MEMBERSHIP RETENTION IN THE FITNESS INDUSTRY: A QUALITATIVE STUDY AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF A PREDICTIVE MODEL.

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Abstract
The concern over poor membership retention rates in the fitness industry is increasing, yet it has attracted little empirical research. So far, membership retention has mostly been indirectly and narrowly addressed, whereby research has either measured member satisfaction or member usage of a fitness club from mainly a service quality perspective. This paper introduces a mixed-method (QUAL→quan) research project and presents the findings of the qualitative study. 30 semi-structured telephone interviews were conducted with a stratified random sample of current and past members of a fitness club. The responses were thematically analysed and used in the development of a predictive model of fitness club membership retention. The model seeks to predict club usage and actual retention, and includes components such as attitudinal, normative, control beliefs, motivation orientation as well as perceived quality, brand identity and commitment.