

Fitness-And Health Center Evaluation by Resigned Male Members

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Abstract: The aim of the evaluations and statistical analyses presented here is to examine the question to what extent the evaluations of a fitness studio by men dropping out from their contract are age-dependent. In other words: do studio evaluations– that probably have played a role in the quitting decision - have a different basis in older men in relation to younger men?

A total of 61 men, who had terminated their contract with a fitness studio, were questioned. The average age of the respondents was 43.5 years. The average duration of membership added up to 4.4 years. Overall, it is found that only a few of the reasons offered in the survey are also indicated in significant frequency as important for the quitting decision. On the whole, the various aspects of the studio offer and its surroundings were largely rated as "good", the mean values range around the value 2. The respondents particularly expressed their appreciation for opening hours, trainers (friendliness, helpfulness, competence), trial training and first impression. The membership costs and individual aspects such as music, spaciousness, ventilation, locker rooms and parking facilities are evaluated more critically, if not really badly. Regarding the respondents' age, there are only minor evaluation differences among the age categories. These small differences in age have, depending on the item evaluated, very different directions. The collected data should help to create recommendations for action that can help to increase the customer satisfaction in fitness companies and to reduce the long-term drop-out rates by an adequate service offering.

Keywords: Fitness-and Healthcenter, evaluation, resigned male members

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Introduction

The fitness line is characterized both by an almost stagnating number of fitness clubs and an annual fluctuation of total membership numbers within the fitness studios. We therefore examine whether there are typical priorities in the drop-out justification and which reasons are used, in a statistically significant way, more or less or not at all. The collected data should help to derive recommendations for action in order to increase the customer satisfaction in fitness companies and to reduce the long-term drop-out rates by an adequate service offering (Rampf, 1999; Zarotis 1999; Zarotis *et al.*, 2017).

In the evaluations and statistical analyses presented here we examine the question to what extent are the evaluations of a fitness studio by men dropping out from their contract age-dependent. In other words: do studio evaluations–that probably have played a role in the

quitting decision-have a different basis in older men in relation to younger men? According to the life stages, do other needs and therefore other preferences regarding the studio conditions play a role here?

Brehm and Eberhardt (1995) questioned fitness studio members about their reasons for quitting training because they had not renewed their membership when their contract ended. The "lack of fun in the sporting activities" was mentioned as a priority factor for quitting the activity. In addition, "motivation problems" (e.g., laziness), "lack of time" (often due to heavy workload) and "financial reasons" (too expensive membership fees) were mentioned as reasons for quitting. In an open question the members were asked for a specific reason for quitting. On this occasion criticism about the "studio atmosphere" (too impersonal) was mentioned, as well as "lack of social support" (e.g. no contact with other members, partner has quit the training, etc.) and "high membership costs" (also for additional services like childcare).

These studies show that quitting a sports program always depends on several factors. The features of quitting a sports activity may be personal and situational characteristics (Rampf, 1999). It is often possible to identify reasons which ultimately lead to dropping out, but the participation behaviour is influenced by a complex factor structure.

Dishman (1982) several times remarks critically on the often-unsystematic approach of many studies and describes them as "atheoretical". He criticizes the limited data base and imputes it to the lack of uniform models that could simplify research. Due to this lack of standardization of theories and examination methods, the comparability of the studies is severely restricted.

Material and Methods

Survey methodology

A total of 61 men, who had terminated their contract with a fitness studio in a major city were questioned. The survey was conducted by telephone in July 2016. The advantages of the telephone survey are the low cost per interview, the possibility of responding to queries and the high external validity (Homburg and Krohmer, 2008).

The respondents are persons who have terminated their membership in the period between 01.07.2015 and 30.06.2016. The average age of the respondents was 43.5 years. The average duration of membership added up to 4.4 years (Zarotis *et al.*, 2017).

The persons were asked about different aspects of the training possibilities, equipment, support and environment factors of the fitness studio. Each evaluation aspect was queried on a 5-point Likert scale. The scaling ranged from "excellent" (coded with the numerical value 1) to "inadequate" (coded with the numerical value 5). The scaling corresponds to a school note scaling without the grade 6, the intermediate stages are correspondingly with "good", "satisfactory" and "sufficient" verbally anchored.

In this way it is questionable in the strict metrological sense whether the distances between the scale stages can be regarded as equidistant and therefore whether the items have an interval scale level, or whether one would not have to assume an ordinal scale level here. However, it can be shown that when using Likert scaled rating scales the use of parametric procedures can lead to statistically correct decisions even if the distances between the scale stages are not exactly equidistant. Such scaling can thus be evaluated as being "sufficiently

similar" in practice as an "interval scale", so that mean values and parametric procedures can be used accordingly.

In the case of a person interviewed, all information concerning the evaluation of the studio is missing, which reduces the sample size to $N=60$. Apart from that, in most of the questionnaire items there were no response refusals, so that in 17 of the 19 questionnaires there are valid values even $N = 60$. In the case of two items, there was a further missing value, so that in these items exist $N = 59$ valid values.

The age of the interviewees was recorded in whole years; here, in one case, there was a missing value, so that in $N=60$ cases the information about the age is in years.

In the data analysis, the sample characteristics are initially described in terms of age and duration of membership in the studio.

With regard to the question of the relationship between the importance of quitting reasons and the age, the male respondents of the sample are presented in a descriptive manner in their distribution characteristics of the studio evaluations and by age groups. Therefore, age data were divided into the following four age categories:

Age group 1: Respondents up to 25 years old

Age group 2: Respondents between 26 and 40 years old

Age group 3: Respondents between 41 and 55 years old

Age group 4: Respondents from 56 years old and over

To ensure the inferential statistic of the relationship between the studio evaluation and the age, however, these age groups are not used, but correlations with the Pearson correlation coefficients, to make use of the full variance of the characteristic age in the correlation analysis. These correlations are used to determine for each studio evaluation aspect the extent to which the age determines the studio evaluation in this sample, and whether such a relationship in the sample -if it is worth mentioning- is statistically significant. The conventional significance level of $p < .05$ is used here. If the values are below the significance threshold, it can be assumed that the correlation can be generalized, beyond the sample, to all the population and does not merely represent a random effect of this specific sample.

Results

Sample description

The sample's age range is between 20 and 74 years with a respondents' average age of 44 years and a distribution of 16.7 years. In the age categories mentioned, exactly 30% of the respondents are in the age category 4 and a further 28.3% in the age category 2, 23.3% in the age category 3 and 18.3% in the age category 1. Contract terminations were made on average after 5.4 years of membership, with a very large distribution (standard deviation) of 4.1.

Table 1. Sample distribution characteristic values

		Quantity	%	Mean value	Median	SD	Quantity
Age				44.1	42.0	16.7	60
Membership duration (Years)				5.4	5.0	4.1	61
Age category	up to 25 Years	11	18.3%				
	26-40 Years	17	28.3%				
	41-55 Years	14	23.3%				
	> 55 Years	18	30.0%				
	Total	60	100.0%				

Studio evaluation in general

Table 2 shows the mean values, median and standard deviations of the 19 studio evaluations:

Table 2. Mean values, median and distribution of the studio evaluations

	Mean value	Median	SD	Quantity
Studio location	1,6	2,0	,6	60
Parking facilities	2,1	2,0	1,0	60
First impression	1,4	1,0	,5	59
Opening hours	1,3	1,0	,5	60
Studio atmosphere	1,7	2,0	,7	60
Trial training	1,4	1,0	,5	60
Membership costs	2,5	2,0	,6	60
Strength training offer	1,8	2,0	,4	60
Endurance training offer	1,8	2,0	,4	59
Spaciousness	2,3	2,0	,6	60
Music	2,4	2,0	,5	60
Light	1,7	2,0	,5	60
Ventilation	2,2	2,0	,4	60
Locker rooms	2,1	2,0	,4	60
Sanitary facilities	2,0	2,0	,1	60
Gastronomy	1,9	2,0	,2	60
Trainer's friendliness	1,4	1,0	,5	60
Trainer's helpfulness	1,4	1,0	,5	60
Trainer's competence	1,4	1,0	,5	60

Studio evaluations according to age categories

Table 3 shows the distribution characteristic values (mean value, median, standard deviation) and the sample size differs according to the four age categories.

Table 3. Distribution characteristic values of studio evaluations according to age categories

			Mean value	Median	SD	Quantity
Age category	up to 25 Years	Studio location	1,5	1,0	,5	11
	26-40 Years		1,7	2,0	,7	16
	41-55 Years		1,6	2,0	,5	14
	> 55 Years		1,4	1,0	,5	18
Age category	up to 25 Years	Parking facilities	1,6	2,0	,7	11
	26-40 Years		1,9	2,0	,5	16

	41-55 Years		3,2	3,0	1,2	14
	> 55 Years		1,8	2,0	,6	18
Age category	up to 25 Years	First impression	1,5	2,0	,5	11
	26-40 Years		1,6	2,0	,5	16
	41-55 Years		1,4	1,0	,5	14
	> 55 Years		1,2	1,0	,4	17
Age category	up to 25 Years	Opening hours	1,5	2,0	,5	11
	26-40 Years		1,4	1,0	,6	16
	41-55 Years		1,2	1,0	,4	14
	> 55 Years		1,2	1,0	,4	18
Age category	up to 25 Years	Studio atmosphere	1,5	2,0	,5	11
	26-40 Years		1,8	2,0	,6	16
	41-55 Years		1,7	2,0	,5	14
	> 55 Years		1,7	1,5	,9	18
Age category	up to 25 Years	Trial training	1,5	1,0	,5	11
	26-40 Years		1,6	2,0	,5	16
	41-55 Years		1,3	1,0	,5	14
	> 55 Years		1,3	1,0	,5	18
Age category	up to 25 Years	Membership costs	2,8	3,0	,9	11
	26-40 Years		2,6	2,5	,6	16
	41-55 Years		2,9	3,0	,4	14
	> 55 Years		2,1	2,0	,2	18
Age category	Up to 25 Years	Strength training offer	1,8	2,0	,4	11
	26-40 Years		2,1	2,0	,3	16
	41-55 Years		1,8	2,0	,4	14
	> 55 Years		1,7	2,0	,5	18
Age category	up to 25 Years	Endurance training offer	1,8	2,0	,4	11
	26-40 Years		2,0	2,0	,0	16
	41-55 Years		1,8	2,0	,4	14
	> 55 Years		1,6	2,0	,5	17
Age category	up to 25 Years	Spaciousness	2,2	2,0	,4	11
	26-40 Years		2,4	2,0	,5	16
	41-55 Years		2,2	2,0	,8	14
	> 55 Years		2,3	2,0	,5	18
Age category	up to 25 Years	Music	2,2	2,0	,4	11
	26-40 Years		2,6	3,0	,5	16
	41-55 Years		2,4	2,0	,5	14
	> 55 Years		2,3	2,0	,5	18
Age category	up to 25 Years	Light	1,7	2,0	,5	11
	26-40 Years		1,8	2,0	,4	16
	41-55 Years		1,9	2,0	,4	14
	> 55 Years		1,5	1,5	,5	18
Age category	up to 25 Years	Ventilation	2,0	2,0	,0	11
	26-40 Years		2,4	2,0	,5	16
	41-55 Years		2,3	2,0	,5	14
	> 55 Years		2,0	2,0	,3	18
Age category	up to 25 Years	Locker rooms	2,0	2,0	,0	11
	26-40 Years		2,1	2,0	,3	16

	41-55 Years		2,1	2,0	,3	14
	> 55 Years		2,2	2,0	,6	18
Age category	up to 25 Years	Sanitary facilities	2,0	2,0	,0	11
	26-40 Years		2,0	2,0	,0	16
	41-55 Years		2,0	2,0	,0	14
	> 55 Years		1,9	2,0	,2	18
Age category	up to 25 Years	Gastronomy	2,0	2,0	,0	11
	26-40 Years		1,9	2,0	,3	16
	41-55 Years		2,0	2,0	,0	14
	> 55 Years		1,9	2,0	,3	18
Age category	up to 25 Years	Trainer's friendliness	1,5	2,0	,5	11
	26-40 Years		1,6	2,0	,5	16
	41-55 Years		1,1	1,0	,4	14
	> 55 Years		1,3	1,0	,5	18
Age category	up to 25 Years	Trainer's helpfulness	1,5	1,0	,5	11
	26-40 Years		1,6	2,0	,5	16
	41-55 Years		1,1	1,0	,4	14
	> 55 Years		1,3	1,0	,5	18
Age category	up to 25 Years	Trainer's competence	1,5	1,0	,5	11
	26-40 Years		1,6	2,0	,5	16
	41-55 Years		1,1	1,0	,4	14
	> 55 Years		1,3	1,0	,5	18

Significance test of the correlations between studio evaluations and age

In Table 4, the correlation coefficients (product-moment correlations according to Pearson) of the studio evaluations are presented each time with the respective age:

Table 4. Correlations between studio evaluations and age

Correlations		
		Age
Studio location	Pearson-Correlation	-,075
	Sig. (bilateral)	,574
	N	59
Parking facilities	Pearson-Correlation	,126
	Sig. (bilateral)	,342
	N	59
First impression	Pearson-Correlation	-,275*
	Sig. (bilateral)	,037
	N	58
Opening hours	Pearson-Correlation	-,327*
	Sig. (bilateral)	,011
	N	59
Studio atmosphere	Pearson-Correlation	,081
	Sig. (bilateral)	,540
	N	59
Trial training	Pearson-Correlation	-,174
	Sig. (bilateral)	,187
	N	59

Membership costs	Pearson-Correlation	-,420**
	Sig. (bilateral)	,001
	N	59
Strength training offer	Pearson-Correlation	-,262*
	Sig. (bilateral)	,045
	N	59
Endurance training offer	Pearson-Correlation	-,246
	Sig. (bilateral)	,063
	N	58
Spaciousness	Pearson-Correlation	,023
	Sig. (bilateral)	,862
	N	59
Music	Pearson-Correlation	-,146
	Sig. (bilateral)	,270
	N	59
Light	Pearson-Correlation	-,190
	Sig. (bilateral)	,150
	N	59
Ventilation	Pearson-Correlation	-,142
	Sig. (bilateral)	,283
	N	59
Locker rooms	Pearson-Correlation	,172
	Sig. (bilateral)	,194
	N	59
Sanitary facilities	Pearson-Correlation	-,155
	Sig. (bilateral)	,240
	N	59
Gastronomy	Pearson-Correlation	-,115
	Sig. (bilateral)	,384
	N	59
Trainer's friendliness	Pearson-Correlation	-,269*
	Sig. (bilateral)	,039
	N	59
Trainer's helpfulness	Pearson-Correlation	-,200
	Sig. (bilateral)	,129
	N	59
Trainer's competence	Pearson-Correlation	-,230
	Sig. (bilateral)	,079
	N	59
*. correlation is significant by level 0,05 (bilateral).		
**. correlation is significant by level 0,01 (bilateral).		

Discussion

In general, the mean values of the evaluations vary between 1.3 and 2.5, i.e. all are consistently in the positive evaluation range of the scale. Most items are a little below or slightly above the value of 2, which is "good".

Clearly, the best scores are found in opening hours, in the last three items, in which the studio trainers are evaluated, in the item first impression and in trial training. The-relatively

speaking - worst ratings appear at the features of membership costs, music, spaciousness, ventilation, locker rooms and parking facilities. In the research made by Rampf (1999) it becomes also evident that 19 % of the respondent group stated "too high cost for membership" as the main single reason for quitting the sports program. However, the real amount of cost is not the actual problem but rather the negative cost/benefit balance.

There is also evidence in other studies that financial aspects of dropout play an important role. In the survey by Breuer et al. (2013) even 45.1% of the 149 respondents cite as a reason "membership costs", which is why they discontinue fitness training.

Financial aspects are also mentioned in a study by the IHRSA (2012) as main arguments for the termination of membership in a fitness club. 52.2% of the 1,000 respondents surveyed said they were no longer able to afford their membership or rated them as expensive. Therefore, in future work, the collection of the income should be considered in order to assess its impact on the dropout.

It is important that the customer feels comfortable in the training area and in all other parts of the fitness-club. Comfortable feelings are for example guaranteed by not crowding the training area with training equipment. Sufficient space for movement during training, facilitates a positive training experience. Background music also creates a positive atmosphere. Sufficient ventilation is of special significance in that regard (Rampf, 1999).

A concentration of negative aspects in terms of training, will over time lead to an abandonment of the activity. Overall these results confirm the assumption that drop-outs are more critical towards general conditions and thereby support the results of other studies released on this topic (Brehm and Eberhardt, 1995).

The differentiation by age groups shows in most evaluation categories only slight differences between the age groups of a few tenths of a scale in the mean values. More than half a scale difference in the mean values can only be found in the item parking facilities with a significantly worse rating in the age category 41-55 years and in membership costs, which is rated much better by the oldest age category than by the other three age categories.

Within the small differences between the age groups, there are inconsistent trends across all age groups. For most items, a kind of "reversed u-shaped" relationship between age and evaluation is descriptive in the form that the oldest and the youngest respondents give the best ratings, while the middle age groups are slightly more critical. A truly monotonous trend between age and evaluation is only found in the evaluation of the locker rooms, which tends to receive worse evaluations the older the respondents are. In the three items concerning the trainer evaluation it is interesting to see that the 41-55-year-old age group gives best ratings. On the whole, however, the differences between age categories - with the exception of parking facilities and membership costs - are rather low.

In the correlations between studio evaluations and age there are in most items only weak up to very weak trends, only in two cases is the value of the correlation coefficient $> .30$. The most frequently occurring correlation amounts to .42. Accordingly, in 14 of the 19 correlations the outcome is also a—mostly obvious— not significant result; the slight correlations in the sample cannot therefore be distinguished from chance. From the five significant correlations one is at a 0,1%-level distinguished from chance and shows an average correlation strength. The other four are at a 5%-level distinguished from chance and

are once in the middle correlation intensity range and three times in a weak correlation intensity range.

In detail these correlations indicate

The evaluation of membership costs correlates with age at $r = -.420$ ($p = .001$; 17,6% explained variation), with increasing age, this aspect of the studio tends to receive better evaluation.

The evaluation of the opening hours correlates with age at $r = -.327$ ($p = .011$; 10,7% explained variation), with increasing age this studio aspect tends also to receive better evaluation.

The evaluation of the first impression correlates with age at $r = -.275$ ($p = .037$; 7,6% explained variation), with increasing age this studio aspect tends also to receive better evaluation.

The evaluation of the trainer's friendliness correlates with age at $r = -.269$ ($p = .039$; 7,2% explained variation), with increasing age this studio aspect tends also to receive better evaluation.

The evaluation of the strength training offer correlates with age at $r = -.262$ ($p = .045$; 6,7% explained variation), with increasing age this studio aspect tends also to receive better evaluation.

Overall, most fitness reviews, however, seem to be largely independent of the age of the men interviewed. The few resilient correlations show significant correlation intensity ($r > .30$) only in two cases.

Conclusions

On the whole, the various aspects of the studio offer and its surroundings were largely rated as "good", the mean values range around the value 2. The respondents particularly expressed their appreciation for opening hours, trainers (friendliness, helpfulness, competence), trial training and first impression. The membership costs and individual aspects such as music, spaciousness, ventilation, locker rooms and parking facilities are evaluated more critically, if not really badly.

As regards the respondents' age, there are only minor evaluation differences among the age categories. These small differences in age have, depending on the item evaluated, very different directions.

The correlations between age and studio evaluation are usually weak up to practically non-existent and in most cases also clearly not significant. Effects distinguished from chance appear in the characteristics membership costs, opening hours, first impression, trainer's friendliness and strength training offer. All these characteristics tend to receive better evaluation the older the respondents are.

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