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What drives athlete loyalty? The interplay of service quality and satisfaction in Banjarmasin city

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ABSTRACT

The quality of service that athlete recevice from a sports development organization plays a substantial role in shaping how satisfied and loyal they remain toward development program in which they participate.This Study sets out to measure the extent to which service quality relates to athlete satisfaction and athlete loyalty, as well as to examine the effect of service quality on athlete loyaty with satisfaction acting as a mediating variable among athlete in Banjarmasin City. A quantitative method was employed, covering a population of202 athlete who took part in the 2025 South Kalimantan Regional Student Sports Week(Popda), with 100 respondents drawn as the sample through a stratified random sampling technique. Data were gathered through a Likert scale 1-5 with Google Form questionnaire and subsequently processed using the Partial Least Square approach with the assistance of SmartPLS 3 software. The findings reveal a positive and significant link between service quality and both athlete satisfaction and athlete loyalty, and athlete satisfaction is furhter shown to serve as a significant mediator within the pathway through which service quality influences loyalty, The implication is that continuously enhancing service throughout the development process is essential for sustaining both the satisfaction and the loyalty of regional athletes.

1. Introduction

Efforts to advance regional sports cannot be separated from the need to produce capable athletes ready compete at regional and national events. (Komarudin, 2023)asserts that service quality stands as one of the principal keys to a sucsessful athletes development process noting that good service must be sustined continuosly so that athletes remain engaged and motivated to take part in the development offerd by their respective sports branches. In similiar vein, (Zeithaml et al., 2018),identify five dimensions that consumers commonly use to evaluate service quality, Tangillity, reliabilty, responviness, assurance, and emphaty. When these five dimensions are well managed, they generate a positve experience that builds a long tern relationship between service providers and service recipints.Within public service sectos such as regional sports development, athletesact as recipients of various forms of service, ranging from training facilities, technicel guidance, and administrative support, to recognition for achievemetns attained. (Zeithaml et al., 2018),further note that service quality is gauged by the extent to which the service provided is able to meet, or even exceed, the recipient develops toward the service provider. According (Kotler & Keller, 2016), this condition of exceeded expectation gives rise to satisfaction, an emotion of pleasure or disappointment that emerges once an individual compares the actual perfomance of a product of service aganist what they had previosly anticipated. When athletesfeel satisfied with the development services they receive, that positive experience strengthens their bond with the provider, reflected in their comfort with training facilites, trust in their coaches, and the sense of being appreciated for their achievements.

The satisfactiofelt by service recipients plays a major role in cultivating loyalty, which within services marketing does not simply denote repeated purchase but rather a deep seated commitment to continue using a particular service in the future, notwithstanding situational temptations or marketing efforts that might otherwise prompt a switch.(Alma, 2018), explains that when the service quality

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perceived by consumeres meets or suarpasses their expectations, cosnumers tend to make repeated use of that service, conversely, a mismatch between expectation and reality triggers disappointment and a desire to discontinue use of the service in question. Within the context of regional in sports, athlete loyalty is obseable through a continued willingness to represent the region in competitions, consistency in participating in development programs, and steadfastness in maintinning a commitment to arhieve on behalf of their region.

Regrettably, the pratice of sports service at the regional level still leaves room for issues that may undermine athlete loyalty. One concreate manifestation of declinning service quality lies in the area of recognition, namely the reduction of bonus amounts awardedto high achieving athlete. According to a repot by Nina Megasari (2026) published on DutaTV, bonus values at the 2025 Regional Sports Week (Purprov) fell compared with the 2022, the gold medal bonus dropped by Rp.5,000,000, while the silver and bronze medal bonuses each fell by Rp.2,500,000. Hermansyah, as cited in the report, stated that bonus amount was determined entirely by the city goverment without involing KONI in the decision, even though KONI had proposed that the value remain on par with the previous periode.

Hermansyah also voiced concern that this reduction in recognition risk eroding athlete loyalty, potentially even prompting some athlete to transfer their allegiance to represent other regions.This phenomenon points to a weakness in one facet of the service quality received by athlete, one that has potentional to affect satisfaction while also thratening the sustainabilty of their loyalty toward Banjarmasin City.On the basis, the present study was designed to exmine in the effect of service quality on athlete satisfaction, the effect of service qualty on athlete loyalty, and the effect of service quality on athlete loyalty through the mediation of athlete satisfaction as an intervening variable , among athlete in Banjarmasin City.From a service marketing perspective, service quality describes the degree of excellence of a service as perceived by its recipient, aasessed by the extent to which the interaction process during service delivery is able to meet or exceed the recipient expectations (Zeithaml et al., 2018). (Tjiptono, 2017), reinforces this view by defining service quality as the expected level of service exvellence in order to satisfy consumer needs, service quality must threfore be mangaged and sustaind continuosly so that the long term relationship between provider and recipient is preserved. The five dimensions commonly used to measure service quality are tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy (Zeithaml et al., 2018).

Satisfaction constitutes an evaluative reaction that arises from comparing pre service expectations with the actual perfomence of the service exprienced (Kotler & Keller, 2016). When the perfomence experienced meets or surpasse expectations, a positive response emerges that forms the foundation for the continuity of the relationship between the athlete and the service provider. In an earlier study, (Saputra, 2024), found that caoching service quality is closely related to the satisfaction and loyalty of baketball academy athletes in the Special Region of Yogyakarta, While (Maria, 2022), found that service quality alose inluencens the motivation, satisfaction, and perfomance athlete at the Puslatda fot the 20th National Sports Week in Yogyarkata.

Loyalty is described as a commitment to sustaning a long term relationship with an organization, manifested through the desire to remain, involvement in the relationship and resilience against external temptarions (Payne & Frow, 2017). Within the realm of regional sports, athlete loyalty is reflected in the willingness to represent the region in competitions, consistency in following development programs, and resistance to alternatives offers. (Arminudin, 2024), identified a link between service quality and event management with satisfaction and loyalty among basketball athletes in Banjarnegara, whereas (Nurmanah, 2024), found that service quality, pricing, and motivation influance loyalty through the satisfaction of badminton club athletes acros Bantul Regency. (Pawoko, 2019), adds to this body of work by showing that athlete satisfaction also contributes to shaping their commitment toward the organization.

2. Research Methods

This study adopts a quantitative desaign with a descriptive and causal approach. According to (Jaya, 2024), research methodology refers to a collection of rational and reasonable procedures used to uncover scintific truth through the stages of data collection and data processing. The descriptive approach is used to objectively map the conditions of service quality, athlete satisfaction

and athlete loyalty within sports development in Banjarmasin City, while the causal approach is used to test the cause and effect relationship among variables,with service quality serving as the independent variable, athlete satisfaction as the intervening variable, and athlete loyalty as the dependent variable.

The population of this study encompasses the entire of Banjarmasin City athletes who participated in the 2025 South Kalimantan Regional Student Sports Week (Popda), totaling 202 individuals. The minimum sample size was calculated using the slovin formula and subsequently raised to 100 respondents thorugh a stratified random sampling random sampling technique. The primary instrutment was Likert Scale 1-5 questionnaire distributed via Google Form, comprsing statmenst relating to the five dimensions of service quality, five indicators of athlete satisfaction, and five indicators of athlete loyalty.

Data processing employed the Partial Least Square(PLS) technique with a formative indicator model, supported by SmartPLS 3 software. (Solimun et al., 2017), describe PLS as reeatively "robush" analytical techniqe because it reries minimally on statictal assumption, can accommodate a variaty of measurement scales simultanneosly, and does not require a large sample size. (Hair et al., 2019), further affirm that PLS-SEM is well suited to models with formative constructs as well as to research oriented toward predection. Indicator validty was tested using outer loading values and T-Statistics, reliabilty with refrence to (Ghozali & Latan, 2016), while hypothesis testing was carried out through bootstrapping resampling at a 5% significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$).

3. Results And Discussion

3.1. Result

Indicator Validity Test

Table 1 Outer Loading of The Service Quality Variable

Indicator	Original Sample Estimate	Mean of Sub Sample	Standar Deviation	T-Statistic
X1	0,969	0,968	0,007	133,556
X2	0,966	0,966	0,009	108,130
X3	0,971	0,971	0,006	153,785
X4	0,961	0,960	0,010	92,834
X5	0,959	0,959	0,009	112,177

Source: *Processed Data, 2026*

Table 2. Outer Loading Athlete Satisfaction Variable

Indicator	Original Sample Estimate	Mean of Sub Sample	Stander Deviaton	T-Statistic
Z1	0,964	0,962	0,008	119,072
Z2	0,960	0,959	0,009	102,108
Z3	0,958	0,957	0,010	99,764
Z4	0,956	0,956	0,008	120,809
Z5	0,963	0,963	0,008	127,217

Source: *Processed Data, 2026*

Table 3. Outer Loading Athlete Loyalty Variable

Indicator	Original Sample Estimate	Mean of Sub Sample	Stander Deviaton	T-Statistic
Y1	0,978	0,977	0,005	197,579
Y2	0,970	0,970	0,007	134,136
Y3	0,971	0,970	0,009	113,559
Y4	0,977	0,976	0,006	161,629
Y5	0,973	0,972	0,008	125,961

Source: *Processed Data, 2026*

The three tables above demonsrate that every indicator within each variable carries an outer loading value about the 0,50 threhold and a T-Statistic exceeding 1,96, indicating that all indicators

are deemed appropriate for use in the subsequent model testing, in accordance with the criteria set out by (Solimun et al., 2017).

Indicator and Model Reliabilty Test

Table 4. *Composite Reliabilty*

Variable	*Composite Reliabilty*
Service Quality	0,986
Athlete Satisfaction	0,983
Athlete Loyalty	0,989

Source: *Processed Data, 2026*

All three Composite Reliability values above sit well beyond the minimum threshold of 0,70 required by (Ghozali & Latan, 2016), such that every construct is confirmed to be reliable.

Table 5. R-Square

Variable	R-Square
Athlete Satisfaction	0,691
Athlete Loyalty	0,756

Source: *Processed Data, 2026*

Reffering to Table 5, 69,1% of the variance in Athlete satisfaction and 75,6% of the variance in Athlete loyalty can be explained by service quality within model. The predictive relevance (Q^2) calculation yields a value of 0,925, indicating that the research model possesses highly adequate predictive power, with roughly 92,5% of the variance in both endogenous variables accounted for by the model, while the reminder is explained by factors outside the model.

Hypothesis Testing

Table 6. Hyphothesis Testing Results

Path Relationship	Original Sample Estimate	Mean of Sub Sample	Stander Deviaton	T-Statistic	P-Values
Service Quality -> Athlete Satisfaction (H1)	0,831	0,831	0,029	28,572	0,000
Service Quality -> Athlete Loyalty (H2)	0,488	0,484	0,089	5,477	0,000
Service Quality -> Athlete Satisfaction -> Athlete Loyalty (H3)	0,349	0,351	0,070	4,980	0,000

Source: *Processed Data, 2026*

All three path relationship above register P-Values below 0,05 with T-Statistics exceeding the minimum threshold of 1.96, such that all three research hypotheses are declared supported.

3.2 Discussion

Service Quality is shown to be positvely and significantly related to athlete satisfaction (H1). Among the five constituent dimensions, empathy emerges as the most dominant relative to the other indicators, indicating that the attentiveness and concern coaches show toward athletes needs is the aspect most storngly felt by athletes in Banjarmasin City. On the satisfaction side, the indicator of perceived experience during the development process registers as the most dominant. This pattern aligns with the proposition of (Zeithaml et al., 2018), that well maintained service quality generates a positive experience build upon a long term relationship between athlete and

provider, and is likewise consistent with the finding of saputra (2024), that good coaching service moves in tandem with the level of athlete satisfaction.

With respect to the second relationship (H2), service quality is also shown to exert a positive and significant effect on athlete loyalty. The empathy dimension again stands out most prominently of the service quality side, while on the loyalty side, the indicator of commitment to reprenseting the region proves to be strongest, signaling that pride and the aspiration to achieve on behalf of the region reprensent the most tangible from loyalty among athletes in Banjarmasin City. This finding supports the theory of (Kotler & Keller, 2016), that loyalty constitutes an ongoing commitment to a particular product or service, while also aligning with the concept put forward by (Payne & Frow, 2017) regarding resilience against external influance as a hallmark of long term loyalty. This result is consistent with the research of (Arminudin, 2024), which likewise identified a lnik between service quality and the loyalty of basketball athletes.

The third relationship (H3) demonstrates that athlete satisfaction partially mediates the effect of service quality on loyalty, with an indirect coefficient of 0,349 (T-Statistic 4,980, P-Values = 0,0000), while the direct effect of service quality on athlete loyalty remains significant (coefficient of 0,488). In other words, good service does not merely raise loyalty directly but first cultivates a sense of satisfaction that, in turn, further reinforces loyalty. This finding strengthens the result of Nuramanah (2024) study, which identified satisfaction as the connecting pathway between service quality and the loyalty of badminton club athletes, as well as that of pawoko (2019), who showed that satisfaction contributes to shaping athlete organizational commitment.

As a cross country comprasion, the findings of this study align with those of (Abdul Rahman et al., 2021), on athlete at a public university in Malaysia, who likewise found a strong link between service and athlete satisfaction, with the human interaction indicator proving more dominant than the other indicators examined. The consistency of this pattern strengthens the argument that the human dimension of a sports service stands as the principal aspect underlying satisfaction and loyalty surpassing the mere completeness of physical facillties.

4. Conclusion and Suggestion

This study draws three principal conlusions. First, service quality is positively and significantly related to athlete satisfaction in Banjarmasin City. Second, service quality is positively and significanly related to athlete loyalty in Banjarmasin City. Third, athlete satisfaction is shown to serve as a significant link within the chain throgh which service quality influences athlete loyalty. In summary, imprving the quality of service within the sports development process is capable of enchaning athlete satisfaction, which in turn is also capable of strengthening and reinforcing athlete loyalty toward their region.

For future researchers, it is recommended that the scope of research be expended to other sports branches or other level of competition, and that additional variables beyond service quality and satisfaction, ones with the potential to firther shapes athlete loyalty be incorporated. For sports development organizers, the findings of this study suggest that primary attention be direceted toward the dimension of coach empathy and the quality of the athlete development experience, given that both aspects emerge as the most important and most influential factors in enchaning and sustaning the satisfaction and loyalty of regional athlete over the long term.

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