Examination of the Effect of Service Quality on Spectator Behavioral Intentions Through their Satisfaction
(Case Study: Spectators of Mashhad Farsh-Ara futsal Team in Iran Premier League)

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to investigate the effect of service quality on spectator intentions through their satisfaction. To measure service quality, Gronroos (1984) theoretical framework which contained two dimensions of technical quality and functional quality was used .The methodology was descriptive survey and the data was collected through random sampling among 241 spectators of Shahid Beheshti Stadium in 1391 which was obtained by Cochran formula. To examine hypothesis, Structural Equation Modeling in Error level of 0.05 was used .The results indicate the effect of functional quality on spectator's satisfaction with regard to regression coefficient (0.08) and p-value (0.375) which is more than significance level of 0.05, is not significant. Therefore, with possibility of 95 % functional quality doesn't have any positive effect on spectators satisfaction .The results also indicate the effect of technical (outcome) quality on spectator's satisfaction with regard to regression coefficient (0.76) and p-value (0.000) which is less than significance level of 0.05, is significant. Therefore, with possibility of 95 %, technical (outcome) quality has positive effect on spectator's satisfaction. The results also demonstrate indicate the effect of satisfaction on spectator's intention with regard to regression coefficient (0.67) and p-value (0.000) which is less than significance level of 0.05, is significant. Therefore, with possibility of 95 %, satisfaction have positive effect on spectators intention .Considering the survey findings, spectators satisfaction have many benefits for the clubs. Clubs managers must do their best to improve the service quality offered to spectators as well as to employ star players in order to provide spectators with satisfaction which results in spectator's presence in stadiums.

Key Words: Sport Marketing, Service Quality, Behavioral intentions and satisfaction.

Introduction

Efforts to improve the service quality have become an essential and strategic part of companies for success and to remain in the severe competitive market. Therefore sports is considered as the greatest social phenomenon and in an environment which the competition is increasing dramatically, the sports

organizations must provide their customers with the best service qualitys; otherwise they will lose their customers to the competitors (Shonk and Seifried, 2006).

Efficiency and effectiveness of the organization processes is the concern of the day. Through the scientific studies this question should be answered that how we can improve the effectiveness of processes in the organization. The scholars believe that one of the ways to increase the effectiveness of the organization is to improve the service qualitys, that is, to meet the needs and expectations of customers. Demingh one of the pioneers of comprehensive quality management, believes that quality and customer satisfaction are of the same value. Therefore with increasing the service qualitys, customer satisfaction will be increased and thus the organization effectiveness will be increased. Therefore customer satisfaction can be considered as one indicator organization effectiveness (Kotler, 2003).

Some researchers use the two concepts of service quality and satisfaction interchangeably. However satisfaction and service quality are two separate concepts, but depending on each other very much. In addition, customer satisfaction should be considered separate from the service qualityso that one can figure out that how the customers evaluate the performance of services. Satisfaction is a much broader concept than service quality; Satisfaction consists of emotional and cognitive evaluation, while the service qualityis basically a cognitive process (Kotler, 2003). Service qualityis described according to the advantages i.e., the service qualityis the judgment of spectators or participants on the extent to which the sport services or service components are superior. Therefore, the more the notion of the spectators or participants is close to the superiority of the services or performance of sports services, the better their evaluation of the quality will be. Customer satisfaction is a customer's feeling or attitude toward a product or service after using that. In other words, the customer satisfaction is defined, on the basis of desired performance, i.e., the customer satisfaction is a judgment on sports services or components of the services in which the desirable level of satisfaction is related to the performance of and the more the performance is better the more level of satisfaction of the spectator or participant would be . The thing which is easily acceptable and might be the key point, is the difference between the two kinds of assessment; That is while the satisfaction depends on the experience, but the service qualitydoes not depend on experience-i.e., in order to be satisfied or not, about a sports goods one must experience it, however there is no need to experience, regarding the quality concepts (Alidoust and Ahmadi, 2012).

Attracting people to the stadiums is a good solution for many clubs to increase their income and to be different from the other clubs. In order to increase the presence of spectators, knowing the factors that have the highest influence on the people, is of importance for sports marketing. This allows the marketers to use more effective marketing strategies to focus on the spectators. It also allows managers to schedule and plan the competitions in a more effective way, give their work a better form and implement new methods for increasing the presence of spectators and gain more profit (Saatchian, Elahi and Nazemi, 2012). Studies by Carlson and O'cass showed that the positive notion about the service quality leads to customer satisfactionwhich in turn leads to positive behavioral intentions . It is to be mentioned that positive behavioral intentions, lead to willingness to attend again, spreading the nice words about the event and encouraging oneself and others to attend the events again (2010: 112-127). The relation between customer satisfaction and behavioral intention is investigated by the researchers who study different fields of mutual services. However, the interaction between the service qualitys, customer satisfaction and loyalty is still a controversial issue. Regarding the sports spectators, very few studies on interactions between three fields of service qualitys, satisfaction and behavioral intentions are available. There is no much studies related to sports spectators especially of indoor soccer that has investigated the relation between service qualitys, satisfaction and behavioral intention of spectators.

Dobholkar et al developed a model based on which service quality consists of four features (reliability, personal care and convenience). Based on this model the service qualitylead to customer satisfaction and

customer satisfaction leads to behavioral intentions (2000: 139-173). In most models of service qualitys, the dimensions related to the service quality (e.g., behavior of personnel and quality of physical environment) are used to predict the customer satisfaction and the outcome is neglected. This is probably due to the problems that sports managers face when controlling aspects of the sports games (Brady et al, 2006). Brady et al (2006), Greenwell (2002), Tsuji (2007) and Yoshida and James (2010) are the only researchers who have studied the effect of process and outcome on the satisfaction of the spectators from the sports events. Although all the above studies show that service quality affects satisfaction considerably, their results are not easily comparable and they are to some extent, opposing each other. Regarding the various fields of research and the difference between the conceptions of outcome quality, different measurement scales are used, too. As an example, Brady et al (2006) Tsuji et al (2007) showed that factors related to the game (outcome quality: It refers to what the customer feels and it is what remained for the customer, after the process of production-consumption is finished (Brady and Cronin, 2001) have the most powerful effects on satisfaction while Greenwell et al (2002) showed that the environmental aspects of services (functional quality) have the most powerful effect. Functional quality of environmental element is a function of the service quality and in the present study it is including environment/stadium facilities, services (for example parking lots and privileges) and the interactions between the spectators and the employees.

The time of collecting the information might also affect the results. For example at the end of a failed season, the elements of functional quality might be more important, for the fans, than the outcome (Greenwell et al, 2002). As the relation between the customer satisfaction and behavioral intention is investigated by the researchers who work in different fields of services, the interaction between service qualityand customer satisfaction and loyalty is still a controversial issue. Little studies are conducted regarding the sports spectators specially those of indoor soccer, to investigate the interactions between service quality, satisfaction and behavioral intention. With regard to not meeting the needs and problems of the spectators and the no efforts by the clubs to satisfy the spectators, the present study tries to figure out the behavioral intention of the spectators to provide them with desired services and to satisfy them so that they can attend for the future games and thus helping the clubs to sell more tickets and increase the income and find more sponsors and support the team toward success and etc. Since most of indoor soccer clubs in Iran are privately owned, and they need to gain income through selling tickets, advertisements around the play ground and on the clothes and etc., sports managers should pay special attention to gain satisfaction of the spectators and provide them with proper services   and good outcomes to attract them in future events. Finally with regard to the fact that the model is based on the conceptual model adapted from Theodorakis et al and investigates the relations between the four factors and also contrary to other models of service quality it also considers the outcome, this model is used in the present study (2012: 162-178).
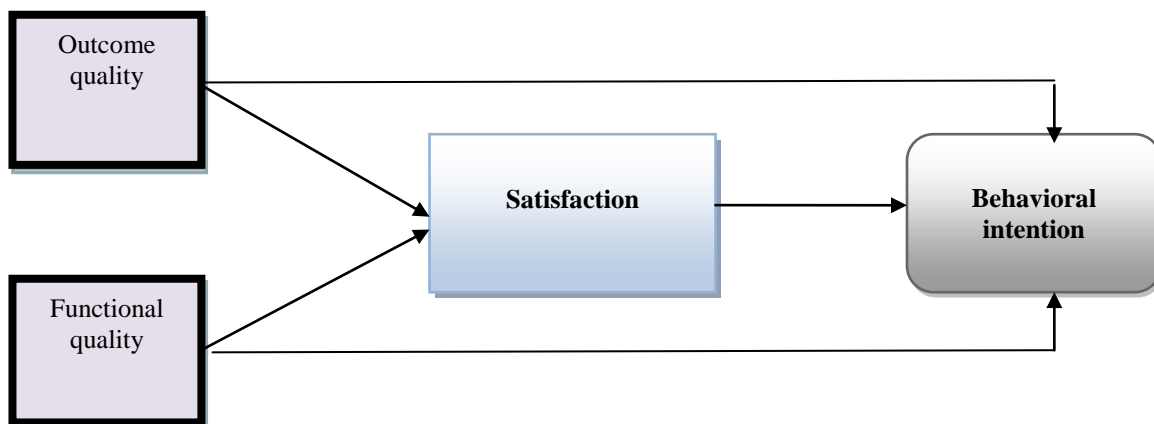
The Conceptual model adapted from Theodorakis et al (2012)

Methodology

The present study aims to solve a problem which is the investigation on the effect of service quality on the behavioral intention of the spectators, due to their satisfaction. Therefore it is an applied research. Also since the data collection is done through questionnaires to find the viewpoints, ideas and behaviors of indoor soccer spectators and also since the present study describes the variables, as well as predicting the depending variables, therefore it is a descriptive and analytical survey. This study is based on the data collected before the games of indoor Soccer of Iranian super league. The statistical sample of the study consists of the spectators who were present at Shahid Beheshti Stadium of Mashahd, hosting the games of super league of indoor Soccer in 2013. The game was between Farsh Ara and Rah sari. Based on this sample the study included 241 spectators that were selected through random sampling. We used the Kocran's sampling equation to determine the sample size out of an unknown population. Based on the Kocran's formula, the number of sample size for the samples which their total number is not clear, is according to the following equation.

Where: $$n = \frac{(Z_{\alpha/2})^2 . (pq)}{d^2}$$

P=the possibility of having a feature, q= the possibility of having no feature Z= the initial value of critical zone when the P-value is less than 0.025. d= negligible error, approximation of society's parameter which is assumed to be 0.063
So, with regard to the formula, the volume of the sample will be calculated in this way:

$$n = \frac{(1.96)^2 \times 0.5(1-0.5)}{(d)^2} = 240$$

Based on this, 300 questionnaires were distributed among the spectators; out of which 241 were returned used for statistical analysis. In order to measure the functional aspect of service quality, 5 aspects of the process are adapted from the Sportserv model including: Tangibility or apparent characteristics, accountability, accessibility, reliability and security. In order to measure 2 aspects of outcome, we used the works by Koo et al (2009) and Yoshida and James (2010) that included team performance and quality of the game . Also we used 4 statements adapted from Brady (2006) about the spectators' satisfaction and in order to find the positive behavioral intention of the spectators we used the works by (Zeithaml et al 1996) and Cronin (2000) and Yoshida and James (2010). In all scales, the participants used answers varying from completely agree (1) to completely disagree (5), in order to show the amount of their approval.
The reliability of the content of the scales used in the present study is verified through asking for the viewpoint of some prominent professors of sports management and general management fields. Also the results of the functional confirmation analysis to confirm the validity of the construct showed that it is very strong. Finally to measure the coherence of the scale, we used Cronbach's alpha for all the variables and result was as the following: Behavioral intention 0.833, satisfaction 0.884, quality of game 0.907, Team performance 0.786, tangible features 0.787, accountability 0.869, accessibility 0.780, and reliability 0.849 and security 0.800.
In order to analysis the results of the study, after using the descriptive data for deducting research theories, the most important method used is the structural equations using the Amos software. Based on the results of descriptive statistics, the frequency distribution of age of participants is 39. 4 percent between the ages 18 to 24 years. The highest number of presence of the spectators in one season is 30.3 percent with spectators who have presence in 10 to 12 games. And also based on the record of presence of this group, 5.8 percent of the spectators are more than 16 years watching the indoor soccer games. And most participants have education of high school which is 29.5 percent of the participants. Based on statistics related to variables of the research model, the average response to accountability is more than the average

response to other variables and the quality of the game has the lowest average, compared to other variables (table 1).

Table (1): Statistical indices of research variables

Maximum	Minimum	Standard Deviation	Mean	Number	Variable
5	1	0.994	2.721	241	**Tangible features**
5	1	1.060	3.433	241	**Accountability**
5	1	0.999	3.219	241	**Reliability**
5	1	1.018	2.871	241	**Accessibility**
5	1	0.908	2.399	241	**Security**
5	1	0.873	2.121	241	**Game quality**
5	1	0.821	2.208	241	**Team performance**

Before modeling the structural equation to test the research hypotheses, it is necessary to validate the research scale using the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). In order to investigate it, first, we should validate the data collected by each item which is measured through Amos by two indicators of Kurtosis and Skewness. The value for Kurtosis should be between ±7 and ±3 Skewness. Then the construct validity of the model is investigated which is done using convergent validity and discriminant validity. In convergent validity, each regression coefficient should be greater than or equal to 0.5, and in the discriminant validity, in order to investigate the lack of overlapping between constructs of the questionnaire, regarding the items, the covariance between every two constructs must not be greater than 0.9. Finally the model fit is investigated based on the relevant indicators. The table 2 shows the results of confirmatory factor analysis for questionnaire items. The regression coefficients, according to the table 2 below are significant and more than 0.5. Therefore the convergent validity of the scale is confirmed and the covariance between both constructs is less than 0.9 and thus the lack of overlapping in the form of discriminant validity is also confirmed; As a result the validity of model construct is confirmed, too.

Table (2): Results of factor analysis of questionnaire items

Factor load	Items	Questions	Factor load	Items	Questions
67/0	Tangible features 3	Q19	73/0	Behavioral intention 1	Q1
66/0	Tangible features 4	Q20	75/0	Behavioral intention 2	Q2
81/0	Accountability 1	Q21	79/0	Behavioral intention 3	Q3
83/0	Accountability 2	Q22	76/0	Behavioral intention 4	Q4
78/0	Accountability 3	Q23	88/0	Satisfaction 1	Q5
68/0	Accountability 4	Q24	83/0	Satisfaction 2	Q6
68/0	Accessibility1	Q25	83/0	Satisfaction 3	Q7
77/0	Accessibility2	Q26	72/0	Satisfaction 4	Q8
780	Accessibility3	Q27	84/0	Game quality 1	Q9
58/0	Accessibility4	Q28	87/0	Game quality 1	Q10
87/0	Reliability1	Q29	76/0	Game quality 1	Q11
76/0	Reliability2	Q30	89/0	Game quality 1	Q12
79/0	Reliability3	Q31	88/0	Team performance 1	Q13
70/0	Reliability4	Q32	73/0	Team performance 2	Q14
82/0	Security 1	Q33	62/0	Team performance 3	Q15
69/0	Security 2	Q34	64/0	Team performance 4	Q16
78/0	Security 3	Q35	67/0	Tangible features 1	Q17
56/0	Security 4	Q36	78/0	Tangible features 2	Q18

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With regard to the fact that the fit indicators as shown in the table (3) are located in their desired domain, therefore the measurement model of the study has an acceptable fit. Thus, in general the measurement model of the study is confirmed by the researcher.

Table (4): Fit indices of the model for the confirmatory factor analysis

index	Desired value	Value obtained in the actual model
Degrees of freedom (df)	-	540
Chi square(χ^2)	-	805.846
level of significance for (χ^2)	dependent on the sample size	0.000
optimized Chi square (χ^2/df)	Less than 4	1.492
Good fit index (**GFI**)	0.8 to higher	0.852
(**RMR**)	below 0.08	0.067
(**CFI**)	above 0.9	0.946
(**RMSEA**)	below 0.08	0.045

Continuing with this, we used modeling of structural equations to test the research theories and to investigate the relations between the variables of research model. The figure below shows the result of modeling the structural equations.
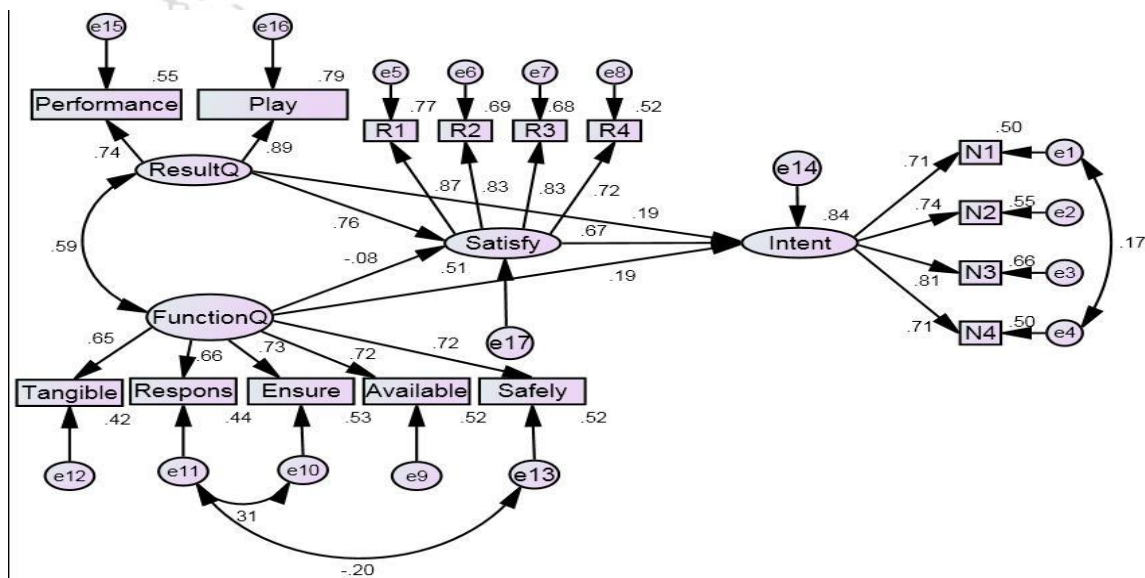

Figure 1. Model of structural equations for the study

After developing the model, there are several methods to estimate the goodness of the models overall fit that will be discussed later in this paper.

Index	Desired value	Value obtained in the actual model
optimized Chi square (χ^2/df)	Less than 4	1.597
Good fit index (**GFI**)	0.8 to higher	0.935
(**RMR**)	below 0.08	0.044
(**CFI**)	above 0.9	0.975
(**RMSEA**)	below 0.08	0.05

a) RMSEA index: Is one of the Parsimony indices. This measure is refers to the value of difference between the sum of squares explained by model and the sum of matrix squares estimated in the sample for each degree of freedom. The value of RMSEA for models with a good fit is less than 0.05. In case that its value is between 0.05 and 0.08, the fit is acceptable and higher than 0.1, the fit is weak, (Kalantari, 2010). In the fit model of the study, this value is equal to 0.05. Therefore, based on this index, the model has a good fit.

b) CFI measure: This index is one of the Comparative indices. It measures the amount of improvement through comparing a so called independent model (in which there is no relation between the variables) with a suggested model. The more the value of this index is closer to the value of 1, the more it shows a good fit of the data (Kalantari, 2010). This index for the fitted model of the present study is 0.975 which is an acceptable fit for the research model.

c) RMR index: This measure is defined as the standard remaining mean square root (an index for remaining variance in fitness of each parameter to sample data). This index is one of the absolute fit indices. In a model where the amount of this index is less than 0.05, the model fit is acceptable. However the values between 0.05 and 0.08 are also accepted (Kalantari, 2010). Therefore, since the calculated RMR is 0.044, thus the research model has an acceptable fit, according to this measure, too.

d) χ^2/df index*:* One of the general indicators is normal or relative chi square which is calculated through dividing the value of chi square by model's degree of freedom. The acceptable value for this index is often less than 4. As it is given in the table, the value for the desired model is 1.597 which is an acceptable and appropriate value.

d) GFI index: Is one of the comparative indexes for which the values more 0.8 means a good fit of the model. The GFI for research model is 0.935 which means a good model fit.
So considering the acceptable indices of the model, the theoretical research model is an acceptable model and thus we can now use the significant regression coefficients using p-value to investigate the relations between variables. The results are presented in table 5.

Table (5): Statistical indices for regression coefficient and p-value of the research variables

Hypothesis	Direct way	Regression coefficient	p-value	Outcome
1	Functional quality→Satisfaction of spectators	-0.08	375/0	Rejected
2	outcome quality→Satisfaction of spectators	0.76	000/0	Accepted
3	Functional quality→Behavioral intention of spectators	0.19	005/0	Accepted
4	Outcome quality→Behavioral intention of spectators	0.19	041/0	Accepted
5	Satisfaction→Behavioral intention of spectators	0.67	000/0	Accepted
6	Outcome quality→Satisfaction→Behavioral intention of spectators	0.506	001/0	Accepted
7	Functional quality→Satisfaction→Behavioral intention of spectators	-0.051	424/0	Rejected

In order to test the sixth and seventh hypotheses of the study we used Bootstrap method in Amos software. These hypotheses investigate the intermediation of satisfaction in the relation between outcome quality and behavioral intentions of spectators and also investigate the intermediation of satisfaction in relation between functional quality and behavioral intentions of the spectators.

Discussion and conclusion

The present study aimed to investigate the relation between service quality and behavioral intentions of the spectators, in terms of their satisfaction. Several studies are conducted in Iran and other countries which have investigated the factors affecting the presence of spectators in sports events and also about service qualitys, satisfaction and behavioral intentions of the spectators. However, there has hardly been a study in Iran which has investigated these three subjects together and or through dividing the service quality into two aspects.

The review of literature shows that service quality has a relation with satisfaction (Brady et al, 2002; Cronin and Taylor, 1994). Also the studies by (Chang and Wang, 2008; Cronin et al, 2000; Hou et al, 2009; Park et al, 2006; Wou et al, 2008) show that receiving a higher level of services in terms of quality, leads to customer satisfaction. With regard to the fact that functional quality dimensions has been widely investigated by previous researchers, the results of the present study on the positive effect of functional quality on satisfaction (with regard to regression coefficient and a small p-value is not consistent with the results by Hightower et al (2002), who pointed out the importance of functional quality and services' environment. However the results show a positive effect of outcome quality on the satisfaction of the spectators and it is consistent with results of studies by Wakefield & Blodgett (1996) that showed intangible service quality factors (outcome quality) is the dominant factor in determining the perception of the service qualitys. It is also consistent with study by Kelly and Turley (2001) who argued that the most important feature of services is the experience of the game. From a managerial point of view, the dimensions related to the outcome quality, (quality of the game and team performance) are less in control of the manager, compared to functional quality. Therefore the team manager will never be involved in choosing team players, strategy for the play, play style and etc., and the coach will decide in these, while having an important influence on the satisfaction and further presence of the spectators (Kelly and Turley, 2001)(Clemes et al, 2011). This is pointing out the problems managers facing when trying to develop the team, selling products, to advertise and etc.

The importance of dimensions of outcome quality (play quality) is confirmed in the studies by Madrigal (2003) and Wakefield & Blodgett (2002). The findings by Oven and Widerson (2002) also showed that quality of Rugby game is a major factor in the presence of the spectators. Therefore it can be argued that with regard to the fact that the spectators are fans of Farsh Ara team and the team has gained good outcomes and has showed good plays, in spite of dissatisfaction from the quality of environmental services (functional quality),they still feel consent by attending the stadium. However this should be noted that loyalty of fans and the spectators to the club and their commitment to watch a given game is not countless. It is necessary to supply a game like supplying other services, with acceptable features. For example, the ticket price or Television cost should be a reasonable price which the fans can afford it; the facilities and stadium should have an appropriate quality. If these considerations are not observed for several times, the ties between the fans and the club will be broken.

Focusing on the cause and effect relationship between service quality and satisfaction, the results show that service quality has priority over satisfaction. The priority of service quality over satisfaction in both the literature of services' marketing (Anderson and Fornell 1994; Cronin and Taylor, 1992; Hou et al, 2009; Park et al, 2006) and sports literature (Koo et al, 2009 ;Shonk, 2006; Tsuji, Benet and Zhang, 2007) have been emphasized.

There is no consistency with previous studies including Chang and Wang (2008), Hou et al, (2009) Hutchinson et al (2009), and Li et al (2009), in terms of the positive effect of functional quality on behavioral intention of spectators and also the positive effect of outcome quality on behavioral intention of the spectators. However, the foreign studies have also different results; Zeithaml et al (1996) showed a

direct relation between behavioral intention and the service qualitys, while Cronin et al (2000) pointed out that service quality affects the behavioral intention through satisfaction. In the literature of sports spectators by Theodorakis and Alexandris (2008) there is a weak direct relation between dimensions of service quality and behavioral intention. They showed that the dimensions of outcome quality have a direct effect on behavioral intention of the spectators which is consistent with the positive results from the outcome quality on behavioral intention of the spectators. Brady, Robinson and Cronin, 2001; Top and Clause 2000, have argued that the cultural differences affect the assessment of the spectator about the services.

Considering the relation between satisfaction and behavioral intention, as discussed by Madrigal (1995), satisfaction is a great predictor of the possibility of presence of the spectators in future events, the results of studies by Laurie and Arnett (2000) showed that in order to increase the willingness of the spectators to recommended the athletic event to others, they must be, first, satisfied. The positive relation between satisfaction and behavioral intention is confirmed by many authors including (Karoo and Garcia, 2007; Hightower et al, 2002; Koplanid and Gibson, 2010; Shonk, 2006; Shonk and Chelladurai, 2008; Yoshida and James, 2010) which is consistent with the results of the present study. So it can be concluded that when the spectators are satisfied with services, they are more likely to recommend this event and future games of the team to others and attend for games of the team in the future.

Finally with regard to the results of this study, Kohen (2005) concluded in his study that the amount of income has a direct relation with active participation (watching the game in stadium) or inactive participation (following the games on television, newspapers and on the Internet) of the spectators in sports events and games. In this study the youth and those with a low level of income have more motivation to attend the stadiums and as was seen, the percent of their participation is higher than other spectators. Therefore, the conducting management and other authorities should take serious care of providing appropriate services. They should also pay attention to a fair pricing of the tickets. It is also proposed that with regard to the fact that outcome quality has the most influence on satisfaction of the spectators and these are less in control of the manager, thus, marketing managers should participant in different ways to make strategic decisions, the managers should understand the football issues and its management very well and understand outcome quality, quality of players, and team performance. These factors affect the satisfaction and loyalty of the spectators and this is the ultimate goal of each club to reach the economical stability.

The prevalent issue with almost all small and large clubs in Iran is the fact that the club managers have no understanding of football, and therefore the marketing managers of the clubs should be involved in strategic decision making. In addition, communication techniques can increase the understanding of the spectators about technical aspects of the service qualitys. Team records, quality of players, coach personality, and team's name are the issues which must be considered. Exciting and interesting plays affects the perception of the spectators. Also the justice in treatment of the teams by league authorities, and equivalent treatment of the teams by referees can play an important role in developing the aspects of outcome quality.

In the present study the spectators were satisfied with the outcome quality, but they were not satisfied with the functional quality. However, according to Thriado et al (1999), relative satisfaction of the consumers does not mean that the sports organizations are completely successful. Researchers in their studies have found that if the customers' needs are met completely, not relatively, their loyalty to consume the sports goods will be increased. By changing the key elements of service provision, the sports managers can affect the future behavior of the spectators (behaviors like faithfulness, politeness, willingness to buy again, willingness to attend again). Therefore the managers of these stadiums should increase the level of satisfaction of the spectators, in terms of quality of the services. The physical environment of the stadium has an important role in satisfaction of the spectators .

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