

Young rider's satisfaction and loyalty to a club: factors and influences

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Since 2012, the evolution of the French Equestrian Federation licensees has reversed after 70 years of continuous progression. In addition, customer versatility is intensifying. These trends are especially pronounced among children under 13, who are the main target clientele of riding schools. The services offered by riding schools have evolved but still remain too standardized and seem to have difficulties to adapt to a changing demand. In this context, this research focuses on the expectations of these young customers, but also on their satisfaction and loyalty to the club. It assumes that parent and child have complementary influences in the assessment and decision processes. The analysis is based on face-to-face surveys among 87 young riders between 7 to 12 years of age and their parents, in two French regions. The results highlight the influence of family members, especially the mother, in the initial choice for horse riding and for a riding school. However, once the practice is engaged, child's satisfaction and desire to stay or not in the club seem to take precedence over parent's opinions. From the point of view of the child and the parent, loyalty process towards riding school is largely influenced by the tripartite relationship that exists with the teacher. For the child, there is also an important role of the child's emotional commitment to one specific pony or horse and to the group of friends in the club. These two elements influence child's satisfaction but can also represent switching barriers. Equestrian disciplines that are proposed can also represent a source of dissatisfaction for the child. For the parent, there is also an emphasis on their own reception conditions. These results invite equestrian structures to question building and promotion of their offer in order to adapt it to the specificities of this market, while taking into account the distinct and complementary roles of young children and their parents in loyalty process.