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The 20th EASM conference **Sport between business and civil society**



ABSTRACT BOOK

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Member's retention in Portuguese fitness clubs: The influence of expectations, positioning, well-being and satisfaction

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Abstract keywords

Retention, fitness, positioning, expectations, well-being, satisfaction

Aim of abstract/paper - research question

The objective of this study was to understand how positioning, expectations, well-being and satisfaction influence membership retention in fitness clubs in Portugal. We tried to answer the following question: To what extent do the positioning, perception of the service attributes by the members; the expectations, what is expected from a certain service; the well-being, pleasant being of body and mind; and the satisfaction, contentment of necessities and wishes, influence member retention in fitness clubs.

Theoretical background or literature review*

The influence of satisfaction in retention has been continuously explored [1]. However, it is important to underline that not all attributes have the same weight. Thus their effects on the satisfaction are different [2; 3]. It is therefore crucial to understand which are the most important to the retention [2].

A study [2] about services quality in retention links retention to the perception of the service attributes – positioning. If the member does not recognize the key aspects, the option may not be effective.

Other studies [1; 5] explain the retention through expectations. According to the authors, consumers use their expectations of the service to determine if this has an acceptable level of quality and satisfaction, becoming therefore necessary to understand the expectations regarding the organization.

Studies mention the psychological and physical well-being associated to consumption [4], arguing that the values relating the physical practice change according to well-being. Nonetheless, the relation between well-being and consumption in fitness is poorly documented and it became, in this study, an opportunity to directly explore its relationship with the retention in fitness services.

Methodology, research design and data analysis

Data from a sample of 2250 fitness club members were collected, through questionnaire, from a Portuguese Fitness Network. The sample is representative of both genders: female (54.6%; $n=1228$) and male (44.9%; $n=1010$). The

majority of the respondents is in the age group "20-34 years old" (56%; $n=1259$), followed by "35-49 years old" (19%; $n=428$).

For the questionnaire, a list of attributes, mentioned in the literature and confirmed by expertise, was produced. A pre-test was conducted which led to formal adjustments in order to simplify the completion resulting in the final instrument. It was applied randomly by the staff to the members of the club and collected at the end of the workout.

In the treatment of the questionnaire data the factor analysis was used with extraction of principal components, in order to determine common factors to the original variables. Path analysis was subsequently performed, through multiple linear regressions and analytical model representation. The overall fit of the model was assessed through the coefficient of determination R , the proportion of unexplained variability was given by $e=1-R$ and the path coefficient was given by $\sqrt{1-R}$. Then the total effects were calculated through the direct effects and the indirect effects among pairs of variables. Finally, the proportion of causal explained correlation was calculated through the ratio of the total effect and the correlation coefficient.

Results, discussion and implications/conclusions**

The model shows the direct influences of the different constructs on retention. Satisfaction influences significantly retention. Concerning positioning, facilities and equipment and human resources are the constructs which influence retention, as in the studies [2; 3]. Expectations also influence the retention, reinforcing studies [5]. However the most influential construct in retention is the well-being in the club. Members who feel well-being in the club through the positive effect of physical activity remain in the club, promoting retention.

The model also contains the constructs which influence satisfaction and have indirect impact on retention, through satisfaction. Positioning influences satisfaction on the construct, innovation and services, as in study [1], facilities and equipment, and human resources, as referenced in studies [1; 3] The constructs expectations and well-being in the club influence significantly satisfaction, with well-being in the club appearing as the most influential on satisfaction. Our study confirms that not all attributes have the same weight and therefore do not have the same influence on satisfaction.

Comparing the total effects and the respective causal explained proportions of the model, it can be seen that the constructs which have greater causal effect on retention are well-being in the club (72%), followed by facilities and equipment (22%), expectations (21%), human resources (16%) and innovation and services (9%). The results indicate that in the relationships between these constructs and retention, although significant, they are not very strong, suggesting that there may be additional attributes with impact on retention.

Fitness clubs should keep suitable and modern facilities and equipment, should bet on cultivating strong customer relationships and especially ensure that the member feels good at the club to renew the membership.