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1 **Member identity in fitness centres and its consequences: An examination of members**
2 **and managers' perspectives**

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36 **Member identity in fitness centres and its consequences: An examination of members**
37 **and managers' perspectives**

38 **Abstract**

39 **Purpose:** The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of member identity and its dimensions of
40 power, urgency, external legitimacy, internal legitimacy and interest, on satisfaction and behavioural
41 intentions in fitness centres.

42 **Design/methodology/approach:** Two studies were designed. In Study 1, data were collected from
43 fitness centre members (n=225) and structural equation modelling used to examine the dimensions of
44 fitness centre member identity and its subsequent effect on satisfaction and behavioural intentions. In
45 Study 2, interviews exploring member identity were conducted with members (n=9) and managers (n=7)
46 and a content analysis contrasted their perceptions of power, urgency, internal legitimacy, external
47 legitimacy and interest.

48 **Findings:** The results of Study 1 support the multidimensional construct of member identity and its
49 positive influence on both satisfaction and behavioural intentions. Satisfaction mediated the relationship
50 between member identity and behavioural intentions. In Study 2, managers and members expressed
51 similar perceptions of the member identity dimensions: low power; urgency is issue-dependent; external
52 legitimacy is recognized; members are perceived as legitimate; and most members exhibit high interest
53 in their membership.

54 **Originality:** This study provides a deeper understanding of how member identity contributes to long-
55 term relationships between members and fitness centres. It extends the body of consumer behaviour
56 literature in the context of fitness centres.

57 **Keywords:** Fitness Centres; Member Identity; Stakeholders; Satisfaction; Behavioural Intentions.

58

59

Introduction

60 The fitness industry, with 184 million members, 205,000 gyms and €81.7 billion of annual
61 global revenue reported in 2020, has experienced 3.8% growth over the last two years (IHRSA,
62 2022). There is concomitant growth in research on member attraction and retention (García-
63 Fernández et al., 2016; Kim & Byon, 2022). To facilitate ongoing growth, fitness centres (FCs)
64 should focus on member satisfaction given its link to developing long-term relationships
65 (Ferrand et al., 2010). One way to understand member satisfaction is to explore how individuals
66 perceive their role as a member (i.e., member identity; Biscaia et al., 2018; Trail et al., 2005),
67 given that one's identity is developed over time through the interactions between the person
68 and the context (Woolf & Lawrence, 2017).

69 Investigating the identity of members is important, because they are critical stakeholders
70 of FCs through their direct (e.g., monthly fees) and indirect (i.e., word-of-mouth) contributions
71 to overall revenues (Pedragosa et al., 2015). As noted by Bryson (2004), organisational success
72 largely depends on satisfying key stakeholders. Thus, understanding the meaning members
73 associate with their role identity and how it affects satisfaction levels may be pivotal to
74 strengthening their relationship with FCs over time. Role identity represents the characteristics
75 attributed to oneself within various social roles ranging from being a parent to being a member
76 of a FC (Wood & Roberts, 2006). Role choices reflect a person's identity at a given moment in
77 time, and identities are organised within the 'self' through a salience hierarchy (Stryker, 2007).
78 As role identification intensifies, individuals increasingly act in accordance with role
79 expectations (Stryker & Burke, 2000). Because individuals in their chosen role choose which
80 action(s) to complete in order to enhance their experiences, and there are behavioural
81 expectations associated with fitness members (Woolf & Lawrence, 2017), role identity likely
82 contributes to satisfaction and behavioural intentions in FCs (e.g., membership renewal).

83 Biscaia et al. (2018) proposed a multidimensional conceptualisation of consumer role
84 identity based on perceived levels of power, urgency, and both external and internal legitimacy.
85 While contributing to better understanding role identity, it is important to note that stakeholders
86 have varying degrees of interest in sport organisations (e.g., attention to social media posts or
87 queries) that are underpinned by past, present, or expected future activities (Clarkson, 1995).
88 Interest manifests through a consumer's effort invested in a sport organisation (Funk et al.,
89 2001). Including interest within a conceptualisation of role identity (i.e., being a member of a
90 group) will clarify how different stakeholders may affect the organisation (Bryson, 2004). That
91 is, a person's interest in an organisation affects the evaluation of their service experiences and
92 the likelihood of re-patronage (Yoshida et al., 2015).

93 Given that members are among the most important stakeholders of sport and recreation
94 organisations (McDonald & Sherry, 2010; Riseth et al., 2019), their importance should be
95 analysed. Nevertheless, extant studies have analysed stakeholders based on either managers'
96 (e.g., Parent & Deephouse, 2007) or consumers' perspectives (e.g., Trail et al., 2017). While
97 pragmatic, a manager's perspective is subjective and only provides a partial understanding of
98 stakeholders' importance (Senaux, 2008). On the other hand, an exclusive focus on
99 stakeholders' own perspective is insufficient given their perceptions may not reflect their actual
100 status with or in the organisation. Thus, it is important to consider simultaneously how FC
101 members perceive themselves in relation to the centre and how managers perceive their
102 importance. This will enable a more in-depth understanding of how to strengthen the
103 relationship between members and their FCs.

104 This research incorporates two studies to better understanding member identity and its
105 relationship with satisfaction and behavioural intentions. Study 1 is based on members'
106 perceptions, and examines the relationship between member identity (i.e., role), satisfaction and
107 behavioural intentions. We propose and test a multidimensional construct of member identity

108 based on five dimensions (i.e., power, urgency, external legitimacy, internal legitimacy and
109 interest) and examine its relationship with satisfaction and behavioural intentions. This model
110 extends previous literature (e.g., Biscaia et al., 2018) by capturing the notion of interest in the
111 conceptualisation of member identity and exploring the mediating role of satisfaction in the
112 relationship between member identity and behavioural intentions. In Study 2, we interviewed
113 both members and managers of FCs to explore the meaning and importance of member identity
114 with the design serving as a complement to Study 1. This holistic approach is novel and
115 necessary because stakeholder analysis must fit the situation for which it is to be used
116 (Achterkamp & Vos, 2008) and gathering one side's perspective only allows partial
117 understanding of stakeholders' importance (Senaux, 2008).

118 **Theoretical Background**

119 *Members as Stakeholders of Fitness Centres*

120 Stakeholders are people or groups that either affect or are affected by an organisation's
121 actions (Mitchell et al., 1997). Primary stakeholders are those whose continued participation is
122 necessary for the firm's survival (e.g., investors, employees, customers, and suppliers), while
123 secondary stakeholders are not essential for its survival (e.g., media) (Clarkson, 1995). In FCs,
124 members are primary stakeholders because they are the end-consumers. They pay monthly fees
125 to access the FC, purchase additional products and services, engage on social media and face-
126 to-face, help attract new members, and influence organisational decision-making (García &
127 Welford, 2015; Pedragosa & Correia, 2009). Members are pivotal for service co-creation (e.g.,
128 group classes) and often recommend the FC to others (Foroughi et al., 2019). Therefore, high
129 member satisfaction should be a strategic imperative for FCs (Avourdiadou & Theodorakis,
130 2014; McDonald & Shaw, 2005).

131 The way in which a member engages with the FC reflects his/her role identity, because
132 stakeholders express their identity through actions (Crane & Ruebottom, 2011). With this in

133 mind, Biscaia et al. (2018) explored sport fan perceptions of their role identity. The authors
134 presented a multidimensional identity construct capturing power, urgency, and legitimacy (both
135 internal and external) and explored dimension-level effects on fans' behavioural intentions.
136 Despite the contribution of this study, the fan's interest in the sport organisation was not
137 included in either conceptualisation or operationalisation of role identity. Indeed, the impact of
138 one's interest in an organisation extends beyond transactions to all aspects that may offer
139 consumer benefits (Brennan et al., 2003), thereby offering the potential to shape stakeholders'
140 actions towards an organisation (Bryson, 2004). It is also important to simultaneously recognise
141 the importance of members to FCs and of FC to members (Woolf & Lawrence, 2017). Given
142 the inherently interactive nature of FCs in which members and managers frequently interact
143 (Behnam et al., 2021), extending the work of Biscaia et al. (2018) to this context is appropriate.
144 The current operationalisation of member identity therefore includes power, urgency,
145 legitimacy as well as interest. Both member and manager perceptions of these dimensions are
146 needed to fully capture the complexity of the construct.

147 *Member Identity and its Consequences*

148 Social identity theory is frequently used in studies of sport consumer behaviour to help
149 explain how and why people connect with groups (Woolf & Lawrence, 2017). Despite the
150 importance of group identity in sport contexts, most related research does not recognise that
151 individuals have a personal identity in addition to their social identity (Lock & Heere, 2017).
152 In fact, personal identity in sport can either be role-based (i.e., member identity) or category-
153 based (i.e., FC identity) (Trail et al., 2017). Social identity theory is used to frame the study of
154 category-based identity (e.g., identification to a FC), while identity theory better aligns with
155 role-based identity (i.e., importance of being a member of the FC) (Lock & Heere, 2017).

156 A primary tenet of identity theory is that role identities are guided by prior experiences and
157 that identity helps predict future behaviours (Ervin & Stryker, 2001). Individuals can have many

158 role identities, and each represents a set of beliefs about the importance of that role to the
159 individual (Trail et al., 2017). This is particularly important in fitness contexts because members
160 often see FCs as a central part of their life and use their membership to express their identity
161 (Behnam et al., 2021). Also, identifying with the role of being a member of a FC has associated
162 behavioural expectations (Woolf & Lawrence, 2017). In the current study, we explore the
163 dimensions of FC member identity and its subsequent effect on satisfaction and behavioural
164 intentions.

165 Building on Biscaia et al. (2018), member role-based identity in the fitness context can be
166 understood as the meaning individuals attach to that role. This can be conceptualised using
167 perceived power (i.e., degree to which the member is capable of influencing the FC), urgency
168 (i.e., extent to which the member expects immediate attention by FC staff), external legitimacy
169 (i.e., extent to which a member's concerns are considered by staff to be appropriate according
170 to social norms and values) and internal legitimacy (i.e., extent to which the individual sees
171 him/herself as being a member of a particular FCs). Interest (i.e., the degree to which a member
172 wants to know or learn about the FC) is needed to fully capture role identity in this context
173 because it is an important aspect of a person's connection to an organisation (Inoue et al., 2017).

174 Understanding role-based identity is important because of its influence on satisfaction. The
175 identity of a consumer is cultivated over time through the interactions with an organisation
176 (Matsuoka et al., 2003). Satisfaction is a backward-looking concept (Wolter et al., 2017) insofar
177 as it captures a consumer's perception after the service encounters. Therefore, an individual's
178 role identity is shaped by his/her experience and may contribute towards satisfaction with the
179 organisation (Wann, 2006). Furthermore, Trail et al. (2005) suggested a positive link between
180 identity, satisfaction and conative loyalty (i.e., behavioural intentions). This means that a
181 member's role identity is likely shaped by an assessment of the experiences with a FC as it
182 feeds the importance of that role. Following this rationale, we argue that as the member's role

183 identity intensifies, the more likely he/she is to be satisfied with the FC. Additionally, FC
184 members have more interaction with organisational personnel than most other services
185 (Behnam et al., 2021) and this may shape how that person identifies with the organisation. On
186 this basis, we propose:

187 **H1:** Fitness members' role identity positively impacts satisfaction.

188 Role identity often influences behavioural intentions towards the organisation because of
189 role expectations (Ervin & Stryker, 2001). A behavioural intention represents a motivational
190 component reflecting an individual's willingness to engage in a behaviour (Zeithaml et al.,
191 1996). Behavioural intentions are goal-oriented and can be either positive (e.g., repurchase or
192 recommendations) or negative (e.g., complains or switching behaviours) for organisations.
193 Following previous consumption-related literature in fitness (e.g., Avourdiadou & Theodorakis,
194 2014), in the current study, we define behavioural intentions as a member's intentions to make
195 positive comments about the FC, recommend it to others, renew the membership fee and
196 increase the frequency of their visits.

197 A fan's role identity positively influences his/her intentions to support the team and attend
198 future games (Biscaia et al., 2018). This is consistent with identity theory as the more salient
199 an individual's role (e.g., member of a FC), the more likely he/she is to adopt behaviours related
200 to the expectations of such identity (Stryker & Burke, 2000). Salient identities are those
201 displayed routinely (Laverie & Arnett, 2000), such as visiting a FC. In addition, despite the
202 common use of composite behavioural-intention measures (e.g., García-Fernández et al., 2016),
203 members often adopt a variety of 'behaviours' towards the FCs. Fitness members can adopt
204 'talk behaviours' (e.g., recommending the FC) and 'doing behaviours' (e.g., renew
205 membership) (Ferrand et al., 2010) and these should be measured separately to establish a more
206 nuanced understanding of their relationships with FCs. For example, while an individual may
207 encourage friends to become members, he/she may or may not renew the membership because

208 of internal or external constraints (Biscaia et al., 2017). On this basis, we propose the following
209 hypothesis:

210 **H2:** Fitness members' identity positively impacts the intention to (a) renew membership,
211 (b) increase weekly frequency and (c) recommend membership to others.

212 Sport consumer studies report positive relationships between consumer satisfaction and
213 behavioural intentions (e.g., Biscaia et al., 2021). This is because an accumulation of satisfying
214 experiences with a service provider generates conative (i.e., intentional) and behavioural loyalty
215 for consumers (Oliver, 1999). In FCs, managers seek to facilitate positive experiences that
216 satisfy members and lead to positive consumption behaviours (García-Fernández et al., 2016).
217 While a positive satisfaction-behavioural intentions link has been widely reported, the
218 mediating effect of satisfaction between role identity and behavioural intentions requires further
219 empirical examination – particularly in inherently interactive FC contexts (Behnam et al., 2021;
220 Xu et al., 2022). As noted by Behnam and colleagues, FC membership is often an expression
221 of an individual's identity, shaped by his/her interaction with the FC and with an influence on
222 subsequent evaluations of the service experiences (Laverie & Arnett, 2000; Wear & Heere,
223 2020). In addition, although studies have suggested that single measures of behavioural
224 intentions are appropriate in consumer behaviour research (e.g., Kwon & Trail, 2005), multiple
225 items will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationships among constructs.
226 Considering that one's identity is shaped by interactions with the organisation (Lock & Heere,
227 2017) that affect service experience evaluations (Trail et al., 2005), and that favourable
228 evaluations of these experiences can generate increased willingness to support the organisation
229 (Pedragosa & Correia, 2009), we propose that satisfaction partially mediates the effect of
230 member's identity on various behavioural intentions:

231 **H3:** Satisfaction mediates the relationship between member identity and the intention to
232 (a) renew membership, (b) increase weekly frequency and (c) recommend membership to
233 others.

234 Taken together, exploration of the three proposed hypotheses (Figure1) will facilitate a
235 better understanding of the relationship between member identity, satisfaction and behavioural
236 intentions. Recognising the need to develop a more comprehensive understanding of FC
237 member identity, this project aims to capture the perspective of both members and managers
238 through two complementary studies. Study 1 features a traditional hypothesis testing approach,
239 whereas the interviews in Study 2 enabled an exploration of the meaning and importance of
240 member identity dimensions among both managers and members.

241 [Figure1]

242 **Study 1 – Testing the Hypothesized Model**

243 **Study Context**

244 Data were collected from members of two FCs in Lisbon, Portugal. The European fitness
245 industry in 2020 reported €28.2 billion in revenues, underpinned by approximately 63,000 FCs,
246 and 65 million members (EuropeActive, 2020). In Portugal, annual revenues are estimated at
247 €289 million across 1100 FCs, with 688,000 members (Pedragosa & Cardadeiro, 2020).

248 **Measures**

249 The questionnaire included demographic questions and an initial pool of 32 items separated
250 into three sections. The first section assessed member identity, and included measures of power
251 (5 items), urgency (5 items), external legitimacy (4 items) and internal legitimacy (5 items)
252 adapted from Biscaia et al. (2018) for the fitness context. Items measuring interest (5 items)
253 were specifically created for this study and based on Bryson (2004). All items were measured
254 on a 10-point scale ranging from ‘Strongly Disagree’ (1) to ‘Strongly Agree’ (10). The 4-item
255 scale proposed by Pedragosa et al. (2015) was used to measure satisfaction, featuring a 10-point

256 scale ranging from ‘Strongly Dissatisfied’ (1) to ‘Strongly Satisfied’ (10). Behavioural
257 intentions were captured through four individual items, with three being adapted from
258 Avourdiadou and Theodorakis (2014) and one created specifically for this study (increase
259 weekly frequency). As we were capturing different ‘behaviours’ (Hedlund, 2014), single items
260 were used rather than a composite measure. This procedure has been successfully implemented
261 in prior studies examining behavioural intentions (e.g., Arnold & Reynolds, 2009). These four
262 items were measured on a 10-point scale, ranging from ‘Not Likely at All’ (1) to ‘Extremely
263 Likely’ (10).

264 Five sport management academics then conducted a content analysis of the items. These
265 researchers, all experienced in consumer behaviour research and from different countries,
266 received details on the purpose of the study, a description of the constructs and expected data
267 collection procedures. Based on their feedback, minor wording changes were adopted for six
268 items. Also, seven items were removed to ensure the parsimony of the questionnaire without
269 compromising each construct’s content. At this stage, the instrument was shortened to 25 items
270 (power=4; urgency=4; external legitimacy=4; internal legitimacy=3; interest=3; satisfaction=4;
271 behavioural intentions=3). A back-translation process was undertaken (Douglas & Craig,
272 2007). After translation into Portuguese by two bilingual authors, and back-translating into
273 English by a native of Portugal who is an academic with translation experience, the two versions
274 were compared and we concluded that the instruments were equivalent.

275 **Pilot Study**

276 Pilot data were collected through an online survey during a one-month period. Participants
277 were recruited using the Facebook page of a Portuguese FC. A total of 425 participants
278 responded to the survey. After data screening (e.g., elimination of surveys by participants less
279 than 16 years-old, incomplete surveys or surveys with one-third of consecutive answers in the
280 same scale number), 151 surveys were deemed usable for data analysis. The age of the

281 participants ranged from 17 to 62 years-old ($M=35.8$, $SD=9.3$), and 38.8% were in the 36-45
282 age range. About two-thirds were female (68.3%) and 46.9% had finished an undergraduate
283 degree. Almost half (47.7%) had been paid-members for more than 12 months, and 35.2% has
284 membership tenure of 19-24 months.

285 The psychometric properties of the items were assessed using SPSS 24.0. All skewness
286 values were less than 3.0, and kurtosis values were below 7.0 indicating that the items were
287 appropriate for factor analysis (Kline, 2005). The item-to-total correlations for all items
288 capturing member identity constructs and satisfaction were greater than the .50 threshold
289 (Zaichkowsky, 1985). Furthermore, Cronbach's alpha coefficients for constructs were above
290 .70, ranging from .86 to .93, and indicating good internal consistency (Nunnally & Berstein,
291 1994). This 25-item questionnaire was used for the main study.

292 **Main Study**

293 Participants were recruited from a large FC that is integrated within an international chain
294 operating in Lisbon. The FC manager sent an email to all active members explaining the study's
295 purpose and asking them to participate. A total of 767 individuals started the survey and 225
296 were completed and deemed usable for data analysis. As noted by Hulland et al. (2018), low
297 response rates do not necessarily represent a problem for theory testing and convenience
298 samples are appropriate to test the veracity of proposed relationships. The data screening
299 procedures from the pilot test were again utilised. Participant characteristics were similar to the
300 pilot study. The age of participants ranged from 16 to 89 years-old ($M=44.0$, $SD=14.7$). About
301 one-third (32.0%) were 36-45. More than half were female (55.6%) and had an undergraduate
302 degree (55.4%). The majority (78.7%) were members for more than 12 months. The
303 demographic characteristics of the participants corresponds to the typical profile of fitness
304 members reported in the Portuguese Fitness Barometer (Pedragosa & Cardadeiro, 2020).

305 Prior to data analysis, we considered the four common criteria for determining reflective
306 or formative dimensions (i.e., direction of causality, interchangeability of indicators,
307 covariation among indicators, and nomological net (Finn & Wang, 2014; Jarvis et al., 2003).
308 Given that power, urgency, internal legitimacy, internal legitimacy and interest are expected to
309 reflect member identity, these five constructs were specified as reflective. Data were then
310 analysed through SPSS 24.0, and a two-step maximum likelihood structural equation model
311 (SEM) was performed. First, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to assess the
312 measurement model. Composite reliability (Hair et al., 2009) was calculated to assess the
313 internal consistency of the constructs, while convergent validity was evaluated through the
314 average variance extracted (AVE). Discriminant validity was assessed through AVE vs.
315 squared correlations tests (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Second, SEM was used to test the
316 hypotheses. The fit of the data to both the measurement and structural models were examined
317 through the ratio of chi-square (χ^2) to its degrees of freedom, Tucker-Lewis index (TLI),
318 comparative-of-fit index (CFI), goodness-of-fit index (GFI), and root-mean-square error of
319 approximation (RMSEA).

320 Given that the study is cross-sectional featuring self-reported data, procedural remedies
321 were adopted to alleviate concerns of common method variance bias. First, as noted above, the
322 content and face validity of the items were analysed by an expert panel and the questionnaire
323 was subsequently piloted prior to the main application (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Second, the
324 items were randomized with a separation of dependent (satisfaction and behavioural intentions)
325 and independent variables (member identity dimensions) into different sections of the
326 questionnaire (Hulland et al., 2018).

327 **Results**

328 *Main Study*

354 consistent with prior research testing scales in different sport contexts (e.g., Biscaia et al., 2013;
355 Ross et al., 2006). Consistently, as the CR was above .60, convergent validity can be considered
356 adequate (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Additionally, the correlation between member identity and
357 satisfaction (.78) is below the .85 criterion, and there was a statistically significant decrease in
358 the χ^2 statistics when the correlation between these constructs was free versus constrained to
359 one ($\Delta\chi^2=37.78$; $\Delta df=1$; $p<.01$). These values support the validity of the second-order variable
360 of member identity. As noted by Bagozzi and Yi (2012), second-order models are appropriate
361 when first-order factors correlate with each other (see TableII) and when there is a theoretically
362 justifiable higher-order factor (i.e., member identity). This is corroborated by Claudy et al.
363 (2015) who also highlight the importance of second-order constructs to ensure parsimonious
364 and interpretable models. In line with measurement theory and consumer behaviour research,
365 we adopted the second-order construct of member identity to test structural relationships.

366 **Structural model.** The goodness-of-fit indices [$\chi^2(263)=662.61$ ($p<.001$), $\chi^2/df=2.52$, CFI=.93,
367 GFI=.82, TLI=.92, RMSEA=.08 (CI=.075-.009)] indicated an acceptable fit to the data. The
368 mean values for each behavioural intention ranged from 5.57 and 6.85¹. Figure2 and TableIII
369 illustrate the path coefficients for the structural model, indicating that member identity was
370 significantly related to satisfaction ($\beta=.79$, $p<.001$), which supports H1. Member identity
371 showed a significant positive effect on the intentions to renew membership ($\beta=.28$, $p<.001$),
372 increase weekly attendance frequency ($\beta=.30$, $p<.001$) and recommend membership to friends
373 ($\beta=.17$, $p<.001$). Thus, H2a, H2b and H2c were supported. In addition, satisfaction was
374 significantly and positively related to all behavioural intention items (renew membership:
375 $\beta=.57$, $p<.001$; increase weekly attendance: $\beta=.33$, $p<.01$; recommend: $\beta=.74$, $p<.001$).
376 Furthermore, through bootstrap procedures used to estimate the direct, indirect and total effects,
377 member identity showed a positive indirect effect on the three behavioural intention items

¹ Descriptive statistics, CFA item statistics and correlation matrix of the variables are available for consultation upon request.

378 (renew membership: $\beta=.45$, $p<.001$; increase weekly attendance: $\beta=.26$, $p<.01$; recommend:
379 $\beta=.58$, $p<.001$). Therefore, H3a, H3b and H3c were also supported. Member identity accounted
380 for 63% of the variance in satisfaction. Jointly, member identity and satisfaction accounted for
381 approximately 65% of the intention to renew the membership, 36% of the intention to increase
382 weekly frequency, and 77% of the variance of the intention to recommend the FC.

383 [Figure2]

384 [TableIII]

385 The results of Study 1 indicated good psychometric properties of the multidimensional
386 construct of member identity and provided evidence of its positive direct effect on satisfaction,
387 and an indirect effect on all behavioural intention measures (via satisfaction). Therefore, all
388 hypotheses were supported. Study 2 was implemented next to explore the more nuanced aspects
389 of member identity as a construct. Member and manager perceptions of the meaning and
390 importance of members and their identity were captured through semi-structured interviews.

391 **Study 2 – Understanding member’s role identity: Member and manager perspectives**

392 **Participants and Procedures**

393 A purposive sampling approach was employed (Palinkas et al., 2015). Nine semi-structured
394 interviews were conducted with members, and seven with managers of the FC chain (all face-
395 to-face) from Study 1. Interviewing is among the most used qualitative techniques, with the
396 semi-structured format the most predominant (Creswell, 2007), allowing interviewees to freely
397 describe and explain circumstances and experiences (Qu & Dumay, 2011). Data were collected
398 during a one-month period prior to onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020. The
399 inclusion criteria for managers were having experience as section coordinators or being director
400 of the FC. For members, they had to have at least 6 months of membership. The managers’ ages
401 ranged from 27 to 47 years-old ($M=35.29$; $SD=6.68$) and their work experience in the FC

402 ranged from 3 to 21 years (female=2; male=5)². The age of members ranged from 19 to 65
403 years-old (M=38.56; SD=17.50), with 55.6% having an active membership for over 37 months
404 (female=5; male=4). All interviewees attended their FC at least 3 times per week, and 78%
405 followed the centre's social media (i.e., Facebook, Instagram) or App. Interviews were held in
406 a private room of the FC and lasted 15-30 minutes. All interviews were conducted by the study's
407 first author. Only the interviewer and interviewee were present in the room.

408 Interview questions were derived from previous literature about identity and stakeholders
409 (Biscaia et al., 2018; Mitchell et al., 1997) and captured managers and members' perceptions
410 of power, urgency, internal legitimacy, external legitimacy and interest³. Data collection ceased
411 when no new and relevant information was emerging from the interviews (Guest et al., 2006).

412 **Data Analysis**

413 Interview data were analysed using MAXQDA.12 and according to Graneheim and
414 Lundman (2004). The analysis started immediately after the data was gathered, with the lead
415 author listening to the recorded interviews, transcribing and reading them several times. Next,
416 all transcriptions were given to the other authors. These were evaluated both on an individual
417 and collective basis (Gratton & Jones, 2010) to better understand the quotes in relation to the
418 member identity attributes under investigation: power; external legitimacy; urgency; internal
419 legitimacy; and interest. Then, quotes were organised into three levels of importance: high,
420 neutral and low (Stieler et al., 2014). This was based on the frequency that each interviewee
421 described each theme.

422 To address trustworthiness, member checking was implemented. Participants were invited
423 to review and comment on their quotes and how these reflect each of the attributes under
424 investigation. We also engaged in peer debriefing during and after interviews to discuss findings

² Sample characteristics of all interviewees available for consultation upon request.

³ Interview questions available for consultation upon request.

425 with colleagues not involved in this study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility was enhanced
426 by interviewing participants with prolonged engagement in the research setting.

427 **Results**

428 The findings indicate a degree of consistency between members and managers' views about
429 power, urgency, external legitimacy, internal legitimacy, and interest. The main findings of the
430 interviews and related quotes are presented in TableIV.

431 *Power*

432 Managers perceive that members often have low power in FCs and that member influence
433 depends on what they want to influence. For example, if the member has a request related to
434 non-core aspects of the service (e.g., changing music type in the exercise room, television
435 channels or even cleaning some parts of the FC), they have the power to influence it. Relatedly,
436 MGR6 mentioned "there are situations that members can influence, for instance, the type of
437 music in the fitness centre." These are aspects the gym instructor can change, but structural
438 aspects linked to gym management are less likely to be influenced by members (e.g., acquisition
439 of equipment). Also, most managers agree that if the request goes against the FC policy,
440 strategy, rules and regulations, the power of the member is lower. MGR6 said that "changing
441 class schedules is not always possible because we have to keep in mind the professional agenda
442 and the club's strategy to make the changes. When I deny it, I always justify it." Regardless of
443 power levels by members, managers highlight the importance of explaining their actions.
444 Members' power is also conditioned by the opinion of the majority (i.e., in situations when
445 managers ask members' opinion, the final decision depends on the opinion of most) and by the
446 financial availability of the FC.

447 Members reported that their power to influence the FC was limited or even non-existent.
448 The majority feel they have the power to complain but not to influence decisions, which is
449 aligned with what managers conveyed. MEM2 said "we do not have the capacity to influence,

450 but we can always complain if the service delivered to us is bad.” The findings also indicate
451 that when acting in group, they perceive more power. MEM1 said “I feel I don’t have power,
452 but I don’t remember any good example to demonstrate it”, while MEM2 noted that “alone I
453 have no power but when many of us complain we have power to influence.” Occasional
454 situations such as music and television channels are easily changed after members’ suggestions
455 as also noted by managers. However, aspects related to organisational, structural, and strategic
456 situations of the FC are under the control of managers (“we don’t feel real and concrete actions
457 from the gym regarding our claims”; MEM6).

458 *Urgency*

459 Managers noted that when members express urgency it is because something is wrong or
460 needs to be improved immediately. Most managers note that members exhibit urgency
461 regarding services they use in a day-to-day basis, such as machines in the exercise room or
462 cleanliness of the SPA. MGR4 mentioned that “maintenance of exercise room equipment is
463 very urgent for members.” Managers reported that solutions often depend on third parties like
464 their superiors or external suppliers. It is therefore sometimes challenging to address members’
465 requests quickly. MGR5 said that “the exercise room has been filthy for 3 days, and the
466 outsourced company should handle the situation. This delay is on the suppliers.” At least one
467 manager conveyed that in response to a volume of complaints, more substantial changes are
468 possible (shifting to alternate external suppliers) but this was often stressful for management.
469 MGR4 articulated the sequence in response to escalating complaints. “It reaches a point that is
470 not viable. Suggestion, then complaint and then imposition.” Managers noted that proper
471 communication of the challenges to members is vital, especially when the response time is slow
472 and not under their control. MGR7 suggested that “communication makes members more
473 calmly wait for the solution”. It was noted by managers that long-term members are usually
474 more patient, while more recent members often convey more urgency in their requests.

475 Members are almost certain to complain when they perceive something is wrong. However,
476 they also recognise it may be more difficult for managers to respond quickly in certain
477 situations. This aligns with the stories that managers told. For day-to-day situations, such as
478 cleanliness, music, television channels, members feel they are entitled to an immediate response
479 from managers. MEM8 said that the urgency “depends on the situation. For example, hygiene
480 needs to be resolved quickly.” For issues related to equipment and machine malfunctioning,
481 maintenance and funky smell, urgency is also expected but to a somewhat lesser extent. They
482 want a quick response by the FC, but accept that the resolution of these issues may take time.
483 This view is also expressed by MEM2 who refer that “there are loads of damaged machines,
484 but we have to accept because it may not depend on them but on the supplier.”

485 *External Legitimacy*

486 Managers noted that members have external legitimacy in the sense they can make
487 suggestions and complaints, but not the right to ‘impose’ anything. Most managers do not
488 accept the imposition by the members because it could go against the FC strategy. While
489 acknowledging members’ legitimacy, managers consider members do not drive the way the FC
490 is managed. Recognising the external legitimacy of members is important as it helps managing
491 the business and this can be accomplished by graciously receiving suggestions or complaints –
492 formally if necessary. MGR2 indicated that members “have the legitimacy to make suggestions
493 but not to impose a will. Normally, members report their concerns to gym instructors and these
494 report to the coordinator. We have many weekly suggestions, and some complaints too. Some
495 members also leave papers at the reception, speak to the receptionists and sometimes directly
496 to me.” A similar view was expressed by MGR1 (“members have the legitimacy to make
497 suggestions and complain but not impose their will”).

498 For members, there was unanimous agreement that the FC recognises their right to
499 complain and make suggestions. As noted by MEM4, “in general, members are taken into

500 account in some way. They recognize our importance even if they don't solve our problems. At
501 least, that's my perception." For instance, MEM2 referred "managers recognise our
502 importance", while MEM3 said "managers are open to accept our suggestions. For example,
503 this weekend we were in a competition and they gave us the floor to speak openly. We have an
504 open group and talk about how to improve the training sessions." Consistently, MEM9 noted
505 that "I never had many situations to complain but I think they recognise that we are clients and
506 as such we have that right."

507 *Internal Legitimacy*

508 Most managers acknowledge that members feel they have the legitimacy and feel good
509 about being members. By in large, the managers interviewed in this study noted that longer
510 tenured members are more involved with FCs and provide more constructive suggestions.
511 Members who are in the FC for a lesser amount of time complain more. MGR5 said that some
512 "members feel the legitimacy to send messages to my cell phone, and I'm fine with them feeling
513 the freedom to do it.", which would not happen if the FC was not important for them. MGR1
514 further noted that "members feel they have the right to make suggestions and claims, and that
515 is good." Despite that, it is worth noting that "the final decision is to be made by the director"
516 (MGR4).

517 It was evident that members see themselves as an important part of the FC community,
518 exhibiting the confidence to make suggestions and complaints, but not impositions. However,
519 two members made the point that related expertise and socio-economic profile often influence
520 members' perceptions of having the right to complain or suggest anything to the FC. For
521 example, people with little knowledge of exercise and health do not feel the legitimacy to
522 question the type of training they are doing ("technical knowledge of members to complain or
523 suggest"). On the other hand, most members consider that being part of the FC is important for
524 them. As such, if the FC offers a service, members have the legitimacy to suggest and complain

525 about that when appropriate. This was articulated by MEM6: “I think I have the right to claim
526 because I’m an older member and realise that the gym cannot respond to the individual interests
527 of all.” She further added in relation to the cleanliness of the rooms and group class equipment
528 that “I have enough experience to realise that there are situations that affect everyone, and I
529 should complain if it is for the interest of all.”

530 *Interest*

531 In general, the managers perceived that members have high levels of interest in the FC,
532 and this is reflected through interest shown in the schedule of group classes, and the desire to
533 know more about training sessions, instructors, and future events. Managers found that more
534 experienced members (i.e., knowledgeable of other gyms and/or long tenure of membership),
535 the more they want to know about what happens in the FC. MGR6 adds that some “members
536 are very curious with the training sessions, and their interest tends to increase with time. Some
537 of them search the Internet for information about exercises to then discuss with the instructors.”
538 MGR7 further highlights how members show interest in the events organised by the FC (“In
539 our events, we always have lots of participation, so it is something that moves them”).

540 The interviews with members indicate that most are curious and interested in FC activities:
541 individual training sessions; new instructors and health professionals; supplementary events;
542 official social network sites (e.g., Facebook, Instagram), appearance of the staff in TV shows
543 and magazines. MEM7 mentioned “I love to see when the FC appears on TV and I love to
544 attend the events they organise. They are effective at communicating on social network sites,
545 and we have a WhatsApp group that posts updates in a daily basis.” This interest in the FC is
546 shared by other members. For example, MEM 3 noted his enthusiasm to learn more about
547 CrossFit sessions (“I am reading and studying about it), while MEM 4 noted that “the Gym give
548 us information but could give more. I often search on their website or other places when they
549 provide me with all I want.”

550

[TableIV]

551 The results of Study 2 indicate that managers and members have similar perceptions of
552 member power, urgency, internal legitimacy, external legitimacy, and interest. Both managers
553 and members recognise that members' power is often low; urgency depends on the situation
554 and whether is it easy or difficult to solve; the FC recognises members' external legitimacy;
555 members feel themselves as legitimate members of the FC; and most members exhibit high
556 interest in the FC services.

557

Overall Discussion

558 The first study quantitatively examined the relationships between member identity (power,
559 urgency, external legitimacy, internal legitimacy and interest), satisfaction and behavioural
560 intentions in FCs. The second study qualitatively explored how members and managers
561 perceive member's role identity. In doing so, the two studies extend previous literature that has
562 typically focused on either managers or consumers, conceptualises and measures role identity
563 to the fitness context, and provides a deeper understanding of the how members' identity
564 contribute to the development of long-term relationships between members and FCs.

565 The results of Study 1 provide evidence that member identity plays an important role
566 increasing both satisfaction and favourable behavioural intentions towards the FC (Trail et al.,
567 2005). This means that the more meaning individuals attach to their role of being members, the
568 more satisfied they will be and more likely to favour the organisation. The impact of members'
569 identity on behavioural intentions that emerged here supports previous sport consumer
570 behaviour studies (e.g., Biscaia et al., 2018) suggesting that high salience of role identity
571 influences behavioural choices (Stryker & Burke, 2000). These findings further reinforce that
572 members are primary stakeholders of FCs (Pedragosa & Correia, 2009), indicating that the five
573 dimensions of member identity come together to increase the likelihood of members renewing
574 a membership, recommending the FC to others and increasing weekly visits. It is also worth

575 noting that satisfaction mediates the relationship between member identity and all behavioural
576 intentions. This adds to the literature by providing empirical support to the idea that one's
577 identity shape how individuals evaluate their experiences (Wear & Heere, 2020) and that these
578 experiences are vital to generate positive outcomes (Behnam et al., 2021). Also, it extends sport
579 consumer identity literature (e.g., Biscaia et al., 2018; Lock & Heere, 2017) into the fitness
580 arena, which is of particular relevance because member experiences often feature high levels
581 of interaction at the intersection of the service provider, member and built environment (Pizzo
582 et al., 2020). Specifically, the evaluation of FC experiences is influenced by the meaning a
583 person attaches to the role of being a member of that FC and can act as a driver of FCs' success.

584 The conceptualization and measurement of member identity here has facilitated a nuanced
585 understanding of the importance of each identity dimension (power, urgency, internal
586 legitimacy, external legitimacy and interest). Empirical evidence has helped to address concerns
587 about the distinction of these dimensions in different contexts (Currie et al., 2009). External
588 legitimacy emerged as the most important attribute reflecting member identity in Study 1, which
589 supports the idea that role identities must be socially recognised (Ervin & Stryker, 2001). The
590 second most important attribute is power reflecting the influence of members on organisational
591 decisions (Mitchell et al., 1997). Power is followed by internal legitimacy, which helps
592 understand the way a person sees him/herself in the role of a member (Trail et al., 2017).
593 Additionally, evidence here related to interest and urgency as identity dimensions supports the
594 idea that stakeholder interest may shape the organisation (Bryson, 2004), especially when
595 seeking immediate attention (Senaux, 2008). Collectively, knowing that member identity is
596 dependent on the relative importance of external legitimacy, power, internal legitimacy, interest
597 and urgency is an important contribution to the literature, given that membership in FCs often
598 represents a central part on individuals' life and is an expression of their identity (Behnam et
599 al., 2021).

600 Findings from Study 2 indicate that perceptions of members and managers are similar
601 regarding the respective importance of power, urgency, external legitimacy, internal legitimacy
602 and interest. These findings complement Study 1 allowing a holistic understanding of members'
603 importance to FCs and filling blind spots from previous stakeholder research based on either
604 consumers' or managers' perspectives alone (Neville et al., 2011). Both parties recognized that
605 members have the right to suggest and complain according to the norms, rules and values of the
606 FC (external legitimacy). This is paramount because the actions of members are important to
607 help drive organisational strategy improvements (Parent & Deephouse, 2007). Furthermore,
608 despite limited ability to exert power related to a wider organisational strategy, results from
609 both Studies 1 and 2 confirm the importance of power as a central attribute of stakeholders (i.e.,
610 members) (Bryson, 2004), which can manifest in various ways (e.g., changing music channel).
611 The importance of internal legitimacy was also acknowledged by members and managers, and
612 insights from Study 2 indicate that the length of membership, academic background and socio-
613 economic status of the members seem to influence perceptions of internal legitimacy. This
614 finding empirically supports the notion that one's role identity accommodates the social nature
615 of past experiences (Ervin & Stryker, 2001) and that identification with the organisation is
616 important to increase self-esteem (Trail et al., 2005).

617 Interest in the FC and its activities (e.g., schedule of group classes, social media) was also
618 highlighted by both members and managers. We note that interest seems to increase with the
619 length of membership (i.e., more knowledgeable of fitness services), suggesting that the
620 interaction with the service provider and other members likely generates benefits for the FCs
621 (Behnam et al., 2021). In addition, both members and managers recognized that members
622 request immediate attention (urgency) regardless of the situation. This is important because
623 even short-term interactions with the FC may trigger identity developments (Woolf &
624 Lawrence, 2017). Nonetheless, insights from Study 2 indicate that not all issues raised are

625 treated equally. For example, claims related to day-to-day operations (e.g., cleanliness) are
626 easier to solve than those related to organisational decisions (e.g., changes of gym equipment).
627 The findings also suggest that urgency is a catalyst to initiate members' actions in relation to
628 the organisation (Mitchell et al., 1997), and that consumers use a range of platforms to request
629 the attention of organisations (Ferreira Barbosa et al., 2022). Given the importance of
630 examining holistically how members and FCs affect each other, findings from studies 1 and 2
631 extend previous literature by providing empirical evidence that member's perception of their
632 importance align with those emanating from managers. Relatedly, capturing the views of
633 managers and members is strategic and can add value to a FC (Priem, 2007).

634 **Managerial Implications**

635 The results from the current study have implications for FCs, and other sport and recreation
636 providers. As organisational success often depends on identifying and satisfying stakeholders
637 (Neville et al., 2011), FC managers should nurture the five dimensions of member identity. For
638 example, power and external legitimacy can be addressed through clear communication about
639 contracts and codes of behaviour in the FCs and through digital platforms. In addition,
640 technology (e.g., Apps) can ensure that urgent requests are addressed quickly (Gómez-Ruiz et
641 al., 2022). Increased competition (e.g., rewards and physical challenges), social interactions
642 (e.g., supplementary events), and wearable technology (Pizzo et al., 2020) can help nurture the
643 internal legitimacy dimension. Furthermore, members' interest could be increased through
644 regular micro-communications (i.e., service updates) and macro-communications (e.g.,
645 promoting supplementary events) using different platforms (e.g., website, WhatsApp). In
646 addition, gamification through digital platforms (e.g., acquiring points based on actions over
647 time) can help foster member identity and its associated dimensions. By nurturing these five
648 dimensions, managers will also likely enhance members' perceptions of overall service quality,
649 a known precursor to satisfaction in fitness (e.g., García-Fernández et al., 2016; Xu et al., 2022).

650 For example, the exertion of power by an individual to change the music in a FC may affect
651 how others assess the centre's ambience (García-Fernández et al., 2018). Similarly, the urgency
652 regarding equipment maintenance of, interest in official social network sites or schedule of
653 group classes could shape both core and ancillary aspects of service delivery.

654 Members should also be encouraged to experience the variety of available services (e.g.,
655 group classes, swimming pool) to increase the number of touchpoints. This could be done
656 through regular vouchers to the service offerings. As a member's identity can be dynamic (Katz
657 & Heere, 2016) and there is a subjective evaluation of service encounters (Bodet, 2008),
658 periodic assessments of member identity perceptions and satisfaction will provide useful
659 insights and ultimately foster desired behaviours (e.g., membership renewal and
660 recommendations, more frequent visitation). The five dimensions should be front of mind when
661 customising member relations, simultaneously helping to reduce member rotation (Pedragosa
662 & Cardadeiro, 2020) and retention levels in a competitive market (Kim & Byon, 2021, 2022).

663 **Limitations and Future Research**

664 There are limitations in this study that should be acknowledged. First, data from the main
665 study were from a single FC located in one city, which may limit generalisability of study
666 findings. Second, member identity was measured at a single moment of time and previous
667 research has noted that role identity is not static (Stryker, 2007). Thus, longitudinal studies are
668 welcome to provide deeper insights on role identity and its impact on subsequent outcomes
669 towards FCs. Also, the COVID-19 pandemic has contributed to change physical activity
670 patterns among individuals (Ferreira Barbosa et al., 2022). Additional research could thus
671 assess whether these changes affected member identity.

672 Additional research may focus on examining other outcomes of role identity. A specific
673 suggestion is the impact of member identity on customer lifetime value (i.e., present value of a
674 predicted net profit attributed to the future relationship with a consumer; Wang et al., 2012).

675 Furthermore, the increased importance of technology and digital transformation of fitness
676 environments (i.e., Apps, wearable technology, virtual-classes, on-demand) has changed the
677 experience of many FC members (García-Fernández et al., 2022; Pizzo et al., 2020). Measuring
678 how technology and digital interactions shapes FC member identity is a promising research
679 avenue.

680 Collectively, the findings from this study indicate that power, urgency, external legitimacy,
681 internal legitimacy, and interest are salient aspects of member identity. For FC members, these
682 contribute to satisfaction and behavioural intentions. Members and managers hold similar
683 perceptions of the importance of member's role identity attributes. These two findings should
684 be considered by academics and practitioners concerned with optimising the experiences of FC
685 members.

686

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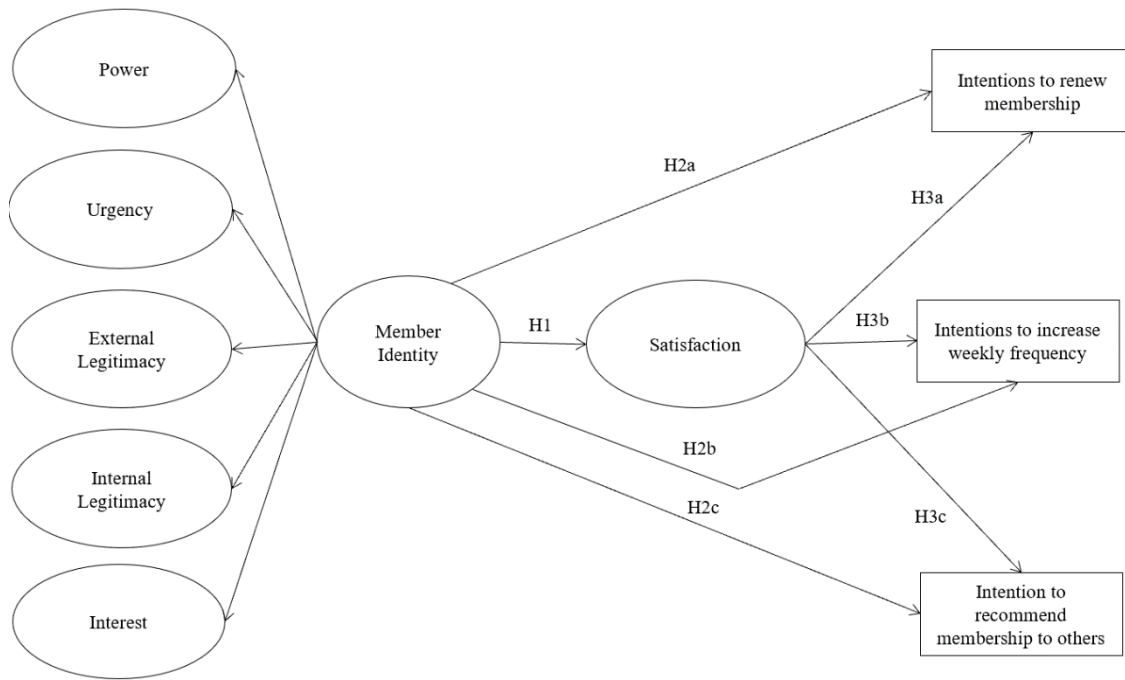
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890



891

892 **Figure 1.** Hypothesised model for study 1.

893

894 **Table I.** Psychometric properties of the variables in study 1.

Constructs	First-order		Second-order		
	Items	Loading	Z-value	Loading	Z-value
Member Identity (<i>CR</i> =.81; <i>AVE</i> =.48)					
Power (<i>CR</i> =.93; <i>AVE</i> =.78)	I can exert power within <FC>	.93	18.27	.77	12.15
	I can influence <FC>	.85	15.65		
	I can impose my will to <FC>	.81	14.60		
	I can impact the direction of <FC>	.93	18.11		
Urgency (<i>CR</i> =.87; <i>AVE</i> =.63)	I urgently communicate my concerns to <FC>	.81	14.30	.40	5.41
	I express my opinion to <FC> without delay	.89	16.25		
	I communicate my requests to <FC> promptly	.78	13.31		
	I actively seek to have attention of <FC> regarding my concerns	.69	11.34		
External Legitimacy (<i>CR</i> =.96; <i>AVE</i> =.85)	My claims are viewed by <FC> as legitimate	.91	17.76	.96	15.07
	<FC> considers me a legitimate stakeholder	.89	16.90		
	My concerns are viewed by <FC> as appropriate	.95	19.20		
	<FC> listens to me when I express my opinion	.95	18.91		
Internal Legitimacy (<i>CR</i> =.84; <i>AVE</i> =.64)	I consider myself to be a member of <FC>			.68	9.10
	I would experience a loss if I had to stop being a member of <FC>	.80	14.10		
	Being a member of <FC> is very important to me	.78	13.43		
Interest (<i>CR</i> =.88; <i>AVE</i> =.72)		.82	14.42	.53	7.31
	I pay attention to what is happening at <FC>	.86	15.58		
	I want to learn more about <FC>	.82	14.47		
Satisfaction (<i>CR</i> =.96; <i>AVE</i> =.85)	I take an interest in <FC>	.87	15.84		
	I am fully satisfied with <FC>	.97	15.95		
	<FC> always fulfils my expectations	.96	17.43		
	My experiences with <FC> are excellent	.90	19.51		
	<FC> has never disappointed me so far	.90	19.51		
		.85	19.85		

895 *Notes:* CR=Composite reliability; AVE=Average Variance Extracted; FC=Fitness Centre.

896

897 **Table II.** Discriminant validity results for the first-order constructs (study 1).

	AVE	1 .78	2 .63	3 .85	4 .64	5 .72	6 .85
1. Power	.78	1.00					
2. Urgency	.63	.18	1.00				
3. External Legitimacy	.85	.57	.14	1.00			
4. Internal Legitimacy	.64	.28	.32	.36	1.00		
5. Interest	.72	.14	.37	.21	.72	1.00	
6. Satisfaction	.85	.24	.03	.57	.47	.22	1.00

898 *Notes:* 1=Power; 2=Urgency; 3=External legitimacy; 4=Internal legitimacy; 5=Interest; 6=Satisfaction.
899

Table III. Direct, indirect and total effects for the hypothesized model using bootstrapping procedures (study 1).

Hypothesis/Effect/Path	Bootstrap estimate		95% Confidence interval	
	Path coefficient	SE	Bootstrap percentile	
			Lower	Upper
H1: Direct Effect(MID→SAT)	.79***	.12	.72	.90
H2a: Direct Effect(MID→RENMEM)	.28***	.15	.07	.94
H2b: Direct Effect(MID→WEEKFREQ)	.30***	.21	.09	.69
H2c: Direct Effect(MID→RECOMMEND)	.17***	.12	.04	.64
H3a: Direct Effect(SAT→RENMEM)	.57***	.09	.05	.76
H3b: Direct Effect(SAT→WEEKFREQ)	.33**	.12	.05	.54
H3c: Direct Effect(SAT→RECOMMEND)	.74***	.07	.30	.88
Indirect(Mediated) Effect(MID→SAT→RENMEM)	.45***	.27	.05	.60
Indirect(Mediated) Effect(MID→SAT→WEEKFREQ)	.26**	.17	.04	.42
Indirect(Mediated) Effect(MID→SAT→RECOMMEND)	.58***	.15	.27	.70
Total Effect(MID→SAT + SAT→RENMEM + MID→SAT→RENMEM)	.73***	.08	.62	.88
Total Effect(MID→SAT + MID→WEEKFREQ + MID→SAT→WEEKFREQ)	.56***	.07	.45	.68
Total Effect(MID→SAT + MID→RECOMMEND + MID→SAT→RECOMMEND)	.76***	.07	.66	.90

Model fit (SEM)	χ^2 (df)	χ^2/df	p	CFI	GFI	TLI	RMSEA
	662.61 (263)	2.52	p < .001	.93	.82	.92	.08

Explained variance	
Satisfaction	R ² = .63
RENMEM	R ² = .65
WEEKFREQ	R ² = .36
RECOMMEND	R ² = .77

Notes: MID=Member Identify, SAT=Satisfaction, RENMEM=Intention to Renew Membership, WEEKFREQ=Intention to Increase Weekly Frequency, RECOMMEND=Intention to Recommend, SE=Standard Error, 500 Bootstrapping Re-samples, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, ***p<0.001.

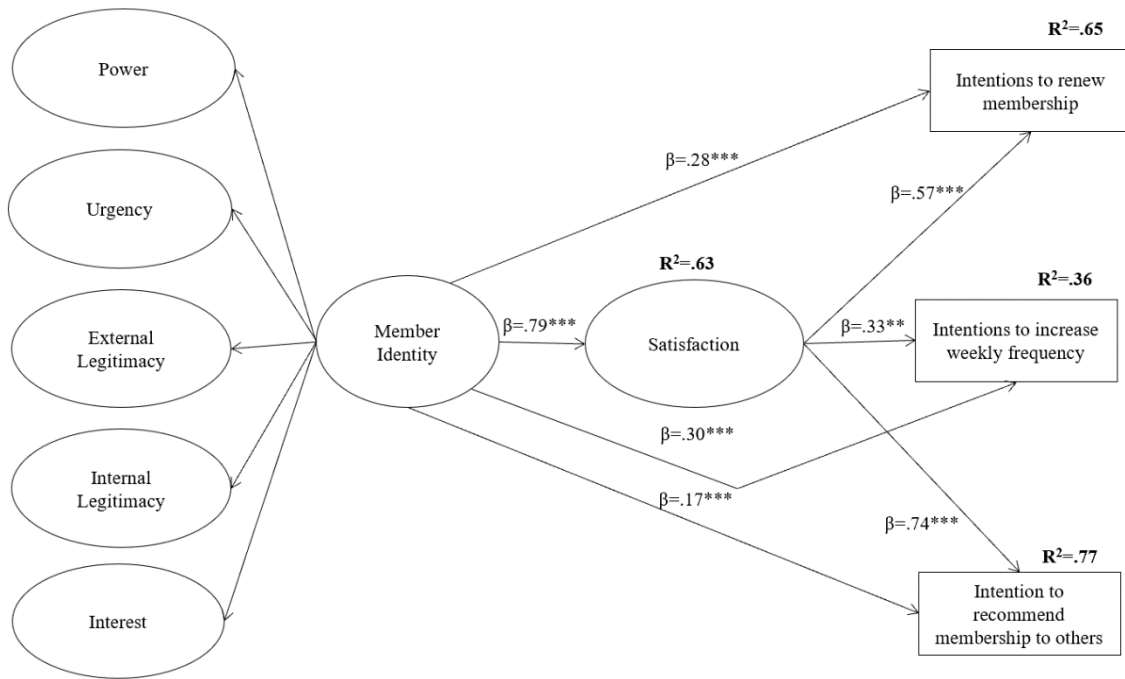


Figure 2. Standardised estimates of the second-order structural model.

Table IV. Themes, its importance and frequency (n), and example responses (study 2).

Themes	Importance(n)	Example quote
<i>Power</i> (managers)	High(0)	N/A
	Neutral(1)	“I haven't had a case like that. Members are very calm.” (MGR3)
	Low(6)	“Members don't have power and the final decision belongs to the fitness centre, director, coordinator based on our vision.” (MGR4).
<i>Power</i> (members)	High(2)	“I think I have power regarding cleaning in the changing rooms. I have complained before and <fitness centre> improved.” (MEM8)
	Neutral(0)	N/A
	Low(7)	“The maximum I can do is to make a suggestion about what I think needs to be repaired and improved. Still, I don't have the power to change. I try to influence <fitness centre>, but the final decision belongs to them.” (MEM4)
<i>Urgency</i> (managers)	High(5)	“The member has urgency ‘for yesterday’. The jacuzzi is not working for one week. The piece takes a long time to be sent by the supplier. They complain quickly..” (MGR2)
	Neutral(0)	N/A
	Low(2)	“Urgency is only for some members. Most do it at the reception and wait. A few want the director to solve the problems immediately. Members are generally peaceful.” (MGR7)
<i>Urgency</i> (members)	High(4)	“I think we have. I complain and the next time I come to the fitness centre, I want that problem to have been solved.” (MEM2)
	Neutral(0)	N/A
	Low(5)	“I want them to solve the issue of funny smell in some parts of the gym, but I know it is not easy to solve it.” (MEM9)
<i>External legitimacy</i> (manager)	High(7)	“Members have the right to complain and suggest. Just yesterday, some members suggested removing the treadmills from that area and were heard. I recognise they have the legitimacy to make suggestions and complain, but not to impose anything.” (MGR6)
	Neutral(0)	N/A
	Low(0)	N/A
<i>External legitimacy</i> (members)	High(9)	“Managers consider we have the right to suggest and complain. I feel very comfortable here. If I have a problem, if something is wrong, I tell it to the instructor. I believe they listen to us.” (MEM7)
	Neutral(0)	N/A
	Low(0)	N/A
<i>Internal legitimacy</i> (managers)	High(6)	“Members have. Older people who have been around longer make more suggestions. People who are here for less time make less suggestions but complain more.” (MGR7)
	Neutral(0)	N/A
	Low(1)	“I don't think so. I have the idea that older members impose less than the recent members. In my opinion, it is all about trust. I've always been here, and the old members have a different tone of criticism, they are more comprehensive” (MGR6)

<i>Internal legitimacy (members)</i>	High(7)	“I am the client and of course I have the right to complain and make suggestions. Even today I said there is a funny smell in the corridor next to the changing rooms.” (MEM9)
	Neutral(0)	N/A
	Low(2)	“Not everyone fell they have the right to make suggestions. It depends on one’s personality. Those members who are here for less time do not suggest so much and are more shy. There are some people who do not feel comfortable to share thoughts.” (MEM5)
<i>Interest (managers)</i>	High(6)	“Members look very often if the map of classes is updated on the app, website, Facebook and Instagram. They pay attention to day-to-day activities.” (MGR2)
	Neutral(0)	N/A
	Low(1)	“This activity is new in the <fitness centre> because we only had 35 registrations with the last group-class over a period of 2 years. Some members show low interest in everything.” (MGR3)
<i>Interest (members)</i>	High(7)	“I’m very interested and curious about training. I love sports. <Fitness centre> gives us lots of information.” (MEM4)
	Neutral(0)	N/A
	Low(2)	“I’m not curious. I see it in the newsfeed on Instagram, but I don’t look for information. Before, when I took group classes, I used to look for information. Now, as I only go to the exercise room and pool, I don't look any information.” (MEM8)