Influence of service quality on viewer satisfaction level of the Sri Lankan Premier League tournament.

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ABSTRACT

Background of the Study

Most significantly the management of the sports merchandise has continued to progress and has been nurtured highly by the universal television exposure and supplementary media content, which shape the attraction and celebration of the sport in all corners of the world. When consider these cricket tournament oligopolies in our region, especially in our domestic cricket, in India and even in Bangladesh, many sports entrepreneurs are looking to have more tournaments in their country to make money for them. Hence, many businessmen have built tournaments of a very large scale as well as helped to improve their own program in the process. And for them the next biggest task is to attract enough top draws to fill stadium seats, land lucrative TV contracts and sponsors. Therefore tournaments compete for top-billed stars not only with other tournaments but also with such regular international showcases like ICC Cricket World Cup and Test Cricket tournaments.

The study evaluates the influence of service quality on viewer satisfaction level of the Sri Lankan Premier League tournament, which is the prime T20 cricket competition in Sri Lanka, currently on hiatus. Even though media channels, papers and other journals have bombarded the SLPL tournament and relevant authorities by mentioning the business failures, financial results and contract failures, still no one have done any formal or rather proper analysis to find out the root cause of the problems.

Research Problem

What makes the quality of service difficult & complicated is that, "sporting event" is not a single relatively uniform marketing activity and consequently one size fits all, service quality instruments lead to misleading results. Understanding the influence of perceived service quality, will be helpful in creating strategies towards increasing service quality, witch fosters viewer satisfaction and their loyalty in participating certain events.

The study use the SERQUAL model for this research and going to highlight the effects of the dimensions of service quality on the viewer loyalty of SLPL tournament. Hence the viewer satisfaction has been a subject of great interest to any sporting event with the principle objective of maximizing profits through ticket sales. Therefore adequate service quality will lead to viewer loyalty, recommendation and repeat arrivals for cricket (any sport) matches.

Customer satisfaction which is derived from a service has been studied in different areas, by measuring its relationship with other business aspects. So many researchers have provided possible means of measuring customer satisfaction (Mudie & Pirrie 2006). In relation to the idea of Mudie & Pirrie, some other authors also have examined the relationship between service quality, customer satisfaction within many businesses including sporting and other entertaining events.

However the Sri Lankan Premier League (SLPL) tournament has failed and it is identified that it doesn't have enough audience. Subsequently drop in ticket revenues, less successful compared to Indian Premier League (IPL) tournament and reluctance of sponsors to continue advertising for the tournament can be observed. Even though the relevant authorities and media always criticise towards the joint venture and franchisors it is essential to differentiate the real cause of the business problem from directly apparent and obvious symptoms.

Objectives of the Study

- To investigate the prevailing service quality level of the SLPL tournament.
- To evaluate the relationship between service quality dimensions and the viewer satisfaction.
- To evaluate the difference between viewer expectations and their perceived service quality.

Research Methodology

A descriptive research will gain an insight into viewer's perceived service quality offered by SLPL cricket tournament with respect to five dimensions of SERQUAL scale. And each dimension have divided into several sub items all together 22 items being examined as multiple dimensions of service quality in SERQUAL have been suggested (Parasuraman et. Al. 1988). The 22 pairs of statements are designed to fit into the five dimensions of service quality of the Sri Lankan Premier League tournament and each statement will be appeared twice. One measures customer (viewer) expectations of a particular Cricketing tournament. Second measures the perceived level of service provided by the SLPL tournament with respected to the previous occurrence. In the hypothesis development, the study utilizes the SERVQUAL model by tallying new items and redrafting existing items to operationalize its usual dimensions. Refined 5 dimensions and their generic, simple definitions are mentioned as follows.

Using the SERVQUAL instrument, first obtain the score for each of the 22 items oriented questions (Wolfinbarger & Gilly, 2003). All the SERQUAL elements' tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy mean values are calculated and those findings are used to define the relationship of each dimension with the service quality (Voss, 2003).

• Tangibility - Physical things and appearance of employees.

• Reliability - Ability to perform the promised service and accuracy of the service.

• Responsiveness - Willingness to help customers and providing prompt service.

• Assurance -Knowledge and courtesy of employees

• Empathy - Caring, understanding and individualized attention provide to Customers.

A self-completion questionnaire was developed from the SERQUAL instrument and distributed using a convenience sampling technique to viewers who have visited the previous SLPL tournament in determining the extent to which they think a mega cricket tournament should possess its service features and the perceptions about the service which they have experienced in the previous SLPL occurrence.
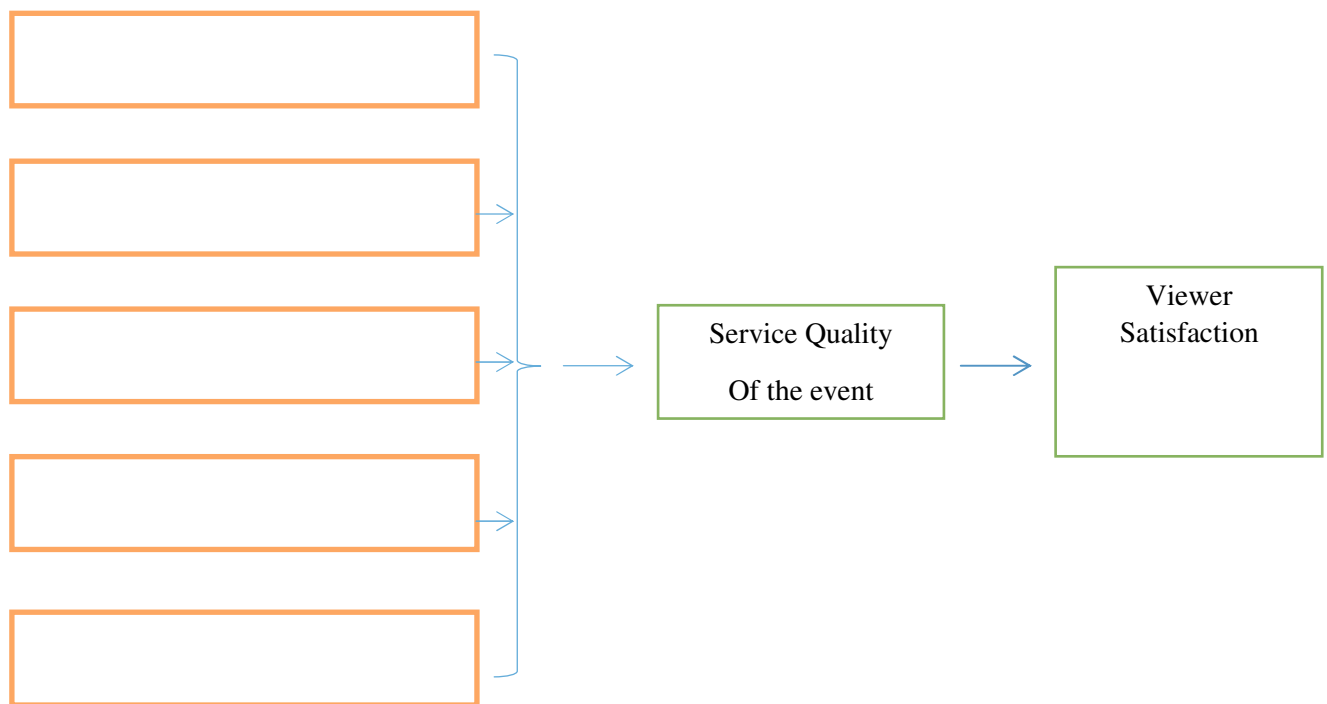
Figure 1: Relationship between Service Quality Dimensions and Service Quality {Source: Adapted from Parasuraman et. Al. (1988)}

The imperative factor in this study was to find out the sample size, since it is not practical to cover the entire population. Even though a large sample size is always recommended, having so many limitations including time and money, 220 respondents were selected for the study. By the end of the collection of data, 200 completely answered questionnaires for the study analysis. Selected participants were given few minutes to read a simple questionnaire and each was containing 22 service quality dimensions.

Key Findings

From the analysis carried out, it was found out that, the SERVQUAL model is an effective instrument to measure the service quality in the study's context "Influence of service quality on viewer satisfaction level of the SLPL tournament". However the study finds that, there is a significant relationship between viewer satisfaction and service quality dimensions of SLPL tournament as some findings from a research on e-commerce shows that Responsiveness dimension has a positive relationship with the service quality of the business (Santos, 2003).

But findings suggest that SLPL cricketing were not providing the level of quality demanded by viewers. Values in a 7-point scale witness that the service level of the SLPL tournament with related to these five factors are very less (Parasuraman et. Al. 1988). As illustrated in the table below, SERVQUAL scores for all items bear negative signs sense that the viewers expectations with reference to certain tournaments (IPL, Big Bash tournaments) are much greater than the performances that SLPL have showed in their occurrences. It indicates that the perceived quality is less than the satisfactory levels. To work out the differences the scores obtained in 'Perception score' is taken away from the scores achieved in 'Expectation score'. It is mentioned as the 'SERVQUAL score'. This value is then squared to produce the 'Squared Difference' (Levine et. al 2010).

It clearly showed that the viewers have higher expectations than what they actually received from the particular tournament. Therefore the overall perceived service quality is low relative to expectations and viewers desired more than what was offered by the SLPL tournament. Evaluating the perceptions and expectations of consumers, it can be seen that no dimension of service quality brings satisfaction (Oliver, 1980).

**Table 1: SERVQUAL Scores of Viewer Expectations and Perceptions**

Dimension	Items	Perception score (Mean)	Expectation score (Mean)	SERVQUAL score (Gap)	Squared Difference
Tangibles	E1 & P1	2.90	6.33	-3.43	11.76
	E2 & P2	2.40	6.23	-3.83	14.67
	E3 & P3	4.01	6.16	-2.15	4.62
	E4 & P4	2.12	6.10	-3.98	15.84

Reliability	E5 & P5	2.34	5.96	-3.62	13.10
	E6 & P6	4.02	6.03	-2.01	4.04
	E7 & P7	2.35	5.80	-3.45	11.90
	E8 & P8	2.01	5.96	-3.95	15.60
	E9 & P9	3.87	6.00	-2.13	4.54
Responsiveness	E10 & P10	2.24	6.00	-3.76	14.14
	E11 & P11	2.56	5.90	-3.34	11.16
	E12 & P12	3.89	5.96	-2.07	4.28
	E13 & P13	3.78	6.00	-2.22	4.93
Assurance	E14 & P14	2.22	6.40	-4.18	17.47
	E15 & P15	2.13	6.53	-4.40	19.36
	E16 & P16	3.76	6.50	-2.74	7.51
	E17 & P17	2.40	6.56	-4.16	17.31
Empathy	E18 & P18	4.01	5.32	-1.31	1.72
	E19 & P19	2.13	6.52	-4.39	19.27
	E20 & P20	3.89	5.40	-1.51	2.28
	E21 & P21	2.02	6.66	-4.64	21.53
	E22 & P22	3.59	5.23	-1.64	2.69
				$\Sigma = 68.91$	$\Sigma = 239.72$

(Survey Data: Calculations by the Author).

Hence the study finds that the SLPL cricketing tournaments need to improve performance on all the dimensions of service quality, in prominently improving, Physical things and appearance of employees , Ability to perform the promised service and accuracy of the service, Willingness to help customers and providing prompt service, Knowledge and courtesy of employees and Caring, understanding and individualized attention provide to Customers (Swaid & Wigand, 2009).

In examining the results, the variability among SERVQUAL items would be essential to recognize when prioritizing investments and considerations on service quality improvements. According to survey data analysis, the variation among Empathy dimensions are relatively higher than other four factors. When empathy's Coefficient of Variation is -61%, other factors have only less than 30% of variation. At the same time Assurance's dimensions are showing the lowest level of variation, which is 19%.
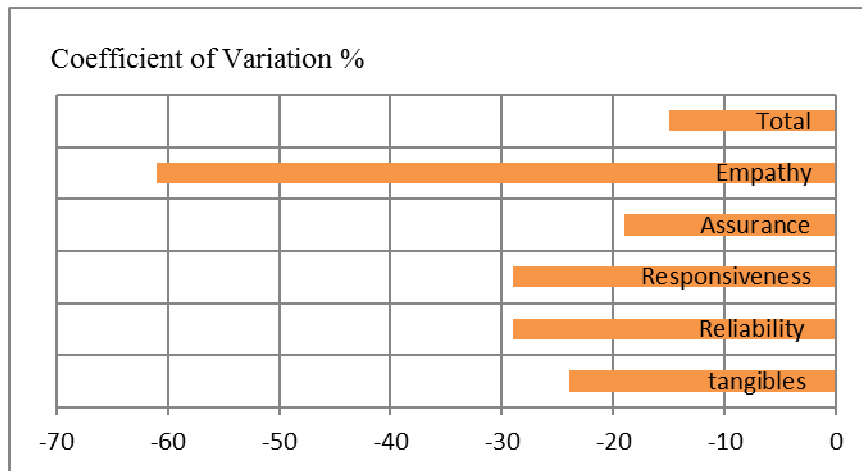
Figure 2: Coefficient of Variation among SERVQUAL items (Source: Measured by the Author)

Conclusion of the Study

Findings suggest that SLPL cricketing were not providing the level of quality demanded by viewers. Ultimately it is evident that the similar scale cricketing tournaments need to improve performance on all the dimensions of service quality in order to increase viewer satisfaction, since viewers expect more than what is been offered by the previous occurrence of the Sri Lankan Premier League tournament. Therefore this study can help to improve the service delivery and design of the tournament structure of the SLPL event. The essay will provide SLC management with data and findings that they can use in making inferences about the customers/viewers in organizing future mega sports events which are similar in nature.

Essential References

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