



Impact of Service Quality on Satisfaction of Spectator

(Case Study: The Spectators of Farsh Ara Futsal Team)

Authors

Mohsen Alaghebandi Toosi

M.A. in Business Administration; Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Iran

Fariborz Rahim Niya

Associate Professor Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Iran
(Corresponding author: r-nia@um.ac.ir +980153181492)

Alireza Pooya

Assistant Professor Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Iran

Abstract

The aim of this study is to investigate the effect of service quality on spectator satisfaction . To measure service quality, Gronroos (1984) theoretical framework which contained two dimensions of technical quality(outcome quality) and functional quality was used .The methodology was descriptive survey and the data was collected through random sampling among 241 spectators of Shahid Beheshti Stadium in 2013 which was obtained by Cochran formula .To examine hypothesis, Structural Equation Modeling in Error level of 0.05 was used .The results indicate the effect of functional quality on spectators satisfaction with regard to regression coefficient (0.08) and p-value (0.375) which is more than significance level of 0.05, is not significant. Therefore ,with possibility of 95 % , functional quality doesn't have any positive effect on spectators satisfaction .The results also indicate the effect of technical(outcome) quality on spectators satisfaction with regard to regression coefficient (0.76) and p-value (0.000) which is less than significance level of 0.05, is significant .Therefore ,with possibility of 95 % , technical(outcome) quality have positive effect on spectators satisfaction. .Considering the survey findings , spectators satisfaction have many benefits for the clubs .Clubs managers must do their best to improve the service quality offered to spectators as well as to employ star players in order to provide spectators with satisfaction which results in spectators presence in stadiums .

Key words: Sport Marketing, Service Quality, satisfaction

Introduction

Service quality and satisfaction have dominated the bibliography on services and sport services literature. For many years sport management focused on service quality and satisfaction, which constituted the two key factors of sport organizations, in order to predict the customer's desirable behavior. Service quality is an important topic in the marketing literature, since perceptions for service quality are directly related to customer satisfaction and customer retention . The need for delivering qualitative services to sport spectators' area

can be achieved, by focusing on the spectators' needs and paying attention to the quality and operation of well-organized sport facilities.

Many scholars and service marketers have explored consumers' cognitive and affective responses to the perception of service attributes in order to benefit by providing what consumers need in an effective and efficient manner. Consumer satisfaction (e.g. Cadotte et al, 1987; Churchill & Surprenant, 1982; Fornell, 1992; Oliver, 1997) and service quality (e.g. Parasuraman et al, 1985, 1988; Rust & Oliver, 1994; Zeithaml et al, 1996) have been considered the primary intervening constructs in the area of service marketing because ultimately they lead to the development of consumer loyalty or re-patronisation of a product or service. Thus an understanding of consumer perception of service attributes and its influence on service quality and satisfaction are crucial to the success of service organisations (Grönroos, 1982; Lehtinen & Lehtinen, 1982; Rust & Oliver, 1994; Theodorakis et al, 2001). Spectator satisfaction with a sports event experience is critical to team support, attendance and revenue for organisations in the multi-billion dollar sports industry. Sports organisations must continuously assess how better to meet or exceed consumer expectations and perceptions of the experience if they are to maintain and grow the number of spectators and loyal fans attending their events (Kennett et al, 2001). There have been many service quality studies in recreation and leisure (Howat et al, 1996; Kim & Kim, 1995; Papadimitriou & Karateroliotis, 2000) and much scrutiny of the dimensions of 'servicescape' and its effect on spectator satisfaction (e.g. Bitner, 1992; Wakefield & Blodgett, 1994, 1996; Hightower et al, 2002). However, with the exception of Greenwell et al (2002), who examined the impact of multiple attributes of the service on the satisfaction of minor league hockey spectators, relatively little attention has been given to the other attributes of service, such as the functional and technical (outcome) attributes, in the context of spectator sport service quality is a complex process. We, therefore, propose that any service quality model in the context of sport spectators should include dimensions to measure their experience on consuming both the core and the peripheral elements of the product. In the current paper we used the constructs of outcome and functional quality (Grönroos, 1984), in order to conceptualize sport spectatorship service quality. These two dimensions are defined in the following sections

Conceptualization of Service Quality

Zeithaml and Bitner (2003) defined perceived service quality as a global judgment or attitude relating to the superiority of a service. It is widely accepted today that service quality is a multi-dimensional concept. There have been a variety of service quality models in the literature. One of the most widely used models is the SERVQUAL, which was developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry, (1988). The model proposed that service quality is measured by five dimensions: reliability, assurance, tangibles, empathy, and responsiveness. Reliability refers to an organization's ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately; assurance refers to employees' knowledge and their ability to convey trust and confidence; tangibles refers to an organization's physical environment, such as facilities, equipment, and communication materials; empathy refers to employees'

willingness to provide individualized attention to customers; and finally responsiveness refers to employees' willingness to help customers and to provide prompt services. Each dimension is measured with four to five items. The model is a useful management tool since it aims to identify the gaps between customers' expectations and customers' perceptions of the services. The measurement of perceptions vs. expectations has been a disputable issue in the literature. While it seems logical that identifying the gaps is the best way to define quality, identify possible problems, and predict loyalty, there have been some researchers (e.g., Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Teas, 1993), who questioned the gap model, suggesting that measuring perceptions alone might be a better indicator of service quality, than measuring the differences between expectations and perceptions (Robledo, 2001; Zeithaml et al., 1996). From a methodological point of view, it is not always easy to adopt the gap approach, since in a real life setting it requires to collect data twice (before and after using the service) from the same customers, and compare their answers. However, from a management point of view, identifying the gaps in customers' evaluations is always a very useful task, since strategies can be designed in order to close these gaps. The SERVQUAL model has been extensively used in a variety of service sectors.

While similar models have been developed in sport, recreation, and travel services (e.g., Bigne, Marty, Miquel, & Andreu, 2003; Ekinci, Prokopaki, & Cobanoglu, 2003; Otto & Ritchie, 1996; Siderelis, Moore, & Lee, 2000) the application of such models in the sport tourism industry is still limited. The REQUAL scale (MacKay & Crompton, 1990; Crompton, MacKay & Fesenmaier, 1991), and the adjusted versions, developed by Wright, Duray and Goodale (1992) and Backman and Veldkamp (1995), are examples of models that have been developed for public recreation services in the United States. The REQUAL scale proposed a similar factor structure with the SERVQUAL (four factors instead of five). We, therefore, propose that any service quality model in the context of sport spectators should include dimensions to measure their experience on consuming both the core and the peripheral elements of the product. In the current paper we used the constructs of outcome and functional quality (Gronroos, 1984).

Outcome quality

The outcome dimension of service quality refers to what the customer receives, that is what is left for the customer, after the production–consumption process is over. The outcome dimension of service quality was first proposed by Gronroos' (1984) and more recently by Brady and Cronin (2001), who used the term outcome quality. This dimension has been largely overlooked in the sport spectatorship literature. The studies of Clemes et al. (2011), Ko et al. (2011) and Yoshida and James (2010) are the only ones that used the outcome quality in a multi dimensional nature in the context of sport spectatorship.

In the current study we propose the dimensions of game quality and team performance to be included with in the outcome element of service quality. These dimensions clearly correspond to the core product in spectator sports, as defined by a number of authors and researchers (Milne & McDonald, 1999; Mullin, 1985; Mullin et al., 2007). Further more, both these

dimensions are the common one that were proposed in the three studies (Clemes et al., 2011; Koetal., 2011; Yoshida & James, 2011), which were reviewed above.

Functional quality

The functional quality relates to peripheral element of the service quality (Gronroos, 1984). It includes elements related to the facility/stadium environment, the supporting services (e.g., parking, concessions) and the interactions between the spectators and the employees. The sport facility environment contains elements, such as aesthetics (i.e. design), accessibility, security, space/functions, while employees' quality refers to their competence, attitude and behaviour (McDonald et al., 1995; Theodorakis et al., 2001; Wakefield et al., 1996; Yoshida & James, 2010). The functional dimension of service quality is well represented in the SERVQUAL model. Based on the disconfirmation paradigm and their gap model, Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985) originally proposed that customers use 10 determinants (tangible, reliability, responsiveness, communication, credibility, security, competence, courtesy, understanding/knowing customer, and access) as criteria to assess the quality of a service. This framework served as the basis for the development of the SERVQUAL model (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988), with five dimensions: tangibles, responsiveness, reliability, assurance, and empathy.

In conclusion, it could be argued that the over emphasis of the sport spectator service quality literature on the measurement of the functional quality and the limited attention on the definition and the measurement of the outcome quality is a major limitation. The present paper aimed to address this limitation by proposing a two-dimensional model of outcome and functional quality. As previously discussed, two dimensions were used to measure outcome quality (game quality and team performance); five dimensions were used to measure functional quality (tangibles, responsiveness, reliability, access and security). These dimensions are typical and have been used in the majority of previous studies that measured the process part of service quality in a spectator sport setting (Hightower et al., 2002; Lambrecht et al., 2009; Lee et al., 2011; McDonald et al., 1995; O'Neill et al., 1999; Theodorakis et al., 2001, 2009; Wakefield & Blodgett, 1999).

Customer Satisfaction at Sporting Events

Customer satisfaction is defined as a pleasurable fulfillment response toward a good, service, benefit, or reward (Oliver, 1997). Customer satisfaction is a prime determinant of customer retention, positive word-of-mouth, improved profits, and lower marketing expenditures (Anderson et al., 1994; Oliver, 1999; Palmatier et al., 2006). Achieving customer satisfaction should be a primary goal for most firms, particularly service delivery firms that manage intangible and heterogeneous assets (Cronin & Taylor, 1992).

There are two important reasons why customer satisfaction is significant for service firms. First, customer satisfaction based on a customer's subjective judgment of services is one of the best criteria for evaluating services. Since it is difficult to maintain consistent service performance due to the intangible and heterogeneous aspects of services, customer satisfaction has been understood in relation to service quality (Cronin & Taylor, 1992;

Dobholkar, Shepherd, & Thorpe, 2000; Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1994). Second, customer satisfaction increases the likelihood of enhanced customer loyalty (Cronin et al., 2000; Oliver, 1997) and repurchase behavior (Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Oliver, Rust, & Varki, 1997; Seiders, Voss, Grewal, & Godfrey, 2005). These findings are consistent in sport contexts. Sport products have been found to have a statistically significant effect on game satisfaction, and intentions to attend future sporting events (Brady, Voorhees, Cronin, & Bourdeau, 2006; Kwon et al., 2005; Zhang, Smith, Pease, & Lam, 1998). Wakefield and Blodgett (1996) investigate the relationships between consumers' service quality perceptions, customer satisfaction, and repurchase intentions across football, baseball, and casino settings. They found that customer satisfaction with the service environment had a significant effect on repurchase intentions in all three settings. Customer satisfaction is not only a criterion to evaluate service quality, but is also a predictor of repeat patronage.

Customer satisfaction is defined in the current study as a customer's pleasurable fulfillment response to the entertainment of sport competition and/or ancillary services provided during a game. Service satisfaction is defined as a customer's overall satisfaction with the services experienced at a sporting event. Game satisfaction is defined as a customer's overall satisfaction with the game experience in relation to the sport competition on the field.

The present study aimed to investigate the influence of both outcome and functional quality on customer satisfaction. We propose that game-related factors (i.e. game quality) will have a stronger effect on spectators' satisfaction than process-related aspects of the sport experience, as reported by Brady et al. (2006), Koo et al. (2008), and Tsuji et al. (2007)

Methodology

Sample

The present study aims to solve a problem which is the investigation on the effect of quality of services on the behavioral intention of the spectators, due to their satisfaction. Therefore it is an applied research. Also since the data collection is done through questionnaires to find the viewpoints, ideas and behaviors of indoor soccer spectators and also since the present study describes the variables, as well as predicting the depending variables, therefore it is a descriptive and analytical survey. This study is based on the data collected before the games of indoor Soccer of Iranian super league. The statistical sample of the study consists of the spectators who were present at Shahid Beheshti Stadium of Mashhad, hosting the games of super league of indoor Soccer in 2013. The game was between Farsh Ara and Rahsazi. Based on this sample the study included 241 spectators that were selected through random sampling. We used the Kocran's sampling equation to determine the sample size out of an unknown population .

Based on the Kocran's formula, the number of sample size for the samples which their total number is not clear, is according to the following equation.

$$n = \frac{(Z_{\alpha/2})^2 \cdot (pq)}{d^2}$$

Where:

P=the possibility of having a feature, q= the possibility of having no feature Z= the initial value of critical zone when the P-value is less than 0.025. d= negligible error, approximation of society's parameter which is assumed to be 0.063

So, with regard to the formula, the volume of the sample will be calculated in this way:

$$n = \frac{(1.96)^2 \times 0.5(1-0.5)}{(d)^2} = 240$$

Based on this, 300 questionnaires were distributed among the spectators; out of which 241 were returned used for statistical analysis

Instrumentation

In order to measure the functional aspect of service quality, 5 aspects of the process are adapted from the Sportserv model¹ including: Tangibility or apparent characteristics, accountability, accessibility, reliability and security. In order to measure 2 aspects of outcome, we used the works by Koo et al² (2009) and Yoshida and James (2010) that included team performance and quality of the game . Also we used 4 statements adapted from Brady³ (2006) about the spectators'. In all scales, the participants used answers varying from completely agree (1) to completely disagree (5), in order to show the amount of their approval.

Statistical analysis

The reliability of the content of the scales used in the present study is verified through asking for the viewpoint of some prominent professors of sports management and general management fields. Also the results of the functional confirmation analysis to confirm the validity of the construct showed that it is very strong. Finally to measure the coherence of the scale, we used Cronbach's alpha for all the variables and result was as the following: Behavioral intention 0.833, satisfaction 0.884, quality of game 0.907, Team performance 0.786, tangible features 0.787, accountability 0.869, accessibility 0.780, and reliability 0.849 and security 0.800.

In order to analysis the results of the study, after using the descriptive data for deducting research theories, the most important method used is the structural equations using the Amos software. Based on the results of descriptive statistics, the frequency distribution of age of participants is 39.4 percent between the ages 18 to 24 years. The highest number of presence of the spectators in one season is 30.3 percent with spectators who have presence in 10 to 12 games . And also based on the record of presence of this group, 5.8 percent of the spectators are more than 16 years watching the indoor soccer games . And most participants have education of high school which is 29.5 percent of the participants. Based on statistics related

¹ SPORTSERV

² Koo et al

³ Brady

to variables of the research model, the average response to accountability is more than the average response to other variables and the quality of the game has the lowest average, compared to other variables (table 1).

Table (1): Statistical indices of research variables

Maximum	Minimum	Standard Deviation	Mean	Number	Variable
5	1	0.994	2.721	241	Tangible features
5	1	1.060	3.433	241	Accountability
5	1	0.999	3.219	241	Reliability
5	1	1.018	2.871	241	Accessibility
5	1	0.908	2.399	241	Security
5	1	0.873	2.121	241	Game quality
5	1	0.821	2.208	241	Team performance

Before modeling the structural equation to test the research hypotheses, it is necessary to validate the research scale using the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). In order to investigate it, first, we should validate the data collected by each item which is measured through Amos by two indicators of Kurtosis⁴ and Skewness⁵. The value for Kurtosis should be between ± 7 and ± 3 Skewness. Then the construct validity⁶ of the model is investigated which is done using convergent validity⁷ and discriminant validity⁸. In convergent validity, each regression coefficient should be greater than or equal to 0.5, and in the discriminant validity, in order to investigate the lack of overlapping between constructs of the questionnaire, regarding the items, the covariance between every two constructs must not be greater than 0.9. Finally the model fit⁹ is investigated based on the relevant indicators. The table 2 shows the results of confirmatory factor analysis for questionnaire items. The regression coefficients, according to the table 2 below are significant and more than 0.5. Therefore the convergent validity of the scale is confirmed and the covariance between both constructs is less than 0.9 and thus the lack of overlapping in the form of discriminant validity is also confirmed; As a result the validity of model construct is confirmed, too.

⁴ Kurtosis

⁵ Skewness

⁶ Construct Validity

⁷ Convergent Validity

⁸ Discriminant Validity

⁹ Fit model

Table (2): Results of factor analysis of questionnaire items

Factor load	items	Questions
88/0	Satisfaction 1	Q1
83/0	Satisfaction 2	Q2
83/0	Satisfaction 3	Q3
72/0	Satisfaction 4	Q4
84/0	Game quality 1	Q5
87/0	Game quality 1	Q6
76/0	Game quality 1	Q7
89/0	Game quality 1	Q8
88/0	Team performance 1	Q9
73/0	Team performance 2	Q10
62/0	Team performance 3	Q11
64/0	Team performance 4	Q12
67/0	Tangible features 1	Q13
		Q14
78/0	Tangible features 2	
		Q15
67/0	Tangible features 3	
		Q16
66/0	Tangible features 4	
		Q17
81/0	Accountability 1	
		Q18
83/0	Accountability 2	
		Q19
78/0	Accountability 3	
		Q20
68/0	Accountability 4	
		Q21
68/0	Accessibility1	
		Q22
77/0	Accessibility2	

780	Accessibility3	Q23
58/0	Accessibility4	Q24
87/0	Reliability1	Q25
76/0	Reliability2	Q26
79/0	Reliability3	Q27
70/0	Reliability4	Q28
82/0	Security 1	Q29
69/0	Security 2	Q30
78/0	Security 3	Q31
56/0	Security 4	Q32

With regard to the fact that the fit indicators as shown in the table (3) are located in their desired domain, therefore the measurement model of the study has an acceptable fit. Thus, in general the measurement model of the study is confirmed by the researcher.

Table (4): Fit indices of the model for the confirmatory factor analysis

index	Desired value	Value obtained in the actual model
Degrees of freedom (df)	-	540
Chi square (χ^2)	-	805.846
level of significance for (χ^2)	dependent on the sample size	0.000
optimized Chi square (χ^2/df)	Less than 4	1.492
Good fit index (GFI)	0.8 to higher	0.852
(RMR)	below 0.08	0.067
(CFI)	above 0.9	0.946
(RMSEA)	below 0.08	0.045

Continuing with this, we used modeling of structural equations to test the research theories and to investigate the relations between the variables of research model. The figure below shows the result of modeling the structural equations.

Figure 1. Model of structural equations for the study

After developing the model, there are several methods to estimate the goodness of the models overall fit that will be discussed later in this paper.

Index	Desired value	Value obtained in the actual model
optimized Chi square (χ^2/df)	Less than 4	1.597
Good fit index (GFI)	0.8 to higher	0.935
(RMR)	below 0.08	0.044
(CFI)	above 0.9	0.975
(RMSEA)	below 0.08	0.05

a) RMSEA index: Is one of the Parsimony indices. This measure is refers to the value of difference between the sum of squares explained by model and the sum of matrix squares estimated in the sample for each degree of freedom. The value of RMSEA for models with a good fit is less than 0.05. In case that its value is between 0.05 and 0.08, the fit is acceptable and higher than 0.1, the fit is weak, (Kalantari, 2010). In the fit model of the study, this value is equal to 0.05. Therefore, based on this index, the model has a good fit.

b) CFI measure: This index is one of the Comparative indices. It measures the amount of improvement through comparing a so called independent model (in which there is no relation between the variables) with a suggested model. The more the value of this index is closer to the value of 1, the more it shows a good fit of the data (Kalantari, 2010). This index for the fitted model of the present study is 0.975 which is an acceptable fit for the research model.

c) RMR index: This measure is defined as the standard remaining mean square root (an index for remaining variance in fitness of each parameter to sample data). This index is one of the absolute fit indices. In a model where the amount of this index is less than 0.05, the model fit is acceptable. However the values between 0.05 and 0.08 are also accepted (Kalantari, 2010). Therefore, since the calculated RMR is 0.044, thus the research model has an acceptable fit, according to this measure, too.

d) χ^2/df index: One of the general indicators is normal or relative chi square which is calculated through dividing the value of chi square by model's degree of freedom. The acceptable value for this index is often less than 4. As it is given in the table, the value for the desired model is 1.597 which is an acceptable and appropriate value.

d) GFI index: Is one of the comparative indexes for which the values more 0.8 means a good fit of the model. The GFI for research model is 0.935 which means a good model fit.

So considering the acceptable indices of the model, the theoretical research model is an acceptable model and thus we can now use the significant regression coefficients using p-value to investigate the relations between variables. The results are presented in table 5.

Table (5): Statistical indices for regression coefficient and p-value of the research variables

Hypothesis	Direct way	Regression coefficient	p-value	Outcome
1	Functional quality→Satisfaction of spectators	-0.08	375/0	Rejected
2	outcome quality→Satisfaction of spectators	0.76	000/0	Accepted

Discussion and Conclusions

The present study aimed to investigate the relation between service quality and satisfaction of the spectators. Several studies are conducted in Iran and other countries which have investigated the factors affecting the presence of spectators in sports events and also about quality of services, satisfaction and behavioral intentions of the spectators. However, there has hardly been a study in Iran which has investigated these three subjects together and or through dividing the service quality into two aspects.

The review of literature shows that service quality has a relation with satisfaction (Brady et al, 2002; Cronin and Taylor, 1994). Also the studies by (Chaun and Wung, 2008; Cronin et al, 2000; Hou et al, 2009; Park et al, 2006; Wou et al, 2008) show that receiving a higher level of services in terms of quality, leads to customer satisfaction. With regard to the fact that functional quality dimensions has been widely investigated by previous researchers, the results of the present study on the positive effect of functional quality on satisfaction (with regard to regression coefficient and a small p-value is not consistent with the results by Hightower et al ¹⁰(2002), who pointed out the importance of functional quality and services' environment. However the results show a positive effect of outcome quality on the satisfaction of the spectators and it is consistent with results of studies by Wakefield & Blodgett¹¹ (1996) that showed intangible service quality factors (outcome quality) is the dominant factor in determining the perception of the quality of services. It is also consistent with study by Kelly and Turley ¹²(2001) who argued that the most important feature of services is the experience of the game. From a managerial point of view, the dimensions related to the outcome quality, (quality of the game and team performance) are less in control of the manager, compared to functional quality. Therefore the team manager will never be involved in choosing team players, strategy for the play, play style and etc., and the coach will decide in these, while having an important influence on the satisfaction and further

¹⁰Hightower et al

¹¹Wakefield&Blodgett

¹²Kelly, S. W, & Turley, L. W

presence of the spectators (Kelly and Turley, 2001)(Clemes et al¹³, 2011). This is pointing out the problems managers facing when trying to develop the team, selling products, to advertise and etc.

The importance of dimensions of outcome quality (play quality) is confirmed in the studies by Madrigal (2003) and Wakefield & Blodgett (2002). The findings by Oven and Widerson (2002) also showed that quality of Rugby game is a major factor in the presence of the spectators. Therefore it can be argued that with regard to the fact that the spectators are fans of Farsh Ara team and the team has gained good outcomes and has showed good plays, in spite of dissatisfaction from the quality of environmental services (functional quality),they still feel consent by attending the stadium. However this should be noted that loyalty of fans and the spectators to the club and their commitment to watch a given game is not countless. It is necessary to supply a game like supplying other services, with acceptable features. For example, the ticket price or Television cost should be a reasonable price which the fans can afford it; the facilities and stadium should have an appropriate quality. If these considerations are not observed for several times, the ties between the fans and the club will be broken.

Focusing on the cause and effect relationship between service quality and satisfaction, the results show that service quality has priority over satisfaction. The priority of service quality over satisfaction in both the literature of services' marketing (Anderson and Fornell¹⁴ 1994; Cronin and Taylor, 1992; Hou et al, 2009; Park et al, 2006) and sports literature (Koo et al,¹⁵ 2009 ;Shonk, 2006; Tsuji, Benet and Zhang¹⁶, 2007) have been emphasized.

Limitations and future research

The present study collected data from iran's professional futsal. As the cultural diversities might influence the conclusions of each study, it would be useful to have evidence from different countries. Thus, cross-cultural research should be conducted in the future and help practitioners and academics to better understand the similarities and differences in the behavioral patterns of futsal fans internationally.

Finally, along with service quality and satisfaction, future research should incorporate other factors and dimensions that have been shown to significantly predict the spectator's behavior, such as those of value, loyalty, motives and brand associations.

data were collected from spectators of one professional team,which means that results are only indicative and can not be generalized.Future studies should use larger samples, including spectators of more professional futsal teams,to allow results to be generalized with more confidence.Further more,the cultural element of the study should be acknowledged.

¹³Clemes, M.

¹⁴Anderson, E.,&Fornell,C

¹⁵Ko, Y. J et al.,

¹⁶Tsuji, Y.,Bennett,G.,&Zhang,J

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