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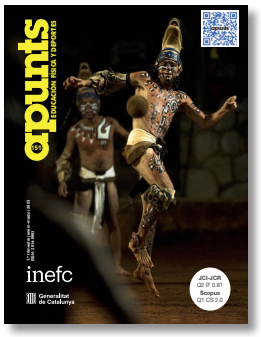

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Event Quality: The Intention to Take Part in a Popular Race Again

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A Mexican man in pre-Hispanic Aztec costume eludes the ball during a traditional "Juego de Pelota" (in Spanish), called by the Maya "pok-ta-pok" and by the Aztecs "tlachtli". Xcaret eco-park, Mexico
June 5, 2009
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Abstract

This paper aims to look at the relationship between functional and central quality, value and satisfaction with the intention to participate again in a popular race, observing potential differences according to gender. A total of 866 participants in a popular 21 km race in the city of Granada were randomly selected and self-administered a questionnaire. A confirmatory factor analysis of the model and a multi-group analysis were carried out. The results of the present study indicated that central quality is a precursor of value and satisfaction, with no differences according to gender, as is functional quality. Value is a predecessor of satisfaction, with no differences in gender being presented. In contrast to functional quality —an indicator of intention to take part again, irrespective of gender— no direct relationship between central quality and intention to re-participate was found. Value is not directly related to intention to take part again, but indirectly through satisfaction, as satisfaction is a direct predictor of re-participation, with no difference according to gender. The foci of this study should be known by the organisers of sporting events in order to apply these socio-demographic variables when organising any event or deciding which event would be the most recommendable for their city.

Keywords: future intentions, gender, running, satisfaction, sporting event, value.

Introduction

The number and importance of sporting events, as well as their impact and effects on society, have grown significantly. Sport has become established as a resource for the development of society; as a result, small communities and even entire nations use sporting events as a tool to achieve various objectives, for example for economic, tourism and cultural growth (Fernández-Martínez et al., 2021). It is worth adding the increase in interest in physical activity and participation in recreational competitions, which has led to the proliferation of a greater number of sporting events, mainly races (Angosto-Sánchez et al., 2016), becoming tourist attractions that increase the number of participants year after year.

The literature underlines that even small or medium-scale sporting events, such as the Granada Marathon, can represent a potential form of sustainable tourism development and help communities' economic development by promoting and diversifying the tourism attraction (Bazzanella, 2019). The majority of studies are based on large events and spectators' ratings, so more research is needed on the role of medium and small sporting events that focus on participants' experiences, as studies on future intentions based on runners' feedback are few and far between (Fernández-Martínez et al., 2021). Furthermore, few studies focus on gender differentiation, perceptions of quality, value and satisfaction in sport services (Nuviala et al., 2021), and less so when the constructs "central quality" and "future intentions" are included. The few existing studies are limited to the realm of fitness (García-Fernández et al., 2016; León et al., 2020), or sports centres (Berber & Mollaoğulları, 2020; Castillo et al., 2019), but in no case is the variable "future intentions" included.

Literature Review

Relationship Between Central Quality, Functional Quality and Perceived Value.

Quality is the customer's evaluation of the service received (Theodorakis et al., 2013). Quality has two measurements. The first measurement, central quality, refers to what the customer gets after receiving the service. These benefits and outcomes should be as close as possible to the motivations for engaging in specific behaviours (Foroughi et al., 2019). Yoshida (2017) clarified this concept, distinguishing between central quality for spectators and participants. It should be highlighted that three attributes related to this measurement are included in sport performance: team characteristics, player performance and evaluation of results. In the case of the participants, these attributes are manifested in physical condition, in the sport programmes themselves and physical changes, i.e. the perception of their sport performance (Theodorakis et al., 2013). The second measurement, functional quality, is understood as the users' evaluation of the physical elements and interactions with human resources (Theodorakis et al., 2013). It is important to highlight that the consumer perceives the service as something that combines both of the measurements, and a perception of quality is obtained by comparing these perceptions with the expectations of the service (Watanabe et al., 2018).

Perceived value is closely related to the quality or benefits they get from the service in return for the price they pay. It is defined as the consumer's evaluation of the usefulness of the product based on the perception of what is received and what is given (Crespo-Hervás et al., 2019). It has been demonstrated that value is a highly subjective, multi-dimensional and dynamic concept that comprises both cognitive and affective elements; can vary between individuals and situations; and is dependent on the moment of valuation by the customer, which determines that quality is an indicator of perceived value among runners (Cabello-Manrique et al., 2021; Crespo-Hervás et al., 2019).

Therefore, the following hypotheses were developed for both male and female runners:

H_1: The central quality by participants of popular races is an indicator of perceived value.

H_2: The functional quality by participants of popular races is an indicator of the value.

Central Quality, Functional Quality and Value as an Indicator of Satisfaction.

Satisfaction (Foroughi et al., 2019) is an emotional reaction to an act of consumption or a subjective evaluation made as a post-choice cognitive judgement based on prior perceptions or surmises of quality. Research on sport services has identified a relationship between quality, value and satisfaction (Cabello-Manrique et al., 2021; Crespo-Hervás et al., 2019), with this being a post-consumer response that is susceptible to change, depending on the circumstances and the individual (Foroughi et al., 2019), which has become a key focus when organising a sporting event. The analysis of satisfaction is highly interesting for the proper management of sporting events, allowing the establishment of management and marketing strategies for the attraction and retention of different categories of attendees (Cabello-Manrique et al., 2021).

Numerous studies support the idea of value as a positive and direct indicator of satisfaction among participants of recreational races (Haro-González et al., 2018; Theodorakis et al., 2014), as value has a strong effect on satisfaction and should be taken into account by those in charge to improve participants' level of satisfaction.

Moreover, there is a strong correlation between quality and satisfaction with sport services, supporting the idea that customer satisfaction results from customer quality (Foroughi et al., 2019; Theodorakis et al., 2014). In short, quality is an indicator of both perceived value and satisfaction (Fernández-Martínez et al., 2020a).

Based on this, the following hypotheses were made for both male and female runners:

H_3: The perceived central quality by participants of popular races is an indicator of satisfaction.

H_4: Functional quality is an indicator of satisfaction.

H_5: Perceived value is an indicator of satisfaction.

Precursors to the Intention to Take Part Again: Quality, Value and Satisfaction.

Participation is a personal variable that expresses the amount of attention, arousal and motivation activated by a situation, affecting consumers' behaviours in the buyer decision process (Eskiler & Altunışık, 2021). Similarly, loyalty can be understood as customer's favourable attitudes towards a sport service, which drives them to both recommendation and repurchase, with a joint and positive relationship between quality, perceived value and satisfaction with users' continuity in these sporting events (Nuviala et al., 2021).

One of the most widely used variables to assess loyalty is satisfaction. When customers are satisfied, they are likely to have a positive perception of the organisation and demonstrate loyalty (Theodorakis et al., 2014). Several studies report a strong relationship between these variables (Cabello-Manrique et al., 2021; Eskiler & Altunışık, 2021). Service quality influences loyalty directly and indirectly through satisfaction (Crespo-Hervás et al., 2019; Theodorakis et al., 2013). Other studies report that perceived value influences loyalty both directly and indirectly through satisfaction (Eskiler & Altunışık, 2021). Value is directly related to satisfaction and indirectly related to loyalty; it is a predictive determinant for future intentions and behaviours, and the positive and combined influence that these three constructs have on customer behaviour and service loyalty has been proven (Watanabe et al., 2018). Several studies have also supported the idea that future intentions have been determined through service quality, perceived value and satisfaction, where value is the variable that has the greatest weight in predicting spectators' future intentions (Calabuig-Moreno et al., 2016).

Therefore, the following hypotheses were suggested for both male and female runners:

H_6: The perceived central quality of participants in popular races is a precursor of the intention to take part again.

H_7: Functional quality is an indicator of the intention to take part in the event again.

H_8: Value is a precursor of the intention to take part again.

H_9: Satisfaction is an indicator of the intention to take part again.

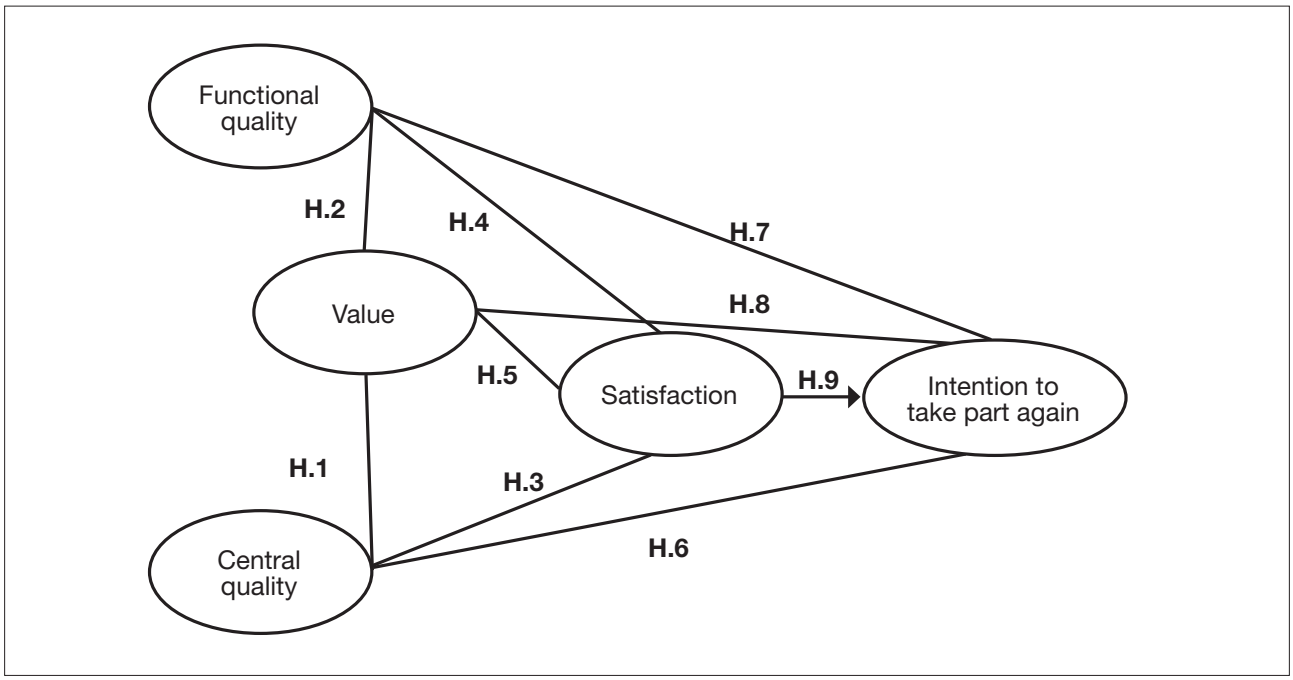

Figure 1
Proposed model for analysis.

Methodology

Participants and Sample

A total of 866 participants of a popular 21 km race took part in this study, 84.4% of which were male. The average age was 41.63 ± 9.27 years. The majority said they had a higher education (66.3 %), and 89.9 % of participants said they were employed. 77.2% lived with a partner. More than half, 54.6%, had previously participated in this race, while 77.8% considered themselves to be frequent runners of races of this type. Only 8.1% held a federation licence.

Measures

A multi-item scale was used for this study (Table 1). Firstly, to measure the functional quality of the race, 14 items were used from the questionnaire proposed by Angosto-Sánchez et al. (2016). To measure the quality of the result perceived by the runner after the race, three items were proposed. Perceived value was measured through a single item used, and satisfaction was measured with three items, all from the EPOD2 tool (Nuviala et al., 2013). Three items were used to measure intention to take part in the race again.

Respondents were instructed to rate their level of agreement with each item, using a seven-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). Several socio-demographic questions were added to the scales, such as age, gender education, frequency of weekly exercise and experience of this type of race.

Procedure

The study received consent from Pablo de Olavide University's Ethics Committee. Those responsible for the organisations participating in the study were informed of the aims and objectives of the research. The research was carried out after obtaining the organisation's approval. The study's design is considered throughout the Spanish legal framework (Organic Law 3/2018). Informed consent was obtained from the participants prior to carrying out the study. It was then carried out by means of a self-administered questionnaire, in the presence of a member of the research team. The time taken to complete the questionnaire was approximately 10 minutes.

Table 1
Descriptive statistics of the tool

Construct	Items	Average	Std. Dev	Factorial Weight
Functional quality	The personnel of the organisation is ready to help/advise.	5.19	1.14	.731
	The volunteers are friendly.	5.52	0.91	.648
	The race is well promoted and publicised, providing sufficient practical information about the race.	4.75	1.30	.695
	During the event, clear and precise information about the layout of the competition is given.	4.94	1.24	.753
	It was easy to register.	5.20	1.18	.544
	The results and the podium are visible to all spectators.	4.53	1.41	.588
	The race course has sufficient and appropriate refreshment points.	5.30	1.18	.583
	The runner's goodie bag is adequate and complete.	4.38	1.46	.537
	The race has sufficient facilities (toilets, changing rooms, cloakroom, massage areas, stands, etc.).	4.21	1.54	.643
	Near the race start/finish line there are places with easy commercial accessibility (cafés, bars...).	5.27	0.96	.610
	The signposting of the event makes it easy to reach the start line.	4.98	1.24	.693
	Sufficient parking is available near the race start/finish line.	3.79	1.63	.573
	The material elements used by the event are visually attractive (banners, fences, start, finish line, route...).	4.97	1.09	.772
	The race route is well signposted and safe.	5.19	1.10	.649

Table 1 (Continued)
Descriptive statistics of the tool

Construct	Items	Average	Std. Dev	Factorial Weight
Central quality	You have shown a high level of preparedness to carry out the race.	4.37	1.14	.793
	You achieved a good result in the race based on preparation.	4.69	1.20	.857
	You enjoyed running the race.	5.44	0.98	.768
Satisfaction	I made a good decision choosing this race.	5.48	0.93	.972
	It was a good decision to run the half marathon in Granada.	5.53	0.89	.982
	I am glad I signed up for this event.	5.51	0.91	.972
Intention to take part again	I intend to continue attending more events held in Granada.	5.39	1.049	.825
	I would recommend the Granada half marathon to my friends and relatives.	5.57	0.933	.919
	If I had the opportunity to attend the half marathon in Granada I would do it again.	5.54	1.021	.926
Value	Overall, I think that attending the half marathon is worth the price.	5.36	0.96	----

Statistical Analysis

Several exploratory tests such as averages, standard deviations, factorial loads and t-tests were performed. The correlations between constructs were subsequently calculated, as well as Cronbach's alpha, average variance extracted (AVE) and composite reliability (CF). Common method bias was calculated using Harman's Single Factor Test. All this was done with the software SPSS.22. Acceptable values for Cronbach's alpha are around .70, and values between .80 and .90 are considered correct. In the case of FC, the results should be above .6, and for AVE they should be above .5 (Hair et al., 2006). Podsakoff et al. (2003) highlight that a percentage of total variance of less than 50% indicates that common method bias does not significantly affect the results of the study.

A confirmatory factor analysis of the model and a multi-group analysis were carried out using the AMOS.22 programme. The model fit was tested for each group separately (total population, model 0; male runners, model 0a; female runners, model 0b). Variation in the model between groups was then observed. The maximum likelihood method was used. The fit of each model was assessed by examining various indices. The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) index, Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Akaike information criterion (AIC) and Expected Cross-Validation Index (ECVI) were used. Additionally, the value of the Chi-square ratio (CMIN) and the value of the Chi-square divided by the degrees of freedom (CMIN/DF) were used. Values of RMSEA < .08 would indicate an acceptable fit, or values ≤ .05 would indicate a good fit. In terms of CFI ≥ .95 are considered acceptable. Lower values of the AIC index and ECVI mean a better model fit. As regards the values of the ratio between $\chi 2$ and the DFs, a model considered perfect would have a value of 1.00, and ratios below 2.00 are considered to be a very good model fit, while values below 3.00 are considered acceptable (Schermelleh-Engel et al., 2003). Measurement invariance between groups was assessed using the $\Delta\chi 2$ test and the recommendations of Chen (2007), according to which cut-off values of ΔCFI ≤ .01 and ΔRMSEA ≤.015 would signify no differences between models. Finally, standardised regression coefficients for ratios and critical ratios were calculated to estimate group differences using AMOS.

Results

As can be seen in Table 2, functional quality was rated positively, with women showing a more positive rating than men. The other constructs were also rated positively, with no differences according to gender. The construct "satisfaction" obtained the highest rating, followed by the constructs "intention to take part again" and "value" (Table 2).

The results of the exploratory factor analysis explain 38.99% of the total variance, indicating that common method bias did not significantly affect the results of the study. Internal consistency was then assessed and measured with Cronbach's alpha, obtaining correct values. The calculation of FC and AVE showed acceptable values. The discriminant validity of the data was verified by calculating the correlation matrix between the factors, and there was a significant and positive correlation between the factors that make up the study (Table 2).

Table 2
Average andstandard deviation. T-test and level of significance. Correlation between constructs, Cronbach's alpha on the diagonal, AVE and FC.

	Total	Male runners	Female runners	1	2	3	4	5	AVE	FC
1. Functional quality	4.87 ± 0.80	4.83 ± 0.79**	5.06 ± 0.80**	(.886)	.392**	.588**	.573**	.580**	.52	.90
2. Central quality	4.83 ± 0.89	4.83 ± 0.91	4.85 ± 0.83		(.731)	.498**	.437**	.425**	.65	.84
3. Satisfaction	5.50 ± 0.89	5.50 ± 0.86	5.51 ± 0.99			(.974)	.795**	.771**	.95	.98
4. Intention to take part again	5.49 ± 0.89	5.49 ± 0.87	5.50 ± 0.96				(.866)	.670**	.79	.92
5. Value	5.36 ± 0.96	5.35 ± 0.95	5.44 ± 1.03					-	-	-

Note: (**) $p < .01$.

In order to find out the relationships between the constructs, and possible differences according to gender, the validity of the model was first tested. Table 3 shows that the fit indices of the model analysed have correct indices for all runners (model 0), for both male (model 0a) and female (model 0b).

The validity of the factor structure of the model is correct, as the goodness-of-fit indices are acceptable for all participants (Table 3). Once the model has been verified to be correct, and in order to compare the model according to the partcipants' gender, it is necessary to carry out factorial invariance tests. Considering the difference in $\chi 2$ between the unrestricted model (model 1) and the rest of the models in the two groups of participants, no significant differences are observed, except with model 5. On the contrary, differences can be found when comparing models 2, 3, 4 and 5 to each other. The differences in $\chi 2$ do not allow the invariance hypothesis to be accepted, but the rest of the indices go against this conclusion. When looking at the value of CFI and RMSEA in the models, it can be seen that they all present very similar values, with a difference of less than .01 and .015, respectively, suggesting the factorial invariance of the model for the study according to the gender of all the runners (Table 3).

Table 3
Fit statistics for the models. Comparisons of conditions using measurement invariance procedures.

Goodness-of-fit indices and model comparisons for tested models							
Model	CMIN	DF	CMIN/DF	CFI	RMSEA	ECVI	AIC
0	463.269	240	1.930	.959	.050	1.594	583.269
0a	463.095	240	1.930	.954	.053	1.762	583.095
0b	299.156	240	1.246	.958	.054	4.990	419.156
1	806.332	480	1.680	.953	.038	2.250	1046.332
2	834.803	501	1.666	.952	.038	2.221	1032.803
3	844.630	507	1.666	.952	.038	2.216	1030.630
4	848.113	511	1.660	.952	.038	2.207	1026.113
5	900.382	540	1.667	.948	.038	2.194	1020.382

Comparison of conditions using measurement invariance procedures						
	Model	Dif. DF	Dif. CMIN	*p*	Dif. CFI	Dif. RMSEA
Assuming that model 1 is correct	2	21	28.471	.127	.001	.000
	3	27	38.298	.073	.001	.000
	4	31	41.781	.094	.001	.000
	5	60	94.050	.003	.004	.000
Assuming that model 2 is correct	3	6	9.827	.019	.000	.000
	4	10	13.310	.000	.000	.000
	5	39	65.579	.000	.006	.000
Assuming that model 3 is correct	4	4	3.483	.001	.000	.000
	5	33	55.752	.000	.004	.000
Assuming that model 4 is correct	5	29	52.269	.005	.004	.000

Note: Model 0, total runners; model 0a male runners; model 0b, female runners; model 1, indicates that no parameters are restricted to being equal in all groups; model 2, factorial loads restricted to being equal; model 3, observed strctural weights and factorial loads restricted to being equal; model 4, observed structural covariances, structural weights and factorial loads restricted to being equal; model 5, observed structural residues, structural covariances, structural weights and factorial loads restrictied to being equal. Dif. CMIN, difference between the model and the other models;, Dif. DF. difference between the model and the other models; p, level of significance across models.

Table 4
Comparison of standardised parameter estimates of direct and indirect effects of the structural equation total users and modelling with respect to gender.

				Total runners		Male runners		Female runners		Male runners versus female runners
				Direct effects	Indirect effects	Direct effects	Indirect effects	Direct effects	Indirect effects	
Hypothesis				Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta	z-score
H.1.	Value	←	OQ	.375**		.418**		.173		-.518
H.2.	Value	←	FQ	.532**		.494**		.687**		.764
H.3.	Satisfaction	←	OQ	.327**		.353**		.253*		.665
H.4.	Satisfaction	←	FQ	.258**		.239**		.375**		.887
H.5.	Satisfaction	←	Value	.482**		.460**		.514**		.672
H.6.	Take part again	←	OQ	.079	.375**	.119*	.392**	-.111	.248*	-1.156
H.7.	Take part again	←	FQ	.158**	.386**	.150**	.340**	.248*	.531**	.629
H.8.	Take part again	←	Value	.042	.340**	.037	.317**	.008	.371**	-.204
H.9.	Take part again	←	Satisfaction	.706**		.690**		.722**		.295

Note: $^{**}p < .01$; $^{*}p < .05$ FQ = Functional quality; OQ = Central quality; Take part again = Intention to take part again

The results that appear in Table 4 show that functional quality and central quality are direct indicators of value and satisfaction in the total participants, as well as in the male runners' group and the female runners' group. Equally it can be seen that value is a direct indicator of satisfaction in the total sample, as well as in both groups. Having the intention to take part in the race again has, as a direct indicator, the functional quality in the total number of participants and in the two groups of runners according to gender. "Central quality" is only directly related to the group of male runners. Satisfaction is indeed a direct indicator in all groups to the intention to take part again. As far as indirect relationships are concerned, functional quality, central quality and value are indicators of intention to take part again through satisfaction in all runners' groups. As can be seen in Table 4, there are no significant differences in these relationships according to participants' gender.

Discussion

The present study aims to explore at the relationship between functional and central quality, value and satisfaction with the intention of taking part in a popular race again, looking at the possible differences according to gender. This data is of interest to researchers because it provides insight into the relationship between all the constructs analysed and allows them to observe the impact that gender has on the model. Similarly, the results are of interest to those responsible for the organisation of these events and for the tourism companies, because they allow the implementation of strategies to improve the sporting event itself, as well as the tourist activity, which could lead to an increase in satisfaction and loyalty to the event, which would translate into an increase in the benefits of any kind that the organisation of these events may entail.

The descriptive results have shown a good general assessment of the event and the intention to participate again, but recognising how the different constructs relate to each other is necessary, especially the effect that functional quality and outcome quality, precursor variables of future intentions (Crespo-Hervás et al., 2019), may have on satisfaction and the future intention to participate in the event, which would make the sporting event a tool that promotes tourism and, with it, the economic and social development of the city that hosts it.

The idea of quality proposed by Grönroos (1984) is that which has guided the proposal of the model analysed in this paper. Firstly, it has been observed that central quality is a precursor of value and satisfaction, with no differences according to gender thus confirming hypotheses 1 and 3. Similarly, funtional quality is a precursor of value and satisfaction in participants of popular races, with no differences between male and female runners, thus hypotheses 2 and 4 can be confirmed. It is worth mentioning that functional quality has a higher beta value than central quality in predicting value. This result is significant since value, understood as an evaluation of the sacrifices and rewards obtained, has a great impact on satisfaction (Crespo-Hervás et al., 2019) and is a factor that those responsible for the management of the sport tourism event can work on.

Likewise, it should also be highlighted that central quality has a higher beta value in relation to satisfaction than functional

quality. This result can be explained by understanding satisfaction as a summary of the evaluation of the experiences of the service received and, following Yoshida (2017), for participants in sporting events, it is related to the sporting performance obtained.

Hypothesis 5 could also be confirmed by showing value as a predictor of satisfaction, with no differences according to gender. Similar results have been found in other studies on sport services (Haro-González et al., 2018; Theodorakis et al., 2014).

The results support the sixth hypothesis. The results have not reflected a direct relationship between these constructs, but indirectly through satisfaction. Central quality is a precursor to value and satisfaction in participants of such events. As a result those responsible must increase the central quality among participants, either by adapting the test to different levels, or by improving the training, with advice in the different means of communication that the organisation uses, since communication is a very important tool in the evaluation and loyalty of people who use sports services (Fernández-Martínez et al., 2020b). No significant differences were found according to gender, so the strategies used can, *a priori*, have the same effect.

Functional quality, on the other hand, is an indicator of intention to take part again, regardless of gender. In the literature, there are studies that support this idea (Cabello-Manrique et al., 2021; Calabuig-Moreno et al., 2016; Theodorakis et al., 2013), although they were attendees at sporting events and not participants. Therefore, on the basis of these results, hypothesis 7, according to which functional quality is an indicator of intention to take part again, can be confirmed.

Value is not directly related to intention to take part again (hypothesis 8), but indirectly through satisfaction. The result may be due to the fact that value is a highly subjective concept, comprising both cognitive and affective elements (Cabello-Manrique et al., 2021), which may condition this relationship. In any case, the literature has highlighted the importance of this dimension in users' future intentions (Crespo-Hervás et al., 2019), so improving its assessment has an effect on future intentions in general and in particular on re-participation.

With respect to hypothesis 9, this has been confirmed by the results gathered in this study. Satisfaction, as expressed in several studies (Cabello-Manrique et al., 2021; Theodorakis et al., 2014), positively affects intention in different types of services, including tourism and sports services, acting as a mediator between different constructs (Vegara-Ferri et al., 2020). The acquisition of positive experiences, satisfaction, is closely related to the intention to continue practising and to repeat similar experiences (Diloy-Peña et al., 2021). Therefore, their increase implies an increase in the intention to take part again. The results obtained do not present differences according to gender and establish strategic lines to be followed by organisers of sport tourism events, such as improving functional quality and outcome quality as primary precursors of satisfaction, since satisfaction is conditioned by various factors (Doña-Toledo et al., 2019).

Conclusions

The results of the present study indicate that there is a direct and significant relationship between functional quality and outcome quality as indicators of perceived value and satisfaction of participants of popular races, with no differences between genders. Satisfaction has been found to be a direct predictor of the intention to take part again. These results highlight the importance of quality management for sports tourists participating in small-scale events. The main application for the organisers of this type of tourism and sporting events is the need to dedicate sufficient resources to achieve optimal levels of functional quality.

Possible future lines of research include studies that include variables related to sporting results, economic aspects or motivational aspects. Similarly, a line of work with a quasi-experimental methodology could be developed.

The most significant limitation is that a search for gender-based differences has been carried out, with the percentage of female runners being considerably lower than that of male runners. Furthermore, it should be noted that the results only refer to one race event.

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