The issue of service quality has received significant attention in the sport marketing literature (e.g., Shonk & Chelladurai, 2008) and it is widely accepted that service quality is an antecedent of satisfaction and behavioral intentions (Tsuji, Bennett, & Zhang, 2007). However, the conceptualization of service quality is still a controversial issue and most studies fail to include the aesthetic aspects of the service environment (Yoshida & James, 2011), which represents an important limitation to analyzing the role of service quality in spectator sport. Thus, the purpose of the current study is twofold. First, we attempt to provide further evidence for the service quality construct that includes the aesthetic dimension. Second, in order to extend the literature that has focused primarily on the conceptualization of service quality (Yoshida & James, 2011), this study tests the effects of service quality on spectators’ satisfaction and behavioral intentions at sporting events.

The study sample consisted of sport consumers from the Top Portuguese professional soccer league. An interactive banner was activated during two days on the most popular Portuguese sports website asking visitors to access the link and complete a questionnaire about their favorite team. A total of 774 surveys were collected and, after data screening, 491 complete responses were deemed usable for data analysis. The 34-item scale proposed by Yoshida and James (2011) was used to assess service quality, and all items were measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1=Strongly Disagree, to 7=Strongly Agree). This scale includes the constructs of game atmosphere, crowd experience, opponent characteristics, player performance, facility access, seat space, and frontline employees. The satisfaction scale included three items proposed by Vilares and Coelho (2005), and was also scored on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1=Not Satisfied at all, to 7=Extremely Satisfied). The behavioral intentions measure included three items based on Yoshida and James (2010), and was similarly scored on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1=Not Likely at All, to 7=Extremely Likely). Data were submitted to a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to examine the measurement model using AMOS 19.0, and structural model estimation was performed to test the relationships among the constructs.

The results of the CFA for the measurement model indicated an acceptable fit to the data [$\chi^2(315)=765.02$ (p<.001), $\chi^2/df=2.34$, CFI=.95, GFI=.90, RMSEA=.05]. The composite reliability values for all constructs were above the cut-off point of .70 (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2005), while AVE values were greater than .50 providing evidence of convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Evidence of discriminant validity was accepted given that the AVE value for each construct was greater than the squared correlations between that construct and any other (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). In addition, the overall assessment of the structural model indicated an acceptable fit to the data [$\chi^2(315)=765.02$ (p<.001), $\chi^2/df=2.34$, CFI=.95, GFI=.90, RMSEA=.05]. The results indicate that player performance ($\beta=.64$, p<.01), opponent characteristics ($\beta=.07$, p<.05), crowd experience ($\beta=.10$, p<.05), and game atmosphere ($\beta=.39$, p<.01) have significant positive effects on spectators’ satisfaction. The findings further indicate that only crowd experience ($\beta=.24$, p<.01) and spectator satisfaction ($\beta=.38$, p<.01) are significant predictors of behavioral intentions. The ability of the hypothesized model to explain variation in the outcome variables was assessed by R2 values. The R2 values for spectator satisfaction and behavioral intentions were 80% and 40%, respectively.

The findings are consistent with the idea that the core product (Tsuji et al., 2007) and the aesthetic features of the service environment (Yoshida & James, 2011) play a crucial role in post-purchase reactions. Thus, sport organizations should try to provide an appealing stadium atmosphere and utilize game-related components in their marketing communications in order to influence fans’ satisfaction and behavioral intentions. This could be achieved, for example by offering memorabilia with team colors (Yoshida & James, 2010), displaying the lyrics of familiar songs at mega screens, and using testimonials from devoted fans to promote the team games. The proposed service quality model and recommendations for future research provide numerous opportunities to continue advancing our knowledge of the marketing effectiveness for managing the core sport product and ancillary services at sporting
events.