

Service expectations and performance evaluation in sport child camps: participants and parents' perspectives

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Abstract - Aim: The current study aims to examine the differences between service expectations and service performance evaluation in sport child camps among participants and their parents. **Methods:** Data were collected from 258 sport child camp participants and 226 parents, before and after the camp experience, to obtain their service expectations and service performance evaluations, respectively. Paired samples t tests were conducted to examine whether a significant difference existed between expectations and performance evaluations among both participants and parents. **Results:** Significant differences were found between participants' expectations and performance evaluations regarding Contact with Physical Environmental, Food and Fun. For parents, significant differences were found between expectations and performance evaluations regarding Staff, Activities Program, Service Failures and Recovery, and Food. In general, participants had higher expectations than their evaluations of the service delivered by sport child camp. In turn, parents evaluated the service performance with higher scores than their initial expectations of the sport child camp. **Conclusion:** This study represents an advance in the knowledge about participants and parents' expectations with the sport child camp services and highlights the importance of contrasting expectations and performance of the service. The results allow sport child camp managers to diagnose where improvements should be targeted and are useful to identify strengths and weaknesses of service quality.

Keywords: sport child camp, expectations, performance evaluation, events, sport management.

1. Introduction

Nowadays millions of children participate in sport child camps, increasing market competition¹ and making these events an important leisure activity². However, preparing a sport child camp offering requires much work and involvement by the organisers, because one must satisfy the expectations of both participants and parents². Considering that participants and parents use different criteria in camp evaluation^{2,3}, the management of the services should also consider their expectations, alongside service performance evaluation. Thus, it is essential to analyse not only the way consumers assess the performance of the service delivery, but also their prior expectations towards that service^{4,5}.

The analysis of consumers' expectations is vital to better manage the service delivery and subsequent reactions to the organization⁵. The importance of its evaluation in sport child camps lies in the fact that camp managers need to plan service delivery according to participants and parents' expectations⁶ to satisfy both groups². Therefore,

sport child camps require further research^{1,7} to better understand what participants and parents expect from their services as these are two key stakeholders of these camps.

Previous research has mainly focused on the analysis of the participants' perceptions² when evaluating Service Quality (SQ)¹. However, it has become crucial for sport organizations to understand not only how favourable their consumers view their service attributes, but also how important those attributes are to them to invest resources on the right service attributes⁸. It is often described that participants expect to do a variety of activities at camp, to stay in a fun environment, and make new friends⁶. While all these aspects are important, previous research has not examined if parents have similar or different expectations regarding the camp experience and associated services. This is important because camp managers must design the service delivery according both consumers preferences and expectations⁶ to satisfy both groups². For that, it is essential first to identify consumers most important needs⁸.

Considering that expectations have been suggested to influence the perception of service delivery⁹, one may argue that it is appropriate to extend extant studies by measuring both expectations and perceptions of service performance. By comparing customer expectations of service with perceived service, camp managers can improve their services¹⁰ aligned with each type of sport child camps consumers' preferences and priorities. Relatedly, improved services often contribute to consumers satisfaction and future retention^{6,11}. Considering that consumers' expectations may not always be aligned with their evaluations of the service, and that parents and participants live the camp experience differently and value different service attributes^{3,12}, this study aims to compare the expectations and performance evaluations in sport child camp among two key consumers: participants and parents. From a managerial standpoint, it is expected that knowledge derived from this study will aid sport child camp managers at improving camp services delivery, communicating properly with both consumer groups. Specifically, a greater understanding of these consumers' expectations and event performance evaluations will enable sport child camp managers to deliver more tailored camp experiences that likely contribute satisfy both consumer groups.

1.1. Sport child camps

Sport child camps are events promoted for children to spend their school vacations, practice a variety of sports¹³, have fun, learn new skills¹⁴, and socialize with their peers. Though these events always had social impact, its purposes have evolved according to society requirements. Sport child camps have initially started with the purpose of youth rest from their daily life, promoting their development², and instructing values and morals, such as respect for others and the environment, hard work and discipline to influence a fair, balanced, and inclusive society¹⁵. Nevertheless, the purposes of these events are currently more linked to (i) to occupying children's free time during vacations¹⁶, (ii) promoting an opportunity to participants to attain the recommended levels of physical activity¹⁷, (iii) practice a variety of sports¹⁷, (iv) having fun, learning new skills¹⁷ and socializing with their peers, and (v) encouraging the adoption of healthy lifestyles¹⁸ and increasing sport participation. This evolution in sport child camps purpose and its social impact led to an increase of research examining these events^{7,11}.

The participants' outcomes from camp participation had comprise a considerable part of camp research⁷. It is often described that most camps expose participants to new and challenging experiences to promote growth, and positive child development¹⁴. But the opportunities for organizational profit that these events represent originated an area focused on its management, the operations, relevant for both academics and practitioners¹⁹. Specifically, a great deal of attention has been devoted to camp consumer

behaviour^{3,20} since both participants and parents are important for camp sustainability⁶. Nevertheless, despite past studies about consumer behaviour have acknowledged the importance of measuring service expectations⁵, both children and their parents' expectations are yet to be captured in sport child camp research endeavours²¹.

Sport child camps are currently facing two big challenges: (i) the existence of two different types of consumers which expectations to be satisfied³; and (ii) the seasonal demand, and "turnover"²². To this respect, data from American Camp Association (ACA) report²³ indicates that in 2021, camps only retained 30% of their 2020 participants. The solution seems to be in returning satisfied consumers^{2,11,21}, that will only be properly understood by camp consumers preferences by also considering their expectations^{4,5}. However, camp research has focused only on camp participants' evaluation^{2,21}, with few studies considering parents' perceptions^{1,11}.

The fact is that sport child camps managers should ensure that their level of service meets or exceeds the level of service expected by participants and their parents². On one hand, parents search camp options to their children¹⁷ and often make the final purchase decision^{2,3}. On the other hand, children are those who live the camp experience benefiting from it². Therefore, perspectives of both groups must be considered in the event evaluation²⁴, including expectations regarding the camps and subsequent service performance evaluations. By comparing consumer expectations of service versus perceived performance, managers can identify service shortfalls and use this information to allocate resources to improve the SQ^{9,25}.

1.2. Expectations

Expectations refer to beliefs about a future event^{26,27} that are developed based on information received from consumer needs, motivations, desires, image, previous experiences, price, word-of-mouth, media communication, among others⁵. Consumer expectations are often described as what consumers feel that a service should offer²⁷ and represent the core structure of marketing thinking and market practice²⁸, because they act as a comparison point for consumers' quality evaluation of the service received^{5,9}.

The evaluation of consumer expectations is crucial for organizations because it allows to improve service delivery⁵, contributes to retain consumers, and gain competitive advantages^{9,10}. The evaluation of expectations informs what consumers expect from an organization, allowing managers to identify which service attributes need intervention⁹, and to invest in²⁹. This is particularly important for sport child camps, because similarly to other child activities^{30,31}, these events have two different consumers that must be heard². If camp managers do not meet the expectations of both groups (i.e., parents and participants), parents will not likely enrol their children in the

camp³⁰, and participants won't likely want to participate in future camps⁶.

Additionally, these events face a seasonal demand⁶, and the high “turnover” of participants²³ limits camps continued success and survivance in such a cluttered marketplace with multiple options for children to spend their leisure time³². Thus, focusing only on consumer SQ evaluation is not sufficient⁹. Consumers often assess their experiences against some standard or belief of what they expect, and as such expectation evaluations must also be considered^{5,27}. Doing so, helps camp managers (i) understand both parents and participants needs, (ii) adapt promotional strategies and service delivery according to consumer preferences^{6,10}; and (iii) retain consumers in future camps.

Although consumer expectations have been analysed in other child leisure activities (e.g., extracurricular or sports^{30,31}), the analysis has focused on child development and performance during activities participation. Additionally, the existent literature on participant incentives for participation in camps argues that (i) the novice participants had expectations to do a variety of activities in the camp, while experienced ones expected to be more independent during their stay in the camp; and that (ii) participants expect to stay in a fun and enjoyable environment, that provides opportunities for meeting new children, interacting with them, and making new friends⁶. However, previous research has not examined if parents have similar or different expectations regarding the camp experience and associated services³². There is a dearth of research capturing and contrasting the expectations of both participants and parents simultaneously²¹. This is important to be considered because camp managers need to plan service delivery according to participants and parents' expectations⁶ to satisfy both groups².

1.3. Service Quality

It has been widely accepted that SQ results from consumers' evaluation of the service encounter³³. SQ is a critical factor for an organization's success and an important tool to differentiate from competitors⁹, since good SQ leads to consumer satisfaction, which in turn, has a positive impact on retention, attraction of consumers, and reduced marketing costs³⁴.

In sport child camps, the measurement of SQ attributes and its comparison to their expectations is important because consumers (parents and participants) often evaluate the camps' attributes differently³. Parents focus their evaluation on management commitment, staff, activities program (AP), facilities, food, safety and contact with physical environmental^{1,3,12}. Participants often consider more other aspects such as fun, staff, services failures and recovery, food, and safety^{3,12}. Since both are involved with camp sustainability⁶, both must be satisfied² through high SQ delivery^{6,11} that aligns with their expectations¹⁰.

Such evaluations will allow to identify strengths and weaknesses within service attributes, and to properly making out service and marketing strategies to improve SQ delivery^{9,29}. The quality requirements of service in sport child camps can vary with the expectations of the camp consumers. Thus, the lack of research in this area justifies greater knowledge of what consumers expect from sport child camps organizations, how they evaluate SQ, and how camp managers can better manage the expectations of participants and their parents.

2. Methods

The current research proposes a model to compare differences between service expectations and service performance evaluations in sport child camps among participants and their parents. It includes two different parts where participants and parents were analysed separately. In part 1, differences between service expectations and service performance evaluations are examined among participants of sport child camp, while part 2 is conducted with parents.

2.1. Participants

2.1.1. Participants and data collection

Data were collected from 258 participants after the camp experience. This sport child camp was a day camp, occurred weekly between Monday and Friday, during the summer and was mainly composed by sport activities. Ages of the participants ranged from 10 to 15 years ($M = 11.73 \pm 1.35$ years) with the minimum of 10 years of age being respected³⁵. Approximately two-thirds were boys ($N = 164$; 63.6%) and 94 were girls (36.4%). Participants filled out two questionnaires in person, during the first (expectations) and the last (performance evaluation) day of the camp, under the best conditions of a private room (quietness, relaxed atmosphere, etc.). The staff were present to help and ensure participants understood what was being asked. All staff received training from the research team and a guide to ensure consistency in the procedures of data collection. Parents signed a consent form explaining the purpose and the voluntary nature of the study, granting permission for participants fill the questionnaires. Additionally, this study has approval from the ethics committee of the Faculty of Sports of University of Porto [CEFADE 30 2019].

2.1.2. Instrument

A questionnaire with two sections was used. The first evaluated the expectations with the service and included a 32-item scale adapted from Ferreira et al.³⁶, and Chang and Chelladurai³⁷. It included the attributes of Staff, contact with physical environmental (CWPE), contact with other participants (CWOP), SFR, and Safety.

In addition, new items to measure fun (three items), food (five items) and safety (seven items) were designed based on previous literature highlighting these aspects in sport child camps^{1,38} and an open questionnaire to understand which camp features that were missing from the initial scale (details below). Items to measure Staff, CWPE, CWOP, SFR, Food and Fun were measured through a Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 = completely agree to 7 = strongly disagree. Items regarding safety were also measured via a Likert-type scale but ranging from 1 = completely agree to 10 = strongly disagree. The use of different responses scales was based on the guidelines proposed in literature³⁹ to help prevent common method variance bias. The second section was composed demographic information (i.e., age, gender, number of camps previous participation, experience in other camps).

The item wording of the questionnaires was adapted according to participants. Prior to the main study, a pre-test was performed with other 180 participants⁴⁰ to: further assess clarity of the proposed instrument among target respondent; verify the adequacy of time, language, as other logistical issues of questionnaires application process and, analyse the internal consistency of the proposed constructs⁴¹. The language and clarity of the items was then subsequently simplified.

2.1.3. Data analysis

Data were analysed using SPSS 27.0, with frequencies being used to determine expectations and performance evaluation rates of the participants. The Shapiro-Wilk test was used to assess if the measures were close to the normal distribution, and this condition was not assumed for neither expectations nor performance evaluation ($p < 0.05$). However, considering the large sample size ($n = 258$), one can assume the central limit theorem (i.e., sample means often approximate to a normal distribution as the sample size gets larger) making the use of parametric techniques appropriate^{42,43}. As such, a paired samples t-test was conducted to examine whether significant differences in mean scores existed between service expectations and service performance evaluation⁴³. The reliability of the constructs was estimated through Cronbach's α coefficients. Statistical significance between groups was assumed for $p < 0.05$.

2.2. Parents

2.2.1. Participants and data collection

As in participants, data were collected from 226 parents, before the camp experience. Ages of parents ranged from 31 to 79 years ($M = 44.05 \pm 5.84$ years), being more women ($N = 164$; 67.2%) than men ($N = 80$; 32.8%). Parents filled out two questionnaires, one for expectations and one for performance evaluation, receiving the first questionnaire at the beginning of the first day, and the second at

the last day of the camp, returning it at the end of the same day. Parents also signed a consent form explaining the purpose and the voluntary nature of the study, allowing their child to participate in this study.

2.2.2. Instrument

The questionnaire was also composed by two sections. The first evaluated the expectations with the service and included a 32-item scale adapted from Ferreira et al.³³ and Chang and Chelladurai³⁶. It included the attributes of MCSQ, staff, AP, CWPE, CWOP and SFR. Additionally, items to measure Food (four items) and Safety (seven items) were designed based on previous literature highlighting these aspects in sport child camps^{1,38} and on the results obtained in an open questionnaire applied two years before on camp (similarly to participants instrument above described). The second section was equal to participants' scale. The item wording of the questionnaires was adapted for parents. Similarly to participants, a pre-test was also performed to 134 parents⁴⁰ with equal purpose to participants' pre-test, resulting in the items language simplification.

2.2.3. Data analysis

As in participants, SPSS 27.0 was used, and similar procedures of data analysis implemented. Were used frequencies to determine expectations and performance evaluation rates., and the Shapiro-Wilk test was performed, but similarly to participants, the central limit theorem was assumed^{42,43}. Significant differences in mean scores exist between service expectations and assessment of service performance were examined through paired samples t-test.

3. Results

3.1. Participants

Table 1 shows the means for service expectation and performance evaluation, Cronbach's α coefficients, t and p values. Almost all Cronbach's alpha values were above the 0.60 criterion, and thus, were considered reliable⁴⁴. Cronbach's alpha varied between 0.56 and 0.82 in expectations, and between 0.74 and 0.86 in performance evaluation. Despite, Food construct had low internal consistency among participants, it was retained due conceptual aspects (i.e. food represents a key attribute of the service in sport child camps²¹). In addition, descriptive statistics for individual items are presented in [Supplementary Material 1 and 2](#).

The expectation constructs scores varied between 6.46 (CWOP) and 6.79 (Fun), while the performance evaluations varied between 6.18 (Food) and 6.66 (Fun). The t -test results indicated significant differences between expectations and performance evaluation in CWPE, Food and Fun measures (Table 1), with the expectations scores

Table 1 - *t* test comparison of participants' service expectations and service performance evaluation measures.

Variables	Expectations M(SD)	Performance evaluation M(SD)	Expectations	Performance evaluation	<i>t</i>	Sig.
Staff	6.57(0.65)	6.63(0.63)	0.73	0.83	-1.08	0.28
CWPE	6.50(0.77)	6.23(1.03)	0.63	0.79	3.41	< 0.001**
CWOP	6.46(0.69)	6.33(0.98)	0.72	0.86	1.74	0.08
SFR	6.54(0.69)	6.41(0.85)	0.71	0.76	1.90	0.06
Food	6.51(0.88)	6.18(1.21)	0.56	0.74	3.44	< 0.001**
Fun	6.79(0.50)	6.66(0.74)	0.75	0.84	2.30	0.02*
Safety	9.20(1.37)	9.37(1.01)	0.82	0.76	-1.54	0.13

p* < 0.05;*p* < 0.01.

being higher than performance evaluations. This means that participants expect more from CWPE, Food and Fun than they realize they got it. In the other constructs, excepting staff and safety, it was also observed a tendency of decreasing the score attributed previously in expectations, when evaluated the service, after camp participation (although no significant differences were observed).

3.1. Parents

The expectations scores varied between 6.28 (SFR) and 6.73 (MCSQ), while the performance evaluation scores varied between 6.22 (Food) and 6.73 (MCSQ). The *t*-test results indicated significant differences between expectations and performance evaluation in Staff, AP, SFR and Food measures (Table 2). The expectations regarding Staff, AP and SFR, were significantly lower than its performance evaluation, meaning that they perceived to get more than they expected. The expectation regarding Food was significantly higher than its performance evaluation, meaning that they expect more from Food, than they realize they got it.

4. Discussion

This study examined the differences between expectations and performance evaluation in sport child camp among participants and their parents, which is of vital

importance to identify shortfalls and guide managers allocating resources to improve camp services⁹. Regarding participants, although both expectations and performance scores being high (> 6.0), the expectations for CWPE, Food and Fun were significantly higher than its performance evaluations. These results may indicate that these are the most important service attributes to participants but can also be related to the fact that: (i) camp organization is not meeting the participants expectations; and (ii) participants had unrealistic expectations regarding the camp. In fact, in other sports services^{5,29}, sport camp consumers often expect more than they end up obtaining, and these unbalance expectations are problematic for organizations^{26,45}, because it is financially unsustainable to constantly increase quality to meet consumer expectations⁵. Additionally, if the participants had unrealistic expectations, they could be resultant from previous experiences, worth of mouth or publicity from the camp. The solution for camp organization seems to be to influence these participants' expectations, to ensure that the camp organization can fulfil them^{5,26}. Informing the participants about what may be offered by the camp will ensure realistic expectations⁴⁵ regarding to the camp. Thus, some strategies as the improvements in facilities, the inclusion of different food diets, the design of new sport activities, or an improved communication strategy focused on the participants, can be adopted as approaches to mitigate this difference

Table 2 - *t* test comparison of parents' service expectations and service performance evaluation measures.

Variables	Expectations M(SD)	Performance evaluation M(SD)	Expectations	Performance evaluation	<i>t</i>	Sig.
MCSQ	6.73(0.39)	6.73(0.51)	0.72	0.89	-0.08	0.94
Staff	6.51(0.52)	6.67(0.61)	0.83	0.92	-3.11	0.002*
AP	6.51(0.65)	6.71(0.50)	0.82	0.79	-3.86	< 0.001**
CWPE	6.37(0.53)	6.30(0.78)	0.79	0.86	-1.04	0.30
CWOP	6.35(0.67)	6.25(0.86)	0.87	0.95	1.55	0.12
SFR	6.28(0.65)	6.46(0.75)	0.78	0.86	2.83	0.005*
Food	6.43(0.65)	6.22(0.96)	0.80	0.87	2.87	0.004*
Safety	9.51(0.91)	9.52(0.92)	0.90	0.99	-0.09	0.93

p* < 0.05;*p* < 0.01.

between the initial expectations and performance evaluation. Additionally, and considering that the best way to design effective sport services is knowing what consumers expect and how they evaluate what they receive^{9,46}, these results also highlight the importance of periodically evaluating participants expectations regarding the camp.

Regarding CWPE, participants expected cleaner and more attractive facilities, as well as more comfortable changing rooms, but the performance evaluation results do not support it. The camp facilities are a good promotional tool as these are a tangible element of the camp that help to attract the consumers originally⁶. Thus, camp managers should consider these CWPE results. Although the facilities are an important camp attribute to parents^{1,3}, the current results show that they are also for these participants. In fact, the participants CWPE long at least nine hours per day because the camp stays in the facilities all day. Additionally, and due to the sport nature of this camp, participants need to frequently use the changing rooms. Thus, the camp managers must consider that, in addition to parents, participants also value the facilities when evaluating the camp. This performance evaluation can indicate that camp organizers must reinforce the cleaning routine, improve the comfort level of the facilities, or decorate it, to become attractive in the eyes of the participants and fulfil their expectations.

Similarly, regarding Food, the performance evaluation was lower than its previous expectations score, meaning that the quality and the variety of food was not as expected. In this sports camp, participants follow a nutritionally balanced diet, planned by nutritionists (following the recommended daily amounts of fruits and vegetables), countering the tendency of children to consume sugary foods and drinks and, infrequently eat fruit⁴⁷. But, although this nutritional routine ensures a healthy food environment in the camp⁴⁸ and apparently pleases parents when they enrol their children in the camp, it seems not to fulfil participants' expectations. Through observation, it was also noted that most of the lunches served consisted largely of pre-packaged sandwiches, and this could not correspond to participants expectations, contributing to decrease the food evaluation score. Thus, considering that camp can be used as an opportunity to improve participants nutrition and health through the adoption of good eating habits⁴⁸, it is suggested the implementation of food literacy activities in the camp, that will likely contribute to the changing in participants nutritional knowledge and habits. These results add to the existing knowledge^{2,3} indicating that for the sport child camps participants it is important to have varied and quality food options, being them capable of evaluate it negatively if these expectations were not fulfilled⁴⁹.

Regarding Fun, lower performance evaluation was obtained when compared to expectations. This may have been related to the camp COVID19 safety measures estab-

lished: social distance, no sharing of sports equipment, or the absence of contact sports activities. In fact, this research occurred after the COVID19 pandemic as started, and similarly to other child camps⁵⁰, safety measures were implemented by camp organization. Although child camps must focus on providing fun experiences to participants⁴⁹, these results may suggest that the implementation of COVID19 safety had made it difficult. Additionally, considering that during the pandemic child interaction and routines have been distorted due COVID19 restrictions and home confinement⁵¹, participants may create unrealistic expectations regarding to social interaction or to be free to play in direct contact with nature. These results show that their expectations were not confirmed, affecting their performance evaluation of camp's Fun. Thus, future research must try to understand (i) why participants expect more fun in camp than they perceive to get, and (ii) if those expectations are affected by safety measures or based on previous experiences, recommendations, and camp publicity. This will allow camp managers to guarantee participants safety without affect their fun experiences.

For parents, although both expectations and performance evaluations were also high ($M > 6.0$), the performance evaluation regarding staff, AP, SFR, and Food was significantly higher than the expectations. These results suggest that camp organization is exceeding parents' expectations in these camp services, but also informs camp managers that staff, AP, SFR, and Food are the service attributes more important to invest in²⁸, to maintain parents' high-performance evaluations in the future⁹. These results also highlights that the camp organization should use these camps attributes to properly make out service and marketing strategies^{9,28}, when publicity the camp. However, it matters to highlight that parents' evaluations can be defined by their perceptions of camp attributes (based on information received, recommendation, or publicity) but also, by participants feedbacks, during participation. Thus, perhaps because of this, parents' expectations could be more realistic when compared with their children.

The better staff evaluation seems to be related to the fact that parents consider staff to have acted with more attention, availability, follow-up, understanding, courtesy, politeness, and friendliness with the participants, than they expected. To this respect, past literature refers that quality sports camp have top-quality staff because these individuals lead almost all sport activities and interact directly with participants, ensuring their safety and wellbeing¹¹. This high-performance evaluation attributed by parents to staff, supports not only the importance attributed to camp staff in literature^{1,2}, but also demonstrates that staff is a vital camp attribute, crucial to parents' evaluation of the sports camp. Additionally, it is worth noting that parents not always deal with the staff, thus, this positive evaluation could be influenced by the feedbacks they have from participants (i.e., their children).

The AP evaluation results demonstrate that parents get more than they expected regarding the camp activities. In fact, the camp under examination includes more than 20 different sports during the week, allowing not only to promote a multisport experience to participants but also to increase their physical activity^{17,18}. This is particularly important for parents because children usually often gain weight and lose fitness over the summer^{47,52}. This parents' concern increased even more with COVID19 pandemic and consequent lockdowns⁵² that increased children's sedentary behaviours and decreased the frequency and duration of their physical activity⁵¹. In addition to supporting previous literature^{1,3,12}, these results demonstrate that parents valued the fact that their children, through the participation in this sport camp, experienced new activities and sports. This suggest that the participation in sport child camps can be used as an effective strategy for parents to increase their children physical activity and improve their sport literacy, recovering the time and experiences lost during COVID19 lockdowns. In turn, camp managers can promote the sport camp participation by highlight the physical activity and sport benefits.

The higher SFR performance evaluation compared to previous expectations could mean that: (i) parents perceived the potential failures were anticipated; (ii) if occurred, failures were properly solved better than parents expected; and/or (iii) there were no failures during the camp. In addition to support the literature^{12,53}, these results demonstrate that SFR is a critical management aspect in sport camps for parents. In fact, participating in these camps presents a high potential risk of injury and illness⁵⁴ and COVID19 contagion among participants⁵⁵. The higher performance evaluation of SFR obtained may be due to the fact none of these situations occurred during the camp, or due to positive feedbacks from participants to their parents. Thus, SFR takes a special importance since a simple camp failure can put participants safety at risk. Therefore, camp managers must continue to prevent service failures and develop recovery strategies when such circumstances occur (e.g., failures in food, activities, or facilities), since parents seem to value it, ensuring that their SFR evaluation remains highly scored.

The higher Food evaluation compared with expectations may indicate that parents value the food routine established in the camp, as well as that camp exceeded their expectations regarding food quality and variety. Contrarily to their child, parents are aware that children face weight-related problems due sedentary behavior⁵¹, mainly during the summertime⁴⁶, a problem that became more worrisome with COVID19 lockdowns⁵². For parents, this camp food diet seems to be not only a valuable camp attribute, but also an opportunity for their children to change and improve their nutritional habits⁴⁷. Parents receive the weekly menu, what could have contributed to their initial expectations, but the compliance with this menu by the

camp organization seems to have determined their higher performance evaluation in Food. Since this food dietary (nutritionally balanced and planned by nutritionists) contradicted the tendency of children to consume sugary foods and drinks, parents evaluate it positively. Thus, camp managers must continue to position this sport camp in the market, not only as a special opportunity to practice physical activity, but also to influence children's positive eating habits.

In general, participants seem to expect more than what they get, while parents seem to get more than they expected from the camp services, which highlights that participants and parents have different expectations and performance evaluations regarding the camps. This difference between participants and their parents supports the importance of understanding different consumers' expectations and perceptions^{28,29} to better manage the service delivery and subsequent reactions to the organizations^{5,9}. Although some studies in extracurricular activities³⁰, or sports for children³¹, described significant differences regarding the expectations of parents and children, none compared those expectations with final performance evaluation after consumption. Thus, this study represents an advance in the knowledge about participants and parents' expectations with the sport camp services, by comparing those with the performance evaluation after the participation in this camp and identifying differences to be considered by researchers and camp managers.

5. Conclusions

Based on the results obtained, camp managers must develop different strategies for participants and their parents. On one hand, they must try to influence participants' expectations to become realistic. This means that prevent communication strategies focused on participants should be developed, explaining what can be effectively offered during the camp. On the other hand, camp managers must communicate with parents daily, for example in aspects related to Food routines, camp safety, children's occupations, daily fun, interaction with the staff to better manage their expectations and final camp assessment. Communications with participants and their parents should be different. Through segmented communication with parents and children, camp managers will better manage these groups' expectations and adapt the camp services to obtain increased services evaluations that often contribute to increase satisfaction and repeated consumption in the future^{5,6}. This study represents an important contribution for sport child camp organizations to be able to develop consumers expectations' strategies and diagnose where improvements should be targeted.

This study has limitations that should be acknowledged and considered in future research endeavours. Firstly, the instrument may have been too long for partici-

pants due to their age, leading to respondent fatigue or lack of motivation to employ sufficient cognitive efforts⁵⁶. Future studies should apply shorter questionnaires⁵⁷ to help promote participant engagement. In addition, despite recommendations for children's questionnaires were followed³⁵, including pre-tests and stressing that there are no right or wrong answers, there is always a risk of a social desirability bias among children participation in research studies. Lastly, the Food construct had low internal consistency among participants. While the option to retain this construct was based on conceptual aspects (i.e. food represents a key attribute of the service in sport child camps²⁰), and in the fact of the Food items being all together (what can cause not only desirability bias but also the low internal consistency), future studies are recommended to refine these items and/or include additional ones adapted to each study context to better understand the importance of food in child sport camps.

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Supplementary Material

Table S1 - Descriptive statistics of the items (participants' service expectations and performance evaluations).

Table S2 - Descriptive statistics of the items (parents' service expectations and performance evaluations).

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Manuscript received on December 1, 2022

Manuscript accepted on August 31, 2024



Motriz. The Journal of Physical Education. UNESP. Rio Claro, SP, Brazil
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