



The Influence of the Constructs 'Perceived Quality' and 'Trust' for the Repurchase Intention in the Market of Fitness Centers in Southern Brazil

A Influência dos Construtos 'Qualidade Percebida' e 'Confiança' para a intenção de recompra no Mercado de Academias do Sul do Brasil

La influencia de las construcciones de 'Calidad Percibida' y 'Confianza' para la intención de recompra en el mercado de las academias en el sur de Brasil

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Abstract

This article aims to analyze the influence of the constructs 'perceived quality' and 'trust' in the repurchase intention in fitness centers and the relationship between the constructs. The sample included 193 respondents members/customers in three gyms in a small city in southern Brazil. The statistical technique used was Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), through which the conceptual model was tested. Results showed that perceived quality and trust positively influence the repurchase intention with a positive relationship existing between those constructs. This research makes it possible to further develop the literature on the topic since there are few studies in the fitness market. Moreover, an analysis of the reality of small cities and small businesses in the market addressed here is also made possible.

Keywords: Perceived quality; Trust; Repurchase intention; Fitness centers.

Resumo

Este artigo tem como objetivo verificar a influência dos construtos qualidade percebida e confiança na intenção de recompra em academias, além da relação entre os construtos. A amostra contou com 193 respondentes vinculados como alunos/clientes em três academias de uma pequena cidade do sul do Brasil. A técnica estatística utilizada foi a Modelagem de Equações Estruturais (MEE), por meio da qual foi testado o modelo conceitual. Os resultados apresentaram que a qualidade percebida e a confiança influenciam positivamente na intenção de recompra, além da relação positiva entre a confiança e a qualidade percebida. O estudo permite avançar na literatura sobre o tema, considerando os poucos estudos no mercado fitness. Além disso, possibilita reflexão sobre a realidade de pequenas cidades e pequenos negócios no mercado abordado.

Palavras-chave: Qualidade percebida; Confiança; Intenção de recompra; Academias.

Resumén

Este artículo tiene como objetivo verificar la influencia de la calidad percibida y la confianza en la intención de recompra en los gimnasios, además de la relación entre los constructos. La muestra incluyó a 193 encuestados vinculados como clientes en tres gimnasios en una pequeña ciudad del sur de Brasil. La técnica estadística utilizada fue las Ecuaciones Estructurales, a través de la cual se probó el modelo conceptual. Los resultados mostraron que la calidad percibida y la confianza influyen positivamente en la intención de recompra, además de la relación positiva entre la confianza y la calidad percibida. El estudio permite avanzar en la literatura sobre el tema, considerando los pocos estudios en el mercado del fitness. Además, permite reflexionar sobre la realidad de las pequeñas ciudades y las pequeñas empresas en el mercado abordado.

Palabras Clave: Calidad percibida; Confianza; Intención de recompra; Gimnasios.



Introduction

The gym market represents an important branch of the Brazilian economy and each year the demand for fitness centers increases. With this growth trend, Brazil is likely to be one of the countries with the largest number of fitness centers. It currently has the second-largest market of gyms in number of units (with almost 35,000, behind only the United States with almost 39,000); ranks fourth in number of members (9,6 million), and twelfth in revenue (US\$2.1 billion), according to the IHSA Report (2018).

In this context, but in a more geographically restricted sense, the gym market in small cities has also been following this growth. On the other hand, with the increase in the number of fitness centers, customers are increasingly demanding and less loyal. This is due to increased competition, decreasing prices, economic recession and competitors' customer acquisition strategies.

Customer service is the most important issue for the business to stay alive. However, it is essential to have a team committed to developing quality work, providing the customers with great service and making them motivated. In this sense, the problem is not attracting customers, but making them loyal to a brand in a competitive market such as fitness centers. Today, customer loyalty is a challenge for gym owners and managers. When comparing costs, retaining customers can cost up to five times less than attracting new ones (Kotler, 2000).

Following this line, the quality of the service offered is considered an important criterion at all stages, according to Slack, Chambers and Johnston (2002). In addition to strengthening trust and influencing the behavioral intentions of those involved (Curth, Picoto, Garcia, & Neto, 2020) and contributes to differentiation and creates a competitive advantage. Thus, possessing the ability to satisfy, surprise, and even anticipate the customer needs is the key to quality endeavors to build relationships. Therefore, the fitness and wellness market must keep up with this demand. Gyms need to be prepared to win the right customers, identify their goals and desires, and thus provide an adequate service, avoiding the increase in customer turn-over.

According to Rittner (2005), many people give up their physical activity or switch their membership from one center to another at the beginning of their practice. Among the reasons mentioned by Nogueira (2000) for the greater loss of customers in the fitness area are the creation of a new fitness center and a teacher being replaced. However, the author points out that approximately 70% of the customers leave companies because they feel dissatisfied with the staff attitude, due to the poor quality of the services provided.

In this sense, the dissatisfied consumers report their experiences of poor service to twice more people than to whom they report their good experiences. Therefore, the dissatisfaction with the staff attitude (poor quality of the services provided) is considered of utmost importance, as it can cause a lot of damage to a business.

From this perspective, it is believed to be relevant to identify elements that enable longer relationship maintenance between customers and gyms. Therefore, it is important to understand the antecedents of customers' intention to maintain their relationships with the fitness centers, which is not found in the literature and suggests a gap to be addressed.

Thus, this study is justified by the need for gyms to have a greater knowledge of their influences to strengthen the relationship and retaining the customers. Thus, it is interesting to seek assistance in the relationship marketing constructs, more specifically 'trust' and 'perceived quality,' and the influence of such constructs on the repurchase intention.

The studies addressing these antecedent constructs as 'trust' were more focused on the issue of loyalty. Some authors, who reported the construct 'trust,' consider it to be a key element in achieving successful relationships between company and customers (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). However, studies about the construct 'perceived quality' mentioned a significant positive impact on trust and emotional commitment, showing the importance of quality to build more lasting and relationships with the clients (Agustin & Singh, 2005; Hennig-Thurau, Langer, & Hansen, 2001; Sirdeshmukh, Singh, & Sabol, 2002). In this sense, according to Gianesi and Corrêa (2006), the perceived quality is created each time customers have a relationship with a company offering a service.

However, how the constructs 'trust' and 'quality perceived' are seen by the customers depends on the context, varies from person to person, and from situation to situation (Lima, 2015). Consumers are increasingly demanding and their tolerance for errors is decreasing. Thus, either one receives a good service or they will think the agreement was unsatisfactory. Therefore, it is recognized the great challenge of fitness centers and their managers to retain clients, since, for the survival of the gym, those clients must remain as members for a long time.

It is noteworthy that the repurchase intention is of great importance in the academic and business context. For this reason, to deepen the knowledge about their antecedent constructs, several researchers point out that there are gaps to be filled. It is necessary, however, to understand the phenomenon that leads a customer to intend to repurchase a certain product and/or service of a brand. From this perspective, this study aimed to identify the influence of customers' perception of quality and trust on the intention to repurchase new memberships at a fitness center in the small city in Southern Brazil. Specifically, the objectives were as follows: a) to identify the influence of perceived quality in the repurchase intention; b) to identify the influence of trust in the repurchase intention, and c) to identify the influence of trust in perceived quality.

Theoretical Background

Repurchase Intention

Repurchase intention is the process of an individual customer or consumer purchasing products and/or services from the same company or brand (Hellier, Geursen, Carr, & Rickard, 2003). In this assertion, keeping the customer is an essential task for companies to survive. Knowing, enchanting, serving and responding to the needs of the clients requires systematic management of the relationships (Laino, 2005).

However, their behavior and their longings must be studied and understood. Thus, organizations must increasingly invest in the service quality to keep their customers happy and win them over when they intend to repurchase.

Wu, Yeh and Hsiao (2011) conceptualized repurchase intention as a consumer tendency to buy a product or service from the same brand in the future and to oppose switching to other market alternatives. Some studies indicate that having an affective quality with the clients is positively associated with repurchase intention, noting that the basic principle intrinsic to affective commitment is the consumer's intention to remain close to the chosen company or brand (Jones, David, Mothersbaugh, & Beatty, 2007).

According to Michelli (2008), the maintenance of this good customers-company relationship is directly related to the customers' loyalty. Furthermore, the customer retention rate is closely related



to profitability. It is assumed that as the customer's relationship with the company strengthens, the profitability may increase. The author adds that by reducing the dropout rate or loss of customers, it is possible and plausible to increase revenues or cash generation and, consequently, the company's profit.

Moreover, a study by Murray and Howat (2002), in the Australian fitness sector, investigated a relationship between quality of service, satisfaction, perceived value (the difference between what is received and what is given in exchange) and future purchase intentions. According to those authors, the quality of service precedes satisfaction, just as satisfaction precedes future customer purchase intentions.

Thus, for companies to be successful, it is paramount to understand the customer decision-making processes to predict their intentions and future purchasing behaviors. In this sense, the customers' intention to repurchase has been the objective of some studies in the area of marketing, mainly those associated with theories of consumer behavior (Han & Kim, 2010).

Perceived quality and repurchase intention

Perceived quality is seen as the customer's evaluation of a product or service offered (Tinoco, 2006). The customers' view of perceived quality is formed each time they have a relationship with the company offering a service (Gianesi & Corrêa, 2006).

Therefore, perceived quality can be considered as one of the determining constructs in the perceived performance and the customer's view of the company, relating the benefits received with the efforts made to obtain the service (Johnson, Nader, & Fornell, 1996). Thus, the better the location and the environment are, the stronger this view is, thus providing greater customer retention and positive customer behavior (Solomon, 2002).

From this perspective, the great challenge for gym managers as service professionals lies not only in giving potential customers a reason to do business but also in offering incentives for current customers to remain as members and/or loyal and even to increase their attendance by establishing a more stable relationship (Michelli, 2008). In addition to the quality of service, following the perception of customers, tangible elements of the environment, such as facilities, equipment, quality of care and hygiene, should also be considered (Henriques, 2006; Lovelock, Wirtz, & Hemzo, 2011).

On the other hand, the perceived quality of the service positively influences the behavior chosen of the customer. This quality will determine the continuity and intensity degree of the relationship (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2001), including for gym services.

Specifically, the perceived quality of service is also understood as a coordinated evaluation of the impact of the customer's perception of reliability, safety, responsibility, empathy and intangible aspects (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985). Thus, the perceived quality of services is usually regarded as a purely subjective concept, the result of a mixture of judgments, knowledge, and expectations (Parasuraman et al., 1985; Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988; Shostack, 1981).

Considering that the relationships between perceived quality and repurchase intention are important and possible, it is understood that there is a gap regarding these relationships in fitness centers, suggesting the following hypothesis: H1: perceived quality positively influences repurchase intention.

Trust and repurchase intention

Consumer trust can be defined as “the expectation held by the customer that the service provider is dependable and can be relied on to deliver on its promises” (Sirdeshmukh et al., 2002: 17). Customers feel that when they perceive they are receiving value for money. Thus, they tend to repurchase regardless of specific prices (Low, Lee, & Cheng, 2013). According to Berry (1983), trust is shown from the moment the company presents its clients with open channels for communication, guarantees of the service provided, and a high standard of conduct. Trust provides a guarantee of a consistent and competent company's performance, ensuring that consumers continue to gain value in future business from the same supplier (Sirdeshmukh et al., 2002).

On the other hand, Moorman, Zaltman and Deshpandé (1992) argue that trust is related to variables such as belief, feeling, and expectation. Related to this, Agustin and Singh (2005) state that trust is represented by the confidential belief of customers that a seller will deliver the services which they were promised. Along the same lines, Reichheld and Schefter (2000) argue that to earn customer loyalty, one must first earn their trust. For Gundlach and Murphy (1993), trust is also the basis for any human relationship. In the same line, trust presupposes the suitability and integrity of trading partners, according to Morgan and Hunt (1994) and Sirdeshmukh et al. (2002 as cited in Souza & Milan, 2011).

The human capital of the fitness centers is invaluable. Therefore, all employees must be involved in providing good service. Also, an integrated system is needed among all areas of the fitness center to unify the work philosophy and provide quality service, aiming at customer adherence, retention or loyalty, as indicated by Saba (2006). The author also suggests that professionals be always provided with consistent, up-to-date and scientifically supported information. Other important qualities are friendliness, warmth, motivation, trust, and commitment to customer well-being (Saba, 2006).

Morgan and Hunt (1994) include the attributes consistency, competence, honesty, responsibility, good faith, and integrity of the partners. Smith and Barclay (1997) point out two preponderant aspects that are related to the construct ‘trust’ in the literature: as cognitive expectation and risk-taking behavior.

Following this concept of relationship and satisfaction, Sirdeshmukh et al. (2002) state that trust is an antecedent key to the perception of value in relational exchanges. In more detail, trust creates value in exchange relationships because it provides relational benefits from customer interaction with a competent and benevolent service provider, and reduces the uncertainty of the exchange process while assisting customers to create consistent and reliable expectations about the service provider.

Therefore, for the customer to realize the need to repurchase a product, this customer must trust in the supplier company, seeing what the company offers as valuable (Zeithaml & Bitner, 2003). Trust, from the customer's point of view, is a relationship built with each meeting with the company, especially when it comes to services (Bitner, 1995).

Considering the potential relationship between the constructs 'trust' and 'repurchase intention,' the following hypothesis is suggested: H2: customers' trust positively influences repurchase intention.

Trust and perceived quality

Consumer trust is the willingness to believe that a company will deliver a service it claims it can do. In this case, customers also believe that the company is risk-free and can provide positive returns, thus fulfilling their expectations (Roque, 2016). In the same lines, Berry and Parasuraman



(1995) and Spekman (1988 as cited in Souza & Milan, 2011) place trust as the most powerful construct regarding the relational practice that is available to be operationalized in a company. Similarly, trust can be said to be the axis of lasting relationships from a long-term perspective (p. 67).

According to Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt and Camerer (1998), trust is a psychological state where there is the intention to accept a vulnerability based on positive expectations about the other's intentions and behaviors. The authors point to the existence of other views on trust concerning other areas of knowledge. Economists, on the other hand, tend to see "trust" in terms of risk calculations; psychologists, in turn, assess it in cognitive terms; while sociologists characterize trust by relating it to the properties of relationships between people or institutions.

In another study by Baptista (2005) and Prado (2004), the perception of perceived quality contributes to the increased trust in the supplier, thus building a positive and direct relationship between the two variables. In addition to the ability to create competitive differentials, it is possible to identify the relationship between perceived quality in services with other variables.

Cronin and Taylor (1992) identified that measuring consumer expectations is unnecessary. They claim that measuring perceived quality is enough to ascertain the performance of the service provider. When customers realize that the company is providing satisfactory results, they automatically tend to trust it (Smith, Bolton, & Wagner, 1999). Thus, considering the complex relationship between trust and perceived quality, the following hypothesis is suggested: H3: trust positively influence perceived quality.

Methodology

In light of the objectives proposed, a survey-type study was carried out (Malhotra, 2012). For Babbie (1999), a survey is the application (by sampling) of previously structured questionnaires, with closed questions, which provide knowledge about the proposed objective. Moreover, a survey leads to the use of a statistical evaluation with the possibility of crossing the variables of the study.

For the data collection stage of the research, the non-probabilistic sampling technique was used, where the researcher can select the sample based on convenience, or make a conscious decision about which elements to include in the sample (Hair Jr., Black, Anderson, & Tatham, 2009; Malhotra, 2012). According to the authors, non-probabilistic sampling techniques can be classified as convenience, judgment, quota, and snowball.

In this study, the sample was based according to the researcher's convenience. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire, delivered by the researchers themselves to the customers of the gyms. The questionnaire was completed with the self-completion method by the research participants, without the interference of the researcher both in the understanding and perceptions of the respondents (Hair Jr., Wolfinbarger, Ortinau, & Bush, 2010).

Regarding the sample size, the use of multivariate analysis techniques suggests the number of 200 to 300 cases for hypothesis testing and may vary slightly (Klem, 1995; Maruyama, 1998). For the elaboration of the research questionnaire, a 5-point Likert scale was adopted (Netemeyer, Bearden, & Sharma, 2003), with 1 corresponding to "Totally disagree" and 5, "Totally agree."

The profile of the participants in the sample is adults of both sexes and various ages, members of the fitness center for at least 6 months. Data were collected in three fitness centers in the city of Ivoti in Southern Brazil. Each gym has its distinctive profile in terms of values and structure:

- i. Gym (A): the monthly fee is R\$ 120.00; it has around 200 active members; offers state-of-the-art equipment and different classes, such as Zumba and indoor bike; in terms of built area, it has the largest weight room;
- ii. Gym (B): the monthly fee is R\$110.00; it has around 230 active members; offers high-quality equipment and different classes, such as indoor bike and functional training;
- iii. Gym (C): the monthly fee is R\$95.00; it has around 160 active members; it offers equipment with quality inferior to those in gyms A and B and bodybuilding only.

These three gyms are located in different parts of the city. Gym (A) is located in a very populous neighborhood and has been working for only 2 years. Gym (B) is located in the city center, is visible and has been operating for 10 years. Gym (C) is located in the city center, in a not too busy street, and has been operating for only 3 years.

Considering the ethical standards pertinent to academic studies, it is noteworthy that, for this research, the Informed Consent Form (ICF) was used, following the recommended norms and the guidelines of the Research Ethics Committee (REC) of our University. The term was presented to the respondent and had its process aligned with the REC suggestions.

The stage to build the research instrument included the selection of scales that were used and validated. At first, the research instrument used questions that checked the research constructs ‘trust,’ ‘perceived quality,’ and ‘repurchase intention.’ The questions addressed the constructs of this research, which were extracted and adapted from other studies:

- i. Trust (Trust1): I believe the gym will strive to keep its promises; Trust2: I believe the gym is trustworthy; Trust3: I trust that the instructors are qualified to prescribe me safe workouts; Trust4: I fully trust the work offered by the gym (Parasuraman et al., 1988; Tax, Brown, & Chandrashekar, 1998);
- ii. Perceived quality (Qual1): The gym has good support facilities (parking, bathroom, bar, etc.); Qual2: The gym has good equipment; Qual3: The physical appearance of the facilities is appropriate to the type of service provided; Qual4: I see that my current results are in line with what was requested by me in the beginning; Qual5: The staff are cordial to me; Qual6: The staff are attentive to my needs (Parasuraman et al., 1988);
- iii. Repurchase intention (RI1): I intend to repurchase new memberships of this gym; RI2: I intend to go to this gym for purchase, rather than others; RI3: If I could, I would like to stop going to this gym; RI4: I consider the gym I am currently going to as my first choice to repurchase (Gao, Waechter, & Bai, 2015; Zeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman, 1996).

Considering the objectives proposed in this study, data analysis techniques were used from multivariate analysis methods, more specifically the case of the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). This technique is concerned with the order of the variables. One of the basic characteristics of SEM is that one can test a causal order theory in a set of variables.

SEM not only allows the confirmatory testing of the psychometric structure of measurement scales but can also be used to analyze explanatory relationships between multiple variables simultaneously, whether they are latent or observed. Hair Jr. et al. (2010) define three different strategies in the SEM: (1) development of a model to be estimated using the SEM to evaluate and perform a confirmatory analysis on that model; (2) development of a model to be estimated and other models to present better adjustments to the estimated model based on comparisons; and (3) development of a model to be estimated, whose purpose is to make modifications to this model



through the structural and/or measurement model and, from there, develop another model to be estimated.

After the adjustments were considered adequate, the results should be aligned with the proposed theory, considering questions to be answered about the research problem (Hair Jr., Babin, Money, & Samouel, 2005). Therefore, it must be evaluated whether it is possible to accept the relationships between the endogenous and exogenous constructs proposed in the structural model, based on the significance of the parameters of this model.

For the data analysis operationalization, Microsoft Excel® 2010 and Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 22) were used for descriptive analysis and data preparation. For the SEM analysis, AMOS™ 20 (Analysis of Moment Structures) was used, as it is one of the main softwares used for this type of analysis (Garson, 2012).

Methodological Procedures

Research Participants

Considering the participants of this study, the sample had 193 respondents linked as customers of three gyms in the city of Ivoti in Southern Brazil. The sample was not probabilistic but chosen by convenience (Hair Jr. et al., 2009; Malhotra, 2009). The fitness centers have a total of 630 members enrolled, totaling 31% of the sample. For the sample size, the literature was followed, with 5 to 10 respondents per analyzed parameter (Hair Jr. et al., 2009), thus suggesting the alignment of the sample collected and the parameters used in this research. Table 1 presents the participants' profile.

Table 1. Participants' Profile

Profile of the respondents	Results	
	Items	Percentage
Gender	Male	106 (54.9%)
	Female	87 (45.1%)
	Total	193 (100%)
	< 20	28 (14.5)
Age	20-29	79 (40.9%)
	30-39	63 (32.6%)
	40-49	17 (8.8%)
	> 49	6 (3.1%)
	Total:	193 (100%)
Duration	1-3 months	19 (9.8%)
	3-6 months	33 (17.1%)
	6-12 months	55 (28.5%)
	Over 12 months	80 (41.5%)
Hiring	Less than 1 month	6 (3.1%)
	Annual	2.6%
	Monthly	69.9%
	Semi-annual	7.8%
	Quarterly	19.7%
	Total	193 (100%)

Source: Elaborated by the author.

The profile of the respondents, shown in Table 1, showed a prevalence of men, representing 54.9%. Female respondents represented 45.1% of the sample. Regarding age, most are from 20 to 29 years old, corresponding to 40.9% of the sample. The minority was over 49 years old (3.1%). The

highest percentage is the time the gym has been used: over 12 months with 41.1%; and the lowest percentage was less than 1 month, with 3.1%. When signing up for new memberships, the monthly fee was the most repurchased, with 69.9%; and the annual fee was the least repurchased, with 2.6%.

Instrument and Data Collection

Considering the descriptive objective of the research, a survey-type study was carried out. The research instrument was validated with 23 members/customers of fitness centers in the same city where the research was conducted, between August 2018 and October 2018. The study aimed to analyze the reliability of the scale by using Cronbach's Alpha. The results showed satisfactory values, with trust presenting Alpha = 0.7 and 4 indicators; perceived quality presented Alpha = 0.75 and 6 indicators; and, finally, repurchase intention presented Alpha = 0.65 and 4 indicators. The stage to build the research instrument included the selection of scales that were used and validated in other studies. Questions were created using the 5-point Likert scale, with 1 being "Totally disagree" and 5, "Strongly agree."

The final instrument presented 19 questions, with 14 questions about the research constructs and the last five questions about the respondents' profile (gender and age group), in addition to questions about gym usage profile (time spent using gym services, hiring format, services hired from other gyms). The research instrument was applied from August 2019 to October 2019. For the collection, a link with the survey was sent via WhatsApp and Facebook in addition to face-to-face interviews..

Results

Measurements Properties

The analysis of the collected data used different statistical procedures for data treatment, reliability analysis, and validity of the questions that measured the constructs of the research. For data analysis operationalization, Microsoft Excel® 2010 and Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 20) were used for descriptive data and data preparation. The AMOS™ 20 (Analysis of Moment Structures) was used for the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), statistical analyses and verification of the conceptual model and variable mediation test.

To identify the possibility of grouping the sample, considering the virtual and physical collection, the invariance test was performed. The test confirmed the existence of invariance in the samples, but with minor differences when comparing the values of Unconstrained (U) and Constrained (C), with RMR = 0.27 versus RMR = 0.26; GFI = 0.80 versus GFI = 0.79; AGFI = 0.73 versus AGFI = 0.73; PGFI = 0.60 versus PGFI = 0.61.

For the outlier analysis, the Mahalanobis D^2 measure was used, as it is a multivariate evaluation of each observation, considering a set of observable variables (Hair Jr. et al., 2009). In this study, no values exceeding those suggested in the literature and considered as atypical were presented.

Considering the performance indicators of the conceptual model, the values presented are within those suggested in the literature. Initially, they present the difference by degrees of freedom with a significance lower than 5 (2.51), which indicates a good basis for the quality of the other indices. GFI = 0.90, which had a degree of the global adjustment to the model and indicates an adjustment within the expected. The values of RMSEA (0.08) and CFI (0.93) presented excellent



results since they are important indicators and were within the values suggested (<0.08 and> 0.90, respectively), which indicates the adjustment of the model with the researched population. The SRMR index was 0.078, which indicates that the difference between the predicted and observed covariances in the model based on standardized residuals is within the range suggested in the literature (<0.08). The other indices presented loads within the suggested by the literature (Hair Jr. et al., 2009), thus reinforcing the adequacy of the model.

After this analysis, in which no respondent was excluded, the composite reliability (CR) was analyzed, as well as the validity of the measurements based on the analysis of extracted variance (AEV), as shown in Table 2.

Table 1. Analysis of the constructs – Alpha, CR, and AEV

Construct	Initial Measurement Model				Purified Measurement Model			
	Nº of items	Cronbach's alpha	CR	AEV	Nº of items	Cronbach's alpha	CR	AEV
Trust	4	0.82	0.83	0.60	-	-	-	-
Perc_Qual	6	0.79	0.80	<u>0.42</u>	4	0.82	0.83	0.62
Rep_Int	4	<u>0.66</u>	0.70	<u>0.40</u>	3	0.70	0.80	0.55
Suggested Indexes		>0.70	>0.70	>0.50		>0.70	>0.70	>0.50

Source: Elaborated by the author.

The indicators of the construct ‘trust’ remained the same, that is, the values presented were within the suggested scope. However, this was not seen with the constructs ‘perceived quality’ and ‘repurchase intention.’ The construct ‘perceived quality’ presented loads of Alpha and CR within the suggested, but AEV (0.42) was below the recommended values. The items removed presented values 0.355 (Qual6) and 0.394 (Qual5). After the exclusion, the values of Alpha, CR, and AEV were above those suggested (0.82, 0.83 and 0.62, respectively).

The construct ‘repurchase intention,’ before the purification, had Alpha (0.66), CR (0.70) and AEV (0.40), with emphasis on Alpha and AEV, below the suggested. The purification of the construct was excluded from item Int2 (0.227). The removal of the item allowed the values of Alpha (0.70), CR (0.80) and AEV (0.55) to present the expected indices. After the purification of the data presented in Table 1, another test was applied (DV – discriminant validity). Following this interpretation, the R² values should be smaller than the AEV values. Therefore, it is necessary to evaluate the difference of x² from the pairs of constructs for two different models, with the test of Bagozzi and Phillips (1982) being suggested to be used. In relation to the model, the following pair was evaluated: Trust↔Perc_Qual, AEV = 0.54 and R² = 0.68 as shown in Table 3.

Table 2. Discriminant validity test

Construct	Trust	Perc_Qual	Rep_Int
Trust	0.54		
Perc_Qual	<u>0.68</u>	0.62	
Rep_Int	0.30	0.54	0.55

Note: AEVs are in the diagonal lines and the correlation (R²) is in the quadrants below.

Source: Elaborated by the author.

First, a free model without fixed parameters was tested to calculate the chi-square value; the second test had parameters fixed in 1. It was possible to see the difference between the value fixed in 1 and free, with a significance = 0.01. This justifies a discriminant and convergent validity between the two constructs since they did not present value higher than the cut-off = 3.84 (Bagozzi & Philips, 1982).

Discussion

Table 4 presents the standardized coefficients and their level of significance, considering the three hypotheses proposed in this study. Thus, the three hypotheses were supported.

Table 3. Loads of constructs in the conceptual model

Hypotheses	Values				
	Non-Standardized Coefficients	Standard Error	Standardized Coefficients	*Sig	Support for hypothesis
H1 Perc_Qual – Rep_Int	0.491	0.116	0.514	0.001	Supported
H2 Trust – Rep_Int	0.083	0.112	0.076	0.046	Supported
H3 Trust – Perc_Qual	0.700	0.103	0.609	0.001	Supported

*Sig = significance.

Source: Elaborated by the author.

Hypothesis H1 addressed the relationship between perceived quality and repurchase intention. The relationships presented values $\beta=0.514$ and significance 0.001 ($p<0,05$), thus supporting the hypothesis.

Lovelock and Wright (2001) consider that customers have a pre-consumer expectation, based on their individual needs, previous experiences or recommendations from other customers and, of course, the company's advertising of the service. However, customers evaluate by comparing the perceived quality of the service they receive with their initial expectations.

Studies have found a strong link between the constructs 'perceived quality' and 'repurchase intention.' The literature points out that perceived quality can generate customers' commitment, loyalty, value perception, satisfaction, repurchase intention, positive word-of-mouth communication, besides enhancing profitability and reducing organization costs (Basso, Schwab, Pólvara, Marques, Pereira, & Slongo, 2008; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2001; Zeithaml, 2000).

According to Zeithaml (2000), the quality perceived by customers can positively affect their intention towards the company, making them show preference over competitors, increasing the volume of purchases and their willingness to pay a premium price, and is essential to attract and retain customers. Also, Miguel and Salomi (2004) emphasize the effort to develop appropriate tools and techniques that generate credible and valid results to measure the perceived quality in services, such as the ones related to health care offered in gyms, such as Pilates, functional training, etc.

Hypothesis H2 addressed the influence of trust and repurchase intention. Trust had a direct and positive effect on the repurchase intention, with $\beta=0.076$ and significance = 0.046 ($p <0.05$), thus supporting the hypothesis.

According to Grönroos (2000), regardless of the reason for trust in a given situation, its very existence is a guarantee against unexpected risks and behaviors in the future. In this sense, trust plays a key role in making the customer feel safe to depend on the service provider (Sirdeshmukh et al.,



2002). When customers feel that they are receiving value for money, they tend to repurchase regardless of specific prices (Low et al., 2013). Thus, when repurchasing the same product, the consumer infers that the benefits or attributes previously found should be repeated. Therefore, predictive power ensures a certain regularity or behavior due to the trust and safety at which the consumers aim (De Toni, 2005).

Repurchase intent is regarded as a key component of customer loyalty (Fornell, Johnson, Anderson, Cha, & Bryant, 1996). In addition, it is a strong indicator of future purchasing behavior (Sheppard, Hartwick, & Warshaw, 1988). When customers are deeply committed or have strong intentions to repurchasing, recommending, and spending more, they are likely to remain trusting (Getty & Thompson, 1995). This assumption is consolidated when customers begin to act cooperatively, that is, when there is a predisposition to repeat the purchase caused by an established trust (Sirdeshmukh et al., 2002).

Hypothesis 3 aimed to identify the relationship between trust and perceived quality by the customers. Trust had a direct and positive effect on perceived quality, with $\beta=0.609$ and significance = 0.001 ($p < 0.05$), thus supporting the hypothesis.

Trust, perceived quality and commitment to the company are the result of continuous processes of meeting the demands of customers and users. These constructs cannot be transferred, extending the possibilities of becoming a sustainable competitive advantage since they are unique and inimitable, create value and cannot be strategically replaced (Barney, 1991; Macadar, 2004; Moorman, Deshpandé, & Zaltman, 1993; Morgan & Hunt, 1994).

In this assertion, trust derives from the perception of honesty of the partner (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Thus, companies aim to guarantee the quality of the services provided and the quality of the relationship with the customers (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2001). Perceived quality appears in some studies as an influencing factor in the duration of relationships between service providers and customers (Moorman et al., 1993; Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Parasuraman & Grewal, 2000; Sirdeshmukh et al., 2002), resulting in long-term relationships. This is maintained based on the quality attributes of the services provided while improving trust (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2001). Therefore, it is possible to suppose that these two behaviors are positively associated when trust is a presupposition for commitment (Mohr & Spekman, 1994; Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Walter, Müller, Helfert, & Ritter, 2003).

Final Considerations

This paper aimed to analyze how relevant the constructs 'perceived quality,' 'trust,' and 'repurchase intention' are for fitness centers in the city of Ivoti in Southern Brazil. Based on the existing literature, a conceptual model was developed with hypotheses. From the structural equation model test, it was possible to check the applicability of the proposed hypotheses in line with the research objectives.

The results are in line with the existing literature. The hypotheses associating perceived quality with repurchase intention, trust with repurchase intention, and trust with perceived quality, were all supported. The model has already been validated and applied in different studies mentioned above.

To the area of Physical Education, more specifically gyms, this study proved to be very relevant. It has discovered unique characteristics in terms of consumer behavior, as to how consumers

are interested in staying as members of the gym and repurchasing new memberships when the level of involvement is high and their expectations are satisfied.

In the case of the construct 'perceived quality,' the customers are very attentive to details in the gym. They analyze the instructors' education degree as well as the gym's structure, and service. All these aspects were also included in this research. The data analysis found that, consequently, these aspects lead the customer to stay longer and to repurchase the services. The data analysis supported the construct 'trust,' as it was found that the customers feel confident about the results. Moreover, they analyze how the money invested returns to their health and well-being. This construct was closely linked to the repurchase intention. Thus, we can emphasize that the customers' repurchase intention is closely linked to the conditions of the services they receive.

The constructs of this study are being much discussed in the area of marketing and customer relations. However, no specific studies related to gyms were found. Thus, we can highlight that this study was unprecedented in the area of fitness centers. However, it should be noted that it can be further explored as there are many gaps to be filled as mediators. An example would be the construct 'commitment,' which appears in bibliographic studies and fits well as a mediator of the constructs 'perceived quality' and 'trust.'

It is noteworthy also that gym customers are increasingly demanding. In this sense, they want more and more quality and to feel more trustful. However, much remains to be addressed regarding customer behaviors and expectations. Customers are looking for excellent work. Thus, in the customer demand process, new gaps emerge to be studied while each step that leads a customer to make new purchases at a fitness center must also be analyzed.

Finally, it is understood that the proposed research filled an important gap in understanding those constructs, considering the market in which they were tested. As a suggestion for future studies, there is a need to research other business models in the fitness market, as well as other locations. Moreover, it is understood that there is a possibility of researching not directly, but indirectly, customers' relationships while considering the moderation between the constructs 'perceived quality' and 'trust.'

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