

# **Customer repeats attendance practices in sports clubs: customer loyalty monitoring**

## **Purpose**

The current research aims to investigate the ways customers return to sports clubs by monitoring customer loyalty.

## **Design/methodology/approach**

The population and statistical sample consisted of 384 customers of sports complexes in Sanandaj, who were randomly selected in a cluster. The measurement tools included questionnaires of functional service quality, technical quality, relationship quality, and customer and future attendance intention.

The research method was descriptive correlation and in terms of collecting field information, which after verifying the validity of form and content, its reliability was confirmed using Cronbach's alpha test. A structural equation model was used for data analysis.

## **Findings**

It can be said that one of the successful ways for any sports complex to maintain customers is to create appropriate service quality, long-term, high-quality relationships and maintain these relationships. Also, customer loyalty, as a deep commitment to repurchasing a product or service, is very valuable for organizations because loyal customers can be very profitable for the organization.

## **Originality**

Consumer behavior refers to the set of behavioral reactions that the consumer shows after using the services of the center or organization and one of these reactions is the intention to attend in the future or the intention to buy again from customers. Repurchase intention increases the likelihood of returning customers.

## **Keywords**

Customers, Future attendance intention, Loyalty, Relationship quality, Service quality

## 1. Introduction

In the last decade marketers have appropriated love as a construct that describes consumers' intense emotional attachments to love objects, whether a brand, product or service. Every business around the world depends on the customer. The product and profit always increase and decrease with the customer's demand. So, that's why it is necessary to treat them as the king of the market; organizations should continuously provide solutions to deal with changes and global competition and quickly meet the needs of customers become a customer-oriented organization ([Minbashrazgah et al., 2017](#)). In the competitive era, research on the behavioral intentions of customers is more important and the direct and indirect results of these decisions on organizations have become more serious because the number of these types of organizations is increasing. In order to attract more customers to buy their services, it is necessary to identify the factors have an effect on it ([Guo et al., 2016](#)). Identifying variables affecting customer behavior is very important for many organizations and companies. It provides the opportunity to reduce costs and consequently increase profits. And it affects many functional areas in organizations ([Drennan et al., 2015](#)). Therefore, to recognize and identify these variables and create a suitable marketing mix for a market, marketing managers must have a detailed understanding of consumer behavior. According to consumer behavior researchers, to describe how consumers make purchase decisions and how to use the purchased goods or services ([Hsu & Chen, 2018](#)). Theodorakis ([Theodorakis et al., 2013](#)) have expressed positive word-of-mouth advertising, desire, and enthusiasm to reorder and buy again as measures of consumer behavioral intentions. Consumer behavior refers to the set of behavioral reactions that the consumer shows after using the services of the center or organization ([Esmaeili et al., 2014](#)). One of these reactions is the intention to attend in the future or the intention to buy again from customers. Repurchase intention increases the likelihood of returning customers. Consumer's long-term orientation is the same as the repurchase intention. Studies in recent years confirm that repurchase intention is influential in determining future customer behavior ([Inoue et al., 2016](#)).

In the competitive era, research on the behavioral intentions of customers is more important and the direct and indirect results of these decisions on organizations have become more serious. The number of these types of organizations is increasing and in order to attract more customers to buy their services, it is necessary to identify the factors have an effect on it ([Guo et al., 2016](#)). Thus, organizations believe that they are able to achieve long-term profits only by repeating the purchase of customers, so they are always trying to take a step forward in facilitating the process of repurchasing customers ([Aghazadeh et al., 2014](#)). On the one hand, considering that consumers operate in a dynamic and continuously changing environment, and on the other hand, consumer products and services are regularly changing and evolving ([Hsu & Chen, 2018](#)). The customers of sports centers are looking for centers that meet their expected demands. Considering the increase in competition and popularity in sports centers today ([CİZRELİOĞULLARI et al., 2021](#)), Fortunately, in recent years, the number of sports centers in the country is increasing daily, and along with the increase in their number. The competition in attracting customers and providing better services is

expanding. Due to this increase in the number and the emergence of competition to attract and retain customers, developing customer retention solutions should be on the agenda of sports complex managers ([Esmaeili et al., 2014](#)).

Measuring the quality of services and identifying the weak and strong points of the organization is the first step toward improving and developing the activities of these groups ([Esmaeili et al., 2014](#)). Considering the increase in competition and popularity in sports centers today ([CİZRELİOĞULLARI et al., 2021](#)), paying attention to the needs of customers and responding to their demands in the production and service sector has become one of the most important and necessary tasks or goals of organizations (Bonfanti, Vigolo, Vannucci, & Brunetti, 2023). Service quality was a concept that was first used in the industry and indicated five dimensions of service, including the sensible dimension (conditions and physical space of the service delivery environment such as facilities, equipment, employees, and communication channels), reliability dimension (the ability to perform the service safe and reliable), responsiveness dimension (willingness to cooperate and help the customer), assurance dimension (employees' ability to instill a sense of trust and confidence in the customer) and empathy dimension (employees' ability to deal with each customer especially according to their mental and emotional state) ([Noaman et al., 2017](#)). Quality is a multidimensional concept that consists of perceptions, values, general intentions, and specific goals of each target or stakeholder group. It is expressed based on the perceived difference between people's expectations and the services received ([Cavallone et al., 2019](#)). In the last two decades, interest in service quality has also been raised in the sports industry. Today, service quality is one of the most important topics in the field of service management and sports marketing (Polyakova & Ramchandani, 2023). Customers are interested not only in receiving services of the most technical quality but also seek to receive its functional quality. The quality of technical and functional services has effects on consumer happiness ([De Keyser & Lariviere, 2014](#)). Kasiri ([Kasiri et al., 2017](#)), in a study, found the fact that functional and technical quality has a vital effect on customer satisfaction by providing high-quality services. Therefore, for different strategies, service quality should be measured in both technical and functional dimensions ([De Keyser & Lariviere, 2014](#)). Therefore, with the intensification of competition among sports service providers, knowing the expectations of customers and the levels of these expectations from sports organizations allows service marketers to determine whether the services provided have an acceptable level of quality (Cuesta-Valiño, Loranca-Valle, Núñez-Barriopedro, & Penelas-Leguía, 2023). Sweeney ([Sweeney et al., 2016](#)) investigated how service quality indicators, service expectations, and different social conditions affect customers' choice to use service locations. The results showed that reputation, friends, and experience are influential in choosing service locations. The quality and expectations of services were influential, with an effect of 0.65, and personal signs of services were influential, with an effect of 0.35.

Various factors and resources have been involved in gaining a competitive advantage in the service sector. It can be said that the most important of them is human power because the employees of the service sector interact with their customers to provide

services. In this direction, the emergence of relational marketing is also related. It is closely related to the growth of the service sector, so long-term relationships, customer interaction, and participation can be mentioned from the service results; the quality of this interaction leads to gaining a competitive advantage and creating differentiation between different organizations ([Gummerus et al., 2017](#)). The concept of relationship quality is derived from the theory of relational marketing research, whose ultimate goal is to strengthen strong relationships and convert indifferent customers into loyal customers (Siegfried, 2023). Also, the authors believe that the concept of relationship quality is a high-order structure and includes many distinct but interrelated elements. These elements are opportunism, customer orientation, conflict, trust in the product or service provider, trust, satisfaction, commitment, and perceived quality ([Mirahmad Babahidari & Tabatabai Nasab, 2015](#)). The quality of the relationship depends on the customer's perception and evaluation of the interactions with the personnel and their behavior in dealing with the customers. New studies regarding this issue have examined and recognized the factors affecting the quality of relationships with customers. They explain how each of these factors can create opportunities for managers that lead to the design and implementation of relational marketing strategies (Won, Chiu, & Byun, 2023). Therefore, (Quansah, 2024), in a study titled Factors Affecting the Effectiveness of Relationship Marketing, concluded that relationship quality predicts 52% of the variance of participation in the game. Also, in [Kim et al.'s \(2011\)](#) research, the influence of relationship quality on the behaviours of sports consumers was investigated in an empirical investigation of the relationship quality framework. The results of which showed that the quality of the relationship with the team explains 56% of the variance of the intention to attend the game, 66% of the variance of the intention to purchase licensed goods. Obtaining needs and desires can be achieved through the process of exchanging with customers ([Collignon & Sultan, 2016](#)). The effect of the communication quality on the behaviors of attending the game, customer referral, and financial assistance of the spectators was investigated. The results showed that the quality of communication has a positive effect on all three behaviors of the spectators ([Guo et al., 2016](#)). Therefore, companies should always monitor the interaction between themselves and their customers (Uhrich, Grohs, & Koenigstorfer, 2024). The development of close and stable relationships with the target customers is recommended as a strategic tool to limit competition in the markets and maintain long-term profitability. Depending on the belief of some experts, the quality of the relationship is an important factor in establishing a reliable relationship with the customers and ultimately improving the company's performance ([Ebrahimi & Aali, 2016](#)). The increase in competition in product marketing forces the company to create a strategy to attract and retain customers. The policy carried out by companies is personal attention to customer needs (Hu, Ye, & Gu, 2024). The great interest of sports complexes in creating quality relationships is not surprising. The survival and success of sports organizations depend on providing and strengthening the quality of these relationships with their customers ([Bahler and Nofar, 2010](#)). In the case of ignoring the demands and needs of the customers, the managers of the sports complexes, their repeat purchases, and future attendance will be lost ([Esmaili et al.,](#)

2014). Also, sports marketers and researchers generally believe that relationship marketing efforts can strengthen relationships and the quality of these relationships with sports consumers. Today, marketing acknowledges the existence of multiple relationships and a network of relationships between different stakeholders (Gummerus et al., 2017). At present, communication with customers is not enough to obtain loyal customers, but the quality of this communication is also very important. The quality of the relationship depends on the customer's perception and evaluation of the interactions with the personnel and their behavior in dealing with the customers (Moradi, 2015). Researchers have examined various variables such as trust, commitment, and relationship satisfaction to investigate relationship quality (Ault, Blanton, & Pierce, 2024). If customers, while having trust and commitment to a company, are also satisfied with it, they show less sensitivity to the increase in the prices of that company's products or services. Their purchasing tendencies increase for future purchases, and they encourage others to buy from that company. According to the quality of the relationship is one of the main factors affecting the performance of sports complexes (Jowett, Do Nascimento-Júnior, Zhao, & Gosai, 2023). But it seems that the quality of the desired relationship alone cannot be a stimulating factor for the future presence of customers in sports complexes. Also, the increase in competition in service marketing has forced companies to create a strategy to attract and retain customers. It is like reducing the costs and existence of the collections, so the collections should prevent the cost of finding new customers and even turn these satisfied customers into loyal customers who can be the defender of the company in the future. The quality of the relationship is considered as an essential criterion in choosing an organization by the customer and how strengthening it affects customer loyalty. When customers are willing to interact with a company, the relationship between them becomes closer, and customer loyalty increases. The issue of customer loyalty is one of the most critical issues in the sports industry. Most commercial and service organizations study, evaluate and implement loyalty strategies and programs to cultivate strong relationships with their customers (Gummerus et al., 2017). Therefore, companies have found that the cost of attracting new customers is five times the cost of keeping current customers. The loss of a customer is not only the loss of a selling point but beyond that, it means the loss of the entire stream of purchases that customers make throughout their lives (Armstrong et al., 2014). For this reason, the managers of sports complexes can improve the service quality levels and relationship quality in their service centers. This leads to the future presence of customers and preventing the cost of finding new customers. And, these satisfied customers become loyal customers who can become defenders of the company in the future. Hence (Compton, 2016) came to the conclusion that sports teams and athletes can benefit through features outside the sports fields and using them as a strategy to create, develop and support fans and maintain their loyalty. It also states that the emphasis on features not related to the product and the use of various tactics in building the athlete's brand and creating a favorable image for creating and developing. Fan loyalty is of particular importance research that interpreted the relationship between customer loyalty and customer satisfaction and built loyalty

models that are appropriate to consumer behavior. Their results showed that customer satisfaction is related to loyalty, and loyalty, in turn, had an impact on the performance of service organizations. They suggested that managers can transfer loyalty and create loyalty in customers by using loyalty models. (Huang & Kim, 2023) ,in research examining the relationship between service quality and customer loyalty of private clubs, stated that there is a significant relationship between the components of service quality and customer loyalty. Today, the provision of services in developed countries constitutes an essential part of the gross domestic product. So, improving quality and increasing performance is one of the necessary goals of this sector. In today's turbulent and competitive business world, being good is not enough. In the meantime, the issue of "maintaining and strengthening customer loyalty" for companies that are concerned about maintaining and developing their competitive position in the market is a strategic challenge. It requires a lot of money to understand and recognize this concept and achieve practical solutions which they spent on strengthening it. With the intensification of competition and the approach of the quantitative and qualitative level of services exist in the chosen field of customers. It is considered vital and necessary to provide services that can be noticed by them and organized by regular customers. In turn, it will influence the word-of-mouth advertising of the organization. Customers are so clever that they know they have the right to choose, and if they have no good experience with the services provided by the organization, they use this right and go to the competitors (Malekzadah et al., 2014). Unlike other research, in this research, the two components of service quality and relationship quality have been examined separately on the intention of future attendance. And, in service quality, the technical quality of tools and equipment (ASTM and EM) has been used. On the other hand, the loyalty variable should be considered as a mediator. Therefore, the aim of the current research is to identify the effect of service quality and relationship quality on future attendance intention through the mediation of customer loyalty.

## **2. Theoretical background**

In the last two decades, interest in service quality has also been raised in the sports industry; Today, service quality is one of the most important topics in the field of service management and sports marketing (Perez-Aranda, Robles, & Urbistondo, 2023). Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) in order to discover the greatest share of participation and attitude of its components can predict the intention of club members. Customers are interested not only in receiving services of the most technical quality but also seek to receive its functional quality. The quality of technical and functional services has effects on consumer happiness (De Keyser & Lariviere, 2014). Kathiri (Kasiri et al., 2017), in a study, found the fact that functional and technical quality has a vital effect on customer satisfaction by providing high-quality services. Therefore, for different strategies, service quality should be measured in both technical and functional dimensions (De Keyser & Lariviere, 2014). Therefore, with the intensification of competition among sports service providers, knowing the expectations of customers and the levels of these expectations from sports organizations allows service marketers to determine whether the services provided

have an acceptable level of quality (Fernando, David, & Sergio, 2023). Sweeney ([Sweeney et al., 2016](#)) investigated how service quality indicators, service expectations, and different social conditions affect customers' choice to use service locations. The results showed that reputation, friends, and experience are influential in choosing service locations. The quality and expectations of services were influential, with an effect of 0.65, and personal signs of services were influential, with an effect of 0.35.

Various factors and resources have been involved in gaining a competitive advantage in the service sector, and it can be said that the most important of them is human power because the employees of the service sector interact with their customers to provide services, and in this direction, the emergence of relational marketing is also related. Customer experience management (CXM) research theory is increasingly concerned with the long-term evolution of customer experience journeys across multiple service cycles. Much of this research suggests that firms should make customer journeys as “consistent and predictable” as possible. It is closely related to the growth of the service sector, so long-term relationships, customer interaction, and participation can be mentioned from the service results; the quality of this interaction leads to gaining a competitive advantage and creating differentiation between different organizations ([Gummerus et al., 2017](#)). The concept of relationship quality is derived from the theory of relational marketing research, whose ultimate goal is to strengthen strong relationships and convert indifferent customers into loyal customers (Pashaie, Golmohammadi, & Hoseini, 2023). Also, the authors believe that the concept of relationship quality is a high-order structure and includes many distinct but interrelated elements. These elements are opportunism, customer orientation, conflict, trust in the product or service provider, trust, satisfaction, commitment, and perceived quality ([Mirahmad Babahidari & Tabatabai Nasab, 2015](#)). The quality of the relationship depends on the customer's perception and evaluation of the interactions with the personnel and their behavior in dealing with the customers. New studies regarding this issue have examined and recognized the factors affecting the quality of relationships with customers and explain how each of these factors can create opportunities for managers that lead to the design and implementation of relational marketing strategies. Therefore, (Ahmad & Akbar, 2023), in a study titled Validating a multidimensional perspective of relationship marketing on brand attachment, customer loyalty and purchase intentions: a serial mediation model, concluded that relationship quality has proved as significant serial mediators between the linkage of relationship marketing and purchase intentions. Also, in [Kim et al.'s \(2011\)](#) research, the influence of relationship quality on The behaviors of sports consumers was investigated in an empirical investigation of the relationship quality framework, the results of which showed that the quality of the relationship with the team explains 56% of the variance of the intention to attend the game, 66% of the variance of the intention to purchase licensed goods. Obtaining needs and desires can be achieved through the process of exchanging with customers ([Collignon & Sultan, 2016](#)). In another study by (Noori Khanyourdi, Tabesh, & Hoseiny, 2023), the effect of the communication quality on the behaviors of attending the game, customer referral, and financial

assistance of the spectators was investigated, and the results showed that the quality of communication has a positive effect on all three behaviors of the spectators ([Guo et al., 2016](#)). Therefore, companies should always monitor the interaction between themselves and their customers (Gao, Wang, & Hafsi, 2023). The development of close and stable relationships background with the target customers is recommended as a strategic tool to limit competition in the markets and maintain long-term profitability. Depending on the belief of some experts, the quality of the relationship is an important factor in establishing a reliable relationship with the customers and ultimately improving the company's performance ([Ebrahimi & Aali, 2016](#)). Sports retail industry and management need to ensure that a substantial customer value is built through high-quality services rendered towards the clientele base, employing sports leadership theories such as path-goal, authentic leadership, transformation, situational and leader member exchange theories. The increase in competition in product marketing forces the company to create a strategy to attract and retain customers. The policy carried out by companies is personal attention to customer needs. The great interest of sports complexes in creating quality relationships is not surprising because the survival and success of sports organizations depend on providing and strengthening the quality of these relationships with their customers ([Bahler and Nofar, 2010](#)). In the case of ignoring the demands and needs of the customers, the managers of the sports complexes, their repeat purchases, and future attendance will be lost ([Esmaeili et al., 2014](#)). Also, sports marketers and researchers generally believe that relationship marketing efforts can strengthen relationships and the quality of these relationships with sports consumers. Today, marketing acknowledges the existence of multiple relationships and a network of relationships between different stakeholders ([Gummerus et al., 2017](#)).

### **3. Methodology**

The current research method is descriptive correlational type in which the customers of Sanandaj sports complex were selected as a sample. The sample size compared to the size of the population based on the Morgan table, 368 customers randomly clustered in such a way that the area of Sanandaj city was divided into five regions: east, west, center, south and north, and sports complexes of Ahmadpanah in the east, Takhti in the west, Kurdistan University in the center, Ostad Pajouhesh in the south and Shahid Chamran in the north were randomly selected. To measure the quality of functional services form of a 22-question questionnaire ([Berry, 1983](#)) to measure the quality of technical services of sports equipment and a 6-question and consolidated questionnaire of ASTM and EN (standard of the American Testing and Materials Association and European Union standard in the equipment sector) and ([Kang & James, 2004](#)), to measure the quality of the relationship from an 8-question questionnaire, and to measure loyalty from a 4-question questionnaire ([Berry, 1983](#)), to measure future attendance intention from a 4-question questionnaire by ([Shang 2006](#)) after translating it into Farsi and applying the necessary changes and corrections, the opinions of experts were used for the formal and content validity of the questionnaire. The researcher was present at the sports complexes; after obtaining



verbal consent and stating that it is not mandatory to cooperate and complete the questionnaire, the participants completed the relevant questionnaire. Finally, 410 questionnaires were distributed, and the researcher managed to collect 370 questionnaires that could be analyzed. Including 370 valid questionnaires, the response rate was 90%. Since the response rate was more than 85%, the number of distorted questionnaires (%10) is not a threat to the present research (Jordan et al., 2011). According to the obtained factor loadings, questions 6-10-14-15-16, which all belonged to the functional service quality variable, were removed from the total data. According to the results of Cronbach's alpha test, the value of all indicators was more than 0.7. It can be acknowledged that the questions for indicators have good reliability, and the measurement tool has good internal consistency (Table 1). In order to organize, classify and summarize the raw data, descriptive statistics used, and in the inferential statistics section, the structural equation model test used to check the fit of the research model. Data analysis done using SPSS and PLS statistical software. In Table 2, the validity and reliability of the constructs of the research tool have presented.

**Table 1.** Components, items of each component, sources used in the questionnaire, and the degree of internal consistency

Index	Component	Sub-component	Number of questions	Source	Cronbach's alpha
Service quality	Functional quality	Tangible	4	Barry et al (1998)	0.84
		Confidence	5		0.84
		Answering	4		0.81
		Guarantee	4		0.74
		Empathy	5		0.84
	Technical quality	6	Kang and James (2001), ASTM and EN	0.83	
Relationship quality	Satisfaction	4	Langster and Legas (2007) and Huang (2001)	0.87	
	Trust	4		0.84	
Loyalty	4		Barry (1996)	0.87	
future attendance intention	4		Shang(2006)	0.87	

**Table 2.** Checking the validity and reliability of research structures

Variables	AVE	CR	A
Service quality	0.47	0.95	0.94
Relationship quality	0.60	0.92	0.90
Intention to attend	0.73	0.91	0.87
Loyalty	0.73	0.91	0.87

As shown in Table 2, all variables have high reliability in the model. Combined reliability and Cronbach's alpha above 0.7 indicate the reliability of each research construct is acceptable. Also, the criterion value for the acceptance level of validity of

convergence (average variance extracted) is 0.4. As shown in Table 1, the AVE values of each construct are more than 0.4, and this confirms that the convergent validity of the present questionnaire is acceptable.

#### 4. Results

The demographic characteristics of the research samples are in Table 2:

**Table 2.** Demographic characteristics of research samples

	variable				Frequency				percentage			
	Gender	male		female		196		174		0,53		0,47
Education	diploma and sub-diploma	Associate degree	Bachelor degree	master's degree and above	218	27	76	49	58,9	7,3	20,5	13,2
Age	Under 20	20-25	26-30	31 years and above	192	74	46	58	51,9	0,20	12,4	15,7
Marital status	single		Married		295		75					
level of sport activity	non-professional		Professional		201		169					
Activity	Physical education		non-Physical education		113		257					
History	under 1 year	1-3	4-7	8 years and above	106	126	84	54				

The information related to the individual characteristics of the research samples is in Table No. 2. According to this table, the highest frequency (0.53) based on the gender variable is related to male customers, the highest frequency (58.9) based on the educational level is related to diploma and sub-diploma customers, and the highest frequency (51.9) in the age variable is regarding the age category under 20 years, the highest frequency (79.7) based on the marital status of single customers, the highest frequency (54.3) based on the variable of the level of exercise related to non-professional customers, the highest frequency (69.5) based on the field of study variable related to non-physical education customers and also on the variable of

activity history in sports complexes, the highest frequency (1.34) is attributed to 1 to 3 years of experience.

Demographic characteristics of research samples

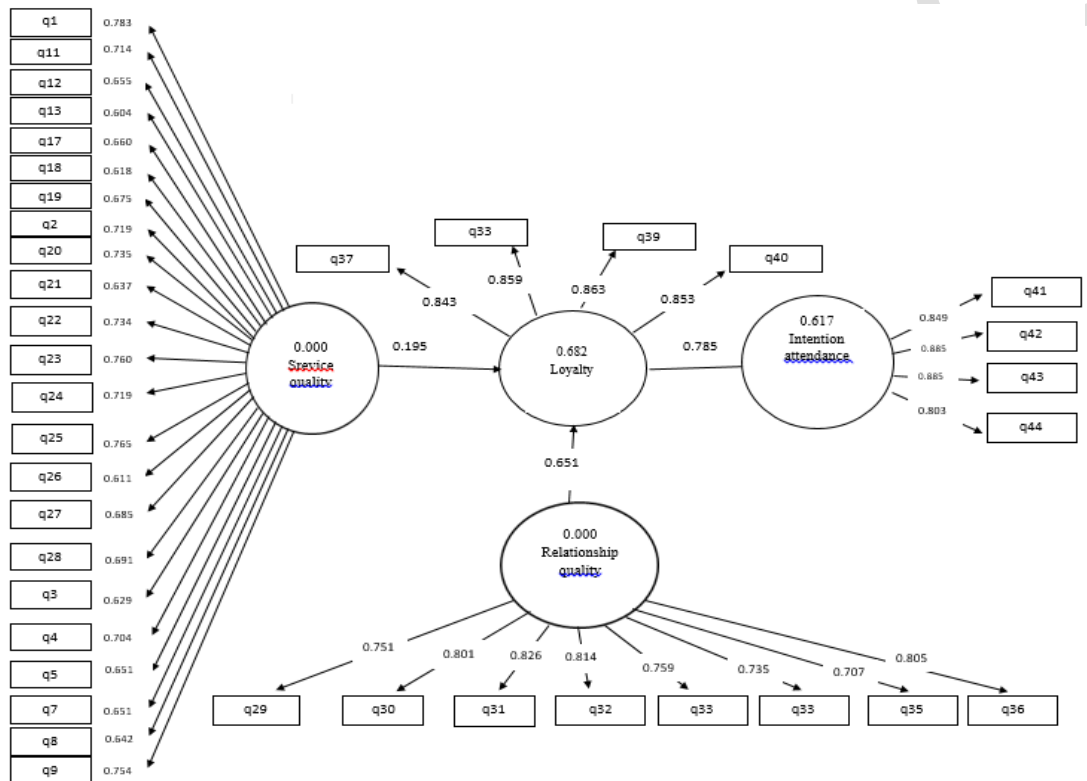


figure 1. PLS software output in standard mode

According to the algorithm, several criteria are issued to check the fit of the structural model of the research, the first and most basic criterion is the significance coefficients Z or t-values (significance mode). According to the table in Figure 8-4, all the paths are not less than 1.96, so it can be outlined that all the ways are positive and meaningful research models. According to Figure 7-4, the value of R2 for the structure of loyalty and intention to attend has been accounted as 0.68 and 0.61, respectively, which confirms the appropriateness of the fit of the structural model according to the three criterion values of 0.19, 33, and 0.67. Another criterion that needs to be examined is the prediction power of the Q2 model. Since the value of Q2 of the endogenous structure of loyalty and intention to attend is 0.44 and 0.49 respectively, according to

the three criterion values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35, it shows the strong predictive power of the model regarding this structure and the proper fit of the structural model of the research once again. Another criterion that needs investigating is the effect size criterion ( $f^2$ ). This criterion determines the intensity of the relationship between the model structures. According to the obtained results, the  $f^2$  value calculated for the path of service quality to loyalty is 0.03 and the manner of relationship quality to loyalty is 0.37, which shows a small effect size and a large effect size. The goodness of fit index or GOF has been calculated as 0.62, which indicates the whole quality of the model. The wellness of fitness value was gained from the following relationship:

$$GOF = \sqrt{\text{Communality} \times \overline{R^2}} = 0/62$$

Finally, the last criterion that needs to be investigating is the prediction power of the Q2 model. Since the Q2 value of the endogenous construct of loyalty is 0.49 and the construct of intention to attend is 0.43, it shows the strong predictive power of the model regarding these instruments and notes the appropriate fit of the structural model of the research once again. In the following, the significant effects of indirect relationships have been done using the Sobel test.

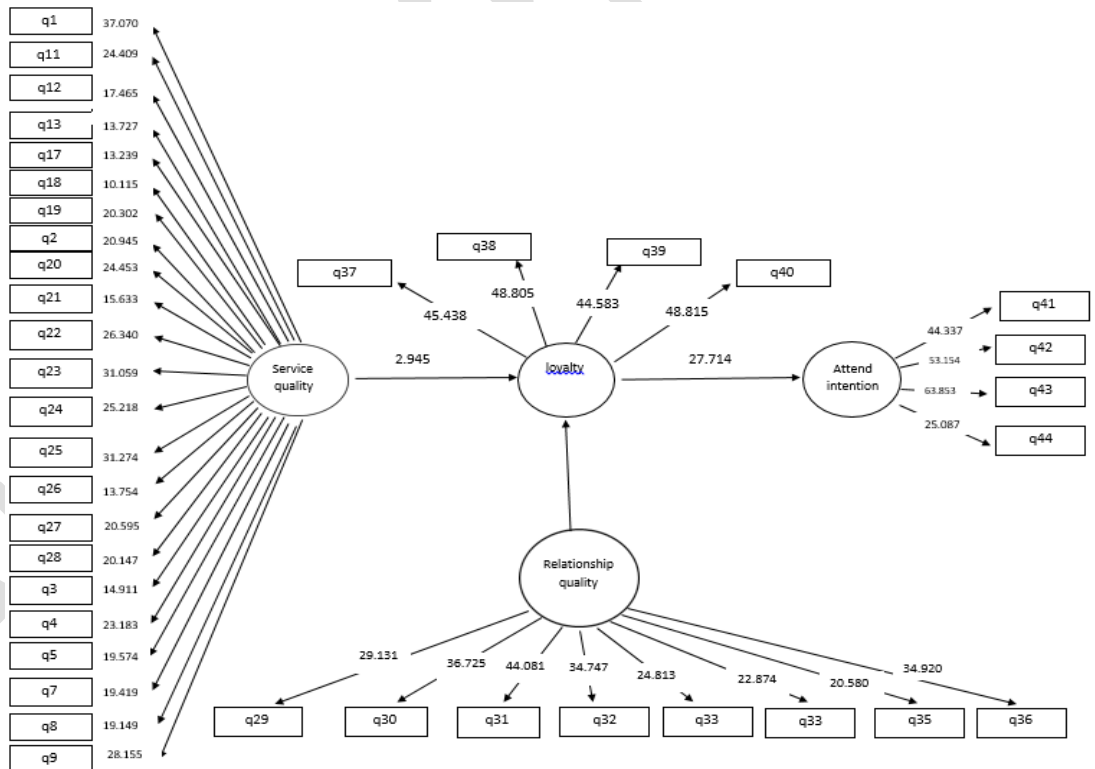


Figure 2. PLS software output in meaningful mode

**Table 3.** Results of indirect and significant effects using Sobel test

The main hypothesis	the direct effect	the indirect effect	the Sobel test	the result
The path of service quality to the intention of attendance	_____	0.15	2.63	confirmation
The path of relationship quality to the intention to attend	_____	0.50	8.49	confirmation
			significant effect	
The path of relationship quality to loyalty	0.65	_____	9.99	confirmation
The path of service quality to loyalty	0.196	_____	2.94	confirmation
The path of loyalty to the intention to attend	0.78	_____	27.71	confirmation

According to the results of Table 3, the Sobel test indicates that the loyalty variable indirectly mediates the relationship between the quality of service and the quality of the relationship in the intention of customers, considering that it is in the range of more than 1.96.

## 5. Managerial implications

The loyalty variable indirectly mediates the relationship between the quality of service and the quality of the relationship in the intention of customers.

## 6. Conclusion

Today, organizations believe that they can make long-term profits only by repeating the purchase of customers, so they are always trying to take a step forward in facilitating the process of re-purchasing customers; therefore, the existence of various stresses in life has caused people to look for mental peace and release their energy for moments by attending sports complexes. But the basic way for customers to reappear in these collections is to make them loyal through efforts to build, develop and maintain long-term relationships (Mandić, Gregurec, & Škorić, 2023). Professional marketers need to understand how to change the variables affecting loyalty to lead to the future intention of customers (Zou, Zhang, Zheng, & Huang, 2023). In this research, the influencing variables on loyalty included service quality and relationship quality. For this reason, sports complexes can improve the levels of service quality and relationship quality in their service centers, lead to the future presence of customers and prevent the cost of finding new customers, and even turn these satisfied customers into loyal customers who can be defenders of the company in the future.

According to (Mereu, 2023), the dimensions of service quality include the ability to trust the service, the feeling of responsibility for providing the service, the competence to provide the service, the possibility of accessing the service at different hours, the politeness and humility of the employees, the relationship with the customer, the reputation of the center, security, the understanding of the customer and the tangible aspects of service delivery. Therefore, customer satisfaction and managing a good relationship with the customer is the basic goal of sports club management. The quality of service is directly related to the rate of customer retention and generating more profit for the center. In addition, providing the best service to the customer requires a system that has the pulse of the customer and makes accurate predictions about the customers. (Kayaman & Arasli, 2007) have investigated the effect of five dimensions of service quality on loyalty. He states that two dimensions of tangibility and responsiveness directly affect loyalty. (Alzaydi, 2024) has confirmed the existence of a positive relationship and a significant effect of service quality on customer loyalty. They state that service quality is one of the most important criteria for customer judgment and high service quality makes them return. (Shiravand, Akbari Yazdi, & Peymanfar, 2023) in their research entitled "The Effect of Investment in Relational Marketing on Customer Satisfaction of Tehran Sports Complexes (Mediating the Role of Brand Trust and Customer Appreciation)" concluded that the brand plays an essential role in creating consumer-brand loyalty and this mentality can lead to the satisfaction and loyalty of the users of the sports complex through trust in the brand. According to the results of the current research model, service quality has a positive and significant effect on loyalty. Therefore, the complexes can create loyalty in their customers with the quality of service, and this leads to the profit of the sports complexes. The results of this research are consistent with the research of (Dreher & Ströbel, 2023), (Kayaman & Arasli (2007), Sun & Ghiselli (2010) regarding the effect of service quality on customer loyalty. Investigating the effect of functional and technical service quality separately on loyalty and quality Customer relationship is suggested.

A high level of customer loyalty increases the probability of their future presence on later. Customer's praise of services from family, friends, and acquaintances attracts more customers, and sports complexes, in addition to satisfying past customers, also do marketing for new customers. Customer satisfaction levels directly affect customer loyalty, and finally, high levels of customer loyalty directly affect the customer's future behavior intention. In this research, the results show the positive and significant effect of loyalty on the future intendance of customers, and based on this, sports complexes avoid the cost of attracting new customers by making their customers loyal and also cause their loyal customers to return to the complex. The results of this finding are consistent with the research of (Ramos, Biscaia, Moro, & Kunkel, 2023), (Pashaie et al., 2023), (Sousa, Gonçalves, Biscaia, & Carvalho, 2024), and Lee (2010). Investigating the relationship of loyalty in attitudinal and combined dimensions separately, as well as the effect of word-of-mouth advertising on customers' intention to attend, is suggested in future research. The quality of the relationship is considered an important criterion in choosing an organization by the customer, and how to

strengthen it affects customer loyalty. On the other hand, it should be noted that the quality of the relationship plays an important role in customer loyalty: when the relationship with customers is of high quality, customers trust the seller and feel satisfied with the relationship with the seller. The relationship between trust as a part of customer relationship quality and loyalty has been considered in several research, getting trust is the main factor that leads to loyalty. When the customer trusts the service provider, he uses the service continuously and recommends it to others. Trust reduces the fear of risk in the customer during the exchange and is considered the most essential variable in the quality of the relationship. Loyalty is a function of customer satisfaction, which is the result of a person's cognitive comparison of consumption experience and expectations. There is a positive and important relationship between customers loyalty and their satisfaction, so satisfaction is considered a prerequisite for loyalty. If the service provider can meet the needs of its customers better than its competitors and satisfy them, it will be easier to create loyalty. In this research, the results showed that relationship quality had a significant effect on the loyalty of the customers of the sports complexes so that for one unit of change in the quality of the relationship, the loyalty of the customers of the sports complexes can be increased. The results of this finding are aligned with the research of (Huang & Kim, 2023), (Hu et al., 2024), (Yaprak, 2023), (Fernando et al., 2023) and not aligned with the findings of (Polyakova & Ramchandani, 2023), (Biscaia, Yoshida, & Kim, 2023) and (Glaveli, Papadimitriou, Karagiorgos, & Alexandris, 2023) in the degree of influence of relationship quality on loyalty.

Therefore, it is recommended to improve and strengthen the activities that are important and valuable to the sports complex by taking advantage of the knowledge of the effective factors in the loyalty and repeat presence of customers in sports complexes, while creating a long-term relationship with customers, to attract more customers to the sports complex. Of course, the variables and factors examined in this research do not cover all the factors affecting the loyalty of the customers' intention to attend sports groups again. Thus, in addition to these variables, other factors such as marketing mix (price, place, promotion, product), market orientation, knowledge management, and customer relationship management based on technology can also be investigated in future research.

### **Disclosure statement**

The authors declare no potential conflicts of interest and this research do not cover all the factors affecting the loyalty of the customers' intention to attend sports groups again.

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## شیوه های حضور مجدد مشتریان در باشگاه های ورزشی: پایش وفاداری مشتری

### چکیده

هدف پژوهش حاضر بررسی شیوه های حضور مجدد مشتریان در باشگاه های ورزشی با پایش وفاداری مشتری است. روش پژوهش توصیفی- همبستگی و از نظر گردآوری اطلاعات میدانی بود. جامعه و نمونه آماری شامل ۳۸۴ نفر از مشتریان مجموعه های ورزشی شهر سنندج بودند که به صورت تصادفی خوشه‌ای انتخاب شدند. ابزار اندازه‌گیری شامل پرسشنامه‌های کیفیت خدمات کارکردی، کیفیت فنی، کیفیت رابطه، مشتری و قصد حضور آتی بود که پس از تأیید روایی صوری و محتوایی پایایی آن با استفاده از آزمون آلفای کرونباخ مورد تأیید قرار گرفت. برای تحلیل داده ها از مدل معادلات ساختاری استفاده شد. یافته‌ها نشان دادند کیفیت خدمات بر وفاداری مشتری ۱۹٪، کیفیت رابطه بر وفاداری مشتری ۶۵٪، وفاداری بر قصد حضور آتی ۷۸٪ به طور مستقیم اثرگذار و کیفیت خدمات بر قصد حضور آتی ۱۵٪، کیفیت رابطه بر قصد حضور آتی ۵۰٪، به طور غیر مستقیم اثر دارد. می‌توان گفت یکی از راه کارهای موفق هر مجموعه ورزشی جهت حفظ مشتریان ایجاد کیفیت خدمات مناسب، روابط بلندمدت، باکیفیت بالا و حفظ این روابط است. همچنین وفاداری مشتری به‌عنوان یک تعهد عمیق برای خرید مجدد یک محصول یا خدمت برای سازمان‌ها بسیار با ارزش است زیرا مشتریان وفادار، سودآوری زیادی می‌توانند برای سازمان داشته باشند.

**کلمات کلیدی:** کیفیت خدمات، کیفیت رابطه، قصد حضور آتی، مشتریان، وفاداری