2022, <https://bit.ly/3rgd0bs>.

However, when demand goes a bit higher than this level, bearing in mind, again, that the capacity remains the same, we can be driven into the second scenario in which we see optimum capacity (Lovelock and Wirtz, 2016). This is where the demand and supply are so well-balanced that we are presented with a scenario of ideal use.

In an ideal use, the attendees of the event are comfortable, being able to not only attend the event, but also potentially enjoy some extra space, if only very few of the seats are still available. This gives them the option of picking their preferred seat and allows staff and volunteers the time needed to cater to the fans, ensuring that they receive the best possible service. The event organisers' costs at this point are covered and, as such, both managerially and in terms of atmosphere, we have achieved an excellent result.

The following photograph from Meeting de Paris 2023 shows how optimal use was achieved in the athletics event. As we can see, while the stadium is full, there are still some empty seats, giving fans who are attending some additional freedom to move, while ensuring that a good atmosphere exists and that most tickets are sold, covering and exceeding the expenses made.

Figure 10. Meeting de Paris 2023 in Charléty Stadium



Source: [untitled image of the Meeting de Paris 2023 in Charléty Stadium], (n. d.), <https://bit.ly/3EJxrR6>.

Right above this thin line of ideal use, however, we can see scenario three, in which the demand exceeds the optimum capacity, while being nonetheless below the maximum capacity (Lovelock and Wirtz, 2016). In this scenario, the service quality we deliver can decline, since although staff members, volunteers, and event organisers overall are trying their best to meet the standards expected, they might be pushed to their limits. This is a case in which sport events are fully booked with all tickets fully sold, to the extent to which there is not enough space to give any leeway. Stadia, in this case, are overcrowded and, even if they are still within the legal limits, not causing any potential health or safety risks, this does not grant that the optimum service quality will be delivered, since all individuals involved will be pushed to provide almost at their limits. An example of this scenario can be seen in the following photograph from a Pakistan Super League (PSL) Twenty20 cricket final match between Multan Sultans and Lahore Qalandars, at Gaddafi Cricket Stadium in Lahore.

Figure 11. Sport event in which demand exceeds the optimum capacity in the Pakistan Super League (PSL) Twenty20 cricket final match



Source: [untitled image of sport event in which demand exceeds the optimum capacity], (2023), <https://bit.ly/3raeynx>.

Finally, the fourth scenario can be seen at the very top of the figure, in which case demand exceeds maximum capacity (Lovelock and Wirtz, 2016). We are thus presented with excess demand, in which event organisers must turn customers down and, consequently, lose potential business. In this fourth scenario, we see lost opportunities and not an optimum quality for the event delivered, since potential high-paying customers are being turned away, and potential safety risks are created alongside a less than optimal service quality delivered. This would be the consequence if the lack of availability is not communicated early enough to fans who might queue up to purchase tickets, which will thus create long queues.

At the same time, a bad reputation can be created for the sport event organisers, blaming them for not foreseeing the potentially high demand, and thus not investing in further developing the existing capacity. The Olympic Games are often accused of this, with particularly popular matches and races within them selling their tickets out rapidly. Amongst them, London 2012 was heavily criticised for leaving two thirds of the applicants for tickets empty-handed, since huge demand as they claimed existed, whilst the sport event organisers had not prepared by increasing the capacity accordingly (Gibson, 2011).

Unit 4.6 Understanding demand and capacity in sport events

As the above analysis has demonstrated, there often exists an imbalance between capacity and demand; so, for sport event, league, and competition organisers to better manage these two aspects, first, they need to understand them.

Initially, we need to appreciate what the constraints of the capacity are (Lovelock and Wirtz, 2016). First, sport event, league, or competition organisers have limited facilities and, as such, a limited number of seats in sports stadia; however, they also have a limited number of staff members and volunteers. While this constraint can be flexible depending on the event, since hiring and training those individuals could be done in a shorter amount of time and with fewer expenses than extending the capacity in terms of seats, it is nonetheless a limitation worth acknowledging.

Another constraint is the availability of time (Lovelock and Wirtz, 2016). Even if sport events are limited in time, identifying ways in which more events could be created could assist in such an effort to meet the increased demand. For example, tournaments could consider adding more matches, such as playoffs at the end of the tournament, to create more opportunities for more sport events to be hosted.

On the other side of the coin, understanding demand is equally important. What event organisers are asked to understand in this case is what the demand patterns are (Lovelock and Wirtz, 2016). They should aim at having a clear understanding of why they vary and the market segments that comprise demand at different points in time. We therefore need to be aiming at charting demand patterns. Such a charting effort would require for accurate information and data to be available.

Once the demand is charted, sport event organisers can try to identify if there are any predictable cycles or causes of demand, or whether they can notice randomly changing demand (Lovelock and Wirtz, 2016). The event organisers should aim to find demand fluctuations dependant on other variables, such as the weather or other socio-economic events. Again, demand patterns by market segments could assist in this effort, since it would allow to better identify which segments they should target. Additional factors that could be used to understand demand for a service would include the employment schedules (weekend versus weekdays), payment, billing, tax and refund cycles, school hours and vacations, and wider changes depending on public holidays and the seasons.

Having understood that the demand fluctuates, and bearing in mind all data available in such fluctuations, sport event, league, or competition organisers can now focus on how to best manage their capacity to meet it, something that we will discuss below.

Sport event, league, or competition organisers have:

- **Limited facilities and, as such, a limited number of seats in sports stadia, however, they also have a limited number of staff members and volunteers.**
- Unlimited facilities and, as such, a large number of seats in sports stadia, however, they also have a large number of staff members and volunteers.

Unit 4.7 Managing capacity for sport events

Managing capacity for sport events involves careful planning, coordination, and implementation of strategies, to ensure that the event venue can accommodate the expected number of attendees. First, this involves choosing a venue that aligns with the anticipated attendance and requirements of the sport event (Lovelock and Wirtz, 2016). A sport event, league, or competition organiser should consider several factors, such as the seating capacity, facilities, amenities, and accessibility. If a particular venue has already been selected, the event organiser should carefully assess the venue's ability to handle the expected demand and determine if any modifications or enhancements are necessary and whether they can be done.

Second, historical attendance data, market research, and trends to forecast the expected demand for the sport event should be consulted (Lovelock and Wirtz, 2016). Additional factors to consider could be the opponent and host team or athlete popularity, the event significance, the competition schedule, and the marketing efforts to estimate attendance numbers. In this assessment, ticketing agencies, sponsors, and various partners could be used to help gather insights and validate demand projections before the event.

Having this data can lead to step three, in which sport event organisers should implement effective ticketing strategies to manage capacity (Lovelock and Wirtz, 2016). Such strategies could include setting different ticket prices for various seating sections, offering tiered ticket options, or implementing dynamic pricing based on demand and availability. If optimal use of the venue is the goal, then the organiser should determine the optimal number of tickets to be sold for each seating category, to ensure a balanced distribution of attendees throughout the venue.

Four, the event organiser should clearly communicate ticket availability, seating arrangements, and event updates to potential attendees, to manage expectations and avoid disappointment, while ensuring that alternative suggestions are offered where possible, bearing in mind the importance of this step to the overall perceived service quality (Lovelock and Wirtz, 2016).

Five, during the event, appropriate safety and security measures and crowd control strategies should be implemented to prevent safety risks and overcrowding, which can reduce the perceived service quality.

Finally, sport event organisers should monitor attendance levels, seating capacity utilisation, and attendee feedback throughout the event (Lovelock and Wirtz, 2016). This can allow them to adjust capacity management strategies if necessary, to ensure a balanced distribution of attendees and address any emerging issues promptly. By collecting and analysing data and attendance patterns, they can also evaluate the effectiveness of capacity management efforts for future events, ensuring that they always deliver the optimum perceived service quality to their customers.

Summary

In this final module of the Managing Service Quality in Sport Events course, we focused on perceived service quality. Therefore, we began our analysis with the theory behind perceived service quality and two of the conceptualisations of this important concept. After discussing this and the factors that contribute to it, we moved on to the concept of service failure and service recovery in sport events. Examples of this were analysed to understand the potential roots of such problems resulting in bad perceived service quality. Following this, we centred on the key issue of the imbalance between demand and capacity in sport events; before, we captured how capacity can be managed to achieve the optimum perceived service quality for the sport event attendees.

Course summary

In this course, focusing on managing service quality in sport events, we began our analysis by appreciating that sport events, leagues, and competitions are above all services. As such, we need to appreciate their characteristics, the most important of which is their customer-centric nature. Therefore, we began our analysis in module one by focusing on customer expectations and satisfaction. We explored customer expectations in sport events and how to best understand them, before moving on to the direct outcome of meeting and exceeding customer expectations: customer satisfaction. Within customer satisfaction, we also discussed how sport event, league, and competition organisers can measure it to better prepare their strategies accordingly.

In module two, we continued our exploration of the customer, by focusing this time on their needs. As we argued, customers have several different needs that manifest in different ways in sport events. Since sport events are customer-centric, we argued that they need to respond to these needs to satisfy them. We then continued the analysis with a focus on customer segmentation, a useful tool allowing us to better understand who our customers are and thus what their needs are. At the end of the module, we also examined the role of the customer in sport events, by focusing on the managerial aspects of how to recruit and manage customers in sport events.

In module three, we moved on to service delivery and began our analysis by exploring its aspects, which we analysed in detail. We therefore captured service design in sport events and the usefulness of a service delivery or customer journey map in planning and managing a sport event, league, or competition. We then examined the servicescape in sport events, before we moved on to the service execution. Then, we captured the service personnel in sport events, including both the event staff and the event volunteers, and how to best manage these two different categories.

Finally, in the fourth and final module of this course, we investigated the perceived service quality of a sport event. Apart from the theoretical conceptualisation of the concept, which presents us with useful tangible advice, we also inquired into service failure and recovery in the module; before that, we captured the important issue of the imbalance between demand and capacity in sport events. The latter allowed us to then focus on how to best manage capacity, which tends to be limited and defined in sport events, yet it remains important for the perceived service quality of the event attendees.

Overall, this course has captured how important managing service quality is for sport events, leagues, and competitions, and how using the principles of managing service quality can ensure that our sport events, leagues, and competitions are successful.

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