A Psychological Approach to Predicting Membership Retention in the Fitness Industry

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the University of Worcester's requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Declaration

I declare that no portion of the work referred to in this thesis has been submitted for another degree or qualification of any comparable award at this or any other university or other institution of learning.

This thesis is a presentation of my original research work. Wherever contributions of others are involved, this is clearly acknowledged and referenced. Where I have quoted from work of others, the source is always given. With exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work.

Helen Watts

March 2012

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Abstract

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This thesis identifies and empirically validates the efficacy of psychological factors in the prediction of fitness club membership retention. Further, it seeks to address gaps in the literature created by three biases of the fitness club membership retention literature so far; a bias towards predicting renewal as opposed to cancellation, a bias towards predicting intentions as opposed to actual behaviour, and a bias towards conducting positivist research as opposed to pragmatist research. In response to these biases, this thesis focuses on cancellation (both intentional and actual) and adopts a pragmatic mixed methods approach.

Firstly, a qualitative study was conducted with a sample of twenty-three current and ex-members of a fitness club which suggested a predictive role of four a priori themes (perceived service quality, perceived value for money, usage and brand identification) and five additional themes which were elicited during a template analysis (social identification, rapport, social physique anxiety, state anxiety and self-determination). These nine themes represented nine potential predictors of membership cancellation.

A questionnaire was then developed, which measured these nine predictors and intentional cancellation, and was distributed to a large cross-section of current members (n=716) and a smaller cross-section of new members (n=89) which assessed the efficacy of the nine predictors in predicting intentional cancellation. In addition, actual cancellation data was collected twelve months after the questionnaire data was gathered for both studies.

In relation to current members, state anxiety (in relation to staff) and intention to cancel, together significantly predicted actual cancellation. With regard to intention to cancel, whilst many of the predictors were predictive when analysed individually, when modelled together, only social physique anxiety, state anxiety (in relation to staff and members) and four self-determination sub-scales (external regulation, identified regulation, integrated regulation and intrinsic regulation) were predictive of intentional cancellation.

In relation to new members, actual cancellation could not be predicted. With regard to intention to cancel, overall perceived service quality and three brand identification scales; brand attractiveness, brand prestige and brand distinctiveness were found to be predictive of intentional cancellation.

The findings of the studies are integrated and discussed, and suggestions are made regarding future research directions and implications for practice.

Chapter 1
Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This thesis seeks to explore the factors underlying fitness club membership retention.

Retention is widely considered to be linked to organizational effectiveness, given the cheaper costs of retaining customers versus acquiring them, and the increased customer value that retained customers offer to an organisation.

However, retention can be hard to achieve, especially in service industries, such as the fitness industry. The problem of retention in the fitness industry is further accentuated by the industry's decline in market growth, and the fact that fitness clubs rely on membership fees as their main revenue stream, making the retention of members and their fees of prime concern. With less growth, the industry can rely less on the acquisition of new members. With limited revenue streams the industry can rely less on customers generating revenue by purchasing additional products and services offered. Further, the fitness industry is complex making it challenging to apply other retention strategies to help retain fitness club members. As such, retention needs to be researched specifically in a fitness industry context.

Given this need, the fitness industry has already attracted much research relating to retention, mainly related to the psychological factors of perceived service quality, perceived value for money, brand associations and perceived usage. However, there are three biases in the literature pertaining to fitness club membership retention. Most of the literature has been focused on predicting renewal as opposed to cancellation. Further, most literature, aside from Bodet (2008) has been limited by only seeking to predict intentional, not actual renewal. Finally, there has been a focus on positivist research, causing the confirmation of perceived service quality, perceived value for money, usage, and brand associations as predictors as opposed to a more exploratory approach being taken.

In response to these biases, this thesis focuses on predicting cancellation, not renewal. Further this thesis seeks to predict actual cancellation in addition to intentional cancellation. This is achieved by taking a pragmatic, mixed methods approach to the research project.

1.2 Research objectives

In order to answer the question "why do fitness club members cancel their membership", six objectives underpinned this research:

1. To identify potential predictors of fitness club membership cancellation.
2. To assess the efficacy that the potentially predictive variables have over predicting the cancellation (actual and intentional) of current fitness club members.
3. To assess the efficacy that intentional cancellation has over predicting actual cancellation of current fitness club members.
4. To assess the efficacy that intentional cancellation has over predicting positive word-of-mouth of current fitness club members.
5. To verify the findings of Objectives Two, Three and Four in relation to new members.
6. To explain the differences found between current and new members resulting from Objective Five.

1.3 Thesis structure

Chapter 1 provides a brief introduction to the research context and objectives.

Chapter 2 provides an evaluation of retention in the fitness industry, examining the importance of retention, the challenges of retention of customers in service organisations, and the challenges of retention specifically in the fitness industry.

Chapter 3 provides a critical review of the fitness industry literature, focusing on four dominant areas; perceived service quality, perceived value for money, brand, and usage.

Chapter 4 provides the detail and rationale for the sequential, embedded mixed methods approach that was taken in this thesis.

Chapter 5 details the first empirical study of the research project whereby twenty-three semi-structured telephone interviews with current, ex- and 'frozen' fitness club members (of various levels of usage and lengths of membership) were conducted and template analysed to enable the testing of the four a priori themes. As well as perceived service quality, perceived value for money, usage and brand, the analysis elicited five new theoretical concepts; social identification (individual stereotyping and in-group homogeneity), rapport, state anxiety, social physique anxiety and self-

determination (intrinsic, integrated, identified, introjected, and external regulation), which appeared to underpin current fitness club members' decisions retain their membership, or ex-members' decisions to cancel.

Chapter 6 details the operationalisation of these themes in the development of a quantitative questionnaire.

Chapter 7 details the first quantitative study; a large cross-sectional study of 'current' members (who have been members for more than three months) fitness club members (n=716) utilising the questionnaire developed in Chapter 6.

Chapter 8 details the second quantitative study, a smaller cross sectional study of 'new' members (who have been members for less than three months) which was conducted with the aim of verifying the findings developed based on current members, to assess if these findings were robust enough to predict cancellation early on in membership.

Chapter 9 summarises the findings and provides an integration of all of the studies.

Chapter 2
Retention in the Fitness Industry

2.1 Introduction

'Retention' is a broad term and can be conceptualised and researched in many ways. That being said, fundamental to any conceptualisation of retention is the notion of maintaining a relationship. This relationship can be with various stakeholders, retaining their relationship to some aspect of the organisation or the organisation itself (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). As Payne, Ballantyne and Christopher (2005) point out, if management within an organisation choose to adopt a retention focus, a critical question to consider is; "with whom are you connected, and to what?" (p. 855). In other words, organisations must consider *with whom (which* stakeholders) does the organisation need to strengthen the relationship e.g. with customers, with employees, with suppliers. Further, organisations must also consider *to what* do these stakeholders have the relationship e.g. to a particular product, product category, or to the organisation (brand) as a whole.

This chapter begins with a discussion of the 'with whom, and to what?' question in relation to fitness club member retention, and the benefits of retention with regard to organisational effectiveness. After retention has been broadly discussed, retention is more specifically discussed in relation to the fitness industry, along with the complexities of the fitness industry.

2.2 Retention 'with whom'?

With regard to the 'with whom', retention can be explored by analysing the strength of the relationships between the organisation and the stakeholders. In the marketing literature, a stakeholder is broadly defined as "all of those groups and individuals that affect, or are affected by, the accomplishment of organisational purpose" (Freeman, 1984, p.46). There has been much debate in the marketing literature over who are the key stakeholders in organisations. The 'six markets' model (Payne et al, 2005) provides a comprehensive classification of stakeholders into six groups that retention efforts may focus on; customer markets (existing and prospective customers), referral markets (existing customers who recommend their suppliers to others or any other referral sources), influencer markets (analysts, shareholders, regulatory groups), employee markets, supplier markets and internal markets (internal customers).

Potentially, retention efforts could be focused on any of these stakeholders. However, as suggested by the arrangement of the markets in Fig. 2.1 below, whilst there are six different markets which can be focused and retained, they all seek to develop the most important market; the 'customer market', which is the reason for the organisation existing.

Fig. 2.1 'Six markets' Model of Stakeholders
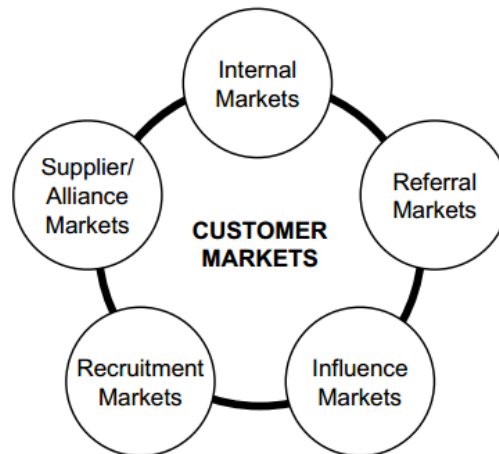
(taken from Payne et al, 2005, p. 860*)*

Whilst it is recognised that the retention of other markets within an organisation is important to the retention of customers, this thesis is concerned with exploring the retention of the customer market directly. It is *customer* retention which yields many organisational benefits, and thus is closely aligned with organisational effectiveness.

2.2.1 Customer retention and organisational effectiveness

A slight increase in retention rates is proposed as yielding a disproportionately higher income compared to an increase in acquisition of new customers. Reichheld (1996, p.2) stated that "long-standing customers are worth so much that in some industries, reducing customer defections by as little as five points from, say, 15% to 10% per year- can double profits". The literature regarding why customer retention links with such effectiveness can be clustered into three broad explanations; retention of existing members is cheaper than acquisition of new members, retained members help to acquire new members, and retained members have increased customer value. These three explanations are detailed below.

Cheaper than acquisition

Organisations are capable of increasing their effectiveness by increasing their market share in two ways; by reducing the loss of current customer (retention) and by attracting new customers (acquisition). However, the retention of current customers is often considered to be a less expensive process than the acquisition of new customers. This is largely because the marketing and administration costs incurred through efforts to attract new customers may be reduced if there is less need to attract more customers, due to more customers retaining their relationship with the organisation of their own accord. According to Reichheld and Sasser (1990), "acquiring a new customer entails certain one-time costs for advertising, promotions and the like" (p.106). Such one-time costs are not incurred with retained customers.

Further, not only is it cheaper to retain customers than to acquire them, but the two processes need not be considered mutually exclusive; retained customers can assist in the attraction, thus supporting the acquisition of new customers.

Supporting acquisition

Retained customers provide opportunities to refer the organisation of which they are customers to other potential customers. Positive word-of-mouth has been studied in many service contexts and described as including "any information about a target object (e.g. organisation) transferred from one individual to another" (Brown, Barry, Dacin & Gunst, 2005 p. 125). Positive word-of-mouth provides a link between successful retention and acquisition; those customers who have been retained through being kept satisfied may also be inclined to promote the organisation to prospective customers (Brown et al, 2005). Therefore, the loss of a customer is not simply a loss of that customer's revenue, but also a loss of that customer's potential to generate new revenue through supporting the acquisition of new customers.

Further to this, customers who are attracted via positive word-of-mouth as opposed to being attracted via direct marketing initiatives have been argued as having a higher long-term customer value. According to Villanueva, Yoo & Hanssens, 2008, customers who have been acquired via positive word-of-mouth add nearly twice as much value to an organisation than marketing-induced customers. Further, according to Schmitt, Skiera and Van den Bulte (2011), after tracking 10,000 banking customers, they asserted that not only does positive word-of-mouth help to attract more customers, but

the average value of a referred customer is at least 16% higher than that of a non-referred customer.

Such referral and engaging in positive word-of-mouth behaviour can be seen as co-production behaviours; behaviours which the customer is under no obligation to perform but that facilitate the organisation (Gruen, Summers and Acito, 2000). According to Gruen et al (2000), based on exploratory interviews with professional association executives and members, retained customers have the opportunity to facilitate the organisation through performing other co-production behaviours such as participating in the organisation's public relations efforts, making suggestions for improving products, services, and/or processes, proactive communication (e.g. making a cancellation even when there is no contractual penalty to do so), and being flexible and tolerant when the organisation requires it.

Therefore, customers who retain their membership with the organisation are not just retaining their own contribution, but they are also retaining their likelihood of engaging in these positive word-of-mouth and other coproduction behaviours. This relates to their increased customer value.

Increased customer value

Customer value refers to the amount of value that the customer will add to the organisation, either through higher levels of expenditure or through lower levels of service demand. Higher levels of expenditure can be achieved through 'cross-selling' initiatives; promoting products to existing customers which are different to the product that originally attracted them to the organisation. Retained members are generally considered to be more susceptible to cross-selling initiatives; the longer a customer has had a relationship with an organisation the more knowledge they will have gained regarding the organisation's wider range of offerings. Such additional knowledge also leads to customers making fewer enquiries and being more self-sufficient during their service usage, placing less demand on the service provider.

Whilst customer retention reflects a continuing relationship, cross-selling measures the relationship development or relationship extension (Verhoef & Donkers, 2005). As such, cross-selling is an important goal for all service organisations seeking to develop relationships with their customers (Bolton, Lemon, & Verhoef, 2004).

Customers who spend more on a variety of products are considered to have a higher 'breadth of relationship' with the organisation as they are related to the organisation in multiple ways making it perhaps more seemingly difficult for them to leave an organisation (Dawes, 2009). Interestingly, it seems that the relationship between retention and customer value is reciprocal. Dawes found that relationship breadth has a positive direct effect on retention rates with new customers; cross-selling to new customers can increase the length of their overall relationship with the organisation.

These three explanations illustrate the close relationship between customer retention and organisational effectiveness, thus the need for organisations to focus on customer retention. In a fitness club context, such retention would more specifically relate to 'member' retention, due to the nature of fitness clubs having members as opposed to customers. However, as well as discussing the importance of retaining customers (retention 'with whom') it is also important to consider, as mentioned earlier, 'to what' are customers are retained.

2.3 Retention 'to what'

The 'to what' aspect of retention involves considering to what is the organisation trying to connect the customer; the level of relationship.

Levels of retention

There are different levels at which a customer can be related to an organisation; brand level, product category level, and/or product (Kuenzel & Halliday, 2010). Olsen (2007) asserted that most studies of loyalty focus on the brand level rather than the product category level. However, Olsen points out that customers may consider their relationships on all levels; product, product category and brand. Customers may be heavily involved in a product or product category but may not be loyal or committed to an organisation (Warrington & Shim, 2000). Conversely, the customer may be involved with, and retained to, the organisation but not necessarily the product (Coulter, Price & Feick, 2003). Indeed, a confirmatory factor analysis by Kim and Sung (2009) of student attitudes towards various products provides support that these different levels of relationship; at a product level or a brand level, do exist.

This suggests that as well as there being a choice regarding 'with whom' should be the focus of retention, there is also the choice regarding 'to what' level of the product-brand hierarchy retention should be focused on.

With regard to services and the current context, a similar hierarchy of levels exist; service provider level (fitness club), service category level (fitness club membership), or specific product level (fitness club membership contract) (Ganesh, 2000). For instance, whilst a customer connected at service category level but not a service provider level might be more prone to retain their fitness club membership, the specific club with which membership is maintained would be incidental to this customer, rendering them more prone to switching between clubs.

In addition to establishing that different levels of relationship exist, the relationship *between* the different levels has also been researched. Oliver (1999) suggested that product loyalty can develop into brand loyalty. Iwasaki and Havitz (1998, 2004) suggested that product category loyalty in relation to leisure activity ('leisure involvement') leads to 'psychological commitment' to the leisure service provider, which in turn results in loyalty to the leisure service provider.

Whilst all of these different levels of retention can be explored, this thesis is primarily concerned with understanding the determinants of retention to the service provider (the fitness club itself; one large 'flagship' site of a leading multi-site private fitness club operator in the UK), and not with retention to the service category (fitness club membership per se), nor with retention to the actual product (specific contract type).

Retention vs. loyalty

The aforementioned work by Iwasaki and Havitz (1998, 2004), Oliver (1999) and Olsen (2007) has introduced the term 'loyalty' into this thesis. However, whilst the terms 'retention' and 'loyalty' may be considered as interchangeable, they should perhaps be considered as distinct. Retention can be considered as a manifestation of, but not equivalent to, brand/service provider loyalty, as retention is a more objective, definitive metric than loyalty. When retention is measured, it is usually measured after a certain pre-specified time period has elapsed (e.g. 12 months) when it can be clearly ascertained whether the customer has actually retained their patronage with a particular service provider after the specified time period has elapsed, or whether they defected. Thus, retention is usually measured definitively as a binary dependent variable i.e. stay/cancel (Bolton, Kannan & Bramlett, 2000), retention/defection (East, Gendall, Hammond & Lomax, 2005), using objective, factual data (e.g. secondary data gathered from a customer database). It is retention that has the direct financial impact on a brand/service provider's bottom line, not loyalty.

Loyalty, whilst often used as the outcome measure instead of retention, is attitudinal and therefore less objective and less definitive that retention. Dick and Basu (1994, p.99) asserted that "customer loyalty is viewed as the strength of the relationship between an individual's relative attitude and their repeat patronage". This suggests that there are two types of loyalty; attitudinal and behavioural, with attitudinal loyalty being the extent to which the brand/service provider is considered to be favourable to other competing brands/service providers, and behavioural loyalty being the extent to which the customer actually makes, or intends to make, a purchase from the brand/service provider. There is also a debate about which behaviours should be measured, and whether a range of behaviours (repeat purchase and positive word of mouth) is indicative of 'loyalty' or whether just one (e.g. repeat purchase) is indicative of loyalty. Dick and Basu argue that to gain a true picture of loyalty, a range of behaviours *and* attitudes should be measured.

Whilst this splitting of the loyalty construct allowed recognition of the importance of measuring both attitude and behaviour, such a split is perhaps misleading; both attitudinal and behaviour loyalty are usually measured using self-reported perceptions and intentions. Even though behavioural loyalty is considered to be different to attitudinal loyalty, like attitudinal loyalty behavioural loyalty is usually measured using self-report measures; perceptions of either current behaviours, or future intentions to perform behaviours.

'Behavioural loyalty', whilst perhaps sounding more objective and definitive than perhaps attitudinal loyalty, is a broad term that can be used to measure either *one* behaviour or *multiple* behaviours, and further may either measure *current* perceptions of behaviour(s), or *future* intentions related to the behaviour(s). Current perceptions of behavioural loyalty tend to measure the extent to which the customer currently engages in certain behaviours e.g. frequency of usage.

However, specific, episodic, 'one-off' behaviours such as renewal/cancellation which are not performed regularly are usually measured with regard to *intentions* for the future, as opposed to *current* perceptions.

Table 2.1 highlights these different approaches taken to measuring behavioural loyalty.

Table 2.1 Approaches to measuring behavioural loyalty

Current behaviour	Future behaviour
Frequency of current usage	Intended frequency of current usage
Frequency of purchase	Intended frequency of purchase
Frequency of word-of-mouth recommendations	Intended frequency of word-of-mouth recommendations
	Intended renewal/ cancellation of membership

There has been further confusion regarding the dimensionality of behavioural loyalty; whether behavioural loyalty is uni-dimensional; requiring just one behaviour to be measured, or whether behavioural loyalty is multi-dimensional; requiring the measurement of many behaviours to ascertain 'true' behavioural loyalty. Further, the relationships between the different behaviours are often measured. For instance, some studies consider current positive word-of-mouth behaviour to be separate to, and predictive of, other future behavioural intentions, whilst some studies consider current positive word-of-mouth behaviour to be equivalent to retention intentions.

In a broader marketing context, according to Söderlund (2006), positive word-of-mouth and loyalty should be considered as distinct constructs. Also, Dick and Basu (1994) asserted that loyalty predicts positive word-of-mouth; whilst they may be related they are distinct. Brown, Barry, Dacin and Gunst (2005) conducted a study specifically focused on predicting positive word-of-mouth, finding that commitment and word and mouth (intentions and behaviour). More recently, De Matos and Rossi (2008) conducted a meta-analysis of sixty-two studies, concluding that across the studies loyalty is predictive of positive word-of-mouth intentions and behaviours (albeit the relationship between loyalty and positive word-of-mouth intentions was stronger than the relationship between loyalty and positive word-of-mouth behaviours).

Whilst behavioural loyalty is perhaps more closely related to retention, behavioural loyalty usually only relates to the measurement of perceptions and intentions, and is therefore different to retention.

The decision to collect actual retention data makes this thesis specifically concerned with retention; specific cancellation intentions, as opposed to being concerned with the broader construct of loyalty. For clarity and specificity, the term 'loyalty' is not used in this thesis.

Nature of fitness club retention

According to Liljander and Strandvik (1995), a service relationship can be categorised based on whether the service is of a 'discrete' nature (a separate purchase each time the service is consumed), or of a 'continuous' (contractual) nature. A discrete service exists when a customer is required to re-purchase the service in repeated transactions (e.g. 'pay as you go' fitness clubs). A continuous relationship would be present when a contract is signed, requiring just one transaction. In the fitness industry, many membership types are continuous, ending only when the membership is terminated by the member, and not dependent on the member re-signing a contract. Whilst fitness clubs are increasingly offering a discrete, 'pay as you go' service (Mintel, 2011), automatic continuation of membership is also a popular method of continuous patronage in fitness clubs (albeit sometimes controversially, recently attracting investigation from the Office of Fair Trading, 2012). Thus, retention in fitness clubs is often the outcome of a member continuing their relationship; a lack of 'relationship ending' (or 'dissolution', 'termination', or 'exit' depending on which terminology is preferred, Tähtinen & Halinen, 2002).

Specifically, such relationship ending is an outcome of either membership lapsing (not renewing a contract) or membership cancellation. Attrition (the inverse of retention) can be the outcome of a relationship ending at any one of these different levels. According to Libai, Muller and Peres (2009, p. 165), "attrition consists of churning [switching to a competitor] and disadopting [ending the relationship with the product category] customers, and the attrition rate is the sum of the churn and disadoption rate". However, the customer's lack of behaviour ('inertia') can also determine retention, or attrition. 'Inertia' refers to when customers non-consciously either repeatedly purchase, or avoid switching to other services perhaps due to a habit that has formed, or through the customer being driven by convenience and not wanting to make a change. As such, inertia can cause retention (Wu, 2011). However, a lack of action may also cause lapsing, leading to attrition. Lapsing is when the customer does not renew their membership when the opportunity arises; "the non-renewal of membership by an individual member" (Bhattacharya, 1998, p.36).

Therefore, depending on the customer's fitness club membership contract, retention is the manifestation of either a 'positive behaviour' (renewal), or 'positive inertia' (allowing membership to automatically continue). Attrition is the manifestation of a 'negative behaviour' (cancellation), or 'negative inertia' i.e. allowing membership to lapse.

Table 2.2 shows the different potential relationships between customer behaviour and their effect on retention.

Table 2.2 Customer behaviours and fitness club retention

	Positive effect (retention)	Negative effect (attrition)
Behaviour	Membership renewal	Membership cancellation
Inertia	Membership continuation	Membership lapsing

Largely, renewal is a process which is activated externally by the organisation by notifying members that their opportunity to renew is coming up, or activated by the member's own knowledge of a forthcoming renewal deadline. Knowledge of a pending renewal deadline requires the member to consider and evaluate their membership and then make the decision of whether to renew or not to renew. Cancellation, on the other hand, is triggered internally by the member, and depending on the contractual notice period, can happen anytime of the year. Therefore, it is perhaps more likely that the member's awareness of a change in a particular variable(s) e.g. decline in perceived service quality, usage, or enjoyment of the activity, will be the trigger(s) of cancellation.

Also, in relation to switching to competitors, Roos (1999) suggests that maintaining a relationship is dependent on both 'push' and 'pull' factors. Push factors might represent negative changes in the relationship, 'pushing' a customer away from their service relationship. However, 'pull' factors are factors which encourage a customer to stay in their service relationship. This notion of some factors 'pushing' and others 'pulling' has also been supported by Bansal, Taylor and James (2005) who found that push, pull and 'mooring' factors (ones which might moderate the push or pull effects) could account for switching intentions.

It can be argued that renewal is the outcome of feeling 'pulled' towards the current service relationship whereas cancellation is the outcome of feeling 'pushed' away from it, hence representing fundamentally different processes underpinning renewal and cancellation.

2.4 Retention in the fitness industry

Given the earlier mentioned benefits of customer retention to the organisation, retention in the fitness industry is one of the fitness industry's major concerns. As stated by the International Health, Racquet & Sportsclub Association (IHRSA, 2006, p.34), "member loyalty is low in the fitness industry compared to other industries. Retention will always be the Achilles heel of this industry". The concern of retention in the fitness industry is largely related to the performance of the industry, which has been researched both by the Fitness Industry Association (FIA, 2002), and by Mintel (2005, 2007, 2009, 2011). According to the FIA (2002), the average retention rate for a fitness club is 60.6%; each year a club will lose approximately 40% of its members. Any industry losing nearly 40% of its customers on an annual basis should scrutinise itself, asking if any more can be done to retain its business (Mintel, 2005). Such poor retention rates are further accentuated by two factors; a decline in market growth and value, and the limited source of alternative revenue streams.

2.4.1 Decline in market growth and value

Between 2004 and 2008, the market grew by nearly a quarter due to new club openings and an increase in the proportion of adults who became members. However, the growth of the market slowed down between 2008 and 2009, due to less new clubs opening and a decline in the number of people joining fitness clubs (Mintel, 2009). Table 2.3 shows the market size trends between 2002 and 2006 (Mintel, 2007), and between 2007 and 2011, along with forecasts from 2012 up until 2016 (Mintel, 2011).

Table 2.3 Fitness club market size trends between 2002-16

	Members (millions)	Market value (millions)	Average revenue per member
2002	3.67	1,799	490
2003	3.96	1,934	489
2004	4.2	2,044	487
2005	4.35	2,110	485
2006	4.68	2,266	484
2007	5.18	2,500	483
2008	5.24	2,520	481
2009	5.26	2,520	479
2010	5.34	2,583	484
2011 (est.)	5.33	2,660	499
2012 (f'cast)	5.35	2,681	501
2013 (f'cast)	5.42	2,713	501
2014 (f'cast)	5.52	2,768	501
2015 (f'cast)	5.64	2,837	503
2016 (f'cast)	5.79	2,922	505

(Based on Mintel, 2007; 2011)

Since 2006, the growth of market value and membership levels slowed down, contrary to forecasted linear relationship. Further, through the comparison of industry reports (Mintel 2007; 2011), it can be seen that the growth and market value that was forecast for 2011 in 2007 report did not materialise. As shown by Fig. 2.2, since 2009, whilst there has been some slight growth, the rate of growth is still slower than between 2004 and 2008.

Fig. 2.2 Forecast and actual membership growth between 2002 and 2016
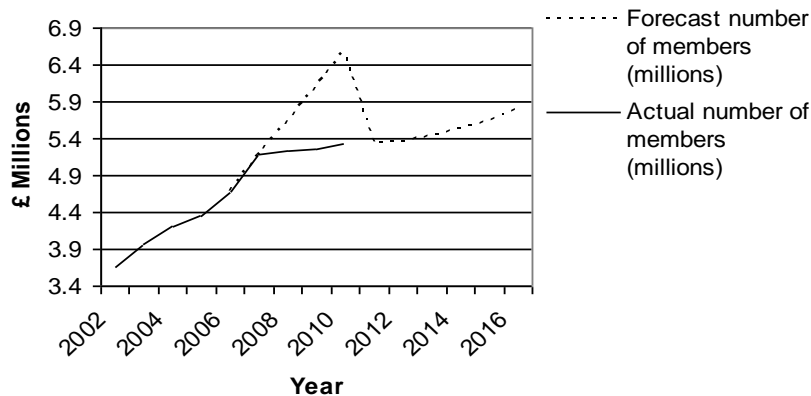
(Based on Mintel, 2007; 2011)

As a result, in 2010, the forecasts had to be re-considered, and a slow rate of growth is forecast between 2011 and 2016. Further to this slow growth in membership, the market value has followed a similar pattern (Fig. 2.3).

Fig. 2.3 Forecast and actual market value between 2002 and 2016
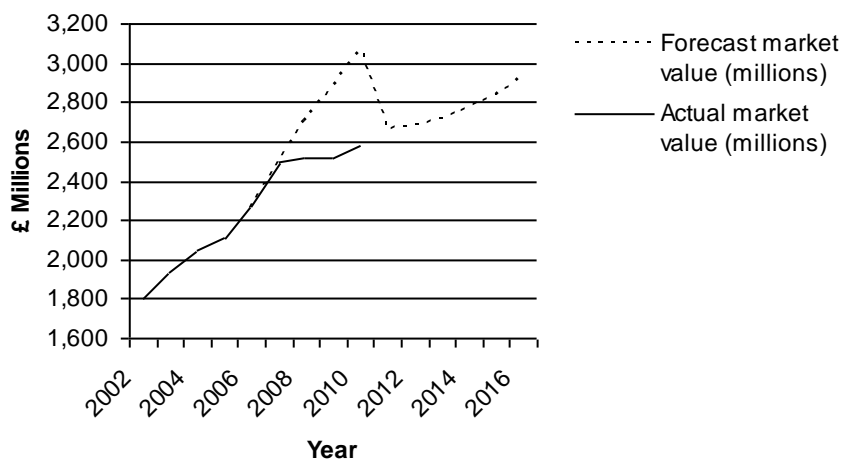
(Based on Mintel, 2007; 2011).

With such a divergence in growth of the actual and estimated membership growth and market value, there is an increased need for fitness clubs to retain more of their current members.

As well as the decline in membership growth and market value, this increased need to focus on retention is supported by the fact that the fitness industry has limited alternative revenue streams, thus is reliant on membership fees as the primary source of revenue.

2.4.2 Limited alternative revenue streams

Poor retention rates are a concern for the industry, not only due to the decline in market growth but also due to the fact that membership fees are the main source of revenue for fitness clubs. Whilst fitness clubs have been increasing their foci on maximising secondary spend on areas such as personal training, health and beauty, and food and beverages, membership fees still account for 80% of overall revenue (Mintel, 2011). The fitness industry therefore places much reliance on the membership fee as a source of income. When a fitness club member cancels their membership there are few, if any, other ways in which that member can continue to patronise the club. Fundamentally, fitness clubs have a limited range of products which can be purchased; they are heavily reliant on selling products (e.g. contracts) relating to just one product category (fitness club membership) to generate their revenue.

Table 2.4 shows the different revenue streams, comparing primary spend (membership fees) with secondary spend (beauty, sun beds, food, drink, accessories, clothing etc.).

Table 2.4 Fitness club revenue streams between 2002-10

	Membership/joining fees (millions)	% Overall revenue	Other Revenue (millions)	Total revenue (millions)
2002	1,421	79	378	1,799
2004	1,615	79	429	2,044
2006	1,769	78	499	2,268
2008	1,966	78	554	2520
2010	2,066	80	517	2,583

(Mintel, 2007; 2011)

As such, maintaining retention fees as a source of revenue is of high importance.

Overall, the decline in market growth and value, and the limited alternative revenue streams accentuate the importance of fitness clubs optimising their retention rates. With less growth, the fitness industry can rely less on acquisition of new members. With limited revenue streams, the fitness industry can rely less on customers generating revenue by purchasing other products and services offered.

However, despite a clear need for fitness clubs to focus on increasing their retention rates, there are many challenges in doing so. Certain complexities within the fitness industry render it difficult to position the fitness industry with other service industries.

2.5 Complexities of the fitness industry

One of the overarching challenges for the fitness industry is that it falls under the remit of the broader service industry. The service industry has experienced much growth, and as such has attracted a vast body of marketing literature devoted purely to understanding the service industry, and the different challenges for organisations which are service-based compared to those organisations which are goods-based.

For instance, one of the most notable contributions to differentiating these two types of organisations came from Zeithaml, Parasuraman and Berry (1985) whereby they proposed the 'IHIP' model of how services differ from goods; intangibility, heterogeneity, inseparability and perishability. They proposed that services are intangible, meaning they can't be touched, felt or seen. Also, they proposed that services are heterogenous, meaning that the service experience may be different for different customers unlike products which can be standardised and objectively quality controlled. Also, they proposed that the service production is inseparable to service consumption; production takes place when the customer demands consumption unlike products which may be manufactured well in advance of being exposed to customers. Finally, perishability relates to the notion of intangibility; if a service doesn't tangibly exist it can perish unlike a product which will always exist but will just maybe experience a transfer of ownership between sellers and buyers. This implied certain strategies for the marketing of services.

However, Vargo and Lusch (2004) criticised the IHIP model, arguing that this model is not only inaccurate but has also led to misleading services marketing strategies.

Overall the IHIP model suggests that services are different from goods and that the differences that services have in relation to goods put services at a disadvantage; because they are different they do not benefit from the 'positive' aspects of goods in that good are tangible, homogenous, separable and imperishable. Thus, the IHIP model implies that service-based organisations should try to become more like goods-based organisations, and therefore that services should be tangiblised, standardised, with a separated production and consumption experience, and should be closely monitored and inventorised.

However, the fitness industry provides a good example of a service industry for which such implications may be inappropriate. In line with Vargo and Lusch's critique of the IHIP model (2004), fitness clubs should perhaps invert the implications of the IHIP model.

2.5.1 Intangibility

The IHIP model assumes that the lack of tangibility is of detriment to the service industry and therefore it is implied that service-based organisations should tangibilise their offering. However, according to Vargo and Lusch (2004), brand image is also important; an important intangible factor. As such, tangibilising services creates the risk of neglecting important intangible aspects such as brand image. Tangibility can be thought of in relation to how tangible the service *offering* is i.e. a tangible, physical product being served to the customer or an intangible advisory service being offered. For instance, members in fitness clubs may use their membership to gain access to nutrition- and fitness-related products, or they may use their membership to gain access to nutrition- and fitness-related advice.

Tangibility can also be thought of in relation to how tangible the service *benefit* is i.e. a tangible, physical benefit of the service or an intangible psychological benefit of the service. This can also be thought of as the 'pivotal' service attribute; the outcome of the interaction. It is thought that the customer's perception of how successfully the pivotal attributes are being achieved is highly influential over their satisfaction, and more influential than how the pivotal attributes are being delivered ('core' attributes) and also more influential than other 'incidental extras' ('peripheral' attributes) (Philip & Hazlett, 2001).

For instance, members in fitness clubs may have multiple reasons for joining the fitness clubs, thus seeking different benefits. According to the FIA (2002), members join fitness clubs for various reasons including relaxation, stress management, cardiovascular conditioning, improved muscle tone, increasing strength, increasing flexibility and maintaining/gaining weight. These needs relate to both tangible and intangible benefits; relaxation, stress management being intangible benefits which can be subjectively measured, cardiovascular conditioning, improved muscle tone, increasing strength, increasing flexibility and maintaining/gaining weight being tangible benefits which can be objectively measured. Further, the actual products offered to fitness club members can be classed as intangible and tangible; whilst the core offering may be access to a service, fitness clubs also sell a number of tangible goods e.g. beverages, snacks, health and fitness supplements and also spa/beauty products.

Members may join in order to seek a number of service benefits, e.g. weight loss and relaxation, however for one member weight loss could be pivotal and relaxation would be peripheral, whereas for another member, the inverse could be true. Whilst Philip and Hazlett (2001) assert that pivotal attributes may differ *between* services, it should also be asserted that in a fitness club the pivotal attributes may differ *within* the club itself, due to a range of potential benefits sought after by the member.

Whilst not empirically validated, Table 2.5 offers a conceptual delineation of the complexity of defining tangibility, with regard to the service benefit and the service offering, in a fitness club context.

Table 2.5 Intangibility and tangibility of fitness clubs

		Service offering	
		Intangible	Tangible
Service Benefit	Intangible	Advice to achieve psychological change e.g. life coaching	Fitness equipment to achieve psychological change e.g. spa/ jacuzzi
	Tangible	Advice to achieve physical change e.g. personal training	Fitness equipment to achieve a physical change e.g. gym equipment

Thus, tangibilising services creates the risk of neglecting those members who value intangible service offerings and benefits.

A further complication for fitness clubs is that even if something may be considered as 'tangible' this doesn't mean it can be objectively evaluated; the tangibility of benefits 'received' from fitness club membership is perhaps subjective e.g. weight loss is a tangible metric of success, however some members may consider one kilogram of weight loss to be a tangible benefit whereas others may consider no less than five kilograms to be a tangible benefit. Therefore, the degree to which the service can be considered as having a tangibility benefit is subjective.

Marketing typologies, which can be relevant for both goods- and service-based organisations, suggest that organisations need to understand the differences between products which are rational and emotional. In 1980, Vaughn, whilst working for the Foote, Cone and Belding advertising agency, created a framework ('FCB Grid', Vaughn 1980; 1986) which suggested the way that organisations should market their products, based on whether the product is a rational 'cognitive' product (products bought out of 'need' e.g. detergent) or whether the product is an emotional 'affective' product (hedonic products bought out of 'want 'e e.g. designer clothing). Since then, Park and Mittal (1985) also supported the idea decisions to buy products are based on types of motive; cognitive and affective. Kim and Sung's (2009) typology of motivations at product and brand level also provides support that these types of motivation (cognitive or affective) do exist.

Again, whilst not empirically validated, the potential way in which a fitness club member's motivation (cognitive or affective) can interact with their reason for joining (intangible or tangible service benefit), is conceptually delineated in Table 2.6 below.

Table 2.6 Tangibility and motivation

		Service benefit	
		Intangible	Tangible
Motivation	**Cognitive**	"I *need* to relax/ improve my social life"	"I *need* to lose weight/ increase muscle tone"
	Affective	"I *want* to relax/ improve my social life"	"I *want* to lose weight/ increase muscle tone"

The same pivotal service benefit can be driven by different motivational states; cognitive or affective.

For instance, regarding weight loss, this benefit can be needs-based (cognitive); the member feeling that they 'need' to lose weight i.e. for health reasons. However, the same pivotal service benefit (weight loss) could also be desire-based (affective) i.e. the member 'wanting' to lose weight for appearance reasons.

This suggests a further complexity to the tangibility dimension of the IHIP model; on its own it is not sufficient to distinguish between fitness club members' motivations for being a member.

Overall, a fitness club can be argued as providing intangible access to tangible facilities and/or intangible advice provided by employees. The tangibility of the service received is determined by the customer's motivation for being a member, which casts doubt over the entire concept of categorising service organisations with disregard for the customer's motivation for purchasing the service. For instance, how these 'rational' 'needs are determined is usually the result of a subjective perception, "unless the agent [member] regularly employs an objective measure (e.g. scales or a tape measure)" (Crossley, 2006, p.33).

Thus, the fitness club's offering is neither tangible nor intangible. The benefits of its offering are neither tangible nor intangible. The motivation is neither purely cognitive nor affective.

Overall, in relation to intangibility, neither the implications from Zeithaml et al's (1985) IHIP model, nor the inverted implications from Vargo and Lusch's (2004) critical response to the IHIP model, nor frameworks such as those proposed by Vaughn (1980), Park and Mittal (1985) or Kim and Sung (2009) can be easily applied to the fitness industry. As such, further research specifically conducted in the fitness industry context is needed, which this thesis addresses.

2.5.2 Heterogeneity
The implication of Zeithaml et al's (1985) IHIP model is that services have more heterogeneity which is detrimental to them in comparison to goods-based organisations. As such, the implications of the IHIP model are that the services would benefit from standardisation. However, as Vargo and Lusch (2004) point out, the risk of focusing on standardisation is that a differentiation to competitors would be harder to make.

In their 'service-dominant logic', Vargo and Lusch (2004; 2008) suggest that service should be provided and not produced; that there is a difference between taking a 'goods-dominant logic' to trying to standardise and produce 'services' (plural) to generally recognising customer needs and providing service (singular). Standardisation reduces the opportunity for service providers to achieve advantage over their competitors. Whilst standardisation can create homogeneity, this is considered to be only beneficial in terms of efficiency and reducing costs, but not beneficial in terms of marketing effectiveness.

With regards to fitness clubs, the merger of two large operators in 2010 (Mintel, 2011) has to some extent inevitably reduced heterogeneity. However, with so many different motivations and needs that members have regarding their fitness club membership, it is perhaps inappropriate to try and standardise the service experience received in a fitness club. Perhaps, if anything, what can be standardised is the approach taken, and priority given, to tailoring membership to suit the needs of the individual member.

2.5.3 Inseparability

Zeithaml et al's (1985) IHIP model assumes that, unlike the production of goods, the production of services is inseparable to the consumption of the service; goods can be produced separately in advance of the customer's consumption unlike services. The assumption, therefore, is for services to try and create some kind of separation; producing as much of the service experience in the 'back office' prior to customer demand. However, similarly to the critique of standardisation (above), this creates the risk of not customizing the service to the customer's precise demand. Perhaps inseparability, like heterogeneity, provides a positive differentiator between service- and good-based organisations. By keeping the service supply and demand close together, service providers can try and ensure a high level of value is co-created with the customer.

This has also been supported by Gummesson (2007) who states that whilst a service supplier offers a value proposition, the value actualisation occurs only during the usage and consumption process. Thus, the actual value is the outcome of co-creation between suppliers and customers. Further, the inseparable nature of production and consumption in services provides an opportunity for organisations to develop relationships with their customers, and to personalise their service experience in order to co-create value with their customers.

It has been found that for services with a high degree of contact (such as fitness clubs), relational benefits and relationship building activities are considered to be the most important aspects of their service experience (Kinard & Capella, 2006).

However, in relation to fitness clubs, there are two issues; firstly, how much control fitness clubs can have over co-creation and secondly, whether indeed there is such inseparability. Regarding control over co-creation, this arises due to the fact that fitness clubs can be considered part of the 'rental/access paradigm' of services (Lovelock & Gummesson, 2004), meaning that the service provided to members is merely access which the customer subscribes to, paying monthly/annual costs regardless of their use of such access. Paid memberships, as in the case of fitness club memberships, allow exclusive access to the organisation's services or goods (access to a fitness club's facilities) (Bhattacharya, 1998). In essence, fitness club members subscribe to a service which, within their contractual stipulations, they can use as much or as little as desired.

Whilst there has been much literature in relation to subscription services, this has mainly been in relation to information technology and telecommunications services (Iyengar, Jedidi, Esseghaier & Danaher, 2011) or entertainment rentals (Randhawa & Kumar, 2008) but the fitness industry has received no such interest, other than being recognised as a 'paradox' (Ferrand, Robinson & Valette-Florence, 2010), in that by encouraging usage of a fitness club there is a risk of encouraging overcrowding. Whilst helping members to achieve 'good value for money' may help to retain them to the club, this could also cause disgruntlement and perhaps attrition if, upon usage, the fitness club is too crowded.

Fitness clubs have little control over how members' levels of value are co-created. This relates to the concept of 'congestion' which, in service industries is "an unavoidable reality" (Cachon & Feldman, 2008). However, unlike other services, fitness clubs can't simply try and 'serve quicker'. When a member enters the club, the time of their usage is unknown and controlled mainly by the member. Fitness clubs have little control over how often members will use the club, making it difficult to plan interactions and build relationships with members; how can fitness clubs build relationships with members who are not attending?

Further to this issue of control, even members who use the club on a frequent basis can easily bypass the relational aspects of a club, by choosing not to engage with staff and other club members, hence reducing the scope for more value to be created through interaction and rapport. In essence, fitness club members may co-create value not with club personnel, but directly with usage of the physical equipment.

During the service experience within fitness clubs, the potential for interpersonal contact is easily avoidable by members who instead create their service experience with tangible goods; fitness equipment, spa facilities etc., choosing only to have any interpersonal contact if and when they require it. The premise of 'co-creation' is difficult in fitness clubs; this assumes that customers will also be co-creating value with employees. However, members often create value (solely) during their interactions with the physical facilities. Regardless of the quality of the facilities, training of the employees or pleasantness of the environment, the value which members receive is ultimately their responsibility regarding how they create the value (with staff or with the facilities). This notion is supported by Lengnick-Hall, Claycomb and Inks (2000) who found that customers can influence their received outcomes, hence causing service outputs to vary depending on what outcome the customer has 'created' for themselves.

The second issue, relating to inseparability, is that it can be argued that the co-creation of value *is* separate. In goods-based industries, the manufacturers usually have the initial outlay of cost through the manufacturing goods ahead, and in the hope of, customer purchase. In many services, customers pay and, at the same time as payment, service is both produced and received. However, in fitness clubs due to the subscription nature of the service, members (not the provider) also have an initial outlay of cost, after which the issue is not so much about co-creation of value, but how to regain value and compensate for the costs paid out.

2.5.4 Perishability

Finally, according to Zeithaml et al's (1985) IHIP model, goods-based organisations differ from service-based organisations because services (being considered as intangible in the IHIP model) are perishable, whereas goods which always continue to exist and simply change ownership from seller to buyer. This 'existence' of goods makes it easier for those organisations to inventorise their goods and be able to ensure supply meets demand. However, as Vargo and Lusch (2004) point out, goods-based organisations should be seeking to reduce inventorised goods and instead supplying

customers closely to the point that demand is required to avoid wasted stock and storage costs. Therefore, goods-based organisations should be supplying to demand instantaneously as happens in service-based organisations. Vargo and Lusch consider that all organisations, service- or good-based, should be seeking better ways to manage service flow. However, again, due to the identification of the rental/access paradigm of services, demand cannot be easily controlled in access-based services such as fitness clubs.

As well as fitness clubs being difficult to position as a 'service industry', there is a further challenge for fitness clubs. Seeing as fitness clubs provide a discretional service (unlike a more generally required service, such as household energy) the transition between being a prospective member to being an actual member of a club involves three stages of decision making; three stages during which a prospective member could decide not to become a member making the acquisition of members more difficult.

2.5.5 Transition from prospective to actual member

For individual fitness clubs to attract new members there are three steps in the decision making process which a prospective member must progress through. As Crossley (2006, p.30) states, "one does not typically drift into gym-going without first deciding upon it. Costs are incurred, and hurdles have to be jumped…these processes force potential gym-joiners to reflect upon their motivations and commitment before they actually join. An agent [prospective member] who cannot muster convincing (to their self) reasons for joining at this stage is very unlikely to go through with the process".

Firstly, the individual needs to decide to enter the health and fitness industry in some capacity. Ultimately, not all members of the population feel the need to participate in health and fitness activity. For instance, in 2011, approximately 5.33 million adults were fitness club members (Mintel, 2011). At an overall adult population in the UK being 51,045,000 (National Office of Statistics, 2011), this means that only 10.4% of the adult population were fitness club members. As stated by the IHRSA (2006, p.34), "the fact that even in the most mature market only 15% of the population uses our type of services shows that 85% dislike what we offer in such a way that they are not willing to put in the time, money and effort it takes to make use of it".

Some members may 'need' to become members based on medical advice. Some members may 'need' to become members based on a perceived need to change physical appearance. Some members may want to become members for some form of physical/psychological health improvement. Thus, becoming a fitness club member is not required by everybody.

Further, if the reason for joining a fitness club is a desired physical change the customer also faces a 'delayed return on investment' (DellaVigna & Malmendier, 2006), whereby members may have to invest considerable time and resources before achieving any physical change. This delayed return on investment is perhaps responsible for the service provided being unappealing to prospective members. This is different from, say, energy providers who needn't be concerned with individuals considering an equivalent statement; 'do I want/need energy for my home'.

Secondly, if a prospective member decides that they do want to partake in health and fitness, the individual needs then to decide that fitness clubs are the preferred health and fitness environment. Fitness club membership can require a significant expenditure; an expenditure which may be seen as a discretionary, non-essential luxury. Further, fitness clubs compete in a complex market, served also by exercise outdoors, exercise at home, public leisure centres, sports clubs, colleges and universities gyms, and company gyms. Such alternative leisure providers are often cheaper and are increasing their share of the leisure industry. For instance, between 2006 and 2010, the sports industry saw an increase of 16.1% growth in value whereas fitness clubs saw only 13.9% growth (Mintel, 2011). Further, between 2004 and 2009, there was a significant increase in exercising at home (Mintel, 2009). For example, the Nintendo Wii games console, launched in November 2006, is now found in 5.5 million UK households meaning that more than 12 million people have access to Wii Fit/Wii Fit Plus, Zumba Fitness, My Fitness Coach and Wii Sports Resort which all, according to Mintel (2011) have been providing most of the home-based fitness competition to fitness clubs. Such competition from other product category alternatives is, again, not of concern for energy providers, whereby the consumer of energy usually has little choice regarding how energy (gas, electricity or oil) is provided to their home, and usually cannot provide it themselves.

Thirdly, even if a member eventually decides to engage with the fitness industry, they must then select which specific health and fitness club to join. This step, the only step, is analogous to energy providers, who must try and persuade consumers to select their provision of, say, electricity.

With so many barriers in place; opportunities for individuals to 'opt out' during this decision making process, those individuals that do make the transition from prospect to member become valuable stakeholders of the fitness club, of which much resource has been invested in their acquisition.

After all of these steps required before an individual makes the transition to become a member, the next challenge for the fitness club is to retain them, potentially adopting specific retention strategies.

2.6 Retention strategies

Reichheld and Kenny (1990) asserted that six factors underpin improving retention; commitment from senior management, a customer-focused culture whereby employees and managers place full attention on customer satisfaction, systems which track and analyse the causes of defections, empowerment of front line employees to take actions that provided immediate customer satisfaction, continuous staff development, and reward systems that are based on customer retention. However, Kumar, Lemon, and Parasuraman (2006) list a number of challenges in achieving retention. 'Implementation challenges' can be caused by a lack of ownership in organisations over the responsibility of retention management. Such a lack of ownership is perhaps also indicative of another 'strategic' challenge caused by a lack of a customer-centric approach.

With specific reference to the fitness industry, Oliver (2003) suggested that fitness clubs need to have an 'organisation customer focus'; (customer focused culture), a 'customer management focus' (focused on maximising customer value) and a 'customer knowledge focus' (focused on researching the customer). Similarly to Oliver's suggestion that fitness clubs should adopt a broad focus when trying to increase retention, Hurley (2004) suggested that the fitness industry needs to develop 'higher-level' retention strategies. Using Berry and Parasuraman's (1991) three level framework of how retention marketing can be conducted, Hurley proposed that fitness clubs should seek to develop financial, social and structural bonds with their members.

Dhurup and Surujlal (2010) conducted research with fitness club managers in order to find out what retention strategies they use within their fitness clubs. These have been cross-referenced (Table 2.7).

Table 2.7 Usage of fitness club retention activities per strategy type and level

Strategy type and level (Hurley, 2004)	Strategies used (Dhurup & Surujlal, 2010)
Level 1 Financial • No joining fee • Discounting • Special offers • Freezing of membership	Special discounts (rank order 1) Special offers (rank order 5)
Level 2 Financial and social • Discount loyalty cards • Social activities • Buddy weekends • Positive word-of-mouth incentives • Training partners • Guest invitations • Group activities	Social events (rank order 4)
Level 3 Financial, social and structural • Cultural/organisational change • Marketing approach • Customer service • Customer development methods • Points of contact	Direct marketing (rank order 6) Telephone call (rank order 8) Satisfaction survey (rank order 9) Regular newspapers (rank order 3), notice boards (rank order 2), Christmas/birthday cards (rank order 10/11)
• Staff training/rewards • Education • Awareness of lifetime/financial value • Identification of lapsed members • Membership tracking • Reactivation programmes	Renewal notification (rank order 7)

(Hurley, 2004; Dhurup & Surujlal, 2010)

As showing in Table 2.7, by cross-referencing Hurley's suggested levels with eleven retention methods used by fitness club managers and their rank ordering of importance (Dhurup and Surujlal, 2010), it can be seen that many of Hurley's suggested retention strategies are not used, especially those related to level 2; financial and social. Interestingly, this suggests that most retention activities, as per Dhurup and Surujlal (2010) occur either at level 1 or level 3 of Hurley's (2004) suggested hierarchy, but not at the 'financial and social' level 2. This suggests that perhaps the more social-based retention strategies are either not favoured or are perhaps harder to implement than Level 1 and 3, suggesting that Levels 2 and 3 should be inverted. That being said, it is difficult to interpret the eleven strategies listed by Dhurup and Surujlal (2010). For instance, it is not known what the 'telephone call', 'notice board', 'newspapers' or 'direct

marketing' actually consisted of. Also, regarding Hurley's strategies, 'group activities' is difficult to distinguish from 'social activities', and 'points of contact', 'customer service' and 'marketing approach' are also ambiguous.

Finally, neither Oliver (2003), Hurley (2004) nor Dhurup and Surujlal (2010) have researched whether these retention strategies actually increase retention. That being said, even if they had researched empirically the link between strategy and retention, by focusing on a strategy level it cannot be explained as to why theoretically these strategies work. In short, it is difficult to ascertain which strategies are advised, which strategies are effective and which strategies are in use. In order to develop higher level strategies, more empirical research is needed to understand the phenomenon of retention in the fitness industry, which this thesis provides. Whilst it may be unappealing to study failure attrition too closely (Reichheld, 1996), only through empirical research can the antecedents of retention be understood and subsequently developed into strategies to improve retention rates in fitness clubs.

2.7 Conclusion

Overall, retention is a complex process which can potentially be directed at different stakeholders and at different levels. However, it is considered that an increase in customer retention can yield an increase in organisational effectiveness. Whilst there are many benefits to retention, retention in the fitness industry is of increasing concern, due to poor retention rates and slow market growth and limited alternative revenue streams. Unfortunately, whilst the services marketing literature has provided knowledge which may be more readily applicable to other service-based organisations, there are many challenges and complexities within the fitness industry which make such transfer of knowledge more difficult. Retention strategies have been proposed, and their usage researched which seems to have exposed a mismatch between what fitness clubs should perhaps be doing and what they are doing in order to retain members. Such strategies need to be founded on empirical research into the antecedents of retention. A review of the retention literature to date, in the context of the fitness industry and the wider service industry, is reviewed in the subsequent chapter in order to guide empirical research into the predictors of retention in the fitness industry.

Chapter 3

Perceived Service Quality, Perceived Value for Money, Brand and Usage

3.1 Introduction

The phenomenon of fitness club membership retention, given its importance and the challenges of achieving retention of fitness club members (discussed previously in Chapter Two), has led to much research interest. In 2002, the Fitness Industry Association (FIA) conducted a large-scale research project ("Winning the retention battle"), consisting of three research studies. This series of research projects provided the starting point for understanding the predictors of membership retention in the fitness industry. In order to begin meeting the first objective; to identify potential predictors of fitness club membership cancellation, this chapter reviews the findings of the FIA (2002) study, before presenting a critical review of the academic literature, centred around four main potential predictors; perceived service quality, perceived value for money, brand and usage.

3.2 Fitness Industry Association: "Winning the retention battle"

Within the FIA's "Winning the retention battle" study (2002), the first study was quantitative and focused on retention rates, comparing rates based on demographic variables, contract type, club type and usage level. This study was based on data collected from over sixty-four clubs (across sixteen club operators) relating to members who joined in the year 2000 (N= 72,354). The second study was qualitative, consisting of focus groups with current members (from five different clubs) and ex-members (from two different clubs) exploring what is important to them regarding fitness club membership. The third study was a quantitative study, based on structured telephone interviews, which explored retrospectively why ex-members cancelled their membership within the last three months and was conducted with members from three private chains (eighty seven per cent) and one public chain (thirteen per cent).

Age and contract type were found to affect the length of a member's retention rate.

Age

According to the FIA's first study, there was a positive relationship between age and annual retention rate. For instance, members aged thirty-five or over yielded retention of at least twenty weeks longer (one and half times longer) than those under thirty five. Those members aged forty-five or over yielded an average retention of twenty three per cent longer than those aged between sixteen and twenty four.

Contract type

The FIA study also suggested that those members who joined on an annual contract yielded higher retention than those members who joined on a monthly contract; a sixteen per cent longer retention rate, even when the joining fee was controlled for. Those members who joined on a monthly contract were more likely to cancel after sixty-eight weeks than those members who joined on an annual contract.

Personal changes

Whilst age and contract type were found to affect retention rates, personal changes were listed as being a reason for cancelling membership. Twenty-eight per cent of ex-members listed personal or work changes as a reason for cancelling, and fifteen per cent listed injury or illness as a reason for leaving.

However, whilst knowledge about how age and contract type might influence retention rates could be used to develop targeted retention strategies, there is perhaps still much unexplained variance within different ages and contract types that influences retention rates. Thus, whilst the FIA study highlighted the roles of age and contract type, the aim of this thesis was to focus on a range of psychological variables, as it was considered that they would account for a higher amount of variance in retention rates than simply age and contract type.

'Psychology', as defined by the British Psychological Society (2011), is "the science of mind and behaviour", and as such includes any exploration of concepts such as perception, cognition, emotion, and behaviour. Psychological variables are more susceptible to change and so can perhaps be more easily influenced than demographic variables, perhaps making psychological variables more controllable using an appropriate retention strategy aimed at trying to change such variables. As such, it is a psychological approach which is taken throughout this thesis. Personal changes can be considered as non-controllable; there is little that a fitness club manager can do to retain a member who is relocating or has become injured/ill. In any industry, there is always an unavoidable amount of attrition. However, it is the 'avoidable attrition' which is the focus of this thesis.

The FIA study did also highlight the role of psychological factors, such as perceptions of the gym environment and staff, perceptions of cost and value for money, perceptions of brand image, and perceptions of usage.

Gym environment and staff

It was found that thirteen per cent of members who had switched to a different fitness club gave equipment and facilities as the main reason for switching clubs. Similarly, changes in the gym environment, deterioration of equipment and poor maintenance were suggested as being reasons for cancelling. Also, it was found that thirty-five per cent of members gave overcrowding in the gym environment as the main reason for cancelling their membership. Further, it was reported that increased advertising in a bid to attract new members was seen negatively by current members who considered the gym environment to be overcrowded as it is. Whilst overcrowding may be alleviated by booking in advance or queuing, having to book or queue was also suggested as causing a desire to leave. In relation to staff, whilst only four per cent of ex-members felt that their staff rating was linked to their non-renewal, it was suggested that members do consider that staff should provide service and to make contact with members, but that this expectation of staff was not always met. Also, the amount of respect that a member has for the level of staff training, qualifications and experience was important in their rating of the fitness club.

Further, the way the staff 'come across' was found to be important, determining the atmosphere of the club and subsequently affecting a member's likelihood of renewal; according to twenty-two per cent of ex-members, a bad atmosphere was listed as a reason for non-renewal. Also, it was found that the way in which the joining contract was presented by staff to the member was considered as important.

Cost and value for money

In addition to the suggested importance of gym environment and staff, the FIA study also reported that forty-five per cent of ex-members members suggested that fees were the main reason for leaving. Thirty-eight per cent of ex-members gave poor value for money as a reason for leaving. Also, thirty per cent of ex-members who had switched to another club gave 'cost' as being the reason for joining a different club, with the costs and benefits being weighed up by members in terms of time (opportunity to use the club) as well as the perceived expense.

Brand

The FIA study also reported that the overall brand of the fitness club was considered to be important to members' renewal decisions. More specifically, it was considered to be a 'tipping point' for attracting new members to join; whilst it might not be the main

reason to join, given a comparison with another club it might be the deciding variable in choosing between them.

Usage

It was suggested that there is a positive relationship between fitness club usage and membership retention. There was a positive relationship between visit frequency in the first three months and annual retention rate; the lower the frequency the higher the chance of cancellation in the first sixty-eight weeks. Also, those who visit once a week regularly retain their membership thirteen weeks longer. Thirty-eight per cent of ex-members gave a 'loss of motivation to use' as being the main reason for cancelling membership.

However, whilst the FIA's (2002) research report was based on large-scale research, consisting of three studies which provided some key findings, this report does not appear to have been peer-reviewed, reducing the extent to which the credibility of the research and the associated findings could be assumed and generalised. As such, a review of the academic literature was conducted in order to ascertain current knowledge regarding the psychological factors influencing fitness club membership retention.

3.3 Literature review

The fitness industry has attracted literature from the disciplines of sports management, sports marketing and leisure marketing. As such, a literature review was conducted across these disciplines in order to ascertain the current amount of peer-reviewed, academic literature relating to fitness industry retention. Further, literature from the discipline of services marketing was also reviewed, in recognition of the fitness industry being under the remit of the services industry. This was to ensure that literature pertaining to the relevant context (fitness industry) and also pertaining to the relevant outcome (retention) was reviewed.

In order to try and elicit as much relevant literature as possible, various keyword search terms were used, searching within the article titles. Variants of the term 'fitness club' were used to allow inclusion of literature into the search, alongside other search terms considered to be useful in obtaining literature. Only peer-reviewed journal articles were included. Articles which related only to the prediction of exercise adherence, exercise participation, or fitness merchandise were excluded from the review.

This was to ensure that only literature relevant to the research question was reviewed. Also, any articles relating to the benefits of exercising at a fitness club to health or work productivity were excluded. In addition to this, the wider literature on services marketing was consulted.

In the academic literature, various psychological concepts capture the proposed antecedents of retention. To align the discussion of these concepts with the FIA's proposed psychological variables (gym environment and staff, perceptions of cost and value for money, perceptions of brand image, and perceptions of usage), the discussion of the academic literature is based around four psychological variables; perceived service quality, perceived value for money, brand and usage.

3.3.1 Perceived service quality

Service quality is a widely used construct and, as such, has been defined in the services marketing literature in many ways. Zeithaml (1988) defines service quality as "consumer opinion about the excellence or superiority of a product or service" (p.3). Bitner and Hubbert (1994) define service quality as "global consumer impression about the relative superiority or inferiority of an organization and its services" (p. 7). Both of these definitions are based on the notion that service quality is a subjective assessment. According to Bowen and Ford (2002, p. 450), "it does not matter if organizational efficiency measures the cost, accountants, or the production engineers all affirm the excellence of the organization's service experience, if the customer does not perceive it that way".

This asserts the importance of the customer's perception of service quality (perceived service quality) as opposed to focusing on objective measures, benchmarks or standards of service quality. As such, it is *perceived* service quality which is the focus of this thesis.

SERVQUAL

There has been much debate in the literature regarding how perceived service quality is determined. According to the 'SERVQUAL' measure (Berry, Zeithaml & Parasuraman, 1985; Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985; 1988) service quality is a judgement relating to the *perceived* superiority of the service and relates to five dimensions; tangibles (the appearance of physical facilities, equipment, and personnel), reliability (the ability to perform the promised service dependably and

accurately), responsiveness (the willingness to help customers and provide prompt service), empathy (the provision of individual care and attention to customers) and assurance (the knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence). However, relating to dimensionality, the validity of the SERVQUAL instrument has been questioned, due to inconsistent variable loadings found when testing the variable structure of the model and different numbers and levels of dimensions being found, rather than the five dimensions suggested originally. Also, it has been argued that SERVQUAL focuses on service delivery as opposed to the outcomes of service encounters, when perhaps the outcome outweighs the process of delivery when consumers form their quality evaluations.

The SERVQUAL instrument was designed to be a generic instrument which evaluates perceived service quality by comparing expectations of service with perceptions of service in the aforementioned five dimensions. The premise of the SERVQUAL is that service quality perception is the result of the 'gap' between perceived quality and the expected quality. However, the main question regarding the service quality construct is whether or not expected quality should be taken into account. The idea of asking consumers about their expectations has been criticised as being ambiguous, mostly due to the difference in 'expectation' meaning either what the service provider should ideally offer, and realistically what they expect to receive.

As such, from a wider service industry perspective, the SERVQUAL framework has received criticism. As Ladhari (2008) points out, the SERVQUAL instrument was formulated as a result of twelve focus groups and also points out that there are many contentious aspects of the SERVQUAL measure, relating to the use of gap scores, the validity of ascertaining expectations, dimensionality, and an overstated focus on delivery rather than outcome. For instance, relating to gap scores, the idea of perception-minus-expectation in the generation of overall quality has been criticised based on little evidence that consumers actually assess quality in this way. It has been argued that service quality should be assessed by measuring only perceptions of quality.

Such criticism for the SERVQUAL conceptualisation of perceived service quality has led to the development of other perceived service quality definitions and measures.

Alternative service quality models

As an alternative to SERVQUAL, Cronin and Taylor (1992, 1994) proposed the SERVPERF scale, which consists of the same items as the SERVQUAL scale, but without the expectations component. Not only did this shorten the scale by fifty per cent (removing items relating to expectation), but it also helped to distinguish perceived service quality from satisfaction. They argued that perceived service quality should be rated in relation to performance only, and that the relationship which perceived performance has with expected performance is actually, in itself, a measure of satisfaction. Indeed, the expectancy-disconfirmation theory of satisfaction (Oliver 1980) suggests that customers judge their satisfaction with a product by comparing product performance with previously held expectations of the performance. The disconfirmation (whether it is in a positive or negative direction) reflects the 'gap' (as referred to in SERVQUAL) and it is the customer's salience of such a gap which determines the satisfaction level and subsequently causes customers to reflect on whether their decision to buy the product was a good or bad decision. As such, Cronin and Taylor argue that perceived service quality should only be measured in relation to performance, which avoids confusion between perceived service quality and satisfaction.

Another alternative model was developed by Brady and Cronin (2001) who proposed a three-dimensional model of perceived service quality, asserting that perceived service quality is based on the perceived performance of three broad dimensions, underpinned by various sub-dimensions: interaction quality (staff attitude, behaviour, and expertise), physical environment quality (ambient conditions, facility design, and social factors), and outcome quality (waiting time, tangible elements, and valence).

The models proposed by Cronin and Taylor (1992, 1994) and Brady and Cronin (2001) represent a shift away from SERVQUAL, and instead towards measuring only the perceived performance of service quality attributes and not the comparison between performance with expected performance. These models arguably have allowed perceived service quality and satisfaction to be more clearly differentiated.

However, these alternative models are still generic models of perceived service quality. Due to the criticisms of using generic perceived service quality scales, industry specific measures of perceived service quality have been considered to be preferable.

Fitness industry service quality measures

In 1995, the QUESC (Quality Excellence of Sports Centres) measure of perceived service quality was developed (Kim & Kim, 1995); representing the first bespoke perceived service quality measure for use in fitness clubs. After conducting an exploratory factor analysis, eleven service quality dimensions were proposed; employee attitude, employee reliability, programs offered, ambience, information available, personal considerations, price, privilege, ease of mind, stimulation and convenience. However these eleven dimensions were not found to be supported by Papadimitriou and Karteliotis (2000) after their use of the measure, potentially due to the single item measurement of some of the dimensions (Lam, Zhang & Jensen, 2005).

The CERM-SQC (Centre for Environmental and Recreation Management-Customer Service Quality) was later developed by Howat, Crilley, Absher and Milne, 1996, and represented an industry-specific measure for leisure services. The development of the CERM-CSQ was based on a large-scale sample and comprised only three dimensions of quality were identified core, personnel and peripheral, but each of which were represented by multiple items.

Lam et al (2005) developed a new 'service quality assessment scale' (SQAS) for use in fitness clubs and developed a comprehensive perceived service quality scale. To develop the SQAS, they conducted a literature review, field observations across ten health–fitness clubs, and focus groups and interviews with fifteen members of health–fitness clubs. This resulted in the development of a six dimensional instrument for measuring perceived service quality; staff, classes, changing rooms, physical facility, workout facility and childcare. However, whilst this perceived service quality measure was developed comprehensively, it has not yet been tested with regard to its criterion validity.

More recently, Dhurup, Singh and Surujlal (2006) developed their own measure of perceived service quality; Health and Fitness Service Quality (HAFSQ) that consisted of eight dimensions of service quality; personnel, programming and medical, convenience and information dissemination, functionality and layout, ambience and accessibility, facility attraction, safety and support and membership. The items which measured these dimensions were developed from a literature review and were content validated by two academics and two fitness club administrators, and were then used to measure perceived service quality. However, unlike Lam et al's (2005) measure, the

service quality attributes were only validated by 'experts', not by fitness club members; the key informants of perceived service quality.

Perceived service quality and retention

With regard to the wider services marketing literature, a meta-analysis of eighty-six empirical studies was conducted (Carillat, Jaramillo & Mulki, 2009), reporting predictive relationships between perceived service quality, attitudinal loyalty and purchase intention, providing further overall support for the relationship between perceived service quality and retention.

However, the development of the aforementioned industry-specific measures of perceived service quality facilitated industry-specific measurement; the impact of perceived service quality specifically over fitness club retention. Literature has suggested the importance that the perceived service quality of a fitness club has in determining member satisfaction and retention, and subsequently the bottom line profitability (Gerson, 1999; McCarthy, 2004).

With regard to the fitness industry, Lentell (2000) measured the relationship between perceived service quality and satisfaction, measuring perceived service quality with the CERM-CSQ, which Lentell considered, at the time, to be the most comprehensive measure of perceived service quality. The CERM-CSQ was used to predict satisfaction, findings that the 'tangible' dimension (physical aspects of the facility) was most predictive of satisfaction. This suggested that not all aspects of perceived service quality are equally related to satisfaction.

Alexandris, Dimitriadis and Kasiara (2001) were concerned with the effects of perceived service quality, using the generic 'SERVQUAL' measure (Berry, Zeithaml & Parasuraman, 1985; Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985; 1988) to predict renewal intentions, as well as positive word-of-mouth, price sensitivity, and complaining behaviour. Alexandris et al (2001) found that one of the five SERVQUAL dimensions was predictive of renewal intentions; tangibility. This relates to Lentell's (2000) aforementioned finding, that tangibility was related to satisfaction. However, in Alexandris et al's (2001) study, only four items were used to measure 'tangibility' which is perhaps not enough to ensure a sufficient evaluation of the tangible elements of the service provided in fitness clubs.

Further, whilst Alexandris et al (2001) claim to have used the SERVQUAL model, they only measured perception, not expectation.

Murray and Howat (2002) were also concerned with predicting satisfaction from perceived service quality, finding support for the 'chain' between perceived service quality, satisfaction and subsequent positive word-of-mouth intentions. 'Overall satisfaction' was measured using one item. Perceived service quality was measured using eighteen attributes, although it is not clear exactly how they elicited their eighteen attributes. Also, both the customer's expectations and perceived performance of the attributes were measured, which suggests that they may have theoretically been measuring satisfaction twice, if disconfirmation is considered to be a measure of satisfaction instead of service quality.

Alexandris, Zahariadis, Tsorbatzoudis and Grouios (2004) tested Brady and Cronin's (2001) three-dimensional model of perceived service quality, and adapted the measure for use in a fitness club context. The three adapted dimensions (physical environment; ambience, facility design and social conditions between members, interaction; staff attitude, behaviour, expertise, and outcome; waiting time, tangible outcomes and valence) were assessed with regard to their efficacy in predicting satisfaction. All three dimensions were found to be predictive, with interaction quality being the weakest predictor of satisfaction. Only the perceived performance of the service quality attributes was measured, and satisfaction was measured using six items broadly requiring members to reflect on their decision to join the club, ensuring that satisfaction was clearly differentiated from perceived service quality. Further, they found that satisfaction was predictive of psychological commitment and positive word-of-mouth intentions.

Bodet (2006) investigated whether the perceived rating of service attributes had proportionate effects on satisfaction. Both qualitative and quantitative research was utilised which enabled Bodet to develop a list of service quality attributes and then to differentiate between these service quality attributes based on how well their performance was perceived (negatively or positively) and also based on their influence over satisfaction (weak or strong). More specifically, Bodet posited that there are four modes of perceived service quality contribution; basic elements, plus elements, key elements and secondary elements. Basic and plus elements are fundamental and contribute strongly to satisfaction. Basic elements are those that when rated poorly

lead to dissatisfaction, but have a weak relationship with satisfaction when rated positively i.e. 'the bare essentials'. Plus elements, conversely, are those that when rated highly lead to satisfaction but have a weak relationship with dissatisfaction when rated negatively i.e. the 'nice to haves'. Key elements have a strong influence with satisfaction and dissatisfaction regardless of their evaluation and secondary elements play no vital role in either satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

Bodet (2009) also investigated the link between consumption values and their effect on which service attributes contribute mostly towards satisfaction, finding that those customers with a high consumption value (those who place the most value on their membership) are more demanding of service quality attributes. This study suggested a link between the perception of personal value that is added through their consumption of fitness club membership and the importance of service quality attributes to satisfaction.

Pedragosa and Correia (2009) were concerned with the expectations of the fitness club facility, facility ratings and overall satisfaction and the effects these had on renewal intentions, as well as word-of-mouth intention, and intended frequency of use. They found that expectations and facility ratings both had a predictive relationship with satisfaction which, in turn, had a predictive relationship with the retention-related measures; repeat purchase intention, positive word-of-mouth intention, and intended frequency of use. However, similar to Murray and Howat (2002), Pedragosa and Correia also measured both the customer's expectations and perceived performance of the attributes, suggesting that theoretically they may have also been measuring satisfaction twice.

More recently, Wei et al (2010) measured just perceived service quality and renewal intention and found that perceived service quality predicted renewal intention, finding that 'staff initiative' was the strongest predictor of renewal intention.

Ferrand et al (2010) measured the impact of service attributes, brand associations, perceived expensiveness of membership, previous length of membership, on satisfaction, frequency of usage, and intention to repurchase their fitness club membership. A qualitative study was conducted and eventually twenty service quality attributes (five dimensions; services offered, customer relations, nice to use, security and comfort) and fourteen brand associations (two dimensions; promoted image and

additional benefits) were elicited. However, unlike the aforementioned studies Ferrand et al measured perceived importance of the services quality attributes, as opposed to their perceived quality or previous expectations of their performance. The final measurement model indicated that the services offered, security, and promoted image of the brand were predictive of satisfaction. Satisfaction was linked to frequency of usage. Further, frequency of usage, customer relations, perceived expensiveness and previous length of membership were linked to repurchase intention. Whilst the perceived importance of certain service attributes was predictive of satisfaction, satisfaction was not found to be predictive of repurchase intentions.

The studies discussed in relation to perceived service quality are varied with regards to the retention-related outcome they have sought to predict (satisfaction, commitment, loyalty, frequency of attendance, positive word of mouth intentions, and repurchase intentions). However, none of these studies (Alexandris et al, 2001; Alexandris et al, 2004; Bodet, 2006; Bodet, 2009; Carillat et al, 2009; Dhurup et al, 2006; Lam et al, 2005; Murray & Howat, 2002; Pedragosa & Correia, 2009; Ferrand et al, 2010; Wei et al, 2010) have been focused on perceived service quality's predictive effect on actual retention. All of the aforementioned studies related to perceived service quality in the fitness industry have only either been concerned with developing a measure of perceived service quality, and/or measuring perceived service quality's predictive effect on retention-related outcomes, as opposed to actual retention.

As such, the influence of perceived service quality over actual retention is a relationship that needs to be further explored.

3.3.2 Perceived value for money
In addition to perceived service quality, perceived value for money has also been widely researched in a fitness industry context. Perceived value for money can be broadly defined in the services marketing literature as a consumer's assessment of product utility, based on what has been given and what has been gained (Zeithaml, 1988). Reflecting this notion, perceived value for money has also been defined as "a cognitive-based construct which captures any benefit-sacrifice discrepancy" (Patterson & Spreng, 1997, p.421).

Unlike the service quality definitions whereby there is dispute regarding whether service quality is determined using discrepancies between expected quality and

perceived quality, regarding the perceived value for money literature it seems to be widely accepted that a customer does derive value based on a discrepancy (or lack of) between their input into the service compared to what they have received from it.

It should be noted that *perceived* value for money is different from *actual* value for money, which could arguably be calculated by taking objective measures of the member's usage and perhaps comparing the average cost per session with what the cost would be if the member paid for each session on a 'pay as you go' basis, to ascertain whether they were paying more or less per visit than if they were not subscribing to a monthly fee. As well as usage to ascertain actual value, objectively measured service quality could be used, comparing the levels of service offered with other comparably priced fitness clubs. However, in this thesis, value for money refers to the subjective perception of the 'benefit-sacrifice' discrepancy; it is *perceived* value for money which is of interest in this thesis. Also, it should be noted that perceived value for money is different from customer value which, as discussed previously in section 2.2.1, relates to the value of the customer to the organisation, not the value of the organisation to the customer.

With regard to the wider services marketing literature, Cronin, Brady and Hult (2000) found in their study across six industries that service value had a positive effect on behavioural intentions; positive word-of-mouth, repurchase and customer expenditure. Similarly, McDougall and Levesque (2000), in a study of four services, found that perceived value for money is a valuable contributing factor to satisfaction and loyalty.

In the fitness industry context, Murray and Howat (2002) describe perceived value for money as the gap between what is received compared with what is given in exchange. They researched the concept of perceived value for money and intentions to retain membership and concluded that perceived value for money was directly influential over positive word-of-mouth intentions.

Ferrand et al (2010, p.89) asserted that "there is limited evidence in the literature relating to perceptions of price and intention". As mentioned earlier (section 3.3.1), Ferrand et al researched perceived price, finding that the more expensive the price is perceived to be, the less members intended to repurchase their membership.

Whilst they cite Keaveney's (1995) research, which found high price to be a reason given by thirty per cent of customers who had switched service provider, Keaveney found that it was not just high price that was influential to switching; it was also price increases, unfair pricing practices, and deceptive pricing practices that were reasons for switching. Whilst Keaveney's study was directly relevant to retention, as switching is an actual behaviour which affects the organisation and not just an intentional behaviour, Keaveney's study was qualitative, and so a significant causal relationship between price and retention was not established.

There appears to be some dispute in the fitness industry literature regarding how perceived value for money should be measured. Whilst both Murray and Howat (2002), and Ferrand et al (2010) used one, single item to measure perceived value for money, Bodet (2012) took a broader approach, and measured perceived value (not just perceived value for money) and researched perceived value using a three-item measure which included items relating to the perceived *monetary* benefit-sacrifice discrepancy, the perceived *energy* benefit-sacrifice discrepancy and overall the perceived benefit relative to what was 'given up' when becoming a fitness club member. Alongside other variables, Bodet found that perceived value was predictive of resistance to change to another fitness club.

However the same criticism can be applied to these three studies as was applied to earlier discussed construct of perceived service quality; these studies have predicted retention-related variables (respectively, positive word-of-mouth, renewal intention and resistance to change) as opposed to predicting actual retention. It cannot be assumed that these retention-related variables are analogous to actual retention. There is, therefore, the need to explore perceived value for money's efficacy in predicting not only retention-related behaviours but actual retention.

3.3.3 Brand

In addition to perceived service quality and perceived value for money, the role of the brand has also been considered as important to retention. A brand can be defined as "a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or combination of them which is intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors" (Kotler, 1991, p. 442).

Brand equity

The brand is thought to be able to augment a product, by adding value to the product; 'brand equity'. Aaker (1991) proposed that brand equity consists of four dimensions; loyalty; perceived quality; associations; and awareness. Respectively, the more loyal a consumer is to the brand, the higher the perceived quality of the brand, the more favourable the associations of the brand and the higher the awareness of the brand, the more 'equity' the brand has which can then be transmitted to the brand's product's perceived value. In the case of private, multi-site operator fitness clubs, the brand can be considered as the operator.

Krishnan and Hartline (2001) claimed that the relationship between brand equity and a consumer's behaviour will depend on the dominant attributes of the particular type of product or service; search attributes (e.g. brand name, price), experience attributes (e.g. fun, emotion, entertainment), and credence attributes (product characteristics which cannot be easily evaluated e.g. advice, consultancy). Search-dominant services are those which consumers can evaluate the product characteristics of prior to purchase. Experience-dominant services are those which consumers can only evaluate the product characteristics of after purchase. Credence-dominant services are those which consumers cannot evaluate the product characteristics of even after purchase.

In response to a dearth of research on the importance of brand equity in the service industry, Krishnan and Hartline explored the brand equity of different service types, search-dominant, experience-dominant and credence-dominant, and sought to compare this to brand equity of a tangible good. After conducting a pre-test to identify suitable services and a tangible good that would represent each type, experts identified a strong and weak brand of each service. Brand equity was measured both directly (asking respondents how much extra they would be willing to pay for the strong brand name good/service), and indirectly (asking respondents to rate the quality, value, patronage motivation, trustworthiness, and familiarity of a strong and weak brand in each service and good type.

In contrast to previous literature, they found that brand equity is more important for search-dominant services than for experience- and credence-dominated. It was previously thought that high brand equity might compensate for missing information that makes it difficult to judge the quality of experience and credence services. However, they found that search-dominant services are almost equal to tangible goods

with regard to the importance of brand equity, as their strong brands were scored with similar indices of equity. Interestingly, the pre-test suggested that 'exercise clinics' could be considered as search-dominant; participants rated exercise clinics as being relatively easy to judge the service quality of before and after to being purchased. This suggests that for fitness clubs (if assumed to be similar to 'exercise clinics'), the brand equity is important to consumers in performing their search. Even though it may be relatively easy to judge service quality i.e. being able to walk around a fitness club, see the facilities, talk to staff before committing to a contract, it appears that brand equity may be important in prospective fitness club members deciding to purchase a contract.

Whilst this suggests the importance of brand equity in discriminating between strong and weak brands, in relation to 'search-dominant' fitness clubs, this suggested that brand equity was perhaps more important in the acquisition of new members, but not necessarily retention.

One specific aspect of brand equity, brand association, has been focused on with specific reference to fitness clubs.

Brand association

As mentioned earlier, favourable brand associations contribute to equity. Keller (1993) defined brand associations as "informational nodes linked to the brand node in memory and contain the meaning of the brand for the consumers" (p. 3). Further, such associations can be categorised into attributes (perceived quality of the product and its delivery), benefits (perceived benefits to the customer of engaging with the product) and attitudes (overall attitude towards the brand).

Brand association has attracted research in the fitness industry literature, as well as the wider services marketing literature. Across the fitness industry literature, in more recent years, there appears to have been a shift from a perceived service quality focus to the introduction of brand variables and their role in fitness club retention. Macintosh and Doherty (2007) advocated the need for such reframing, and a movement away from a focus on perceived service quality. They found that aspects of the fitness club' brand values and culture as perceived by members relate to their satisfaction and intentions to leave (albeit, this was a correlational study, hence causation was not established).

Alexandris, Douka, Papadopoulos and Kaltsatou (2008) were concerned with eliciting brand associations of existing fitness club members and then assessing which brand associations are most predictive of commitment and purchase intention. Whilst brand associations have often been researched qualitatively, Alexandris et al quantified eight brand associations using a likert scale, asking members the extent to which they agreed with statements relating to different aspects of the brand, finding that the higher the agreement relating to the brand's 'escape', 'nostalgia', 'pride', 'logo' and 'affect', the higher the loyalty; commitment and purchase intention.

In Ferrand et al's (2010) study, brand association was explored alongside satisfaction, service attributes, perceived price, previous purchase behaviour, and previous fitness club frequency of usage, and their relationships with intended repurchase of membership. Defined as "the functional and emotional associations which are assigned to a brand by the customer" (p. 90), fourteen brand associations were elicited from semi-structured interviews, nine of which were factor analysed and parcelled into one construct; 'promoted image' which was found to predict satisfaction.

However, these brand association studies have aimed to predict either intention or satisfaction and not actual retention. In a related context (professional sport sector), Kaynak, Salman and Tatoglu (2008) suggest, after their review some of the key brand association models (Aaker, 1991; Aaker, 1996; Gladden, Milne & Sutton, 1998; Keller, 2003) that brand association has a positive impact on both behavioural and attitudinal loyalty. This is, however, only a conceptual model, not empirically validated.

Brand social representations

Moving away from brand associations towards brand social representations, Bodet, Meurgey and Lacassagne (2009) conducted qualitative research, asking individuals who were not currently members of a certain branded fitness club, to generate brand representations using free-association. Bodet et al defined brand social representations as "more or less structured complexes of information which connect several declaratory or procedural aspects of knowledge and their adaptation to daily life situations" (p.371). As such, brand representations transcend brand images and associations by also capturing how the brand represents the customer's broader socio-cultural context. Elicited associations such as 'health', 'sport', and 'fitness' suggest that the broader product category associations can also infiltrate the consumer's overall brand representations. Bodet et al were concerned with the influence of brand

representations and how they might present obstacles to individuals to join a fitness club, especially if the brand representations were negative and incongruent to the fitness club's desired projections of the brand image. However, as with the aforementioned study of Krishnan and Hartline (2001), Bodet et al's study appears to have been primarily aimed at capturing the perspective of prospective members and what might attract them to join a fitness club, as opposed to the perspective of existing members and what might persuade them to retain their fitness club membership.

Brand identification

However, more recently the importance of brand has been captured in the marketing literature and referred to as 'consumer-company identification' (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003), representing a shift from brand association to brand identification. For instance, brand associations represent 'symbolic bases' for a deeper process of identification to occur (Cardador & Pratt, 2006). When a company (in this case, the fitness club) is considered to be particularly attractive to the individual through its perceived similarity (to the member), distinctiveness (from other clubs) and prestige, consumer-company identification is thought to occur. It is believed that the consumer seeks to identify with the core values of an attractive company hence building "the kind of deep, committed and meaningful relationships that marketers are increasingly seeking to build with their customers" (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003, p. 76). Consumer-company identification is an "active, selective, and volitional act motivated by the satisfaction of one or more self-definitional needs" (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003, p. 77). These self-definitional needs are 1) self-continuity, 2) self-distinctiveness and 3) self-enhancement. Respectively, these three needs translate into three dimensions of a brand's identity which consumers evaluate; brand similarity, brand distinctiveness and brand prestige.

Regarding brand similarity, with the aim of strengthening individual identity, the consumer seeks a brand which shares similar values e.g. a consumer who considers his/herself to value ethical trading will identify with a brand which also promotes ethical trading (e.g. Fairtrade). Regarding brand distinctiveness, with the aim of trying to stand out from other individuals, the consumer seeks a brand which also appears to stand out amongst its competitors, allowing the consumer to further promote their 'uniqueness'. Regarding brand prestige, with the aim of enhancing individual identity, the consumer seeks a brand which is considered prestigious and superior relative to its competitors, allowing the consumer to further enhance their sense of self-worth.

These three sub-dimensions, along with the overall perception of the brand's attractiveness are considered to lead to identification with the brand (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003).

In a fitness club retention context, as opposed to the member having favourable associations, the concept of identification instead relates to the member feeling that their core values are closely aligned and represented by their fitness club, which transcends just having a favourable association with the club.

Mukherjee and He (2008) propose that customer perceived company identification is positively related to retention-related variables such as customer loyalty, customer satisfaction, customer value, customer support, and long-term customer relationship. Further, according to their integrative framework (albeit, to date, not empirically validated) consumers who identify with a company tend to be more loyal, more resilient to negative information about the company, promote the company and even help the company to acquire customers. Likewise, according to Ahearne et al (2005), consumer-company identification has a positive impact on customer extra role behaviours; positive word-of-mouth, volunteering, informing the company of negative word-of-mouth, as well as having a positive impact on product usage.

Kuenzel and Halliday (2008; 2010), found that brand identification has a positive effect on brand loyalty (intention and positive word-of-mouth). In a conceptual paper, Dimitriadis and Papista (2011) proposed that the higher the level of relationship quality and consumer-brand identification, the more willing the consumer will be to continue the relationship. Also, more recently, Papista and Dimitriadis (2012) explored 'consumer-brand identification', finding in a qualitative study that consumer-brand identification is a distinct construct from the quality of the relationship that a consumer may have with a brand, but that such identification is mainly cognitive and develops over time.

However these studies, conducted in a pharmaceutical context (Ahearne, Bhattacharya & Gruen, 2005) or in the automotive industry (Kuenzel & Halliday, 2008; 2010), perhaps lessen the degree to which these studies' findings can be generalised to a fitness industry context.

Contrastingly, Kim, Han and Park (2001) found, in a mobile communications context, that brand identification does not have a significant direct effect on brand loyalty (intentions to repurchase), but that it did have a positive effect on positive word-of-mouth, and that positive word-of-mouth had a positive effect on brand loyalty. Since word-of mouth was found to affect brand loyalty, they argue that brand identification has an indirect effect on brand loyalty through positive word-of-mouth. However, most recently and based on consumers' identifications with a variety of brands (products and services),Tuškej, Golob and Podnar (2011) found that consumer identification with the brand is predictive of commitment and positive word-of-mouth behaviour.

Whilst brand identification has attracted much literature in a wider marketing context, it has as yet not attracted any attention in the fitness industry literature, with only brand associations being explored instead. As such, further exploration is needed of the role of brand identification in predicting retention-related behaviours and actual retention.

3.3.4 Usage

Broadly speaking, fitness club usage is analogous to 'member participation'; the extent to which the member consumes the association's services (Gruen, Summers & Acito, 2000). Some membership organisations have a large proportion of members that have minimal participation, participating 'on the fringe', whereas others have more members who heavily consume the services that are prepaid, such as use of a website, reading a subscribed-to magazine.

Seeing as fitness clubs provide discretional services, in that it may be considered optional to have membership, and that attending the fitness club is the only way to participate in the service it would perhaps be plausible to expect that the more highly a member uses the club the less likely they will be to cancel their membership. For instance, Lemon, White and Winer (2002) found that anticipated future usage predicts the customer 'keep/drop' behaviour; their continuation or discontinuation of a service. Lemon et al used the context of subscribing to an interactive television entertainment service using actual cancellation data. This can be argued as analogous to a fitness industry context, due the nature of interactivity, its discretional nature as a service, and it being a service associated with leisure. Because they were estimating a binary decision ('keep/drop'; retain/cancel) logistic regression analysis was utilised, finding that consumers are more likely to remain in their service relationship when they anticipate high expected future use.

White, Lemon and Hogan (2007) found that future usage uncertainty can lead to an intention to discontinue a service. However, they also found that anticipated regret of discontinuation might lessen the likelihood of discontinuation actually occurring.

It is perhaps such anticipated regret which causes fitness club members to be 'irrational' in their continuation with fitness club membership, even when their usage levels are low. For instance, DellaVigna and Malmendier (2006) explored fitness club membership from an economic perspective using secondary data analysis, and were primarily concerned with whether a 'rational expectation hypothesis' could account for fitness club membership renewal behaviour; whether consumers can rationally predict their future usage of a service (fitness club) and select the most utility-maximizing contract. However, it appears that due to a low level usage making the average visit cost expensive, and a long gap between final usage and cancellation, DellaVigna and Malmendier argue that 'rationality' does not adequately predict usage; fitness club members are, in essence, irrational in their fitness club usage, perhaps due to an overconfidence about future self-control over cancelling membership or about future efficiency in attending. This raises questions regarding the role usage has in fitness club retention.

On the other hand, more recently, Ferrand et al (2010) found that perceived weekly usage had a positive influence over intentions to renew membership. Further, Lin and Wu (2011), found that anticipated usage of a fitness club has a positive effect on behavioural intentions; to continue the service membership, increase expenditure and refer the club to friends. Once again, both Ferrand et al's and Lin and Wu's studies are focused on the prediction on intention, not actual retention. As such, the role of perceived usage could be further explored in relation to actual retention.

It is argued in this thesis that whilst usage of a fitness club (after subscribing to a contract) may be a predictor of retention, usage and retention are distinct constructs. In some continuous services, depending on the nature of the contract, usage may be used as an indicator of retention as it has a direct, objective financial impact on the organisation i.e. in telecommunications, each phone call may be paid for, in utilities, every unit of gas will be paid for.

However, usage of a fitness club, does not have a direct financial impact on the organisation, and instead perhaps represents a member seeking to maximise their

value for money, as opposed to being demonstrative of retention. For instance, a high level of usage may simply be indicative of a consumer seeking to maximise value for money in order to rationalise their monthly payments to the club. In a leisure context, whilst Iwasaki and Havitz (1998, 2004) include duration, frequency and intensity of usage in their conceptualisation of loyalty, the cost implications to the leisure user (i.e. whether usage directly incurs cost to the user) should perhaps determine whether usage is considered analogous to loyalty and retention. For instance, if the fitness club member pays each time they use the club, this is having a direct financial benefit to the organisation; such repeat purchase can be a measure of retention. However, the contractual, subscription-based membership of many fitness clubs renders usage in this context to be considered as a potential predictor of retention, but not a measure of retention.

3.4 Synthesis of membership retention influences

After reviewing both the FIA study (2002) and the academic literature, the commonality amongst the proposed psychological influences on retention is illustrated in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Membership retention influences

Influences (FIA study)	Influences (academic)
Age	n/a
Contract type	n/a
Personal changes	n/a
Equipment, overcrowding in the gym environment, and staff	Perceived service quality
Fees, cost and value	Perceived value for money
Brand	Brand identification
Usage	Usage

This suggests that, from both an academic and industry perspective, perceived service quality, perceived value for money, brand and usage, should be explored further in relation to membership retention. Whilst age, contract type and personal changes have been suggested by the FIA as being important, psychological variables form the focus of this thesis and have been examined in more detail using both the academic literature and the FIA study.

3.5 Critical evaluation

Upon reviewing all of the literature, commercial and academic, three broad criticisms arise. Firstly, there has been a bias towards predicting renewal as opposed to cancellation as the precise retention behaviour; renewal and cancellation are two fundamentally different behaviours. Secondly, there has been a bias towards positivist research, limiting the scope for a wider range of independent variables to be considered and empirically tested. Finally, there has been a bias towards predicting retention-related proxy variables as the dependent variables; satisfaction, intention to renew or cancel being used as proxies for actual retention behaviour.

3.5.1 Bias towards predicting renewal

It appears that all studies of fitness club member retention have only been focused on renewal. Whilst the aim of this thesis is not to explore whether there are different predictors underlying renewal and cancellation, it is argued that whilst the underlying predictors of renewal and cancellation may be the same, this should not be assumed. Thus, it is important to specify cancellation as the outcome behaviour of interest. As such, to address this bias, all objectives underpinning this thesis are focussed on cancellation, not renewal.

3.5.2 Bias towards positivism

Most studies of fitness club member retention appear to be mainly quantitative studies, exploring a narrow range of predictors which have been pre-determined by the researcher. Whilst some studies claim to be 'exploratory', from the outset of their research the predictors were pre-determined, and measured and analysed quantitatively (Murray & Howat 2002; Alexandris et al 2001). Studies which have included a qualitative component have only been conducted in order to elicit open-ended responses which could be used in quantitative research in a later stage. For example, Bodet's (2006) and Ferrand et al's (2010) research included a qualitative step which appears, however, to be aimed at eliciting service attributes which could then be measured quantitatively. Whilst this step in both studies yielded useful service attributes, there did not appear to be an exploration of other unknown predictors that might have a role in explaining fitness club member retention. This suggests that the positivist philosophy has mainly dominated the research, focusing on establishing cause and effect relationships between known variables. This suggests that a more pragmatic, mixed methods approach needs to be taken.

Whilst the focus of this thesis is also on prediction (thus, could also be argued as positivism), there is also a strong emphasis in this thesis on exploratory research (constructivism) unlike the aforementioned research, whereby the aim the qualitative study in this thesis is to elicit entirely new variables for consideration, and not just to use a qualitative study to elicit specific attributes of known variables e.g. service quality. Bodet (2012) has also suggested that qualitative research may be useful in eliciting reasons for non-renewal of fitness club members. As such, the approach taken in this thesis represents a move away from a positivist approach and more towards pragmatism (discussed further in Chapter 4).

3.5.3 Bias towards predicting retention-related variables

Not only has there been a bias towards renewal and positive word-of-mouth (discussed in section 3.5.1), but also a bias towards predicting retention-related or, at best, intended retention. Much of the literature pertaining to fitness club member retention has either been designed to predict only *retention-related* variables (positive word-of-mouth intentions, satisfaction, commitment, and attitudinal loyalty) or has been designed to predict retention directly, but only *intentional* retention. Table 3.2 below illustrates the different dependent variables that have been used in the literature reviewed above, illustrating the difference between psychological and behavioural variables, and retention or retention-related variables.

Table 3.2 Dependent variables used in fitness club member retention research

	Psychological	Behavioural
Retention	Intentional renewal	Actual renewal
Retention-related	Positive word-of mouth intentions Satisfaction Commitment Attitudinal loyalty	Positive word-of mouth behaviour

In a fitness club context, Pegragosa and Correia (2009) treated intention to repurchase and positive word-of-mouth as being contributors to the wider construct of 'loyalty', as it appears Bodet also did, by using the construct 'attitudinal loyalty', which consisted of intention to repurchase, positive word-of-mouth and happiness with choice to become a member of their club. However, Murray and Howat (2002), and Alexandris et al (2004), both explored the relationship between members' feelings about their own membership with positive word-of-mouth, thus treating positive word-of-mouth as a distinct construct. Thus, there is a need to explore the relationship further between intentions

and positive word-of-mouth behaviour. There is also the assumption that intention offers a proxy for actual behaviour. However, as Alexandris et al (2001) point out in a criticism of their own study, behavioural intentions "do not always guarantee prediction" (p.48). Indeed, according to Sheeran's (2002) meta-analysis of the relationship of intentions and behaviour, intentions account for only twenty-eight per cent of the variance in behaviour. In the fitness club literature, it appears that only one notable study to date (Bodet, 2008) has aimed to predict actual renewal behaviour as well as attitudinal loyalty. Bodet aimed to predict actual renewal behaviour from transaction-specific satisfaction and overall satisfaction predicting attitudinal loyalty. However, although being close to reaching the acceptable alpha level of significance, actual renewal behaviour was not significantly predicted. Bodet's work represented the first, notable study to address this bias, whereby a shift was taken from merely aiming to predict intention to aiming to predict actual retention. As such, this thesis seeks to build on Bodet's work, by focusing on predicting not only intended but also actual retention behaviour (cancellation).

Overall, this thesis addresses three biases in the literature, by focusing on cancellation and not renewal, by taking a more pragmatic, mixed methods approach to the research and by focusing on predicting actual cancellation not just intentional cancellation.

3.6 Conclusion

After reviewing the literature on fitness club member retention, certain predictors (perceived service quality, perceived value for money, brand and usage) have been identified as warranting further exploration regarding their efficacy in predicting fitness club member retention. The methodological approach taken (the integration of three studies) to explore the efficacy and sufficiency of these predictors, is discussed in more detail in Chapter Four.

Chapter 4
Mixed Methods Approach

4.1 Introduction

Mixed methods research has been defined in the literature as "the class of research where the researcher mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts or language into a single study" (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p.17). Whilst there have been a number of different definitions offered (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2007), perhaps the most defining aspect of mixed methods research is the combining of findings and analytical techniques. The mixed method research 'end product' should be "more than the sum of the individual quantitative and qualitative parts" (Bryman, 2007, p. 8).

In other words, combining research studies does not just mean that findings of one study provide a platform for another study but that the findings of the previous study should also be integrated with the findings of the subsequent study. To this end, a more detailed definition of mixed methods is offered from Creswell and Plano Clark, (2007, p.5); "Mixed methods research is a research design with philosophical assumptions as well as methods of inquiry. As a methodology, it involves philosophical assumptions that guide the direction of the collection and analysis of data and the mixture of qualitative and quantitative approaches in many phases in the research process. As a method, it focuses on collecting, analysing, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative data in a single-study or series of studies. Its central premise is that the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone".

However, whilst there is perhaps more understanding of what mixed methods research is, there are many barriers faced by researchers when conducting mixed methods research, including integrating the findings, writing for different audiences, not having exemplar studies to refer to, over-emphasising the findings from the preferred or more trusted method, feeling compelled to over-emphasise certain findings and methods to increase chances of publication, structuring the overall research project appropriately and the researcher's perceived capability to use the variety of methods required (Bryman, 2007).

As such, before undertaking mixed methods research and the associated challenges, researchers should have a clear rationale for doing so.

4.2 Rationale for mixed methods

There are many reasons why a mixed methods approach is adopted by researchers. Greene, Caracelli and Graham (1989) suggest five rationales for mixed methods research. Firstly, triangulation; intentionally using multiple methods of data collection and analysis to explore the same phenomenon to seek convergence and corroboration. Secondly, complementarity; used for elaboration, enhancement, illustration and clarification of the results from one method with the results from another. Thirdly, development; sequentially uses the results from one method to help develop or to inform the other. Fourthly, initiation; looking for contradiction and new perspectives in the hope of discovering why such contradictions exist. However, it has been argued that most researchers have a bias towards collecting confirming not disconfirming evidence (Creswell & Miller, 2000) making purposeful adoption of 'initiation' as a rationale perhaps uncommon (Greene et al, 1989). Lastly, expansion, which is when breadth and range of inquiry is sought, by using different methods for different inquiry components.

More recently, in a content analysis of two hundred and thirty-two articles, Bryman (2006), unveiled sixteen more specific rationales as to why researchers chose to adopt a mixed methods approach. These rationales, adapted from Bryman, (2006 p.105-106) are listed below:

- *Triangulation*– that quantitative and qualitative research can be combined to allow corroboration of findings.
- *Offset* – that the perceived strengths and weaknesses of different research methods can be 'offset' when both quantitative and qualitative methods are used.
- *Completeness* – that a more comprehensive account can be provided if both quantitative and qualitative research are employed.
- *Process* – that both a static account of, and the process behind, a phenomenon can be gained using both quantitative and qualitative methods.
- *Different research questions* – that quantitative and qualitative methods can answer different research questions.
- *Explanation* – that qualitative findings can be used to help explain quantitative findings, or vice versa.
- *Unexpected results* – that qualitative findings can be used to understand surprising results that were generated by quantitative findings, or vice versa.

- *Instrument development* – that qualitative findings can be used to develop a questionnaire.
- *Sampling* – that one approach can be used to facilitate the sampling of participants
- *Credibility* –that using both quantitative and qualitative methods enhances the integrity of findings.
- *Context* – that qualitative research can provide contextual understanding of quantitative findings.
- *Illustration* – that qualitative data can illustrate quantitative findings.
- *Utility* – that combining both quantitative and qualitative methods will be more useful to practitioners and others.
- *Confirm and discover* – that qualitative findings can be used to generate hypotheses which can then be tested by quantitative methods.
- *Diversity of views* – that the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods allow participants' perspectives to be gathered whilst also allowing specific relationships between variables through quantitative research to be uncovered.
- *Enhancement*– that either quantitative or qualitative findings can be augmented by using both quantitative and qualitative methods.

Whilst perhaps not as succinct as Greene et al's five reasons, Bryman's categories offer more specificity as to why mixed methods research has been adopted by researchers. Also, these different proposed rationales are not mutually exclusive. Table 4.1 below shows how eleven of Bryman's identified rationales could be linked to Greene et al's rationales.

Table 4.1 Rationales for conducting mixed methods research

Greene et al (1989)	Bryman (2006)
Triangulation	Triangulation
Complementarity	Explanantion Enhancement Illustration Context
Initiation	Unexpected results Confirm and discover
Development	Instrument development
Expansion	Different research question Completeness Diversity of views

However, Bryman's five remaining rationales; 'process', 'sampling', 'offset', 'utility', credibility seem to be unrelated to Greene et al's five rationales. 'Process' and 'sampling' represent much more specific rationales. 'Offset' represents almost a defensive rationale, through using mixed methods as an approach in order to address the inherent weaknesses of quantitative and qualitative methods. But most interestingly, it can be argued that utility and credibility, when offered as the sole reason for adopting a mixed methods approach, are more strategic rationales to help increase the external validity of the findings in the eyes of reviewers or practitioners.

It is essential that claimants of mixed methods research include a clear rationale for its use. However, twenty-seven per cent of articles provided no rationale for their choice to adopt a mixed methods approach. Generally, many mixed methods articles fail to include a clear rationale for its use (Bryman, 2007, 2008). A lack of a clear rationale can be indicative of improper use of mixed methods and instead be indicative of indecisiveness between methods.

With regards to this thesis, it is considered that 'instrument development' was the main rationale for adopting a mixed methods approach, to use the findings of a qualitative study to develop a questionnaire. Onwuegbuzie, Bustamante and Judith (2010, p.60-61) suggested a framework for how such integration can be achieved. As discussed in more detail in Chapter 6, whilst it is considered that the first six steps of the ten proposed have been taken; 1) to conceptualize the construct of interest, 2) to identify and describe behaviours that underlie the construct, 3) to develop the initial questionnaire, 4) to pilot the initial questionnaire, 5) to design and field-test the revised questionnaire, and 6) to validate the revised questionnaire using a quantitative analysis phase, there was not scope within this research project to conduct the final four steps of their framework; 7) to validate the revised questionnaire using a qualitative analysis phase, 8) to then validate the revised questionnaire using a mixed analysis phase of qualitative-dominant crossover analyses, 9) to then validate the revised questionnaire using mixed analysis phase using quantitative-dominant crossover analyses, before finally, 10) evaluating the questionnaire with regards to its use and outcomes found.

Further to the rationale of 'instrument development', due to the lack of mixed methods approaches being taken in relation to exploring the phenomenon of fitness club membership (a bias towards positivism, discussed in Chapter 4), 'credibility' was also a rationale. Also, the applied nature of this research makes it important to consider the usefulness of the findings, and so 'utility' was also a rationale.

Interestingly, however, another rationale for adopting a mixed methods approach became apparent after the second quantitative study whereby the results which were generated using a dataset of current members were not triangulated by the results obtained from another dataset of new members. As such, this led to an exploration of differences between the datasets, which warranted re-visiting the qualitative study and so represents a rationale of 'unexpected results'. This is discussed more in the concluding chapter, Chapter 9.

4.3 The philosophy of mixed methods research

There has always been much discussion as to where mixed methods research 'sits' in relation to mono-method research designs. Because quantitative and qualitative research designs are associated with opposing philosophical positions, quantitative and qualitative research designs are often placed in distinct categories. For instance, qualitative research is associated with constructivism and inductive methodologies.

Conversely, quantitative research is associated with positivism and deductive methodologies. There is much debate over the superiority and the compatibility of these philosophical paradigms, causing division between quantitative and qualitative researchers. This division has been so strong that some researchers choose to define themselves as *either* being qualitative researchers *or* quantitative researchers. This makes "accommodation between paradigms impossible… [and thus] ….we are led to a vastly diverse, disparate and totally antithetical ends" (Guba, 1990, p.81). There are many advocates of the 'incompatibility thesis' (Howe, 1988) which proposes that quantitative and qualitative methods cannot and should not be mixed. To this end, it would seem that 'mixed methods' is not actually possible; that mixing methods involves mixing philosophical paradigms. However, some argue that this incompatibility is largely non-existent and that it overlooks the similarity of the purpose of both quantitative and qualitative researchers; "to describe their data, construct explanatory arguments from their data and speculate about why the outcomes they observed happened as they did" (Sechrest & Sidani, 1995, p.78). Also, both paradigms try to mitigate invalidity and bias, whether it be through implementing techniques to avoid bias or through open discussion of potential bias (Sandelowski, 1986).

Also, there is another line of argument which can be taken in order to counter the proposition of incompatibility. Mixed methods does not try to bridge philosophical paradigms, but instead is driven by a philosophical position of its own; pragmatism.

'Pragmatic' means that the research will be 'problem' led; fitting the methods to the solution of the problem, as is usually the focus of applied research. According to Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2007, p. 125) pragmatism "is a well-developed and attractive philosophy for integrating perspectives and approaches". Thus, mixed methods research can be considered as a research paradigm in its own right; the 'third paradigm' (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Therefore, the categorical distinction between qualitative and quantitative research then can simply be extended to position mixed methods research categorically between qualitative and quantitative methods.

Pragmatism does not mean mixing both inductive methodologies and deductive methodologies but instead adopts both; moving back and forth between inductive and deductive. For instance, the iterative process between the inductive, qualitative elicitation of the potential predictors of fitness club cancellation, the subsequent deductive, quantitative testing of these predictors, and then the re-visitation of the qualitative findings to explain discrepancies between the quantitative findings suggests that neither an inductive nor a deductive approach was solely taken and instead an 'abductive' research strategy was taken. Such a strategy is considered to be taken when inductive and deductive strategies are "intimately intertwined; data and theoretical ideas are played off against one another in a developmental and creative process" (Blaikie, 2010, p. 156).

In essence, pragmatism disassociates research methods from their traditionally associated philosophical paradigms in order to re-associate them with a new paradigm and a new agenda; to help address an identified problem. Bryman (1984, 2007) argues, therefore, that researchers cannot exclusively align research methods with ontological positions and epistemologies. Also, pragmatism does mean mixing subjective and objective epistemologies, and thus requires the balance of attaining a sufficient, subjective closeness to participants with the objective interpretation and communication of the information gathered from this closeness in order to meaningfully address the research problem; 'intersubjectivity'.

Finally, pragmatism does not mean trying to force context-bound inferences to be generalisable, but instead requires the researcher to specifically identify the extent of inference; the degree to which inferences made within one research context can be *potentially* 'transferable' to other contexts, even if not fully generalisable (Morgan, 2007). Overall, mixed methods research does not mean mixing methodologies, blurring

methodologies, creating fuzziness, or confusing epistemologies. Instead, mixed methods research, due its pragmatist underpinning, allows different methodologies, epistemologies and inference to be integrated. This notion of integration does not mean trying to achieve 'everything' with just one method. Instead, integration involves explicit acknowledgement of the different methods whilst also detailing specifically how these have been reconciled with each other.

Because mixed methods research can be argued as being driven by a pragmatist philosophical paradigm, it involves adopting whatever method is necessary to address a problem, regardless of the method's associated paradigm. The problem is identified and the methods are chosen to suit the problem rather than the methodology or philosophical paradigm dictating how a problem is to be researched. In relation to this thesis, the problem of poor membership retention rates was identified externally, defining the project from the outset as applied and of considerable potential industry value. As well as understanding how mixed methods research is philosophically positioned, it is also essential to discuss the various types of mixed methods designs, and how such designs are different to mono-method research designs.

4.4 Mono-method research

With mono-method research, there is a risk that an 'either/or' approach could "uncover some unique variance which otherwise may have been neglected by a single method" (Jick, 1979, p.603). However, quantitative research runs the risk of being too abstract to be applied meaningfully to specific contexts. Whilst the results of statistical tests can suggest cause and effect relationships, they do not fully uncover intricate, complex decision-making processes. Small sample-sizes in qualitative methodologies allow case-by-case analyses to see how constructs are interpreted rather than just measuring them.

A solely constructivist approach could have been taken; for instance if the objective was to understand experientially what it is like to be a member of a fitness club. However, this would not have allowed understanding of how this experience translates directly into the prediction of actual retention or cancellation decisions. Conversely, a solely positivist approach could have been taken. For instance, the objective could have been to conduct a quasi-experimental study, comparing retention rates of different fitness clubs which had each implemented a different strategy for increasing retention rates.

However, this would not have allowed an insight into the psychological variables underlying the success of certain retention strategies, hence no theoretical understanding as to why one intervention was more effective than another.

The objective of this thesis was to address the problem of retention rates through understanding psychologically what creates a propensity for individuals to cancel their membership. This involved firstly understanding the experience of being a fitness club member and secondly, using this understanding to identify potential predictors which could be measured quantitatively in the prediction of actual retention and cancellation.

4.5 Mixed methods designs

In this thesis, the data gathered from the qualitative interviews (see Chapter 5) was used to guide the development of the quantitative questionnaire (see Chapter 6) used in the two main quantitative studies (see Chapters 7 & 8). This refers to the overall mixed methods design; how the methods were integrated with each other between phases. Fig. 4.1 below shows all the possible types of mixed method designs, differentiated by the time order and paradigm emphasis.

Fig. 4.1 Mixed methods designs matrix

Note. "qual" stands for qualitative, "quan" stands for quantitative, "+" stands for concurrent, "→" stands for sequential, capital letters denote high priority or weight, and lower case letters denote lower priority or weight.[11]

(taken from Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p.22)

According to Johnson and Onwuegbuzie's delineation, within this thesis the design 'qual > QUAN' reflects how the studies were integrated. The design was sequential, with a qualitative study preceding the quantitative studies whilst also needing to be completed before the quantitative studies could commence. Whilst quantitative and qualitative methods were mixed, the quantitative paradigm is the most dominant, with the elicited qualitative themes being operationalised in quantitative measures and explored statistically in quantitative studies whereby the analysis is mostly based on statistical interpretations.

However, there was also consideration of the qualitative study after the quantitative studies had been completed, due to unexpected results when findings from one dataset were not verified on the second dataset. Hence the denotation 'qual > QUAN' > qual' being most appropriate to this thesis.

This research design is an example of the 'embedded design' (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007), whereby one data set provides a supportive yet secondary role in relation to another study. In this case, qualitative approaches towards both the analysis and the interpretation are embedded within an overall quantitative framework.

The very nature of the research objective is to address a problem of poor retention rates; a quantifiable measure of organisational effectiveness. Therefore it was deemed appropriate to maintain the emphasis on this quantified 'problem', by identifying the variables which potentially account for variance in these retention rates.

It is also important to clarify that the research was mixed method and not mixed model, as the mixing took place across phases of an overall research project and not within. Table 4.2 details the integration of the studies, illustrating that the mixing took place across the difference phases, but not within.

Table 4.2 Mono model designs utilised in current research project

	Chapter	Qualitative component	Quantitative component
Phase 1	5	Data collection (semi-structured interviews) Analysis (template analysis)	None
Phase 2	7	None	Data collection (questionnaire) Analysis (statistical)
Phase 3	8	None	Data collection (questionnaire) and Analysis (statistical)

4.6 Adopting a mixed methods approach

Bryman (2008) offers some further thoughts regarding the usage of mixed methods research.

Firstly, it needs to be borne in mind that mixed methods cannot compensate for poorly designed mono method research. This relates to the rationale provided earlier of 'offset'; the mere inclusion of, say, a qualitative study does not counter any weaknesses associated with quantitative research if the qualitative study has been poorly conducted. All elements of a mixed methods research project need to be conducted competently. As such, within this thesis, the research process is clearly detailed and evaluated with regards to its credibility (qualitative study), and reliability and validity (quantitative studies).

Secondly, Bryman iterates the importance of mixed methods research being appropriate to the research question. Mertens (2011) also suggests ensuring that the mixed methods approach is unique in relation to the area of research. In relation to this thesis, a mixed methods approach is both appropriate and novel due to bias towards positivism that the fitness club literature has seen in relation to fitness club membership retention. Such a bias has cast doubt on the sufficiency of variables explored in relation to fitness club member retention, which in itself provides a rationale for an initial qualitative study to elicit predictors which may not have previously been considered, which can then be used to assess the predict nature of the variables in relation to cancellation.

Thirdly, Bryman makes reference to the issue of resources in mixed methods research which, due to the independent nature of this thesis, was recognised and considered before undertaking the research project. Fourthly, Bryman makes reference to the importance of having the skills and training necessary to conduct mixed methods research. It is considered that this thesis represents the learning process of both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Finally, it is important to consider what the integrated findings indicate. Integration of findings is briefly discussed throughout, but it is mainly discussed in the final concluding chapter.

4.7 Conclusion

In general, mixed methods research can address a broader range of questions, and more confidence can be had in the conclusions drawn. The creative inclusion and reconciliation of different methods, the use of strengths to counter the weaknesses and the emphasis on addressing a problem make mixed methods research studies, superior in their uniqueness, rigour and applicability compared to mono-method research projects. It was therefore imperative that this thesis employ such an approach. Now that the research philosophy and mixed methodological approach have been clarified, the first stage of this research can be discussed.

Chapter 5

Qualitative Exploration of Cancellation Influences

5.1 Introduction

Perceived service quality, perceived value for money, brand and usage have been widely discussed in the academic literature regarding their role in influencing fitness club member retention. However, whilst there is much support for these predictors, one over-arching problem regarding the academic literature pertaining to fitness club member retention is the lack of consideration that other potential influences may exist. It appears that instead, there has been more research conducted with the aim of generating more evidence for the aforementioned predictors, with the differences mainly lying in the different statistical models that are tested or the different measures that are used to operationalise the aforementioned predictors. More specifically, it was considered that there might be additional predictors that might underpin fitness club member retention. As such, this chapter details a qualitative study that was conducted in order to complete the first research objective; to identify potential predictors of fitness club membership cancellation. In sum, it was essential to explore whether the a priori predictors identified from the literature review (perceived service quality, perceived value for money, brand and usage) may have efficacy, and also sufficiency, in explaining fitness club membership cancellation.

5.2 Positioning within mixed methods design

As discussed in detail previously this thesis is of mixed methods design. The study detailed in the present chapter is the first study of this mixed methods design research project and represents the embedded qualitative phase; embedded within a predominantly quantitative design. However, even though this qualitative phase is embedded into a predominantly quantitative design, it is important to emphasise that this qualitative phase was not merely an adjunct which is often the criticism of the way in which qualitative studies are integrated (Symon & Cassell, 1998). For instance, within the mixed methods design, this study was integrated into the thesis by its informing of the quantitative studies (Chapter 7 and 8). Further, whilst the qualitative and qualitative studies have been integrated throughout this thesis, the approaches taken to the qualitative and quantitative studies have not been blurred. For instance, whilst this study is embedded within a wider quantitative framework, it has been important to ensure that quantitative values were not used to conduct this study. Regardless of its integration, a qualitative study should be treated as just that. Else, there is a risk of conducting a study that is neither qualitative nor quantitative; a study that comprises the weaknesses of both methodologies but with none of the benefits.

5.3 Method

5.3.1 Qualitative research

Henwood and Pidgeon (1995) argue that enhanced use of the qualitative paradigm can improve psychological research in two ways; 1) generation of new theory and 2) exploration of experiences. Firstly, adopting the qualitative paradigm encourages the generation of new theory rather than simply theory testing. For instance, rather than simply aiming to validate the role of perceived service quality, brand, perceived value for money and usage, the qualitative approach allows new potential predictors to emerge and hence, new theory to be generated regarding fitness club member cancellation influences. Secondly, adopting the qualitative paradigm allows the exploration of individual, situated experiences, rather than simply trying to form reductionist explanations. For instance, the qualitative approach allows fitness club members' experiences to be explored. These two aspects are related; the exploration of experiences generates new insights, and subsequently new predictors may emerge leading to new theory to be generated. Whilst there are various qualitative methods, due to this study being guided by four a priori (pre-identified) predictors as well as needing to allow for the emergence of new themes which could suggest additional predictors, a qualitative method was needed that would be structured enough to allow a priori predictors to be examined whilst also being flexible enough to allow for the eliciting of new themes and subsequent potential predictors of membership cancellation. Thus, semi-structured interviewing was deemed to the most appropriate data collection method.

5.3.2 Selection of semi-structured interviewing

Semi-structured interviews have been defined as "guided, concentrated, focused and open-ended communication events that are co-created by the investigator and interviewee(s) and occur outside the stream of everyday life. The questions, probes and prompts are written in the form of a flexible interview guide" (Miller & Crabtree, 1992, p. 16). A semi-structured interview schedule of open-ended questions was developed (see Appendix A1) based around the four a priori themes. Due to the focus of this thesis being on cancellation and not renewal of membership, questions were written targeted towards the specific behaviour in question; cancellation, as opposed to renewal. Open-ended questions allow participants to respond freely, at their own pace, and to the level of detail they are comfortable with. The ability to speak and respond to open-ended questions freely is most often considered to be a way of collecting rich data.

In addition to this, because the participant is not being forced to choose a particular response (as is the case with closed-questions) this should be considered a more ethical way to gather information from participants. Whilst open-ended questions can be usefully included into questionnaires to address a priori themes, much of the effectiveness of open-ended questions is in their ability to produce responses which can be flexibly probed further by the researcher to allow new themes to be identified. Whilst the interview questions were numbered, this is not strictly indicative of the order in which the questions were asked. This is because in semi-structured interviewing it is essential to be accommodating of the participant's preferred progression through the interview, whilst at the same time ensuring that the answers to the scheduled questions have been obtained, whether they were as a result of a direct question or whether they were freely elicited by the participant (Oppenheim, 1992).

Further, it should be noted that there is a difference in the primary research question; 'why do *people* cancel their fitness club membership', and the questions posed to the participants; 'what led *you* to want to cancel *your* membership'. If this differentiation is not made there is a danger that the participants will be trying to speak on behalf of 'other people'; trying to give an objective response rather than a subjective response (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

5.3.3 Development of interview schedule

In order to develop a set of questions which would help obtain the necessary information, firstly, interviews were conducted with colleagues who were also representative of the population of interest to this thesis; they were all fitness club members. This helped to refine the specific questions that should be asked, and to identify the most effective order of the questions, in order to elicit valid information. On a broader level, this stage was conducted to reduce 'data collection' error; error generated as a result of poor interviewing techniques (Bryman, 2008). This stage allowed experience to be gained in conducting semi-structured interviews, hence less risk of error being generated during the main study.

5.3.4 Sampling strategy

The research was conducted with the facilitation of one large 'flagship' fitness club (approximately 9,900 members), of a leading operator in the UK. The operator's Director of Innovations and Development had agreed with the match-funding organisation to facilitate the research on the condition that a non-disclaimer which provided anonymity for the club was signed and that, due to the competitive nature of

fitness clubs, other 'competitors' were not included in the research. It should be noted that the club was one site of a multi-site, private operator. The club offered not only workout facilities, but also offered group exercise classes, childcare facilities, a pool/spa, and a bar/cafe to its members.

Regarding the club's adult population characteristics, based on the composition of members who joined in 2007, 49% were males and 51% were females. Table 5.1 shows the percentages of the ages of the club's members.

Table 5.1 Population age

Age category	Percentage
16-18	3%
19-24	9%
25-29	14%
30-34	16%
35-39	17%
40-44	15%
45-49	10%
50-54	6%
55+	10%

Table 5.2 shows the percentages of the usage levels of the club's members.

Table 5.2 Population usage levels

Usage level	Percentage
None	2%
Once	22%
Two or three times	26%
4- 6 times	21%
7- 10 times	15%
11-15 times	9%
16 plus	5%

In addition to age, gender and usage levels, membership status also characterises members within the club's population. Eight per cent of the adult membership population were recorded as 'frozen', whereby their membership has been placed 'on hold', due a temporary, unavoidable circumstance rendering the member unable to attend the club. The frozen status, unlike cancellation, allows the member to regain full, 'live' status when they are ready to do so, without having to pay a joining fee again as technically they are still classed as a member.

Two sampling strategies were utilised in this study; confirming and disconfirming cases, and maximum variation (Patton, 1990). A confirming and disconfirming sampling strategy was utilised, whereby the data sources would be used to either confirm or disconfirm whether the a priori themes should be included in a predictive model of membership cancellation.

A maximum variation sampling strategy was also employed, whereby a variety of fitness club members were contacted in order to gain a breadth of perspective. Fitness club members were considered to be the most information-rich data sources; the key informants necessary to help investigate the phenomenon of club membership cancellation. A maximum variation sampling strategy is a viable sampling strategy which can be taken in qualitative inquiry (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). In order to ensure maximum variation, perspectives from current, frozen and ex members were sought. All of the members that were invited to take part were either current, frozen or ex-members of a large fitness club that was facilitating this research project.

A slightly modified interview schedule was used for each of these three groups (see Appendix A1). Also sought were perspectives from both high volume and low volume users of the club. Finally, perspectives from members with different lengths of membership were sought. However, these different stratifications within the sample were just included to ensure maximum variation and were not included with the purpose of making comparisons between the groups. For instance, current, ex and frozen members were considered to all be as equally rich in the insights that they could provide regarding the phenomenon of membership cancellation.

The membership database used at the fitness club was used to select the participants. Two reports were generated from the database; an ex- and a current-member report. The current member report was then further sorted into three lists; length of membership, usage levels and frozen membership. A random number generator was then used to select potential participants from each of these lists. As recommended, between twelve and twenty participants are recommended for a maximum variation sampling strategy (Patton, 1990). Also, twelve is the recommended minimum number of participants in template analysis studies to achieve 'saturation', after which point there is little chance that any further interviews will elicit any additional information which could either support or elicit a theme (Guest, Bunce & Johnson, 2006).

As such, it was intended that twelve current, frozen and ex members would take part in a telephone interviews; a total sample of thirty-six. Working on an assumption that fifty per cent of potential participants would either refuse, be unavailable or would have invalid telephone numbers, seventy-two fitness club members were randomly selected; twenty-four current, frozen and ex-members.

5.3.5 Interviewing procedure

From the various types of interviewing, telephone interviewing was chosen, because it allows a detailed exploration of opinions and practices, while avoiding the problems of cost and travel associated with face-to-face interviews. Also, telephone interviews are generally conducted at a faster pace than face-to-face interviews (Bryman, 2008; Oppenheim, 1992). Also, the added benefit of utilising this interview procedure in this context was the level of comfort provided to the participants, given that the nature of the discussion was sometimes in relation to physical appearance, weight and body image.

Whilst sensitive topics can be difficult to explore using telephone interviewing as opposed to face to face, one benefit of telephone interviews is the "remoteness of the interviewer" (p. 198), whereby personal characteristics cannot be seen (Bryman, 2008). This also reduced to the extent to which the author's own personal, subconscious judgements influenced who was asked to take part in the interviews, as none of the participants had been met by the author prior to the interview. Due to the remote nature of the data collection, thus no opportunity for non-verbal communication, it was important to recognise that there was less opportunity to detect any discomfort in the participants. As such, the right to a de-briefing was made clear at the end of the interview so that the participants felt comfortable in making contact if they had any concerns.

The facilitating fitness club manager, in the role of 'gatekeeper', ensured letters (Appendix A2) were sent out to seventy-two club members, providing them with a chance to opt out of their telephone numbers being passed onto a third party. Not only was this necessary from an ethical and data protection perspective, but also from the view that pre-letters have been shown to increase the response rate and allow rapport to be built at the beginning of the interview.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted via telecommunication, using internet communication software to make the calls (Skype®) and to record the interviews (CallBurner®) with the participant's consent which was ascertained at the beginning of the interview. Utilising this interview procedure was not only relatively quick and simple, but also helped to maximize the variation, and to help not skew the data by simply opportunistically conducting face to face interviews with club users. This, of course, meant not including those who had cancelled membership to participate in the study. The criterion was simply membership, not usage. There was an initial call, seeking consent for the participant to be interviewed, and then (if accepted) a follow-up call was usually scheduled at a convenient time for the participant.

From the seventy-two original club members contacted, due to invalid telephone numbers, non-response or declines to participate the final sample consisted of twenty-three participants; sixteen females and seven males. Within the twenty-three, there were twelve current members (two with membership of over five years, two with membership over one year and two with membership of three months, two with a usage level of once per month, two with a usage level of five times per month and two with a usage level of fifteen times per month). Within the sample, there were also three frozen members, and eight ex-members.

The questions included on the interview schedule were equivalent for the current, frozen and ex members, and included mostly structural questions as opposed to descriptive questions. Structural questions are concerned with relationships between factors which underpin a person's experience. In this case, structural questions which related to a member's current or previous membership experience and how it may have been affected by certain factors were mainly asked. Descriptive questions, on the other hand, would have been questions asking members to describe their membership cancellation process, or the process of decision making which was undertaken when deciding to retain membership (Dyer, 1995).

From a marketing perspective, whilst retention can, and has been, researched from both a product and process perspective (Tahtinen & Halinen, 2002; Tuominen & Kettunen, 2003), this thesis was largely concerned with the determinants of the 'product' (cancellation) as opposed to understanding how the decision making process of cancellation unfolds.

All interviews were conducted within three months after the initial letters were sent out. Interviews were transcribed verbatim and template analysed, with use of a template which had been developed using the a priori themes identified in the literature review.

In qualitative analysis, the analysis begins when the data collection begins, unlike quantitative data analysis whereby the data collection, analysis and interpretation are conducted sequentially. Hence, this chapter does not have a clearly separated 'results' section, as would be expected in a quantitative chapter but instead shows the progression of the transcript which, in effect, is the resulting outcome of the study.

As such, the analytical approach is firstly introduced, before then discussing the development of the template and the final template, which represents the findings of the study.

5.4 Template analysis

A template analysis approach was taken to analyse the interview transcripts. Template analysis, sometimes referred to as 'codebook analysis', 'thematic coding', or 'thematic analysis', is an approach whereby the researcher produces a template of 'codes' which represent 'themes' found within their data and can elicit information about the nature of 'variables'. There is, however, debate within the research methods literature regarding the credibility of template analysis. Such criticisms are largely related to whether template analysis is too reductionist; causing transcripts to be misrepresented (Attride-Stirling 2001). Another criticism is regarding whether or not template analysis is even a method of analysis in its own right.

Template analysis, as opposed to being considered as completely different to other qualitative methods, can be seen as situated between content analysis (where all themes are determined a priori) and grounded theory (where there are no a priori themes) (King, 1998). Eliciting themes from qualitative data is part of template analysis, but by itself does not distinguish template analysis from other qualitative techniques such as grounded theory, critical discourse analysis, qualitative content analysis and narrative analysis.

Whilst this makes it questionable as to whether template analysis is an identifiable approach (Bryman 2008), template analysis is becoming more popular as a method of qualitative analysis and has received much support and guidance regarding its rigorous usage, which have been adopted in this study (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Before proceeding further, it is important to clarify some of this terminology and how the terminology has been used throughout this chapter otherwise, there is a danger of using the terms 'variables', 'themes' and 'codes' interchangeably which can lead to a confusing and misleading presentation of a template analysis. In brief, 'variable' refers to the psychological construct (e.g. perceived service quality), 'theme' refers to the variable in relation to a research question (e.g. perceived service quality in relation to membership cancellation).

Themes may also be hierarchical; 'Level One' themes being broader than their subordinate 'Level Two' themes e.g. perceived service quality is a broad Level One theme, which encompasses many different facets of perceived service quality (e.g. gym environment) which would be Level Two themes. Each theme is then represented by a 'code' which can then be used to represent the theme should it be detected in the transcript.

The codes should always be the quickest form of shorthand that can be used to denote a theme such as an abbreviation or an acronym (Crabtree & Miller, 1992). However, with new themes the codes may in fact be shortened summaries of the meaningful elements of the text. This is simply because the researcher may, at the point of coding the transcripts, not know exactly what the theme is and so it may only be possible for the theme to be added into the final template right at the end when all of the codes have been collated together and analysed. The process of finding a theme, attributing one label which will effectively capture a collection of codes, is in itself part of the analysis (Crabtree & Miller, 1992).

The a priori themes are then either supported by sections of text from the transcript or may not be. If the themes are not supported by sections of text then they are deleted from the template as they are, in effect, redundant. As such, they may not be subjected to any further inquiry in future studies. Conversely, if there are sections of text which are relevant to the research question but cannot be accounted for by a priori codes, then new codes representing new themes must be introduced into the template.

5.4.1 Initial template development

The main research question was 'why do fitness club members cancel their membership?' After the initial literature review, four predictor variables of interest were identified; perceived service quality, perceived value for money, brand identification, and usage (discussed in detail in the previous chapter).

These were all considered to have potential in predicting membership cancellation decisions. As such, these variables and their potential relationship to the main research questions became four level one themes. Between two and four levels are recommended, with less themes the study become more synonymous with a grounded theory study, whilst with more themes the study becomes more synonymous with content analysis; counting the frequency of specific comments that have been made (King, 1998). The initial template is shown below (Table 5.3), with two different levels of numbered bulleting representing the different levels (higher order or second order) of codes.

Whilst there was a deductive element to this study, with theoretical constructs being pre-defined prior to the data collection (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2007), template analysis also allows an inductive element to be included; additional constructs can be defined after the data collection. Thus, template analysis is both inductive and deductive; a hybrid approach (Fereday, 2006).

Table 5.3 Initial template

1. Perceived service quality
1.1 Staff
1.2 Class
1.3 Changing rooms
1.4 Childcare
1.5 Physical Facility
1.6 Gym environment
2. Perceived value for money
3. Brand identification
3.1 Attractiveness
3.2 Prestige
3.3 Distinctiveness
3.4 Similarity
4. Usage

5.4.2 Revising the template

Template analysis, when performed correctly, should not be "just a collection of extracts strung together" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.94). As such, there should be a systematic way of organising the data collected and eliciting themes. The strategy for analysis used was the framework approach, developed by the National Centre for Social Research in the UK (Bryman, 2008).

The framework approach is a 'matrix based method for ordering and synthesizing data' (Ritchie, Spencer & O'Connor, 2003, p. 219). In a recent article publishing an application of the framework approach, Smith and Firth (2011) argue that the framework approach, and other similar approaches, are beneficial "as they systematically and explicitly apply the principles of undertaking qualitative analysis to a series of interconnected stages that guide the process." (p. 54). In the framework approach, themes are presented in a matrix alongside each case.

The initial template was applied to each transcript, allocating a priori codes from the initial template to appropriate sections of text. Where there were sections of text which were considered to be relevant to the research question but could not be accounted for by an existing code, an additional code was devised that would capture that section of text (e.g. 'comfort in body image'). However, it was also expected that reasons for maintaining or cancelling membership, might not be salient to interviewees immediately and so they may not offer quotes of such a direct nature. However, by matching their feelings towards membership with the direction (positive or negative) of the comments regarding different fitness club aspects, the importance of certain aspects could be implied.

For instance, for the current members who seemed intent on maintaining their membership, positive ratings towards a certain aspect could be deemed as evidence for this intention to maintain membership. For example, if current members with a low intention to cancel talked favourably about the staff, it could be somewhat assumed that staff bore some importance to that member's status as still being a member there. As such, throughout the analysis it was important to bear in mind the member's status as a member (current-low intention to cancel, current-some intention to cancel, ex-member, or ex-member with some intention to re-join).

Most current members expressed a high intention to maintain membership. These current members, with low intention to cancel, were expected to 'match' this status with positive comments about the fitness club. However, of the current members, three members (Interviewees 3, 7 & 14) expressed some intention of cancelling. Thus, any negative comments from these participants could be responsible for their moderate level of intended cancellation. Conversely, ex-members were expected to 'match' their status as an ex-member with negative comments about the fitness club.

However, of the ex-members, two expressed some intention of re-joining (Interviewees 19 & 20). Thus, any positive comments from these participants could be responsible for their moderate level of intention to re-join. Where an anomaly occurred (e.g. ex-members expressing favourable opinions about aspects of the club) their quote was asterisked (Appendix A3). This helped to make sense of the quotes, and to try and determine which ratings and opinions about the club and their membership actually matter with regard to fitness club cancellation. However, for the purpose of brevity, just 'matched' quotes are included in this chapter, but anomalies (whereby there was mismatch between the membership status and the direction of the comment, suggesting disconfirmation of a theme) were considered overall.

The triangulation of ex- and current members, and high and low intention to cancel members was to try to give extra 'weight' to negative comments made by ex-members/high intention to cancel members and, conversely, to positive comments made by current members/low intention to cancel members. For instance, this helped to differentiate between strong negative feelings (e.g. disliking the music played in the club) which may have not materialised into cancellation (i.e. members having strong negative feelings but still being a member/low intention to cancel), and from strong feelings which may have actually been tied to a behaviour (i.e. members having strong negative feelings towards the music played in a club and who cancelled their membership/high intention to cancel). However this wasn't always possible; childcare only being supported as a factor by a member with low intention to cancel. Further, even if evidence was provided through positive/negative comments being elicited from members with low/high intention to cancel, such triangulation does not allow a true causal relationship to be identified (hence the need for the subsequent quantitative studies, chapters 7 & 8), this offers a more in-depth, critical way of analysing the transcripts.

Table 5.4 shows the revised template, which shows the additional themes that were added.

Table 5.4 Revised template

1. Perceived service quality
1.1 Staff
1.2 Class
1.3 Changing rooms
1.4 Childcare
1.5 Physical Facility
1.6 Gym environment
2. Perceived value for money
3. Brand identification
3.1 Attractiveness
3.2 Prestige
3.3 Distinctiveness
3.4 Similarity
4. Usage
5. Other themes
Commonality/diverse community
Interactions/connections/familiarity
Comfort/ capability
Comfort in physical appearance
Motivation to become a gym member

5.4.3 Finalising the template

In order to finalise the template it was necessary to refine any codes which had been added to the template. This involved exploring relevant literatures in order to find appropriate constructs which could appropriately capture the codes that had been used when coding the transcripts. Not only was a literature review conducted in order to identify constructs and subsequent a priori themes, but the additional reviewing of literature was conducted in order to identify appropriate constructs based on the themes elicited in the analysis. This suggests an iterative process between theme generation and literature review (see Fig.5.1).

Fig. 5.1 Theme generation through pre- and post-study literature reviews
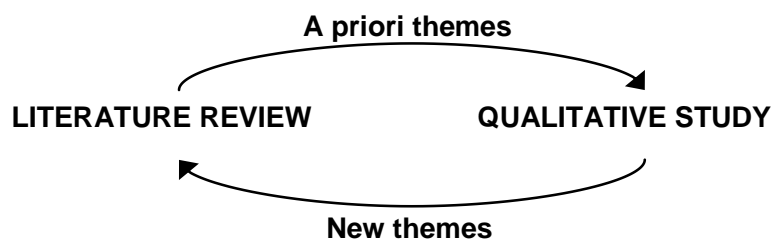
When reporting the results of a template analysis, it is essential to show how the template has either remained the same or changed since the a priori themes were identified.

The template was finalised when it was considered that all of the relevant text had been accounted for by a code. The final template is shown below (Table 5.5).

The final template includes the new additions to the original template (shown in the revised template) as represented by appropriate constructs after further literature searching. For example, when revising the original template and conducting the initial analysis, the theme 'commonality' became apparent. After searching in the literature for an appropriate representative construct, the broader construct of 'social identification' was selected to represent this theme (discussed in more detail below).

To summarise any changes that were made to the initial template, no codes were deleted, but other codes were added. Perceived service quality, a level one code, was added to with the inclusion of two new level two codes being identified (bar/cafe and pool/spa). Five level one codes were added; social identification, rapport, state anxiety, social physique anxiety and self-determination.

Table 5.5 Final template

1. Perceived service quality
1.1 Staff
1.2 Class
1.3 Changing rooms
1.4 Childcare
1.5 Physical Facility
1.6 Gym environment
1.7 Bar / café*
1.8 Pool / spa*
2. Perceived value for money
3. Brand identification
3.1 Attractiveness
3.2 Prestige
3.3 Distinctiveness
3.4 Similarity
4. Usage
5. Social identification*
6. Rapport*
7. State anxiety*
8. Social Physique Anxiety*
9. Self-determination*

Note: * New theme

Each theme in the final template is now discussed, presenting exemplar sections of text from the transcripts.

5.4.4 A priori themes

The discussion begins with the a priori themes and the evidence that was provided which led to their place in the final template being maintained.

5.4.4.1 Perceived service quality- Staff

From current members with a low intention to cancel, comments were made with regards the importance of staff being 'helpful', 'friendly', 'welcoming' and 'nice':

Interviewee 1: For me, I think the key thing that I would invest in would be the staff. The staff have to be approachable, friendly, open, understanding and willing to be perceived as actually caring.

Interviewee 6: The staff are always quite welcoming, they always say bye to you, they ask you if you feel troubled at all.

Moreover, ex-members also expressed criticism of the staff:

Interviewee 22: They were very nice, always quite welcoming... there were an awful lot in the reception area greeting people and working on the desk but when you went to the gym there was only probably two or three. There wasn't an awful lot compared to how big the gym was.

This view was also supported by a current member, with some intention to cancel:

Interviewee 3: They [the staff] seem nice enough but there are not enough of them to be able to do what's important. They should make their customers feel like they're important.

Also, both a current member with a moderate intention to cancel, and an ex-member suggested the importance of staff attitude:

Interviewee 7: The only thing I'm not entirely happy with is some of the service levels of the people there...Frankly, I can go running there, it's a pleasant environment but if I feel I'm faced with surly staff and unresponsive, that's what would make me change my membership.

Interviewee 18: The staff were totally blasé about it [complaint] and really took absolutely no notice.

Overall this suggests that the pleasantness of staff, the attitude and the perceived levels of staff are important to membership cancellation. As such, there was enough evidence to maintain 'staff' as a theme in the final template.

5.4.4.2 Perceived service quality- Changing rooms

Current members with a low intention to cancel commented on the changing rooms, with particular reference to their layout and how well-equipped they are:

Interviewee 3: [during the refurbishment] they sectioned off part of the changing rooms as if to say ' that's where you should be changing your children.

Interviewee 1: The changing rooms are upmarket, quite relaxing and clean... You've got everything, showers, hairdryers; everything's just laid out for you.

An ex-member suggested also that they would have preferred a way of accessing the changing areas:

Interviewee 22: I think in all the changing rooms I've been in, in different places, they were the nicest I've ever seen...but I would have preferred more cubicles rather than communal changing areas...it's not that I think anyone is going to be looking at me, it's just something I don't really like.

Overall this suggests that the changing rooms are of importance to members. As such, there was enough evidence to maintain 'changing rooms' as a theme in the final template.

5.4.4.3 Perceived service quality- Classes

From current members with a low intention to cancel, comments were made with regards to the classes being good and enjoyable:

Interviewee 8: The classes really, they do really good classes there.

Interviewee 13: It's great...I can do classes which I quite enjoy and I can do the exercise.

Further to this, two ex-members also expressed criticisms of the classes:

Interviewee 18: On some occasions we were working, doing yoga, through a plastic sheet, with a Polish work team on the other side of the plastic. [After the refurbishment], it [class room] turned out to be a long narrow room that reminded me of a mausoleum- an internal room, artificially lit by a light sequence which flashed gentle different colours which really, if you squinted, might have had an epileptic fit. They put on classes, at times of course when I couldn't actually go, and here I am, I thought, tied in to a membership in a room that gives me claustrophobia and often you can't actually book it so I left.

Interviewee 22: They had exercise classes but the ones I was interested in tended to be during the day or at weekends when I wasn't going.

Overall this suggests that classes, especially the enjoyment, ambience, space and timing, are important to members. As such, there was enough evidence to maintain 'classes' as a theme in the final template.

5.4.4.4 Perceived service quality- Childcare

Whilst not as much evidence was provided to support this theme, especially the lack of triangulation from an ex-member, three current members commented on the crèche as being important to their membership.

Interviewee 7, a member with some moderation intention to cancel, criticised the crèche:

*Interviewee 7: It can be [*profanity*] difficult getting her [daughter] into the crèche.*

Moreover, two other members with low intention to cancel, praised the crèche.

Interviewee 9: It's more than just a gym, we can go and drop the little one of in the crèche, and we can go and do the gym.

Interviewee 15: There are a lot of young parents, but they've got the crèche which is a huge advantage.

Overall this suggests that classes, especially the enjoyment, ambience, space and timing, are important to members. As such, there was enough evidence to maintain 'Childcare' as a theme in the final template.

5.4.4.5 Perceived service quality- Physical facility

Current members, with low intention to cancel, commented on the physical facility, with interviewee 1 suggesting a favourable opinion of the fitness club as a whole to the fitness club:

Interviewee 1: The car parking can be a challenge because I'm going there after work and it's the busiest period...I know if I went any earlier or later then it wouldn't be a problem so I know that and I understand that and it's acceptable. Service wise, there's everything there I could possibly need. I don't use everything, but there's everything there. It's unfair to call [fitness club] a gym anymore, because there's so many more things involved and that's why I'm still a member and don't begrudge what I pay.

Further, one member suggested that they liked the music and the television; the 'high tech' equipment that is throughout the facility:

Interviewee 8: I like the music that they have on, and they have tellies in there too... They're quite high tech I think.

Related to this, an ex-member was very critical of the noise and music, during a refurbishment that was taking place, even commenting that different music in a club that she had switched to was better than at the current fitness club.

Interviewee 18: They started to knock the place down, which meant it was full of dust, the noise got worse and worse…There was competing noise, because the louder the building works got, the louder the jungle music which they played. There's no nasty music in the place [other fitness club] anyway, just very gentle background music.

Overall this suggest that how members judge 'the place' as a whole, and in particular the music and how 'high tech' it is, is important. As such, 'physical facility' was considered to be sufficiently evidenced to maintain its place as a theme in the final template. In addition, the inclusion of music and television was considered to be of importance in the measurement of physical facility (see Chapter 6).

5.4.4.6 Perceived service quality- Gym environment

Current members, with low intention to cancel, commented favourably on the gym environment, with particular reference to the equipment; the equipment being new, good quality, well spaced out:

Interviewee 1: Yes that's one thing I like....they're always putting new machines in there on a regular basis…

Interviewee 2: Quality of equipment, layout so people have enough space. I know gyms have social factors but sometimes you need your own space.

Also, the range of different machines was mentioned as being important:

Interviewee 12: But they've got loads of different machines and loads of space which is good.

Ex-members mentioned that the gym equipment's maintenance and accessibility of the equipment were problems whilst they were members:

Interviewee 17: My husband wasn't keen on the gym; a lot of the machines were broken and not repaired.

Interviewee 19: It was always an issue trying to get on the equipment, and not all the equipment was there... When you go down there and you can't get on any equipment it's pretty disheartening.

As such, 'gym environment' was considered to be sufficiently evidenced to maintain its place as a theme in the final template. In addition, the inclusion of range of equipment was considered to be of importance in the measurement of gym environment (see Chapter 6).

5.4.4.7 Perceived service quality- Bar/cafe

This was a new theme that was added to level one theme of 'perceived service quality', due to comments being elicited from members regarding its importance.

Current members, with low intention to cancel, commented on the importance of the bar/cafe to them:

Interviewee 2: Because they've got the cafe which is nice, internet access...it's like a one stop shop.

Also, a current member, who had expressed some intention to cancel made a negative comment about the bar/café:

Interviewee 7: It's got a decent cafe where you can sit and have a read of the paper and have a coffee…the only thing I don't like is when they have that [*profanity*] piped music which is a bit irritating when you're sitting there reading the paper.

Further, an ex-member also made a negative comment about the bar/café:

Interviewee 18: The other thing about the cafe is that you can't take guests in. [Other fitness club] had a very nice cafe which you could take guests into.

As such, the theme 'bar/café' was added to the final template, and a scale developed to measure it (see Chapter 6).

5.4.4.8 Perceived service quality- Pool/spa

This was a new theme that was added to level one theme of 'perceived service quality', due to comments being elicited from members regarding its importance. Whilst this was not triangulated by any ex-members' negative comments, current members, with low intention to cancel, commented on the importance of the pool/spa to them:

Interviewee 4: In extreme circumstances, like closing the pool then that might make me want to quit… Periodically, they close the entire wet area and you think '[*profanity*]', I really wanted to go for a swim today'.

Interviewee 9: I normally have a long week, use the sauna and have a bit of a swim. Even the sauna area, it's all just been done up and they've changed the lighting in there which makes it look fresh… It's a place where I can just take myself off to the sauna or the jacuzzi and just chill out.

As such, the theme 'pool/spa' was also added to the final template, and a scale developed to measure it (see Chapter 6).

Overall, the analysis suggests support for other studies which have found that perceived service quality is predictive of membership intentions (Alexandris et al, 2001, Alexandris et al, 2004, Dhurup et al, 2006, Murray & Howat, 2002, Pedragosa & Correia, 2009, Ferrand et al, 2010 and Wei et al, 2010).

5.4.4.9 Usage

One current member, with some intention to cancel, suggested that their level of usage of the fitness club was a reason for considering cancelling membership:

Interviewee 3: It [intention to cancel] fluctuates from day to day... Sometimes I think I should cancel because I don't go, but then I think I should go, and take the kids swimming. If I was happier about going, if the staff were friendlier, I'd perhaps like to go more and then I'd feel like I was getting value for money.

Further, a current member, with low intention to cancel, suggested that their level of usage of the fitness club was a reason for maintaining membership:

Interviewee 4: I go regularly and really enjoy it, so I don't think I'm going to cancel anytime soon… I'm about to start a first year of teaching so I might not get the chance to go as much as I like [which might lead to cancellation].

Also, ex-members commented that their level of usage was the main reason for cancelling membership:

Interviewee 15: I wasn't using it enough to warrant the monthly fee.

Interviewee 22: It was mainly the fact that I wasn't going. Some days I'd think 'yes, I'm really going to go and get my money's worth' and other times I was like 'I'm fed up... I might as well just cut my losses and get out of it.

Thus, 'usage' was maintained as a theme in the final template. This supports the findings by Ferrand et al (2010) and Lin and Wu (2011), who found that perceived usage of a fitness club has a positive influence over intentions to continue membership.

5.4.4.10 Perceived value for money

One current member, with some intention to cancel, suggested that their perceived value for money, based on perceived service levels, was a reason for considering cancelling membership:

Interviewee 7: I sometimes think I'm not getting value for money, especially seeing as it's an expensive membership… It's not so much that I feel that I'm not getting enough value for money but if you are paying that sort of price you expect the service to go with it. It's more about service levels than cost… I do it for a reason and I feel it's money well spent in that respect otherwise I'd obviously pack it in.

Also, current members, with low intention to cancel, suggested that their perceived value for money, based on the range of facilities included in membership, was a reason for maintaining membership, and that any change to the value for money might cause consideration of cancellation:

Interviewee 2: … Just the money side of it I suppose [would make me think about cancelling]. For that membership, you get use of the spa, classes, pool area so it's all thrown in which I think is a very good price especially for the price, especially for the facilities and the quality of the facilities.

Interviewee 10: They've reduced the fees; it's gone down to 35 so it keeps me there. It's purely based on a financial point of view [the reason that I'll be maintaining it]. For me personally the value for money is excellent.

Perceived value for money also seemed to be discussed in relation to either perceived service quality, or with level of usage. Overall, perceived value for money was deemed worthy of inclusion into the final template. This study also supports literature advocating the importance of perceived value for money in predicting retention (Bodet, 2012; Cronin et al, 2000; Keaveney, 1995; McDougall & Levesque, 2000; Murray & Howat, 2002; Ferrand et al, 2010).

5.4.4.11 Brand attractiveness

Current members, with some intention to cancel, suggested that the fitness club's brand image had become less attractive to them, or that the brand image was non-existent:

Interviewee 3: It [fitness club] doesn't seem to have the same ethos any more…It had a refurb about six months ago, it [image] has a completely different look to it now...it's more swish...it doesn't look as family friendly...it's like children being seen and not heard.

Interviewee 7: Did I have a view of what [fitness club's] image was? None at all. It could be any other fitness club that's a national chain of gyms.

Ex-members also made reference to the brand image being non-existent.

Interviewee 17: I don't think there is an image at all.

Overall, the attractiveness of the brand was considered to be supported and thus included into the final template.

5.4.4.12 Brand prestige

Current members, with low intention to cancel expressed that the brand has a high amount of prestige:

Interviewee 2: The facilities are first-class… [fitness club] is by far the best… I think [fitness club] is well liked, recognised and trusted brand.

This was also corroborated by an ex-member, who had some intention to rejoin, who rated the brand's prestige favourably:

*Interviewee 19: I always considered [fitness club] or the brand of [fitness club] to be at the top of their game. [fitness club]... I see them as first class...without sounding up my own [*profanity*] you don't expect to go to [fitness club] and see a load of hoodies or chavs running around…. [fitness club] was probably the best gym that I've been to.*

As such, brand prestige was included into the final template.

5.4.4.13 Brand similarity and distinctiveness

There was limited evidence for brand similarity, although one member did make a direct comment regarding the way in which the brand represented her as a person:

Interviewee 4: The [fitness club] brand is definitely seen as funky and trendy. I guess it does reflect me a bit; it's a fun, funky, trendy place. Naturally, I'm very energetic and enthusiastic and bubbly, so I guess it fits with me wanting to expend energy.

However, the distinctiveness of the brand was not supported.

Overall, in relation to brand, this study found support for most of Bhattacharya and Sen's (2003) subscales of brand identification; brand attractiveness, brand prestige and brand similarity. However, because distinctiveness is related to the wider construct of brand identification, and was the only sub-scale of brand identification not to be supported, it was maintained as a theme in the final template. Hence, this decision was based on theoretical rather than empirical rationale. Also, this study supports literature claiming that brand identification (Ahearne et al, 2005, Kuenzel & Halliday, 2010, Tuskej et al, 2011) is predictive of membership intentions.

5.4.5 New themes

As well as the a priori themes being supported and added to (in the case of perceived service quality), other new themes were elicited during the analysis. These new themes, along with their supporting evidence and associated literature are discussed below.

5.4.5.1 Social identification

Current members, with low intention to cancel expressed a positive aspect of the fitness club being related to having commonality with other members there, and 'fitting in':

Interviewee 1: ....Hopefully I'll carry on being proud of myself and that's only because I wasn't made to feel out of place initially I think that's the biggest barriers to gym membership, that when you go there and you're out of shape and you don't fit in then you're made to feel like an outsider.

Interviewee 10: ...anyone can go there and not feel out of place...it's one of the most important things for any gym.

Ex-members, who have some intention to rejoin, also expressed that they felt a sense of 'fit' during their membership:

Interviewee 19 : Yes, I mean they're my sort of people... If I thought for a minute there were a load of idiots there … I just wouldn't end up going.

Interviewee 20 : I just wanted to be somewhere that was clean and full of normal people. That's not quite the right word, but you know what I mean... rather than full of trendy young people.

Similarly, there were comments from members regarding what *"the huge variety of people; old, young, family members" (Interviewee 4)* and that the clientele there was a *"mixture" (Interviewees 2 and 3).*

Overall, this suggested that the members felt favourably about the sense of commonality and diversity of members, and thus was originally coded as 'commonality/ diverse community feel'.

Seeing as this was a new theme, the literature was reviewed in order to explore this theme further. Whilst there are many theoretical constructs that broadly relate to this theme (e.g. 'social cohesion'; Friedkin, 2004), it was considered that this notion of 'commonality/ diverse community feel' relates most closely to the social psychological concept of 'social identification'.

Most notably, Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) posits that the core of social identity is 'internalisation' with the group in order to strengthen the 'sense of self'. It should be highlighted at this point that there is a distinction between social identification processes and interpersonal interactions. Social identification refers to categorisation into groups, which may happen with or without interpersonal interactions.

In the current context, members may identify with other members of the fitness club and feel part of a group without necessarily having to interact with other members or even use the club. According to Mintel (2009), many fitness clubs are trying to mirror the 'team spirit' and 'community-style nature' found in sports clubs, which would be thus increasing a sense of social identity for the members.

Since the work of Tajfel and Turner, other self-categorisation theories have emerged. Hogg (1992) suggests that 'cohesion' occurs when individuals identify themselves as members of a particular group, and that in-group prototypes develop which help to strengthen one's own identity by defining one's identify relative to that of 'out-group' members.

Leach, van Zomeren, Zebel, Vliek, Pennekamp, Doosje, Ouwerkerk & Spears (2008), operationalised the social identification construct, and based this around two key aspects of social identification; individual self-stereotyping and in-group homogeneity. Respectively, these refer to an individual having commonality with other group members (fitness club members) and the perception that the entire group has shared commonality, making the group homogeneous. Interestingly, however, it seems that a heterogeneous rather than homogenous clientele is important for fitness club members.

As such, it was considered that 'individual stereotyping' and 'in-group homogeneity' would both be related to fitness club membership cancellation, but perhaps in opposed directions with individual stereotyping having a negative relationship and in-group homogeneity having a positive relationship, and so were added as themes to the final template.

Whilst the construct of social identification has been researched in a consumer context, albeit to a limited extent, this has mainly been in relation to assessing the role of social identification on customer preferences towards marketing offers (Barone & Roy, 2010).

However, social identification has not yet been researched in relation to consumer retention, and thus has not yet been researched in relation to fitness club cancellation.

5.4.5.2 Rapport

Current members, with low intention to cancel expressed a favourable view towards 'social factors', with other people at the club:

Interviewee 2: Social factors, people that you meet, I go down with my partner as well and that's nice, working out together, spending time together. More with the other members rather than staff, but they're always roaming round so you do get to know a fair few of them.

Whilst there may be an optimum to how much interaction is experienced, it is clearly desirable to an extent, and is seen as lacking by current members who have some intention of cancelling:

Interviewee 3: Also, there seems to be a high turnover of staff, you never see the same faces and get that recognition. My mum used to belong to a gym and she left because there wasn't that friendliness from staff... She joined [fitness club] down the road, it's very personal, very intimate, they remember your name, they actually talk to you… The staff on reception, they're friendly but kind of automated... I want to belong somewhere, I like it when I go to my greengrocer and they say 'how are you today', but you don't get that in a supermarket and so [fitness club] is a bit like a supermarket gym and it just feels like you're a number...They need to make it more familiar.

Interviewee 7: I don't use it as a social thing really…but just a nod of acknowledgement [from staff] when they see you there regularly is, as far as I'm concerned, that's all I want.

Further, corroborating this, ex-members also expressed that there was a lack of interaction, and sense of being 'known' or, familiarity during their membership:

Interviewee 18: When I go there [other fitness club], they [staff] call me by my name…There's a sense of relaxation and friendliness and the staff are glad we are there…The software that [other fitness club] is using, to ensure that they are giving customers that sense of personal identity, they will, when a gym user logs in any conversational items like 'Oh, I've just had an operation' or 'the cat has died' is logged so that next time they see him they can ask, 'how are you today, feeling better? which makes people feel like 'somebody knows me, somebody bothers'. This is what we need in this big faceless society which is developing.

Interviewee 22: I didn't really have any close friendship with anyone there. I think most people were there on their own. You didn't get many people that would go to the gym together, so there was no sort of friends there. So everyone kept themselves to themselves pretty much. It [having friends there] probably would have done [added to my membership feelings] if I'd met someone there that I got on with and we'd chatted then yes it probably would have made me want to come a bit more... I mean I wouldn't say I felt isolated but kind of like that feeling that you just went, did whatever you were going to do there, and then you went home. It was very impersonal I think.

This was a new theme and thus required a new code. This was initially coded as 'interactions/connections/familiarity', but after a review of the literature, this notion was found to be captured by the concept of 'rapport'. In the fitness club context, Campbell, Nicholson and Kitchen (2006) argued the importance of social bonding, suggesting that social bonds in fitness clubs are key to customer loyalty. It is no surprise therefore, that rapport with other members was found to be important to participants in this interview study. However, rapport, as a construct has most often been researched with regard to the rapport that a customer has with staff.

In the service context literature, the benefits of building rapport have been recognised. Those who experience high levels of rapport can be considered to have an additional relationship with the organisation via the relationship with the staff. Those with low levels of rapport are not developing this additional relationship. Either way, a low level of rapport means that there is a missing relationship. Those with low levels of rapport who are not receiving the level of interaction that they desire are missing this desired relationship and may develop a propensity to look elsewhere for membership. Those who are quite happily receiving low levels of rapport, and quite happily missing out on a relationship are therefore devoid of the extra 'tie' to the fitness club that a relationship with staff can provide. They may not have the same propensity to actively look elsewhere for membership as those members who are seeking extra levels of rapport. However, any weakness in the relationship with the organisation e.g. through a weak relationship with the staff increases the risk that the customer will leave.

Based on a review of the rapport literature and a qualitative study, Gremler and Gwinner (2000) validated a model of rapport, comprised of two dimensions; enjoyable interaction and personal connection. Gremler and Gwinner posit that enjoyable interaction relates to a feeling of "care and friendliness" (p. 91) which can be communicated through interpersonal interaction elements, such as eye contact, language and non-verbal communication. In a fitness club context, this may relate to how a customer is acknowledged when entering the fitness club or perhaps the gym environment or a particular class. This relates to an assertion by McCarthy (2004) who argued the importance of the 'front desk' in its role in 'combating membership attrition' (p. 19). Personal connection relates to the affiliation and identification a person has with another, or an 'authentic understanding' (Price, Arnould & Tierney, 1995).

Further, rapport has been found to be predictive of retention in other service contexts. In a restaurant context, rapport was found to be predictive of repurchase intentions (Kim & Ok, 2010). Also, in a health context of dentistry, rapport was found to be predictive of satisfaction with treatment.

Whilst rapport has been a widely researched construct in other service contexts, in a fitness club context, there appears to be only one notable study by Guenzi and Pelloni (2004) which explored the role of interpersonal relationships in a broader sense. Guenzi and Pelloni asserted that fitness clubs provide a "highly social-intensive context" (p.373), rendering them an appropriate service provider in which the effects of interpersonal relationship can be studied. Specifically, Guenzi and Pelloni studied the effects of 'closeness'; closeness between the customer and other customers, and closeness between the customer and employees. They found that customer-employee closeness was a predictor of fitness club purchase intentions and positive word-of-mouth, but that customer-customer closeness was not predictive.

However, according to Mintel (2009) fitness clubs are increasing the emphasis on building relationships between their members; there is an anticipated increased usage of digital media and social networking sites to enable club members to build a closer relationship between themselves, and to support the development of relationships between members to try and add value to their membership (Mintel, 2009).

These activities suggest that fitness clubs are increasingly trying to develop a sociable, friendly, brand image. As well as increasing rapport and connectivity amongst members, perhaps the promotion of such a brand image also helps to combat any potential feelings of intimidation that fitness club members may experience, which may be disconcerting (discussed in subsequent sections 5.4.5.3 and 5.4.5.4).

Whilst rapport between members may not be as directly predictive of retention as the rapport between members and employees, perhaps an increase in member-member rapport indirectly increases retention through increasing the enjoyment experienced whilst attending the club.

5.4.5.3 State anxiety

Current members, with low intention to cancel expressed views that not being 'judged' and not feeling intimidated positive attributes of the fitness club:

Interviewee 6: I'm not a 'gym freak', my only concern when joining was that you might get looks from other people, but the staff don't judge you and all the members are alright- they don't look at you.

Interviewee 8: I was lucky, I was given a TSG key, which is like a key for doing all your exercises and after a couple of weeks I ventured on to doing the other things....but I can imagine if you're not very confident I can imagine people thinking 'oh my [*profanity*]' and never going back, to be honest.

Such thoughts were corroborated by an ex-member, who felt that the lack of staff made her feel worried about using certain pieces of equipment:

Interviewee 22: The only time I didn't [feel comfortable] was probably due to the lack of staff, you know if I was a bit worried about how to work a particular machine...because there was nobody around, you used to fiddle with it until you got what you hoped was the right thing...I felt like I didn't know what I was doing to a certain degree. If there had been more staff that would have definitely helped.

These comments suggested that the membership is enjoyable when there is a sense of anonymity; not being evaluated by others, as well as feeling capable of interacting with the gym environment. To begin with, this was informally coded as 'comfort/capability'. However, after exploring this further, this was considered to be captured by the notion of 'state anxiety' which has been researched in a fitness club context.

State anxiety, in general, refers to a form of anxiety induced by a certain situation; in this context the situation of being at a fitness club. Within the leisure context, this has been researched in relation to state anxiety resulting from concerns of being in an exercise class. Such concerns include fear of embarrassment from both the class instructor and other class participants, relating to co-ordination, physique, and physical condition. State anxiety refers to the concern resulting from a specific person associated with a specific situation (e.g. instructor or other participant) and has been found to be demotivating in relation to exercise participation (Leary, 1992). Martin and Fox (2001) studied the effects of leadership on the state anxiety experiences by group exercise participants, finding that the instructor and their leadership style can have an effect on their anxiety level. According to Martin Ginis, Lindwall and Prapavessis (2007), physical activity settings provide opportunities for public scrutiny and evaluation; as such these would include fitness clubs.

It is suggested that situations which emphasise both physique and evaluation, such as exercise classes, account for variance in feelings of self-efficacy (Lamarche, Gammage & Strong, 2007). Further, it is considered that a perceived ability to present oneself in a certain way can also lead to state anxiety (Gammage et al 2004, Lamarche, Gammage & Strong, 2009).

According to Mintel (2009), many consumers find joining or visiting a health and fitness club intimidating. As such, the qualitative study has suggested that this concept of 'state anxiety' should be included in the final template.

5.4.5.4 Social physique anxiety

One current member, with low intention to cancel expressed a view that the reason he felt happy at the fitness club was, in part, due to not feeling self-conscious; intimidated by the 'body beautiful' or the 'iron-pumpers':

Interviewee 1: Over the past 12 months I've lost 5 1/2 stone... and it's predominantly because of the contact I've had with [fitness club], they're very supportive. It's a more easy-going atmosphere because I've been to gyms in the past where you get the muscle-bound freaks, do you know what I mean? You know, the steroid pumping nutcases. I don't want that... there's a stigma attached to that and I don't want to be part of that. If the ethos of the gym changes and the membership there changes, I think if it goes more towards the body beautiful and the stigma attached to that then that would change it because I wouldn't feel as comfortable there…I'm not one of the 'iron pumpers', I prefer to go on the floor to work…Initially it's the biggest barrier, your own self-consciousness; if you're out of shape and you're a funny shape surrounded by people that are all the shape you want to be.

Interviewee 4: Some gyms are full of skinny people that look down their noses at you whereas I don't feel like that at [fitness club].

One ex-member also suggested that she only felt comfortable in one section of the fitness club, due to a concern over feeling evaluated with regard to her physical appearance:

Interviewee 22: I think it made me feel more comfortable knowing that in the [women's] area there wasn't any blokes... you're not standing next to some big muscly [person]... you don't feel out of shape coupled with the fact they could be thinking 'ooh look at the state of that' …

Another ex-member commented negatively on other members' seemingly low levels of anxiety over their appearance (the 'posers'):

Interviewee 21: You often get a load of posers down there at [fitness club] gyms, at those kind of gyms. There's just a few isn't there? It's just one or two people like the girls that go down with so much make up and guys that go and lift a couple of weights and pose in front of the mirror all the time. I won't even go onto [talking about] the guys in the shower rooms.

Originally, these comments were coded with 'comfort in physical appearance'. However, the concept of 'social physique anxiety' related directly to these comments. Whilst a fitness club is often associated with increased physical and mental well-being, the fitness club environment also provides opportunities for a person to experience two types of anxiety; anxiety relating to body image (social physique anxiety) and anxiety relating to a fear of embarrassment when visiting the club (state anxiety, see below). Social physique anxiety is arguably pre-dispositional in that this level of anxiety may be present before a member first uses a fitness club whereas state anxiety is any anxiety experienced within the fitness club.

Social physique anxiety is a form of self-presentational anxiety related to the physique (Hart, Leary & Rejeski, 1989). Social physique anxiety occurs when there is a fear that the perception held by others regarding the individual's physique is negative. Interestingly, social physique anxiety can result in low physical activity (Lantz et al, 1997), as well as excessive physical activity (Frederick & Morrison, 1996).

According to Martin, Rejeski, Leary, McAuley & Bane (1997), social physique anxiety is a unidimensional construct based on social evaluation of the physique; an individual's own perception of the physique is largely irrelevant to this construct.

Regarding its relationship with exercise participation, there have been mixed findings; some studies suggesting a positive correlation, some suggesting a negative correlation and some studies suggesting either a moderated relationship, or no relationship (Martin Ginis et al, 2007).

However, regarding the predictive efficacy of social physique anxiety, it has never been researched in relation to fitness club cancellation. Incidentally, according to Mintel (2009) society's increasing emphasis on physical appearance has been beneficial for the industry. In other words, it seems that a certain level of social physique anxiety is optimal for retaining members. The fitness industry benefits from the failure of individuals to accept and be comfortable with their physiques.

As such, 'social physique anxiety' was added to the final template.

5.4.5.5 Self-determination

Finally, much evidence was suggested regarding different types of motivation for being a fitness club member in general. Of particular interest were the various different levels of motivation that members seemed to have.

Current members, with a low intention to cancel seemed to have more deeply-felt motivations for being a fitness club member:

Interviewee 1: It's important that I can go there and spend an hour there and then come home, it's an understanding on their part that it going to the gym can be integrated into your life.

Interviewee 2: I would say [the gym] plays a very important role in my life, not just on the outside but the inside as well.

Interviewee 4: If I could go more I would, I'm a bit of a 'gym bunny'… I feel the benefits of going so I feel like I want to carry on.

Interviewee 8: Yes it's [going to the gym] like my mate.

However, one current member, with some intention of cancelling, expressed a more undecided level of motivation that was mainly externally focused on wanting to lose weight:

Interviewee 3: It's fluctuating but then I think I'll go 'cos I want to lose weight.

Another current member, with some intention of cancelling, expressed a view that she wasn't 'one of those people that really likes gyms' and that being a gym member was not pleasurable or highly prioritised:

Interviewee 14: But now I've got the dog, it's the fresh air rather than being cooped up...I'm not one of those people that really likes gyms... I don't really feel like I get a lot of pleasure from it. It's not a great part of my life. They should give everyone a dog… I felt I needed to [join a fitness club] from peer pressure from my family... family really but I suppose that everyone feels they should be doing something…I tend to fit it in around other things in my life- it's never been a major priority.

As well as current members, ex members commented on their motivation to be fitness club members, all of whom seemed to feel more distant from 'the gym', almost resenting it:

Interviewee 17: The 'gym thing' doesn't suit me.

Interviewee 19: If I was in there with loads of sixteen or seventeen year olds, gangs of them, they'd probably spend more time messing about. You've got to get into that zone haven't you. Going to the gym was such a chore. I'm an impatient person and I need to see results...because those goals didn't come quick enough, I got disheartened… that's what put me off too, that everything was revolving around the gym.

One member expressed a change in their motivation from when they started to when their membership ended:

Interviewee 22: To start with I used to talk about it at work and with my husband. With my friends at work I stopped talking about it really. With my husband, because I was still paying and I wasn't going, he started to nag me...it used to be 'why haven't you been to the gym?'. When I was going I was enjoying it, but when I wasn't going I was thinking about the fact that I was paying for it but not going so it [motivation] was always there but for different reasons. To start with I would have classed it as a personal interest, but not so much towards the end.

This suggests that there are distinct levels of motivation for being a member of a fitness club. Guilt was also suggested as a source of motivation. After reviewing the literature surrounding motivation and exercise, self-determination theory in relation to exercise seemed an appropriate construct which could capture such a wide variety of motivations.

Self-determination Theory (SDT) is a theoretical framework for investigating motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000) which has been used extensively to research motivation for physical activity. Underpinning SDT is the concept of various types of motivation, each representing different levels of self-determination along a continuum ranging from non-self-determined (controlled) to completely self-determined (autonomous) which regulate behaviour.

Other than 'amotivation' (no motivation) there are five types of regulation; external, introjected, identified, integrated and intrinsic, as shown overleaf in Fig. 5.2.

Fig. 5.2 Self-Determination Continuum
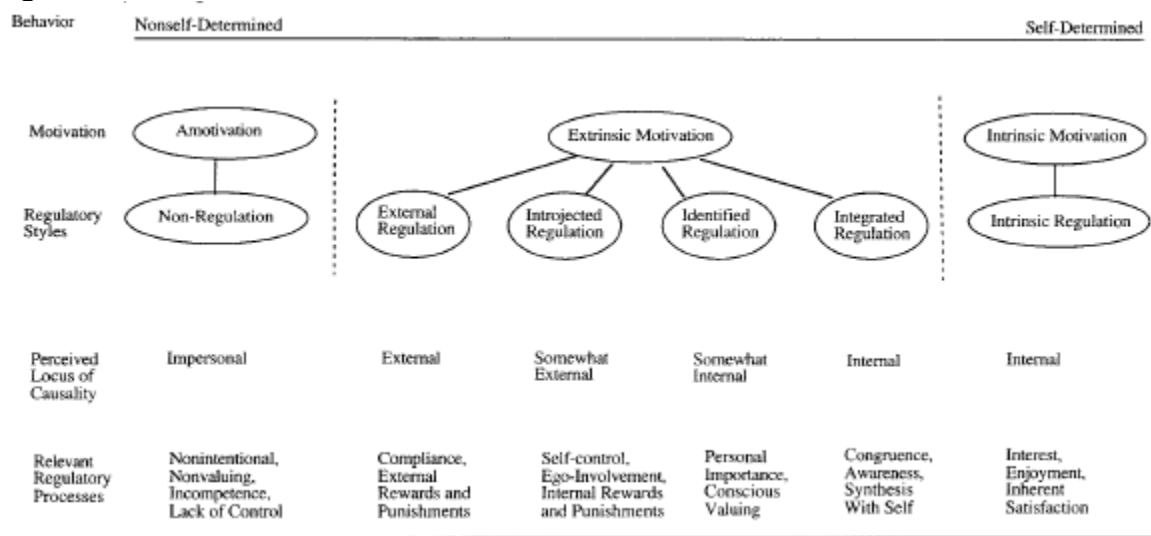
 (Taken from Deci & Ryan, 2000)

External regulation relates to being controlled by motivation to satisfy some kind of external pressure (e.g. going to a fitness club due to the recommendation of someone else to lose weight). Introjected regulation relates to being controlled by motivation to increase internal affective states, such as self-esteem or guilt (e.g. going to a fitness club to avoid feelings of self-loathing). Identified regulation relates to an autonomous motivation to achieve some kind of personal value (e.g. going to a fitness club due to a personal desire to lose weight). Integrated regulation relates to an autonomous motivation to achieve a personal value which is congruent to a person's sense of self (e.g. going to a fitness club due to a personal desire to lose weight which strengthens an identity of, say, 'being a waif'). Intrinsic regulation relates to an intrinsic, autonomous motivation to perform a behaviour for the sheer enjoyment and satisfaction of doing so (e.g. going to the fitness club because it's enjoyable). When a customer is higher on the controlled-autonomous continuum (being more autonomous) with a high level of self-determination, they can be considered as more affectively involved; rather than perceiving fitness club membership as purely functional they perceive it as something which yields internal pleasure and satisfaction.

According to Mintel (2009), the perception held by many members is that fitness clubs are boring and repetitive, suggesting that operators should seek to emphasise the pleasure and enjoyment of membership. SDT has been found to have considerable efficacy in understanding motivation for physical activity. For instance, Ryan, Frederick, Lepes, Rubio & Sheldon (1997) found that intrinsic motivation increases exercise participation. Further, a meta-analysis by Chatzisarantis, Hagger, Biddle, Smith and Wang (2003) found that introjected regulation, identified regulation and intrinsic regulation are positively associated with physical activity intentions and that external regulation was negatively associated with physical activity intentions.

More recently, identified and intrinsic regulation have been associated with an increase in exercise participation (Ingledew & Markland, 2009) and that external regulation is linked with lower exercise participation as opposed to identified regulation which was linked to higher exercise participation (Ingledew & Markland, 2008).

However, whilst these studies have found relationships between self-determination and exercise participation, none of these studies have looked at the direct effect self-determination may have on membership cancellation.

Whilst 'amotivation' may also be a trigger for cancellation, amotivation is distinct from the other types of regulation in that amotivation is related to having no motivation (level) whereas the others are types (sources of motivation). It was decided that 'type' of motivation was more fitting to the evidence collected in the interviews. Amotivation, in the context of this thesis, would refer to members considering going to the club to be pointless and that they resented going. However, no such evidence from the interviews was collected, and so amotivation was not taken forward as a potential predictor of retention.

5.5 Discussion

The a priori themes (perceived service quality, perceived value for money, usage and brand identification) which were proposed from the predictors identified in the initial literature review were all supported during this qualitative study. Perceived service quality was also modified by the inclusion of other service quality factors considered to be important. However, a number of other themes were also identified during this study which involved a re-visit of the literature to identify specific, measurable psychological constructs which could represent these themes. These themes were social identification, rapport, social physique anxiety, state anxiety and self-determination.

Interestingly, this suggests that social aspects, impersonal and personal relationships are critical to membership cancellation in addition to the more evaluative 'rational' aspects of, say, perceived service quality and perceived value for money for money. Thus, when the customer is asked to make an overall assessment of fitness club membership intentions, social aspects are as salient as quality/ value aspects. Relating to usage, two forms of anxiety were identified; state anxiety and social physique anxiety. Also, self-determination was found to be prevalent in relation to usage. This suggests that emotional, affective aspects are crucial to usage and that the route to encouraging usage may be through creating comfortable atmospheres and finding other more 'internal' ways to motivate members as opposed to merely using traditional, 'external' motivators such as weight loss goals.

Broadly speaking, the importance of social factors was revealed in this study. The identification one has with the membership 'group' (social identity), the interactions one has with other people (rapport), the anxiety experience related to body image (social physique anxiety) or capability to use the club's facilities and equipment (state anxiety),

and one's level of self-determination were all themes prevalent in the template analysis of the transcripts.

5.5.1 Limitations

Whilst some interesting themes were elicited during this study, this study was not without limitations. Creswell and Miller (2000) argue that qualitative studies should be assessed for their credibility, depending on the paradigm assumption of the researcher. Creswell and Miller argue that qualitative researchers may adopt one of three paradigm assumptions; post-positivist, constructivist and critical. The post-positivist paradigm assumes that qualitative studies should be subjected to the equivalent rigorous and systematic procedures that are used to assess the credibility of quantitative studies; reliability and validity. However, the constructivist paradigm assumes that qualitative studies should be subjected to completely different criteria. The critical paradigm assumes that qualitative studies should be evaluated with regards to the role that the researcher played in the process.

Further to the paradigms, there are three lenses which can be 'looked through' within each paradigm; researcher, participant, and reviewer. Broadly, these refer to who is the researcher appealing to when trying to demonstrate credibility. Researchers may look through their own lens to assess how well the findings have been made sense of. Researchers may look through the lens of the participant to assess, from their perspective, how well the findings and interpretations have captured the participant's thought and opinions. Finally, researchers may look through the lens of external reviewers to assess the research process, and how rigorously it has been conducted and how decisions were made. As such, the limitations depend on the criteria that have been selected to evaluate the study, according to paradigm assumption and lens. For instance, seeing as this study is embedded into a larger quantitative study, it is considered that this choice perhaps reflects a post-positivist paradigm.

Table 5.6 summarises the various lenses and paradigm assumptions that, combined together, suggest the most appropriate procedures for assessing credibility of qualitative studies.

Table 5.6 Procedures to assess credibility of qualitative studies depending on paradigm assumption and lens

Paradigm assumption/ Lens	Post-positivist paradigm	Constructivist paradigm	Critical paradigm
Lens of the researcher	Triangulation	Disconfirming evidence	Researcher reflexivity
Lens of the participant	Member-checking	Prolonged engagement in the field	Collaboration
Lens of the external (reviewers)	The audit trail	Thick, rich description	Peer debriefing

(Adapted from Creswell & Miller, 2010)

As such, the credibility of this study can be assessed through the demonstration of procedures such as triangulation, member checking and the audit trail. Whilst it was considered that the maximum variation sampling strategy enabled triangulation within this study, and that this study's findings would be corroborated by other quantitative studies, a limitation of this study is that the lens of the participant was not 'looked through'; members were not asked to check their transcripts of the interpretations made. Also, whilst template analysis is almost synonymous with an audit trail; providing a structured 'audit' of how the template progressed, regarding the lens of the external reviewer, credibility may be limited in that there was no inter-rater reliability of the coding process, mainly due to time constraints and the sequential nature of this study needing to be fully completed in order to progress to the next stage of questionnaire development.

One of the limitations of asking why the members or ex-members have retained or cancelled their membership is that the reason they give may be a result of 'cognitive dissonance'. 'Cognitive dissonance' (Festinger, 1957) was a term introduced to describe the discomfort experienced when a person has two conflicting attitudes or behaviours. According to Festinger, in order to alleviate the discomfort, individuals seek to reduce such dissonance and seek to remove the conflict, or close the gap between the two attitudes. This can be achieved by altering one of the attitudes. Using a hypothetical example in relation to the current study, negative service quality perceptions are perhaps conflicting with a high intention to retain membership; surely poor service might be more congruent with a high intention to cancel membership, rather than an intention to retain it.

The member can resolve this conflict by either changing their intention to retain membership changes (to a high intention to cancel membership) or changing their service quality perceptions (to positive service quality perceptions). As such, it cannot be fully guaranteed as to whether the service quality perceptions and membership intentions elicited in the interviews are the original, 'incompatible' ones or whether the perception and intentions are the resulting 'compatible' ones which have been modified to close the gap between perceived service quality and intention to cancel/retain membership.

To some extent, it can be argued that perhaps it does not matter; if the attitude has genuinely changed, it has changed. What is important is whether any such dissonance did in fact induce a genuine change or whether the attitude change might have been voiced in the interview, but has not actually changed. The latter would suggest that it is the perception that *other people* might notice an incompatibility between is being said which causes the discomfort, and subsequently causes the member to remedy the discomfort by instead suggesting attitudes which are more likely to be perceived as compatible by other people, even if they are not genuine.

Alternative interview questions, focusing on the process of how attitudes developed (not just establishing what the attitudes were) may have been helped with determining dissonance and whether attitudes have changed or remained stable. However, the aim of this study was predominantly product-, not process-, focussed; the study aimed to elicit what the potential predictive factors of are in order to develop the quantitative questionnaire.

Telephone interviewing

Also, the actual methodology for conducting the interviews has its limitations. Whilst telephone interviews can be quicker, more convenient and provide a certain level of comfort for participants due to not being visible by the researcher, they also restrict the range of people that can participate i.e. only those with valid telephone numbers, telephone access. Also, those with hearing impairments may have been less willing to take part and, if they did, their response may have been less valid if their impairment prevented them from fully hearing the question being asked. Also, during telephone interviews there is a risk that participants may be less engaged, due to the lack of face-to-face interaction which can provide stimulation for participants (Bryman, 2008).

Sample

Regarding gender, the sample was not representative of the population; 70% were female in comparison to a desirable 51%. As such, males were under-represented in this study. A way of possibly overcoming this under-representation would have been to have validated each telephone number in the initial sampling stage, so that invalid/ inaccurate telephone numbers were excluded from the sampling frame before participants were randomly selected. Conversely, frozen members, who only account for eight per cent of the population of the club, were over-represented in the study. However, a maximum variation sampling strategy had been specifically adopted in this study to elicit the views of a range of different members, even if this would be disproportionate to the population. For instance, frozen members potentially offer insight into what prevents members from completely cancelling their membership, in other words, what anchors them to the club if they are not attending? Further, it would be interesting to explore how many frozen members actually regain their live membership status, and if they find it difficult to make the transition back to full membership. In particular, it would be interesting to explore whether it is easier or more difficult for frozen members to regain their membership and resume attendance, than members who are simply non-users. Does frozen status 'legitimise' non-usage and therefore make it easier for frozen members to resume their usage and membership? Such research would have implications for whether 'frozen' status should be offered more leniently to other members whose usage has declined.

5.6 Conclusion

Overall, factors identified as being potentially predictive of membership cancellation in the literature were explored through semi-structured telephone interviews. This was so that any such factors that were supported during this study could be included in the two subsequent quantitative studies whereby a questionnaire was constructed to represent the factors. To develop the questionnaire efficiently, it was important to make sure that everything possible had been done to reduce the number of redundant predictor variables included in the questionnaire. Whilst perceived service quality, perceived value for money for money, brand and usage were supported as having predictive value, social factors such as social identification, rapport and social physique anxiety and state anxiety, and self-determination were all elicited as potentially valuable factors in the study of membership cancellation. Thus, all of these predictors warranted inclusion into the quantitative questionnaire. The questionnaire's development is detailed in the subsequent chapter.

Chapter 6
Questionnaire Development

6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapters, predictors of fitness club membership cancellation were proposed after reviewing the literature and conducting semi-structured interviews with fitness club members and ex-members which were template analysed. Nine themes; perceived service quality, perceived value for money for money, brand, usage, social identification, rapport, social physique anxiety, state anxiety, and self-determination were all elicited as potentially valuable factors in the study of membership cancellation. The next step was to operationalise these themes in a questionnaire.

6.2 Positioning within the mixed methods design

The development of the questionnaire represented the first transition between the qualitative stage to the quantitative stage, and the introduction of quantitative methodology (see below, 6.2.1). The construction of the questionnaire integrated the findings from the qualitative study. The qualitative study provided the rationale for including measures of the chosen predictors. Once the predictors had been identified, the literature was revisited in order to select and modify existing scales to measure the predictors and comprise the questionnaire. Whilst the questionnaire's construction was not the main research aim of this thesis, the construction of the questionnaire did provide a suitable data collection method for conducting the quantitative studies (Chapter 7 and 8).

6.2.1 Quantitative methodology

Quantitative methodology represents the dominant approach within this mixed methods thesis. Whilst the qualitative approach has been utilized, as stated from the outset the qualitative approach was merely embedded within a quantitative design.

6.3 Approach to questionnaire construction

'Classical test theory' was the approach adopted in the design of this questionnaire. In brief, questionnaires constructed using classical test theory comprise scales which usually consist of multiple items which are thought to collectively measure a psychological construct. Classical test theory assumes that an individual has a 'true score'; a score that would be obtained if there were no errors in measurement.

However, classical test theory posits that the true score can never be observed, as the observed score comprises both the true score plus some measurement error.

This is why classical test theory is sometimes known as 'true score theory' (Breakwell, Hammond, Fife-Schaw & Smith, 2006). In the development of the current questionnaire, scales (as opposed to individual items, were selected and included in the questionnaire to measure each construct. When using scales, in order to reduce the amount of measurement error, it is essential that the 'reliability' and 'validity' of the scales are assessed. This is why classical test theory is sometimes known as 'reliability theory' (Breakwell et al, 2006).

6.4 Reliability

Reliability, in relation to questionnaire design, is the extent to which a questionnaire is consistent and accurate. There are many measures of reliability. Test-retest measures are concerned with stability of the questionnaire over time e.g. how stable would a member's responses to the questionnaire be if it was completed again, say, two weeks later? Alternate form measures are concerned with the equivalence of two similar versions of a questionnaire e.g. how consistent a member's response to one version of the questionnaire would be to an alternate version of the questionnaire. Split-half measures and analysis of variance are both concerned with internal consistency of the questionnaire. Split half measures compare the first half of the questionnaire's responses to the second half of the questionnaire's responses, equally distributing scale items between both halves.

However, as Bryman (2008) states, most researchers nowadays use Cronbach's Alpha; an estimate of the internal consistency of the questionnaire. Cronbach's Alpha computes the variance of all responses to the scale items considered to be representative of a given construct, assessing whether or not the items are homogenous and whether they correlate well together. Although the ideal Cronbach alpha value of a scale should be 0.7 or above (Kline, 1999; Pallant, 2005), a lower Cronbach alpha value of 0.6 in relation to estimating reliability within the domain of social science is considered an acceptable threshold (DeVellis, 1991), especially in the development or use of scales in a new questionnaire (Cohen, 1988).

This type of reliability analysis can also be used as construct validation, and is also the type of reliability analysis that was used in the quantitative studies (Chapters 7 & 8).

6.5 Validity

Validity, in relation to questionnaire design, is the degree to which a questionnaire measures what it claims to measure. Three types of validity which can be assessed that relate to the current questionnaire are face validity, construct validity and criterion validity.

6.5.1 Face validity

Face validity refers to the degree to which the content of a questionnaire appears to be relevant to the construct being measured. For example, face validity is the degree to which the content (scale of items) supposedly measuring the construct of perceived service quality accurately measures perceived service quality. It is essential that the items are assessed for their relevance, range and representativeness of the construct. Face validity can be assessed from two different perspectives; expert and participant.

Expert perspective

The 'expert' perspective can be used for face validation. For example, if there are known individuals who have used the particular scale before in their own research they may be considered to be an expert on that scale. If the particular scale has been modified, the expert could pass judgement on whether they consider the scale has been 'over-modified'. This would mean that the scale has been modified so much that it no longer represents the construct in question. This is one of the biggest challenges in applied research; whilst it is necessary to ensure the context is being accounted for by shaping items to fit the context, there is a danger that by doing so the construct in question is no longer being accurately measured. In the present questionnaire, the questionnaire needed to include a broad range of constructs. As such, different experts were required to assess different scales of the questionnaire.

However, when participants take part in face validity assessment, they are usually required to assess the questionnaire in its entirety, not just specific sections. So, not only is the perspective different, but also the nature of what is being assessed in the questionnaire is different.

Participant perspective

The 'participant' perspective can also be used for face validation, but not only are the participants (like the experts) asked to assess the extent to which specific scales within the questionnaire measure what they are supposed to, but also to assess whether the

overall questionnaire has relevance to the main research question and what the overall questionnaire is like to complete.

This is important not only from a validity perspective but also from a response rate perspective. To encourage a good response rate, participants need to consider the items to be of relevance to the construct being measured; it is important that participants do not doubt the credibility of the questionnaire. If a participant considers the questionnaire to be collecting relevant data they may be more inclined to complete it. If, for instance, the participant knows that they are completing a questionnaire of fitness club service quality but there are no items asking about the cleanliness of the club, then they may consider the questionnaire to be neglecting a valuable construct

Also, to encourage a good response rate, participants need to consider the whole questionnaire to be of relevance to them as individuals. It is important that participants do not doubt their own usefulness in the completion of the questionnaire. In the present context, if the questionnaire is designed to be completed by current fitness club members, then it needs to be only distributed to current fitness club members and not those who have left the club or who have not yet joined. The questionnaire should be as fully applicable to the participant as possible.

However, with regard to measuring a particular construct, it is sometimes preferable that the participant does not know what the underlying construct being measured is. This is due to potential risk of increasing the amount of bias in their responses. For example, in the field of psychometrics, it is essential that the participant does not know which items refer to, say, extroversion. If a participant knows that they are answering items relating to extroversion, they may have their own preconceptions of extroversion or whether or not they are extroverted which may shape their responses. Thus, with regard to face validity, experts were asked to comment on the particular scales whereas participants were asked to comment on just the extent to which the overall questionnaire was relevant to the research area of membership retention was sought. Both experts and participants were asked to comment on 'item validity'; the degree to which items are comprehendible. If an item is, for example, ambiguous, it can be argued as having low item validity.

Ironically, whilst the notion of reliability and validity are aligned with objectivity and rigour, the process of ascertaining face validity is very much a subjective process.

6.5.2 Construct validity

Construct validity is similar to face validity in that it is a way of assessing whether the construct is being measured adequately. However, face validity is a non-statistical subjective assessment of whether the items are appropriate and inclusive of the entire construct. This can be estimated before the questionnaire is even distributed. However, construct validity takes this one step further and assesses whether the construct is actually being measured adequately by comparing scores on the construct in one questionnaire to see if they are the same as scores on the construct in a different questionnaire (convergent validity). To make sure the construct is distinct from other constructs we may look to see if the construct score is different from scores of a different construct (discriminate validity). These assessments, unlike face validity's 'look and feel' approach, are conducted statistically and therefore can only be conducted *after* data has been collected, not before. Further support for the statistical existence of a construct is provided by internal consistency reliability analysis. Reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha (see above) is a form of construct validity; whereby the homogeneity of the items is assessed through their correlations to see how well they collectively represent a construct (Breakwell et al, 2006). Unidimensionality is important within construct validity, whereby the items are assessed in terms of the extent to which they only measure their one, given construct. This is essential to assess when trying to develop a highly efficient questionnaire and where the research question is related to defining constructs.

6.5.3 Criterion validity

Criterion validity is related to how well a questionnaire predicts a criterion. This can be assessed either predictively or concurrently, with the difference being the time taken between assessing the independent variables and the dependent variables. More specifically, it is essential to examine the relationships between responses to the predictor scales (independent variables) and the responses to the criteria (dependent variables). Relating to this thesis, both concurrent and predictive criterion validity are assessed in both quantitative studies; Chapters Seven and Eight. For instance, both studies assess the relationships between the independent variables and intention to cancel (dependent variable), data which is collected concurrently within the questionnaire.

Also, both studies assess the relationships between the independent variables and actual cancellation (dependent variable) prior to the dependent variable being assessed, actual cancellation data was collected twelve months after the initial questionnaire completion, hence assessing predictive criterion validity and not concurrent criterion validity.

Seeing as reliability is the degree to which a questionnaire measures something accurately, if a questionnaire has low reliability and is inaccurate this will also reduce the validity. So, a questionnaire that is valid will also be reliable, but a questionnaire that is unreliable cannot be valid. It is quite possible to have a questionnaire which measures something very accurately, but what is being accurately measured may be irrelevant to the aim of the questionnaire. Reliability is considered to be a necessary but not sufficient property for a valid questionnaire (Breakwell et al, 2006).

It should however be noted that even the most reliable and valid questionnaire cannot compensate for poor use of the questionnaire, including inappropriate distributions of the questionnaire. For example, if the questionnaire was to be distributed to fitness clubs members in, say, North America, there would need to be caution taken. The fact that the questionnaire had previously been developed based on a British sample means that it cannot be assumed that it would be as reliable and valid when used with a North American sample. This may be due to low item validity (ambiguity in the specific item due to differences in United Stated English and United Kingdom English) or perhaps there are other psychological constructs related to fitness club membership cancellation in North America that were not included in the questionnaire. For instance, if the preliminary qualitative study had been conducted with a North American sample, perhaps different themes would have emerged and then guided the inclusion of other constructs into the questionnaire. According to Breakwell et al (2006), there are four issues relating to validity which should be borne in mind:

1. The different methods of validation (content, construct and criterion) may not be equally weighted in their importance to assessing overall validity of the questionnaire. For example, if the aim of developing a questionnaire is to develop a questionnaire which will be widely used and commercialised, then it is more important that it is as short as it can be; that there are as few redundant items as possible in order to make the questionnaire more appealing to complete, thus encouraging its purchase. In this case, construct validity is highly important. However, if the aim of the questionnaire is

to use it for predicting an outcome, then the criterion validity will be more important. Hence, criterion validity has more importance in the validation of the current questionnaire than construct validity.

2. Validity cannot be estimated by a single coefficient. It is essential to assess validity based on empirical and conceptual evidence. It is up to the researcher to consider the overall validity using statistical information combined with other knowledge and literature in the subject area. The researcher also has a responsibility to think laterally about the nature of their research design, data collection and analysis to consider any other threats to validity i.e. restricted samples. Statistical significance is not the same as validity but can merely be used to help ascertain the level of validity.

3. Validity is not something which should only be assessed once; validation should be a process which continues for as long as the questionnaire is used. So, if the current questionnaire was to be used in a different context after its use within this thesis, it would be essential to assess its validity again.

4. It should be remembered that validity is not just related to the questionnaire itself, but should also be related to the appropriateness of its use. This means careful consideration of sampling, and who the findings are being generalised to.

Now that the aspects of reliability and validity have been introduced, the way in which they were taken into consideration during questionnaire construction can be discussed.

6.6 Stages of questionnaire construction

From an ethical perspective, it was essential that the questionnaire's instructions stated clearly that the results would be confidential, anonymous, and that the participants had a right to withdraw and a right to be de-briefed regarding the aims of the project. The first stage of constructing the questionnaire was to select the scales, and to select how they would be modified and measured to suit the context. The second stage of constructing the questionnaire was to assess the face validity of the scales using expert opinion. The third stage was to assess the face validity and usability of the questionnaire based on participant evaluations of the questionnaire which were collected after conducting a pilot study.

6.6.1 Stage 1: Scale selection

In Chapter Three and Chapter Five, the predictors were described, with Chapter Five providing empirical rationale as to why they might have a place in predicting membership cancellation decisions. Based on the themes that were elicited as a result of the template analysis, the literature was reviewed in relation to those themes, and scales were selected that were considered to be the most reliable and appropriate for adaptation and use within a fitness club membership cancellation context. The details of the scales' origins and exemplar items can be seen in Table 6.1.

6.6.1.1 Scale measurement

Whilst most variables were being measured using pre-selected scales, some scales had to be adapted with regards to the wording of the items, to ensure each item was applicable to the context. Also, some scales had to be adapted with regards to their response format. These adaptations (item applicability and response format) are discussed in more detail below.

Item applicability

As well as ensuring the items are semantically comprehensible it was essential to consider if there were any items that, although they 'made sense', might not be applicable to all fitness club members. After considering all of the proposed scales, it was considered that the perceived service quality scale items (staff, classes, changing rooms, childcare, gym environment, overall facility, bar/café, pool/spa) may not be items applicable to all. For example, some fitness club members may not use the childcare facilities or, perhaps, may never participate in the classes. Thus, asking them to rate the respective service quality items would be tenuous. Firstly, their responses would be given even though they would be uninformed on the particular service quality aspect and secondly, this might be quite irritating for the participant and increase the risk that they would not continue with completing the questionnaire. Thus, for the service quality scale, a 'not applicable' option was included. However, for the remaining scales, there were no 'not applicable' options given. It was considered that the remaining scales were applicable to all potential participants. By including a 'not applicable' response option, this may encourage 'satisficing' whereby participants simply use the 'not applicable' response even when they could provide an opinion. Selecting the 'not applicable' response may be due to a lack of motivation, time pressure or fatigue. The notion that a 'not applicable option' is unnecessary has been supported by a number of studies (Breakwell et al, 2006).

Response formats

Most of the scales utilised an interval, Likert scale response format, whereby equal distances had been assumed between each scale point (e.g. 1-5). However, some of the scales that were modified and included, as per Table 6.1, originally had different numbers of response options on their scales. For instance, some of the scales originally comprised seven options and others comprised five.

Where possible, as part of the modification, all response formats were changed to comprise seven numerical, response options along an 'agree-disagree' continuum. It was considered that having an odd number of response options along this continuum would prevent participants from having to favour either one end of the continuum over the other. When there is a mid-point there is the perfectly plausible option of response whereby the participant may indicate a response of 'four' if they simply neither agree nor disagree. Also, not only does a seven point scale provide a genuine mid-point, but the consistent use of a seven point response format throughout the questionnaire enabled the items of most of the scales to be counterbalanced.

Counterbalancing

The items utilising a seven point 'agree-disagree' rating scale were deliberately mixed with each other to avoid a 'block' of items from the same scale appearing together. This was for two reasons. Firstly, to appeal to the participant by reducing their feeling of repetitiveness. Certain items measuring the same scale were similar, as one would imagine. Therefore, by dispersing these items, it was hoped that the perceived repetitiveness would be minimised. Secondly, the dispersion of items would provide a better measure of reliability, again by not allowing the participant to assume what a block of items was measuring and hence answer them all in the same way.

It should be noted here that this is not quite the same as randomisation. The items did not appear in random order; the author had fixed them into an order, albeit a mixed order. This was to accommodate the paper-based version of the questionnaire that created to present an alternative to the on-line version of the questionnaire. With pure randomisation, one can never be certain that the same items from the same scale are not appearing in the same order; there is always some probability that this would occur.

6.6.1.2 Ordinal measurement: Intention to use

Unlike the other scales included in the questionnaire, intention to use was assumed to be categorical. However, it is important to not pre-suppose what the most appropriate categories will be for the data before the data has been collected and the distribution has been examined. As such, secondary data was obtained from the facilitating fitness club, detailing the usage levels of all members for one month. The FIA's (2002) usage categories were not suitable for the usage levels of this fitness club, as shown by the non-normal distribution in Fig. 6.1. However, age categories were created that could accommodate the usage distribution of members of the fitness club, as shown in Fig. 6.2. As can be seen, more delineation was needed at the lower end of the usage scale; most members visited the fitness club 2-3 times during 1 month.

Fig. 6.1 Non-normal distribution of monthly usage categories
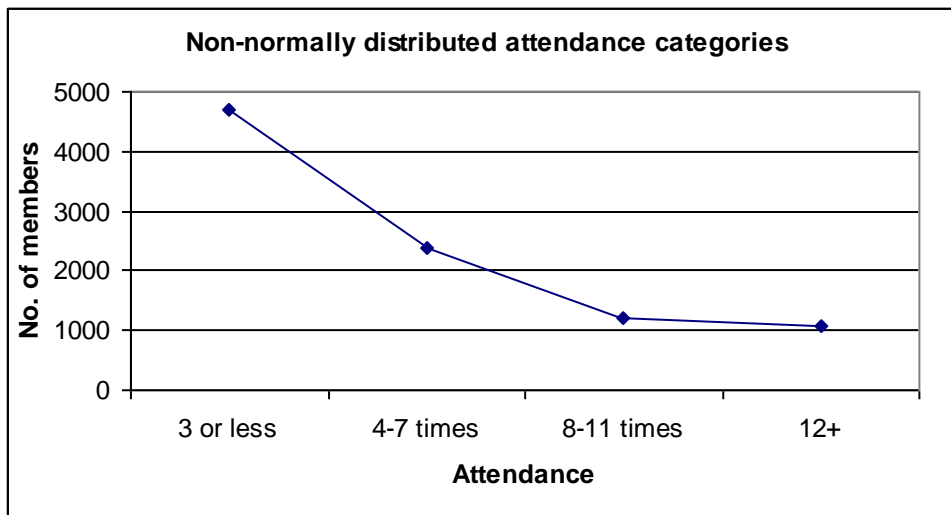
Fig. 6.2 Normal distribution of monthly usage categories
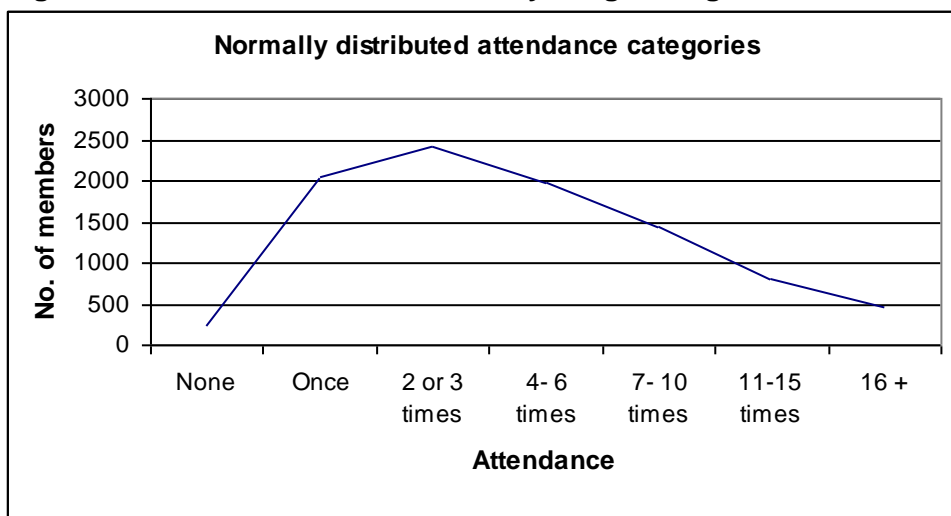
After deciding on the appropriate measurements of the interval and ordinal scales in the questionnaire, the scales were adapted and included into the first draft of questionnaire.

Table 6.1 overleaf shows the scales that were included, exemplar items, and any modifications made as a result of the pilot study or as deemed necessary in order to contextualize the items.

Table 6.1 Details of original scales and modifications

Predictor scale	Scale origin	Sub-scale Original α	Exemplar item**	Modifications
Perceived service quality	Lam et al (2005)	Staff .94	Staff knowledge/skills	'Provision of' was removed from 'Provision of a consistency of service' as a result of the pilot study.
		Classes .88	Variety of classes	None
		Changing rooms .93	Adequacy of the changing rooms	'Adequacy' changed from 'accessibility' as a result of qualitative study.
		Overall facility .84	Availability of parking	'Music control' and 'Television control' added as a result of qualitative study.
		Gym environment .91	Overall maintenance of the gym	'Range of gym equipment' added as a result of qualitative study.
		Childcare .92	Diversity of childcare experience provided	None
	New sub-scale added	Pool/spa n/a	Pleasantness of the pool/spa	N/A- new scale
	New sub-scale added	Bar/café n/a	Pleasantness of the bar/café	N/A- new scale
				General comments: Original 1-7 (Poor-Excellent) response format maintained. 'Not applicable' option added. Items of sub-scales counterbalanced.

Table 6.*1 Cont'd*

Perceived value for money	Murray & Howat (2002)	n/a	My fitness club provides good value for money	**General comments:** Original 1-6 (Disagree-Strongly disagree) response format changed to 1-7 (Strongly disagree - Strongly agree).
Brand identification	Bhattacharya and Sen* (2003)	Attractiveness n/a	My fitness club has an attractive identity	'My fitness club' inserted.
		Prestige n/a	My fitness club is a first-class club	
		Distinctiveness n/a	My fitness club stands out from other clubs	
		Similarity n/a	My fitness club is a club that matches who I am as a person	
				General comments: Scale not previously validated, response options not suggested by authors.
Intention to use	Scale developed by author	n/a	How often do you intend to go to the club over the next four weeks?	Categories generated based on normal distribution of attendance at fitness club (see Fig. 6.2). Measure of intended absence included as a result of pilot study. Could not be included in counterbalancing.
Social identification	Leach* et al (2008)	Individual self-stereotyping .89 -.93	I have a lot in common with the average member of my fitness club	My fitness club' inserted.
		In-group homogeneity .87 - .89	The members of my fitness club have a lot of common with each other	
				General comments: Original 1-7 (Strongly disagree - Strongly agree) response format maintained.

Table 6.1 *Cont'd*

Rapport	Gremler & Gwinner (2000)	Enjoyable interaction .96	There are [staff/members] at the club that I enjoy interacting with	
		Personal connection .93	There are [staff/members] at the club that I get on well with	**General comments:** Original 1-7 (Strongly disagree - Strongly agree) response format maintained. 'This person' was replaced with 'staff' or 'other members'- two rapport scales (staff and members) were generated that incorporated both enjoyable interaction and personal connection items.
State anxiety	Martin & Fox (2001)	.85 / .94 (Pre-/post-exercise; Lamarche et al, 2004)	I worry about how incapable I look in front of the [staff/members]	**General comments:** Original 1-5 (Not at all a concern – Extreme concern) response format changed to 1-7 (Strongly disagree - Strongly agree). Instructor' and 'participant' changed to 'staff' and 'other members'. 'I was concerned' changed to 'I worry'.
Social physique anxiety	Martin et al (1997)	.89	Unattractive features of my physique/ figure make me nervous in certain social settings	**General comments:** Original 1-5 (Not at all true– Extremely true) response format changed to 1-7 (Strongly disagree - Strongly agree). 'Uptight' was changed to 'concerned', as a result of pilot study.

Table 6.1 *Cont'd*

Self-Determination	Wilson* et al (2004)	Intrinsic regulation .93	I find going to a fitness club a pleasurable activity	
		Integrated regulation .92	I consider going to a fitness club to be a part of my identity	
		Identified regulation .78	I value the benefits of going to a fitness club	
		Introjected regulation .81	I feel guilty when I don't go to the fitness club	
		External regulation .82	I go to a fitness club because other people think I should	**General comments:** Original 0-4 (Not at all true– Extremely true) response format changed to 1-7 (Strongly disagree - Strongly agree). 'Going to a' was used rather than 'going to the' to ensure responses were not specific to the club but instead specific to the activity.
Intention to Cancel	Scale developed by author	n/a	I intend to cancel my membership as soon as my contract allows	Items written based on Ajzen's (2006) guidelines.
Positive word-of-mouth	Brown et al (2005)	.95	Say positive things about your club	**General comments:** Original 1-7 (Never – Frequently) response format maintained. Not included in counterbalancing

Note: A full list of the items can be seen in Appendix B2. *Author assessed content validity of modified scale items proposed for inclusion into the questionnaire. ** The exemplar items shown are just the declarative statements that formed part of the item, either prefixed or suffixed with the appropriate response format e.g. "on a scale of 1-7, please indicate how much you agree with the statements below" [followed by declarative statement].

6.6.2 Stage 2: Face validation (experts)

Once the first draft of the questionnaire had been constructed, it was essential to establish the questionnaire's face validity. It was considered necessary to seek the opinions of both the expert and the participant (fitness club member). As with the qualitative study (Chapter 5), fitness club membership was seen as the criterion necessary to classify a person as being a key informant. Firstly, experts were identified and consulted where possible to comment on the scales proposed for inclusion into the questionnaire. The experts were identified based on their contribution to the literature relating to the proposed retention predictors, discussed in Chapters Three and Five. The experts were then contacted via electronic mail and asked or their advice regarding the suitability of the items that had been adapted and included into the questionnaire. The experts' experience of using or developing the scale provided the necessary expertise which could then be used to assess the appropriateness of the scale and its modifications. Secondly, after making any further modifications based on their comments, a sample of participants were identified and asked to evaluate the questionnaire's item validity and overall face validity (not the face validity of each scale). The experts were not asked to comment on the item validity, face validity or overall usability of the questionnaire; it was considered that the participants were best placed to do this. The experts were simply sent the items in the form of an electronic mail, due to the fact that they were solely assessing the face validity. Table 6.1 indicates and details the scales that were subjected to face validation by the experts (authors who had either developed or previously published research using the scale).

6.6.3 Stage 3: Face validation and usability (participants)

After the face validity had been assessed by the experts, it was essential to ask participants to assess the item validity and overall face validity of the questionnaire and to assess the validity of the items. In addition, they were also asked to provide feedback on the usability of the questionnaire, both on the paper- and web-based version. This stage was conducted to reduce 'data collection' error; error generated as a result of poor questionnaire wording or flaws in the administration process (in this case, the use of SurveyMonkey© or paper-based version of the questionnaire) (Bryman, 2008).

6.6.3.1 Method

Firstly, the questionnaire had to initially be constructed in a way that would allow mixed-mode administration; both as an on-line questionnaire and as a paper-based questionnaire. SurveyMonkey© was used for this; to generate both the on-line questionnaire and also the paper-based version to allow the questionnaire look as similar as possible across both versions.

Construction of the questionnaire using SurveyMonkey©

SurveyMonkey© is an on-line tool which enables people to design, distribute and analyse the results of questionnaires. SurveyMonkey provides a variety of item types and response formats e.g. Likert scales, open comment boxes, tick boxes. SurveyMonkey is widely used amongst researchers, both in academia and commerce and allows people to respond to the questionnaire on-line where the results are stored securely and can be downloaded at any time. The scales as detailed in table 6.1 (items as in Appendix B2) were used to create the on-line questionnaire. Other features within SurveyMonkey were utilised such as not allowing the participant to move on to another page of items without completing all the items on the current page. This minimised the extent of missing data that the questionnaire would yield otherwise. Whilst SurveyMonkey is mostly used for on-line distribution, it also provides a useful tool for creating questionnaires which can be printed. As such, SurveyMonkey was used to create both versions of the questionnaire; on-line and paper-based. As well as being convenient, this also allowed both versions to remain comparable. There is always the danger if the questionnaire formats are radically different, the responses obtained from both formats may not be directly comparable. Within SurveyMonkey, the same aesthetic theme of the on-line version (horizontal format, alternating different coloured stripes for the items) was maintained in the printed version, again making both versions as aesthetically comparable as possible.

However, it was essential to try and maximise the response rate by utilising certain layouts appropriate to the on-line format and other strategies appropriate to the paper-based format regarding layout. For instance, with the on-line format, it was considered it would be more palatable for the participant to fragment the questionnaire more than in the paper-based format. This was to avoid the participant having to scroll down the screen too much when responding the items. The response scale that was used was mostly the same for all the items (see previous section, response format).

This meant that there was one scale presented to be used to answer multiple items. The more items that were presented on the screen with each scale, the more distance there was between the items and the scale which could make it more difficult to respond to the items. This is especially the case when the participant is responding to items near the bottom of the screen and the scale is out of view. This then requires the respondent to either have to remember what the scale options are. This adds to their 'extraneous cognitive load'; the load on working memory during an activity (Sweller, 1994). This 'load' may cause errors in response. In order to avoid a heavy 'load', participants may decide to repeatedly scroll back up. Whilst this may reduce errors, this may cause frustration and potentially only partial completion of the questionnaire. As such, the items were 'chunked' into a manageable number per screen. This extra fragmentation also included presenting the introductory and concluding statements on separate screens.

However, in relation to the paper-based version, it was considered that 'the less paper the better' which meant as opposed to fragmenting more compressing and also ensuring that the pagination did not disrupt the presentation of the questionnaire.

Participants and procedure

A convenience sample of individuals was selected, whereby the sample was restricted to twelve individuals who currently held fitness club membership. The sample was further divided so that six participants would complete the paper-based version and six would complete the on-line version. An evaluation sheet was designed to be completed in parallel to completing the questionnaire (the on-line and paper-based version). The participants completing the paper-based version were provided with a printed copy of the questionnaire and a printed evaluation form and were left to complete the questionnaire and return it in the envelope provided. The participants completing the on-line version were asked to provide their email address to which an online link to the questionnaire was sent. Once the participant had received this they could simply click on the link and complete the questionnaire. Instructions for the pilot study were also attached to the email which they could then download and complete in order to evaluate the questionnaire (appendix B1).

Participants, of both the paper-based and web-based version, were advised to complete the evaluation in parallel, to avoid forgetting to report any ambiguous items (item validity), problem areas regarding the overall content of questionnaire (face validity) and any problems/ dislikes when completing (usability).

6.6.3.2 Results

Item validation

Whilst certain items may have been considered to have high content validity of a particular scale by the experts, it was also important to make sure that the items were actually comprehendible by the participant. Note, this is not the same as asking the participant to comment on the relevance of the items, but instead at a semantic level, to make sure that the items themselves were valid when read and processed semantically by the participant. Because the participants were assessing these aspects, it was essential they were sent the questionnaire in the exact formats that were to be distributed to the participants in the quantitative studies (Chapters 7 & 8). It was already planned that the questionnaire would be available for completion both as an on-line and paper-based questionnaire.

Therefore, it was essential that the both versions of the questionnaire were assessed by participants. On the instructions (Appendix B1), participants were asked to identify ambiguous or unclear items (see Table 6.1 for details).

Face validation

As well as asking participants to comment on the item validity, they were also asked to comment on the face validity. In this case, this meant asking participants what else the questionnaire should have asked in relation to your fitness club membership. Interestingly, two participants commented that a measure of intended holiday / absence should be included in the questionnaire in order for a true reflection of members' levels of intended usage. This is due to fact that intention to use over the next four weeks was hoped to be a proxy for general levels of intended usage. For example, if a person intended to go once in the next month but they were due to be on holiday for three weeks, their average usage for the month would be higher. As such, two items were included to obtain members' intended holiday/ absence; one item asking "do you have any absences planned in the nest four weeks? (yes/no) and an open numerical box for members to indicate if so, for how many days.

Usability

In the instructions (Appendix B1), participants were asked "How long (approx.) did it take to complete?", "How difficult was it to complete?", "Could it have been made easier?" and "Overall, please comment on what the questionnaire was like to complete (good and bad points)". The time taken to complete the questionnaire ranged between 8 and 20 minutes (on-line) and 15 and 30 minutes (paper based). Steps were taken to reduce the time taken to complete the on line version. For the online version, there was also a comment relating to 'too much scrolling'. Even though this was considered in the initial design of the on-line questionnaire (see section 6.8.1.1), this still seemed to be an issue for one of the participants of the pilot study. It was commented that too much scrolling and not being able to see the response options led to the questionnaire taking longer to complete. This may have caused some participants to have to scroll back up in order to remind themselves what the scale labels were. Therefore, the on-line format was revised so that fewer items appeared on each screen.

Other participants commented on the repetitive nature of the questionnaire, especially the items regarding intention to cancel. These items were very similar which perhaps made them more memorable and hence more noticeable when they were being responded to. However, in order to get a true measure of intended cancellation and in accordance with Ajzen (2006) it was considered that there was no choice but to retain these items with the same response options. However, to pre-empt the participants' feeling of repetitiveness, the introductory section was revised to include the statement "some of the questions may seem repetitive, but please try and answer ALL of the questions open and honestly!".

6.9 Limitations

The development of this questionnaire is not without its limitations. These limitations relate to the very choice of adopting a quantitative questionnaire as a data collection method, the way in which it was administered (self-administered), common methods variance due to the measurement of both independent and dependent variables in the same measure, response bias, and that it was primarily designed to obtain only internal consistency to ascertain reliability. These limitations are discussed below.

Self-administrated quantitative questionnaires

Every data collection method has limitations, even before it has been used to collect data. According to Bryman (2008), regarding self-administered quantitative questionnaires, whilst they are quicker, cheaper and convenient with no interviewer effects which may cause variability and bias in the data collection process, there is not the opportunity to prompt or probe participants when they are self-administered, and when the questionnaire items are standardised. There is also the risk of excluding literacy limited participants, who may require more literary support in order to provide a valid response to the questions (Bryman, 2008). Due to the lack of interaction, participants may also become more bored and fatigued during the completion process, which may reduce the validity of the responses and even reduce the number of items that are responded to. However, the on-line version of the present questionnaire was designed in such a way that participants could not progress through the questionnaire if items had not been completed. Whilst this reduced the number of missing responses, this may have caused less validity in responses.

Most of the limitations of self-administered quantitative questionnaire are related to the risk of bias in response that they cause. These biases all relate to the broader term 'common method variance'.

Common method variance

Another issue is the possible impact of 'common method variance' (CMV); a problem often encountered in research (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Jeon-Yeon & Podsakoff, 2003). This refers to "variance that is attributable to the measurement method rather than to the constructs the measures represent" (Podsakoff et al., 2003, p. 879). Although the impact of CMV has been considered to be overstated (e.g. Kline et al., 2000), it is still considered by many to be a serious issued in research (Pace, 2010). According to Podsakoff et al., causes of CMV can be due to rater effects and response biases. Rater effects include 'consistency motif', whereby raters (participants) attempt to 'second-guess' the scales of items, and provide consistent responses across all items perceived to be similar. Similarly, 'illusory correlations' occur when a participant attempts to 'second-guess' the covariance of items. Also, participants may be inclined to respond to items according to implicit assumptions about themselves. Social desirability, (choosing options which are considered to be more socially desirable), and leniency bias (choosing options which are

considered to be favoured by the researcher) are also considered to be rater effects which may cause CMV. All of these rater effects thus far assume the participant to be highly engaged in the questionnaire completion. However, participants may be disengaged, causing other rater effects such as acquiescence; being highly agreeable when responding. Participants' mood and affect may also affect responses.

All of the rater effects discussed so far, assume that any CMV is caused by the participant's invalid responding, placing blame on the participant. However, in addition, Podsakoff et al. (2003) suggest that not only rater effects but also item characteristic and context effects may cause CMV. Poorly designed items may be ambiguous (item ambiguity), or written in a way which encourages social desirability or a certain response (demand characteristics). An item may be poorly written in such a way that it generates a certain mood or favourability, or it may be poorly positioned amongst other items as to suggest a relationship between. Short scale lengths may cause item responses to be remembered. Podsakoff et al. (2003) also suggest measurement effects, whereby bias may be caused due to the independent and dependent variables being measured within the same measure, at the same point in time.

Some of these sources of CMV have been addressed in the development of this questionnaire, e.g. item ambiguity during the pilot study. Procedural remedies, such reverse coding of items, could have been conducted to avoid these biases. Whilst one scale (social physique anxiety) was measured using reverse-coded items, no other scales contained reverse coding. However, this was mostly due to the fact that the original scales did not contain reverse-coded items. On a wider note, this presents a debate regarding the extent to which scales of other researchers should be adapted. Reverse coding of items in a scale may improve a scale by reducing its propensity for response bias, but at the same time such adaptation may deviate so far from the original scale that the scale has been more than adapted. Also, separating the measurement of the independent and the dependent variables at different times can also help reduce such bias. However, in the present questionnaire, whilst intention to cancel and positive word-of-mouth (two dependent variables) were measured in the same questionnaire as the independent variables, another dependent variable (actual cancellation) was measured externally to the questionnaire which reduces the applicability of common methods variance to the research detailed in this thesis. Counterbalancing of the item order of predictor and outcome

variables can also reduce common methods variance. Aside from perceived service quality, intention to use and positive word-of-mouth items (which could not be counterbalanced with the other items due to their different response format), all of the items were counterbalanced within the questionnaire. Also, a social desirability scale or impression management scale may have helped. These scales assess individuals' tendencies to project favourable images of themselves during social interactions (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986).

However, according to Pace (2010), the extent of the impact of CMV on validity needs further research and it is not always clear as to whether the common variance is due to the method, the source, the timing of measurement, or other factors associated with the measurement procedure. However, it is something which all researchers must consider in the design of their studies.

Internal consistency

Also, the questionnaire could be criticised due to the fact that it was designed to support internal consistency as the chosen method for estimating reliability. Internal consistency can be criticised for a number of reasons relating to how it calculates reliability co-efficients. Firstly, it depends on the number of items in the scale - α will increase as the number of items increases meaning that scales with many items will more likely have higher reliability estimation. Therefore, internal consistency co-efficients (e.g. Cronbach alpha) should be interpreted with caution (Bartram, 1990) as they may suggest overstated estimates of reliability.

6.10 Conclusion

After its initial construction and content validation, the questionnaire could be used in the first quantitative study. The next chapter provides the details of the first quantitative study conducted with a large sample of current fitness club members in order to assess the efficacy of the nine predictors (perceived service quality, perceived value for money for money, brand, usage, social identification, rapport, social physique anxiety, state anxiety, and self-determination) in predicting intentional and actual cancellation.

Chapter 7

Cross-sectional Study: Current members

7.1 Introduction

The construction of the questionnaire represented the achievement of the first objective of this thesis; the identification of potential predictors of fitness club membership retention which led to the development of a questionnaire which could measure these potentially predictive variables. Nine potentially predictive variables had been identified and included in the questionnaire; perceived service quality (staff, classes, gym environment, changing rooms, physical facility, childcare, pool/spa, bar/café), perceived value for money for money, brand (attractiveness, prestige, distinctiveness and similarity), social identification (individual stereotyping, in-group homogeneity), rapport (with staff, and with members), state anxiety (with staff, with members), Social physique anxiety, self-determination, and intention to use.

After meeting Objective 1, the next stage was to utilise this questionnaire in order to address the next three research objectives; Objective 2) to assess the efficacy that the potentially predictive variables have over predicting the cancellation (actual and intentional) of current fitness club members, Objective 3) to assess the efficacy that intentional cancellation has over predicting actual cancellation of current fitness club members, and Objective 4) to assess the efficacy that intentional cancellation has over predicting positive word-of-mouth of current fitness club members.

Subsequently, this chapter details a large cross-sectional study which addressed these objectives.

7.2 Positioning within the mixed methods design

As was discussed in Chapter 5, this thesis represents a research project of mixed methods design which is mostly sequential in nature; the qualitative phase needed to be conducted before the first quantitative phase (designing of the questionnaire; Chapter 6) could begin. The study detailed in the present chapter is a continuation of the quantitative phase which began in Chapter 6, by taking the newly developed, quantitative questionnaire and testing its criterion validity on a large cross-section of current fitness club members.

7.3 Method

7.3.1 Sampling strategy

The same fitness club that facilitated this study also facilitated the qualitative study (see section 5.3.4 for details of the club and its population characteristics).

It was essential to collect a large enough sample that would represent the population of all members of the club (9900 people in total). Accordingly, working on the premise of a 95% level of confidence and a 5% margin of error, a minimum sample size was identified as 370 (Saunders et al, 2007). As such, a sampling frame of 1057 was aimed for which, with a cautious expected response rate of 35% (Baruch, 1999 as in Saunders et al, 2007), would yield 370 responses. Due to the inconsistent contact details maintained by the fitness club on their database, a face-to-face, convenience sampling strategy was adopted. Whilst it was known that convenience sampling has a high risk of response bias, it was also considered that only contacting, say, members who had valid email addresses would risk just as much restriction in range and biased as convenience sampling does. Bryman (2008) suggests three problems associated with convenience sampling; firstly, restricting the ability of some members of the population to take part in the research due to them not being present in the 'right time and/or place. Secondly, there could be risks of subjectivity and using human judgement to select participants. Thirdly, there is the risk of the convenience sample having some form of commonality and then being representative of a specific sub-population of the overall population rather than of the overall population per se.

However, Bryman (2008) also states that convenience sampling is the most widely used sampling strategy in organisational studies. Surely, the more effectively the previously mentioned three issues are dealt with, the less sampling error will be created. So, in an attempt to increase the rigour of the convenience sampling strategy adopted for this study, a comprehensive sampling strategy was devised. It was important to vary the times of the data collection and to make sure the location was available to all, to deal with the first issue. As such, the sampling frame was generated as inclusively as possible, from many current fitness club members, with different usage levels (e.g. once/four times a week) and different usage patterns (e.g. morning/evening) (see table 7.1 overleaf).

In addition to ensuring the sampling frame included members with varying daily/weekly usage patterns, it was also essential to spread out the sampling period over more than a two week period, so as not to exclude members who might have been on holiday; a one week 'data blitz' would exclude these and so would not have been appropriate. The sampling period began July 17th 2008 and ended August 6th 2008. The opening hours of the club were between 06:00 and 22:00, Monday to Friday and broken down into two 8-hour 'sampling shifts' (06:30- 14:30 and 14:30-22:00) for each week day. On Saturdays and Sundays, the opening hours were 8am-8pm and so were treated as a 'full' day, as opposed to having two shifts.

Table 7.1 Sampling timeframe

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
06:30 - 14:30	Jul 21st	Jul 29th	Aug 6th both shifts	Jul 24th	Jul 25th both shifts	Aug 2nd	Jul 20th
14:30 - 22:00	Jul 28th	Aug 5th		Jul 17th			

7.3.2 Participants and procedure

During the sampling period, the questionnaire was distributed to members of the sample which was generated by those fitness club members agreeing to participate. Members were approached face-to-face and asked if they would consent to being emailed a web link to the questionnaire (Appendix C1). They were also then asked if they had been a member for at least three months. Those who had consented and claimed to be a member of more than three months (n=1053) gave their email address. However, so as not to discriminate against those who did not have access to computers/internet, a paper-based version of the questionnaire and covering letter (Appendix C2) was also offered which therefore required the consenting members to provide their home postal address. These two data collection methods achieved a sixty-eight per cent response rate; much higher than the thirty-five per cent response rate that was anticipated. Six hundred and nine participants completed the on-line version of the questionnaire, whilst one hundred and seven completed the paper-based version.

An incentive was offered, to be entered into a free prize draw to win a £100 retail voucher. It was important to ensure that the incentive was unrelated to what is provided (fitness membership/ products) by the facilitating organisation.

A large enough sample was obtained to allow a cross-validation approach to be taken; the data set (n=716) was split into two halves whereby each model that was developed was also conducted on each half of the dataset to ensure that the any significant findings were not simply due to a large sample.

Table 7.2 and Fig 7.1 show the distribution of members per gender and age category.

Table 7.2 Age and gender of participants

Gender	Age category	Frequency
Males	16-24	44
	25-34	101
	35-44	109
	45-54	58
	55-64	26
	65+	14
	Total	352
Females	16-24	26
	25-34	112
	35-44	119
	45-54	59
	55-64	40
	65+	8
	Total	364

Fig. 7.1 Comparison of age and gender of participants
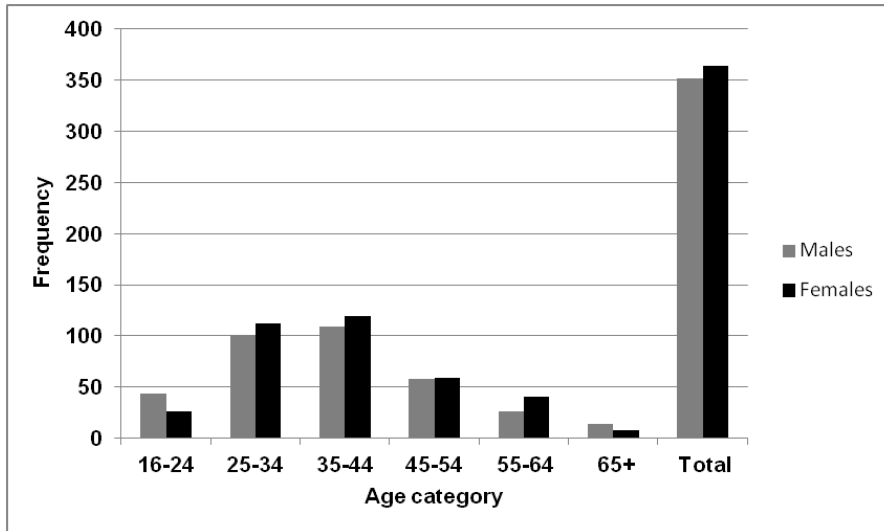
Further to the questionnaire data, actual cancellation data was obtained from the membership database, whereby all respondents to the questionnaire were checked to see if, after twelve months, they were still members or whether they had cancelled their membership. This identification of members in the questionnaire was essential in allowing retention to be measured as opposed to just measuring behavioural intentions, as their names could be matched against a list of members who had cancelled membership to see if any of the members who had completed the questionnaires had retained or cancelled their membership.

Whilst this did not allow anonymity of the questionnaires, members were made fully aware of this in the completion instructions. Only a list of participating member names (but not their responses) was provided to the facilitating fitness club assistant manager who helped to ascertain whether the participating members had cancelled or retained their membership. Further, the author is not affiliated with the fitness club, and it was made clear to members that the author was an external researcher which may have lessened the limitation of not providing anonymity. Whilst anonymity could not be provided, confidentiality of their data was assured; it was only the author who had access to the completed questionnaires.

7.4 Results

7.4.1 Preliminary data screening

Various steps were taken before the inferential analyses were conducted; ensuring data accuracy, dealing appropriately with missing data, reliability estimation and computing 'true' mean scores.

Data accuracy

According to Tabachnick & Fidell (2007), inspection of univariate descriptive statistics for accuracy of input; out-of-range values, plausible means and standard deviations should be the first steps taken in data screening. When completing the questionnaire, all questionnaires were entered using Survey Monkey, even the paper-based ones. As such, there was no option for numbers to be freely entered into, but instead could only be selected from a range of scale options. Although more time consuming, this ensured that data could not have been manually entered out of the given one to seven range, as is the risk when entering paper-based questionnaires directly into a spreadsheet whereby the operator may be at risk of entering any number.

Missing data

Tabachnick & Fidell (2007) also state that missing data must be dealt with before any inferential analyses are conducted. In essence there are two considerations that should be made regarding missing data; what data (if any) should be recoded as missing, and what the implications are for genuinely missing data. Regarding what should be recoded as missing data, as mentioned above, any scores that were missing, or not easily identifiable from the paper-based questionnaires received were re-coded as missing data. The perceived service quality items were the only items which had a 'not applicable' option. Any 'not applicable' responses to the perceived service quality items were treated as missing data.

Reliability estimation

Because mean scores were to be computed of each predictor, it was essential assess the internal consistency of the items representing their associated predictor. The Cronbach alpha values of all scales were obtained in order to test internal consistency of the items scores representative of a given predictor.

Although the ideal Cronbach alpha value of a scale should be 0.7 or above (Kline, 1999; Pallant, 2005), a lower Cronbach alpha value of 0.6 is considered an acceptable threshold within the domain of social science, especially for research purposes (Cohen, 1988). Most scales were internally consistent to an alpha level of 0.6. Further, most alpha levels were in excess of the minimum 0.6 threshold (Table 7.3). As such, mean scores of the items could be generated with a certain degree of confidence.

Computing of 'true' mean scores

To ensure even further confidence in the mean scores, all of the mean scores for the predictors were only computed if all items in the scale had been responded to. This is different from other ways of computing the mean score, which may allow the mean score to be generated from however many items in the scale had been responded to, even if not all items had been responded to. This is risky, as it allows a mean score to be computed which, potentially, may not be based on the full number of items deemed necessary to represent that particular predictor, therefore not appropriately measuring the construct.

Whilst this increased the validity of the mean scores, this inevitably reduced the sample available for inclusion into the analyses; if a participant's mean score was not computed for a particular predictor, then that participant would not be included in an analysis of that particular predictor.

The mean scores and standard deviations are displayed in Table 7.3 (correlations between the variables can be found in Appendix C3).

Table 7.3 Descriptive statistics

	α	Cancelled			Retained		
		N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
Intention to cancel	.85	68	2.51	1.93	574	1.60	1.07
Positive word-of-mouth	.93	69	4.51	1.70	569	4.68	1.47
Perceived service quality - Staff	.89	27	5.21	1.13	280	5.31	0.99
Perceived service quality - Classes	.87	54	5.45	1.04	426	5.46	0.96
Perceived service quality - Changing Rooms	.75	79	5.64	1.11	619	5.59	1.02
Perceived service quality - Physical Facilities	.83	68	5.57	0.98	539	5.62	0.81
Perceived service quality - Gym Environment	.88	73	5.68	1.12	564	5.84	0.83
Perceived service quality - Pool/Spa	.72	74	5.56	1.11	561	5.67	0.95
Perceived service quality - Bar/Café	.78	67	5.58	1.00	512	5.54	1.07
Perceived service quality - Childcare	.89	25	5.64	1.09	156	5.58	1.16
Perceived value for money	n/a	71	4.51	1.49	584	4.77	1.50
Brand attractiveness	.73	68	4.85	1.24	574	4.86	1.23
Brand prestige	.76	68	4.57	1.46	575	4.26	1.49
Brand distinctiveness	.76	68	4.96	1.30	574	4.85	1.25
Brand similarity	.74	71	3.77	1.47	583	3.75	1.51
Individual stereotyping	.71	68	3.52	1.17	574	3.45	1.22
In-group homogeneity	.61	71	3.76	1.23	584	3.67	1.26
Rapport - Staff	.90	68	6.36	2.72	573	6.79	3.09
Rapport - Members	.90	68	3.63	1.42	572	3.94	1.65
State anxiety - Staff	.80	68	2.60	1.34	574	2.05	1.21
State anxiety - Members	.82	68	2.70	1.33	573	2.18	1.32
Social physique anxiety	.84	68	3.83	1.28	572	3.42	1.19
External regulation	.76	68	1.70	0.71	572	1.53	0.78
Identified regulation	.67	68	5.37	1.07	574	5.39	1.04
Integrated regulation	.77	68	3.98	1.41	574	4.24	1.32
Intrinsic regulation	.84	68	5.46	1.18	569	5.71	1.00
Introjected regulation	.77	68	4.23	1.27	571	3.94	1.59

Further with regard to the intention to use predictor, it was essential to control for any barriers that will affect, or have affected, the ability for members to use the club in their usual capacity. For instance, it was essential to try and control for fitness club members' absenteeism from the club due to holidays etc. Given the time of year that the research was conducted (July-August), there was perhaps more likelihood that fitness club members may have been on, or were due to go on, holiday. Therefore, just asking members how often they intended to use the club or had previously used the club would have been misleading. For example, a member may have answered '4-6 times' which over a 4 week period would suggest a minimum usage of once per week. However, if they had planned to be absent from the club due to a two week holiday then intending to use the club 4-6 times in just two weeks over the month suggests a minimum usage of twice per week.

This was dealt with by allowing the responses of members who had indicated foreseeable absence to not have their intention to use the club score computed, instead being recoded as missing data.

After the preliminary data screening steps had been taken, and the mean scores appropriately generated, the inferential statistical analyses were conducted.

7.4.2 Predicting actual cancellation

Logistic regression is often used in the health sciences and epidemiological studies whereby the dependent variable has two categories e.g. disease/no disease, survival/death. Binary logistic regression was used to assess the influence that the independent variables might have over actual cancellation of membership. This is due to the fact that actual cancellation is a dichotomous variable; after twelve months of participants completing the questionnaire, they had either cancelled their membership or they had retained it. As with all inferential statistical analyses, there are certain requirements regarding the appropriate use of logistic regression.

7.4.2.1 Logistic regression requirements

Whilst logistic regression is non-parametric and therefore does not require the assumptions of normality to be met, the main consideration is whether there are enough events per variable (EPV). According to Peduzzi, Concato, Kemper, Holford and Feinstein (1996), there should be a minimum of ten 'events', for the least frequently occurring outcome, per independent variable included in the model to avoid any risk of underestimation or overestimated variances. Standalone, within the dataset there are 81 events (members) who actually cancelled their membership (the least frequently occurring outcome), and 635 events who retained their membership. Thus, with 81 events being the least frequently occurring outcome, based on this rule of 10 events per variable rule this would suggest that only 8 independent variables are included in any model tested at any one time.

However, the number of events will also be determined by the response rate for each variable also being included in the model. For instance, whilst there may have initially been 81 participants who cancelled their membership, when this group was also cross-tabulated with other variables, the rule of 10 EPV is not always met, as the way in which actual

cancellation combines with other variables in the analysis which may have missing data will naturally reduce the EPV. It has also been argued, however, that this rule can be relaxed. For instance, Vittinghoff and McCulloch (2007) conducted two simulation studies to test the influence of EPV, finding that the results obtained between five and nine EPV were comparable to those found with 10 EPV.

However, to optimize the EPV the first step taken was to conduct a series of individual analyses, analysing each independent variable's efficacy in predicting actual cancellation. Whilst conducting individual analyses increase the amount of error, this helped to ensure there were always at least 10 events in actual cancellation outcome group.

7.4.2.2 Reporting and interpreting logistic regression

Whilst logistic regression is generally becoming more popular as a statistical technique (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007), in a search of 12 consumer-related journals, only 77 articles were found which had published the use of logistic regression (Akinci, Kaynak, Atilgan & Aksoy, 2007). This is surprising considering that consumer decision-making is often based on certain discrete choices, such as whether or not to cancel fitness club membership. Due to its rarity in the consumer literature, it is perhaps necessary to provide guidance on how logistic regression analysis results should be reported and interpreted. Field (2005) states that there is little consensus in exactly which coefficients to report, due to the rarity of logistic regression in social science, as opposed to in other sciences premised on epidemiological studies, predicting rare 'events' within a large-scale sample whereby the outcome group will often be very unbalanced. However, Field suggests reporting the beta weights (B and exp B), as well as the standard error and alpha levels which denote the significance of the beta coefficient after conducting logistic regression analyses. The beta values in logistic regression relate to those used in linear regression, both indicating the impact of a unit change in the predictor variable on the outcome variable.

However, the main difference is that in linear regression, B represents a change in the value of the outcome variable; whereas in logistic regression B represents the change in the odds that a case will be categorised into one of two groups. However, there are two beta coefficients in logistic regression; B and Exp B. 'Exponential beta weights' (Exp B) are related to B, but whereas B in logistic regression represent the effect of a unit increase to the likelihood, exp B is simply an expression of this change as an increase in odds.

If there was no effect of the predictor variable on the categorisation of a case into the outcome group, B would be 0 (zero effect), and the exp B would be 1 which represents a 50/50 (equals 1), probability that this categorisation into a certain group would occur, no better than tossing a coin. Thus, the closer the exp B value to 1, the smaller effect size. For instance, an exp B value of, say, 1.5 represents a 50% increase in the probability that the categorisation will occur; 0.5 representing a 50% decrease.

The results of the logistic regression analyses conducted to ascertain the predictors of actual cancellation are now discussed.

7.4.2.3 Preliminary binary logistic regression analyses

All variables were firstly tested individually to ascertain whether they could predict actual cancellation. However, only three variables were found to predict actual cancellation; state anxiety (staff), state anxiety (members) and intention to cancel. These three results are shown below in Table 7.4.

Table 7.4 Binary logistic regression results of actual cancellation predictors

	B	S.E.	Wald	Exp(B)	Model chi-square
Intention to cancel	-.43	.08	28.18	.65**	25.74***
State anxiety- staff	-.31	.09	11.60	.73**	10.86**
State anxiety- members	-.26	.09	8.90	.77**	8.42**

Note: ** p< .01. *** p< .001.

Overall, across the whole dataset, a unit increase in intention to cancel (exp *b*=.65, B= -.43, SE= .08., p=<.01) state anxiety (staff) (exp *b*= .73, B= -.31, SE=.09, p=<.01) and state anxiety (members) (exp *b*= .77, B= -.26, SE=.09, p=<.01) were each found to decrease the likelihood of members being in the category of those who retained their membership. After establishing the predictive efficacy of these three predictors at an individual level, it was then necessary to model them together. However, when these three predictors were included in the same model, state anxiety (members) was no longer significant. As such, the analysis was re-run including just state anxiety (staff), and intention to cancel, with the results detailed below.

7.4.2.4 State anxiety (staff) and intention to cancel

State anxiety (staff) and intention to cancel were the two predictors in the final binary logistic model predicting actual cancellation. As shown in Table 7.5, across the whole dataset, when modelled together a unit increase in intention to cancel (exp *b*=. 67, B= -.40 SE= .08, p=<.001) and a unit increase in their state anxiety (exp *b*= .77, B= -.27, SE=.10, p=<.01) were together found to decrease the likelihood of members being in the category of those who retained their membership.

Table 7.5 State anxiety (staff) and intention to cancel predicting actual cancellation

	B	**S.E.**	**Wald**	**Exp(B)**	**Model chi-square**
Full dataset (n=642)					
State anxiety- staff	-0.27	0.10	7.93	0.77**	33.20***
Intention to cancel	-0.40	0.08	24.53	0.67***	
Constant	3.55	0.32	122.95	34.89***	
First-half (n=333)					
State anxiety- staff	-0.28	0.14	4.15	0.76*	18.95***
Intention to cancel	-0.45	0.12	14.34	0.64***	
Constant	3.92	0.49	63.32	50.211***	
Second-half (n=309)					
State anxiety- staff	-0.29	0.14	4.51	0.75*	15.52***
Intention to cancel	-0.37	0.11	10.68	0.69**	
Constant	3.30	0.43	59.27	27.18***	

Note: * p< .05. ** p< .01. *** p< .001.

These were verified on the first half of the dataset; (intention to cancel, exp *b*=. 64, B= -.45, SE= .12, p=<.001; state anxiety-staff, exp *b*=. 76, B= -.28, SE= .14, p=<.05) and also on the second half of the dataset (intention to cancel, exp *b*=. 69, B= -.37, SE= .11, p=<.01; state anxiety-staff, exp *b*=. 75, B= -.29, SE= .11, p=<.05).

This analysis helped to address Objective 2; to assess the efficacy that the potentially predictive variables have over predicting the cancellation (actual and intentional) of current fitness club members. It was indicated that intention to cancel and state anxiety (staff) were predictive of actual cancellation. Thus, Objective 3; to assess the efficacy that intentional cancellation has over predicting actual cancellation of current fitness club members had also been addressed in this analysis.

7.4.3 Predicting intention to cancel

Seeing as intention to cancel was supported as being a predictor of actual cancellation, it was essential to explore what might predict intention to cancel.

7.4.3.1 The categorisation of intention to cancel

It was assumed that linear regression would be the most appropriate type of inferential analysis to be conducted in order to investigate predictive influences over intention to cancel. This was due to the assumption that all of the predictor variables were continuous in nature; measured using scales of 1-7. Also, the outcome variable of intention was initially measured using a continuous scale of 1-7. However, regardless of the measurement option that was chosen (continuous or categorical) what determines the most appropriate representation of the variable is the distribution of the variable. The first check that was made was that of the normality of the distribution of the variables. Normality was examined using histograms due to the large sample size; using statistical measures of normality may give misleading indications of non-normality when the sample size is large (Field, 2005).

However, contrary to what was expected, intention to cancel had a non-normal distribution (see Fig. 7.2). Whilst intention to cancel was originally measured using scales of 1-7 (1=low intention, 7= high intention), for the analysis, examination of the histograms showed that intention to cancel would be better considered as a categorical variable as the variable was not considered to have captured a normal distribution. The histogram showed intention to cancel to be positively skewed, with one large peak on the lowest score of intention to cancel showing a high frequency of members who intend to retain their membership, and a smaller peak at the highest score of intention to cancel, indicating a small, but distinct cluster of members who seem certain that they will be cancelling their membership. The non-normality of intention to cancel necessitated a change to the planned type of regression analysis conducted; a violation of non-normality means that parametric data analyses are not suitable, such as linear regression. Various non-parametric tests are available, but it was essential to select a non-parametric test that also allowed predictive probabilities to be obtained, not just causation. As such, ordinal logistic regression was chosen which is a non-parametric form of logistic regression that can handle multiple, ordered outcome categories i.e. multiple categories of intention to cancel, progressing from low to high.

Thus, the intention to cancel variable had to be categorised; ordinal logistic regression can only be used with categorical variables.

Fig. 7.2 Intention to cancel distribution
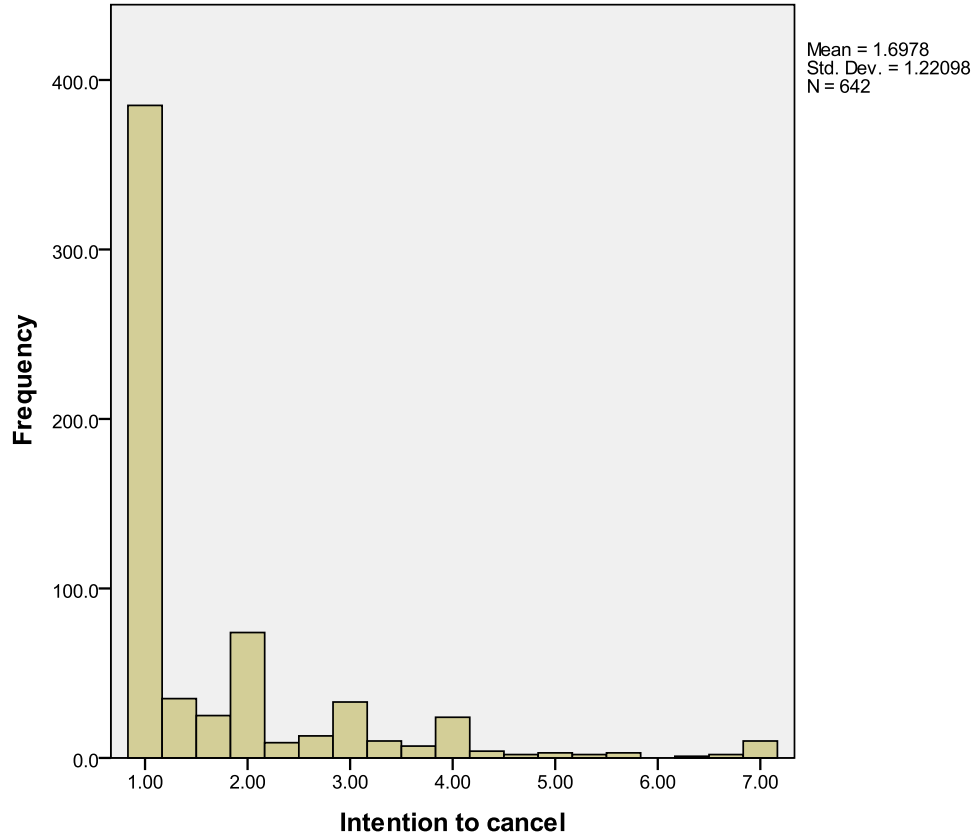
There is much debate over whether such categorisation should indeed ever be conducted on continuous variables (Altman & Royston, 2006; MacCallum et al, 2002; Royston et al, 2006 . Further, if categorisation is supported, there is then the debate regarding how many categories the variable should be split, or 'binned' into and how exactly the categories cut-off points should be determined. It was considered that the higher amount of categories, the more closely the newly categorised intention to cancel would resemble the original continuous scale whilst still allowing the non-parametric logistic regression to be used. For instance, using the bare minimum amount of just two categories can risk misrepresenting the variable. As stated by MacCallum et al (2002), "dichotomisation assumes that the number of taxons [categories] is two and does not allow for the possibility that there are more than two" (p. 35). Further, according to Altman and Royston (2006), "using multiple categories (to create an "ordinal" variable) is generally preferable to dichotomising" (p. 1080).

Thus, for the intention to cancel variable to be represented in the most accurate way, intention to cancel was categorised into six categories based on equal intervals between the mean score; Group 0= mean score between 1-2, Group 1= mean score between 2-3, Group 2= mean score between 3-4, Group 3= mean score between 4-5, Group 4= mean score between 5-6 and Group 5= mean score between 6-7.

All of the logistic regression analyses would then test the independent variable to see if a unit increase in it would increase the likelihood of being categorised into each of the categories 1-5, rather than being categorised into the base category of those with the highest intention to stay. Ideally, any differences between group 5 and group 0 would be of most interest, however by having 6 categories, those members who had expressed a rather ambivalent intention (groups 1-4) could also be explored. Perhaps some unit increases in certain predictors might be better at increasing the likelihood of being categorised into, say, Group 2 (middle category) and Group 0 whilst unit increases in certain other predictors might be better at increasing the likelihood of being categorised into Group 5 (highest intention to cancel) than those with the lowest intention to cancel in Group 0. Having equal categories representing just one scale point allowed the distinct group of 'stayers' (those scoring between 1 and 2), to be treated as a distinct group and compared against all other levels of intention. For instance, if these members had been categorised with those scoring between 2-3, or 2-4 then those members with some degree of ambivalence regarding the future of their membership would have been inappropriately treated as the same as those with a more definite intent to retain their membership.

After categorising intention to cancel, each of the independent variables were tested in a series of ordinal logistic regression analyses to assess their influence over intention to cancel.

7.4.3.2 Preliminary ordinal logistic regression analyses

In ordinal logistic regression, as opposed to a beta weight, an 'estimation' is given. This represents the ordered log-odds (logit) regression coefficients. This estimation, like a beta weight, can be interpreted with the principle that a positive estimation indicates a positive relationship between the predictor and the dependent variable.

The estimation represents the likelihood (log-odds) of being categorised in a higher category would change with a one unit increase in the predictor. The details of each predictor when tested individually in predicting intention to cancel are shown in Table 7.6.

Table 7.6 Ordinal regression results of intention to cancel predictors

	Estimation	SE	Wald	Model Chi-Square
Perceived service quality - Staff	-0.50	0.13	15.82***	15.12***
Perceived service quality - Classes	-0.34	0.12	7.79**	7.63**
Perceived service quality - Changing Rooms	-0.40	0.09	21.51***	20.36***
Perceived service quality - Physical Facilities	-0.64	0.12	28.11***	28.27***
Perceived service quality - Gym Environment	-0.86	0.12	55.56***	55.95***
Perceived service quality - Pool/Spa	-0.37	0.10	14.48***	13.77***
Perceived service quality - Bar/Café	-0.33	0.09	13.56***	13.75***
Overall perceived service quality	-0.14	0.12	40.31***	39.99***
Perceived value for money	-0.30	0.06	27.78***	27.09***
Brand attractiveness	-0.42	0.07	35.00***	35.55**
Brand prestige	-0.37	0.07	30.31***	29.01**
Brand distinctiveness	-0.22	0.06	14.23***	13.86**
Brand similarity	-0.21	0.06	12.86***	13.00**
Intention to use - 4 to 6 Times per Month	1.53	0.52	8.52**	N/A
Intention to use - 11 to 15 Times per Month	0.64	0.29	4.80*	19.77**
Individual stereotyping	-0.22	0.07	10.43**	10.17**
Rapport - Staff	-0.14	0.06	5.76*	5.82*
Rapport - Members	-0.18	0.05	11.49**	11.61**
State anxiety - Staff	0.28	0.07	17.90***	17.41***
State anxiety - Members	0.25	0.06	16.40***	15.90***
Social physique anxiety	0.18	0.07	6.77**	6.73**
External regulation	0.67	0.10	43.78***	45.55***
Identified regulation	-0.66	0.09	61.02***	62.16***
Integrated regulation	-0.33	0.07	24.69***	25.24***
Intrinsic regulation	-0.30	0.09	69.23***	72.14***

Note: * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

As can be seen from Table 7.6 above, all predictors apart from perceived service quality (childcare), in-group homogeneity, and introjected regulation were predictive of intention to cancel. Most variables had a negative influence (seen by the negative estimations of the odds ratios); the higher the score on the variable, the lower the level of intention to cancel they would be most likely placed (Perceived service quality- Staff (Estimate=-0.5, SE=0.13, Wald=15.82, p<.001), Perceived service quality - Classes (Estimate=-0.338, SE=0.12, Wald=7.79, p<.001), Perceived service quality - Changing Rooms (Estimate=-0.4, SE=0.09, Wald=21.51, p<.001), Perceived service quality - Physical Facilities (Estimate=-0.641, SE=0.12, Wald=29.11, p<.001), Perceived service quality - Gym Environment

(Estimate=-0.862, SE=0.12, Wald=55.56, p<.001), Perceived service quality - Pool/Spa (Estimate=-0.37, SE=0.1, Wald=14.48, p<.001), Perceived service quality - Bar/Café (Estimate=-0.333, SE=0.09, Wald=13.56, p<.001), Overall Perceived service quality (Estimate=-0.141, SE=0.12, Wald=40.31, p<.001), Perceived value for money (Estimate=-0.3, SE=0.06, Wald=27.78, p<.001), Brand Attractiveness (Estimate=-0.42, SE=0.07, Wald=35, p<.001), Brand Prestige (Estimate=-0.374, SE=0.07, Wald=30.31, p<.001), Brand Distinctiveness (Estimate=-0.216, SE=0.06, Wald=14.23, p<.001), Brand Similarity (Estimate=-0.206, SE=0.057, Wald=12.86, p<.001), Intention to Use (decrease in Estimate=1.53, SE=0.52, Wald=8.52, p<.001 to Estimate=0.635, SE=0.29, Wald=4.8, p<.001, as usage level increased from 4-6 times per month, to 11-15 times per month), Individual Stereotyping (Estimate=-0.222, SE=0.07, Wald=10.43, p<.001), Rapport - Staff (Estimate=-0.14, SE=0.06, Wald=5.76, p<.001), Rapport - Members (Estimate=-0.18, SE=0.053, Wald=11.49, p<.001) Identified Regulation (Estimate=-0.66, SE=0.09, Wald=61.02, p<.001), Integrated Regulation (Estimate=-0.33, SE=0.07, Wald=24.69, p<.001), Intrinsic Regulation (Estimate=-0.304, SE=0.09, Wald=69.23, p<.001).

Conversely, for some of the variables there was a positive influence (shown by the positive estimations of the odds ratios) indicating that as their score increased so would the level of intention to cancel State Anxiety - Staff (Estimate=0.275, SE=0.07, Wald=17.9, p<.001), State Anxiety - Members (Estimate=0.245, SE=0.06, Wald=16.4, p<.001), Social Physique Anxiety (Estimate=0.179, SE=0.069, Wald=6.77, p<.001), External Regulation (Estimate=0.665, SE=0.1, Wald=43.78, p<.001).

Based on the results from testing the individual variables for their predictive efficacy, the next step was to develop a reduced model that could test all of these variables for the predictive efficacy when modeled together. The first stage in producing such a model was to conduct a factor analysis to see if the individual variables found to be predictive loaded onto broader, underlying factors.

7.4.3.3 Factor analysis of predictive variables
Factor analysis allows consideration of whether variables can be understood as part of a larger, over-arching framework. Creating a framework not only helps to understand the relationships between variables on a more conceptual level, but also allows individual variables to be reduced and composited into broader variables in order to produce a

simple, reduced model which can be tested. Whilst factor analysis is a quantitative method, the interpretation of the results is actually qualitative and is an example of qualitizing data, as adding names to the factors is subjective and the process is inductive; using the data to generate meaning and theory i.e. using the results to generate meaningful factor names (Bryman, 2008). This raises the question of whether factor analysis should be conducted with mean scores of a scale of items as opposed to individual items; whether 'parcels' or items should be used as the level of data to be analysed.

Parcelling

Using mean scores within statistical analysis is a measurement practice known as 'parcelling', whereby a parcel is defined as "an aggregate-level indicator comprised of the sum (or average) of two or more items" (Little, Cunningham and Shahar, 2002, p. 152).

Advocates of parceling would say that working at an item level creates too many 'empirical wrinkles' which distract from the recognition of useful measurement models within the data (De Bruin, 2004). Item responses, whilst being perhaps more empirical and stringent, can be difficult to interpret and can 'muddy the waters' (Little et al, 2002). However parceling is, of course, only acceptable if the construct has been measured reliably and validly, and based on a strong theoretical background in the first place (De Bruin, 2004). As Möbius (2003) argues, parceling is acceptable when the scales being parceled have been tested for their reliability then there is no real objection to their use.

In the present study, all of the mean scores were tested for their reliability using the Cronbach alpha to estimate reliability. Little et al (2002) also discuss the relative arguments for and against the use of parceling. They argue that whether you decide to use parcels or items depends on your philosophical stance. If one is taking an empiricist-conservative stance, whereby your research purpose is to identify the most predictive items in a questionnaire, regardless of their theoretically associated scale's predictive efficacy, then each item response needs to be analysed and so parcelling would be inappropriate. However, if one is taking a more pragmatist- liberal philosophy (as taken in this thesis) whereby the research purpose is to measure the predictive efficacy of theoretical constructs using multiple items then parcelling is considered superior. Parcelling is a way of simplifying the data so that the meaningful interpretations can be made.

In the present study, the aim was to investigate how the proposed independent variables, as entire constructs, factor together in order to create composite variables that could be included together in the same ordinal logistic regression without violating the EPV requirement.

Principal Components Analysis

Principal Components Analysis (PCA) is a method of factoring used in Exploratory Factor analysis (EFA). EFA is used to identify an underlying structure of a set of variables. As opposed to Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), EFA does not require an a priori assumption to be made regarding as to what the underlying structure might be. In relation to the current analysis, whilst a framework had been conceptually proposed, its development was not considered valid enough to make a definitive a priori assumption about. Hence, an exploratory approach was considered to be more appropriate. PCA aims to reduce the data to a relatively small number of dimensions that account for the variance in the items. As such, this was an appropriate method of EFA as the aim was to reduce all of the predictive variables into a set of distinct factors which could then indicate at a broader level the most important factors in predicting cancellation.

There are various thresholds and principles which need to be decided on and adhered to during factor analyses; factor loadings, number of factors to extract and rotation. The acceptable loading of variables onto factors is dependent on the sample size. Stevens (1992) recommends that with a sample of 100 there should be a loading of .384. In the present analysis, the analysis included n=630, a reduction from the overall sample of 716 after the missing data from the intention to use and perceived service quality variables. Therefore, any loadings less than .384 were suppressed. It is recommended that only factors that have eigenvalues of 1 or above are extracted and considered to be factors. With a level of 1 or above, factors are considered to account for enough variance in the overall dataset to warrant being a factor. As well as certain requirements that must be met in order to confidently conduct and interpret PCA, there are other choices that can be made regarding the factor solution i.e. regarding rotation. Rotating a factor solution helps to exaggerate any correlation and factor loadings found, by rotating the solution to make it 'fit' the loadings as closely as possible. This helps to obtain a clear, more definitive structure which is therefore easier to interpret.

Factors can be rotated orthogonally whereby it is assumed that the factors are considered to be uncorrelated or obliquely which assumes there may be some correlation between the variables. However, when working with psychological variables, as with the present study, it has been suggested that "there are strong grounds to believe that orthogonal rotations are a complete nonsense for naturalistic data, and certainly for any data involving humans." (Field, 2005 p. 637). As such, direct oblimin, a form of oblique rotation was selected, as recommended by Field (2005). Now that the requirements for PCA have been discussed, the results of the PCA can now be reported.

Principal Components Analysis Results

Listwise PCA was conducted on the dataset, as pairwise analyses for any type of factor analysis can cause misleading results (Field, 2005). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (KMO) was .85, suggesting that good sampling adequacy and that the data was suitable for factor analysis (Field, 2005). Table 7.7 below shows the total variance explained by the factors. The overall perceived service quality rating was included in the factor analysis an overall variable, to assess members' broad rating(s) of the aspects of the service they felt they could rate (i.e. did not give a 'not applicable' score to). The objective of this study was not to identify which individual perceived service quality attributes were important (although this is detailed in the individual analyses), as it is difficult to measure this when members have such variety in the aspects of the service that they engage in i.e. classes, gym environment, pool/spa, bar/café. Thus, it was the role of a fitness club member's overall perception of service quality that was of interest in this thesis.

Table 7.7 Total variances explained by factors predictive of intention to cancel

Factor	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	5.15	32.20	32.20	5.15	32.20	32.20
2	2.86	17.89	50.09	2.86	17.89	50.09
3	1.32	8.25	58.34	1.32	8.25	58.34
4	1.21	7.53	65.87	1.21	7.53	65.87
5	1.01	6.31	72.18	1.01	6.31	72.18

As can be seen from table 7.7, there were five factors extracted, each above an eigenvalue of 1; five different factors that underpin sixteen of the predictors on intention to cancel. The table below (7.8) details the variables that loaded onto these factors.

Table 7.8 Pattern matrix of intention to cancel predictors

	Perceived service quality and brand	External regulation and anxiety	Internalised motivation	Rapport	Perceived value for money
Perceived service quality	.65				
Brand attractiveness	.78				
Brand distinctiveness	.77				
Brand prestige	.82				
Brand similarity	.66				
Individual stereotyping	.67				
Social physique anxiety		.86			
State anxiety- staff		.91			
State anxiety- members		.93			
External regulation		.59			
Identified regulation			.89		
Integrated regulation			.74		
Intrinsic regulation			.57		
Rapport –staff				.91	
Rapport –members				.91	
Perceived value for money					.53

Composite variables were computed and labelled to represent these five factors, and were then taken forward to be included altogether to assess their efficacy in predicting intention to cancel membership, along with intention to use which, being ordinal, could not be included in the factor analysis.

7.4.3.4 'Internalised motivation' and 'external regulation and anxiety'

On the first analysis, 'Rapport' and 'Service and brand' and 'Perceived value for money' were not found to be predictive of intention to cancel whereas 'Internalised motivation', 'External regulation and anxiety' and intention to use the club were. As such, the analysis was re-run, to include just 'Internalised motivation', 'External regulation and anxiety' and intention to use the club as the independent variables. However, when these three were modelled together, intention to use the club was not significant. As such, the analysis was re-run, with just 'Internalised motivation' and 'External regulation and anxiety' entered as the independent variables. This model was significant. This final model was then also tested on both halves of the dataset. The results are shown in Table 7.9.

Table 7.9 'Internalised motivation' and 'external regulation and anxiety' predicting intention to cancel

	Estimation	SE	Wald	Model Chi-Square
Full dataset (n=634)				
External regulation and anxiety	0.43	0.09	23.71***	94.91***
Internalised motivation	-0.81	0.10	65.47***	
First-half (n=306)				
External regulation and anxiety	0.37	0.14	7.66**	44.02***
Internalised motivation	-0.79	0.14	32.89***	
Second-half (n=328)				
External regulation and anxiety	0.48	0.12	16.37***	51.31***
Internalised motivation	-0.83	0.15	32.49***	

Note: * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

On the full dataset both external regulation and anxiety, and internalised motivation, were predictive (External regulation and anxiety (Estimate=0.43, SE=0.09, Wald=23.71, p<.001), Internalised motivation (Estimate=-0.81, SE=0.1, Wald=65.47, p<.001). These results were verified on the first-half (External regulation and anxiety (Estimate=0.37, SE=0.14, Wald=7.66, p<.001), Internalised motivation (Estimate=-0.79, SE=0.14, Wald=32.89, p<.001) and the second half (External regulation and anxiety (Estimate=0.48, SE=0.12, Wald=16.37, p<.001), Internalised motivation (Estimate=-0.83, SE=0.15, Wald=32.49, p<.001).

7.4.4 Relationships with state anxiety (staff)

In addition to intention to cancel membership, state anxiety (staff) was also found to be a predictor of actual cancellation and, as such, warranted further investigation. State anxiety (staff) was also positively skewed, as was intention to cancel, shown in Fig. 7.3. However, unlike intention to cancel which was not normally distributed and showed to contain a distinct group within the sample, state anxiety (staff) didn't seem to show distinct categories and so it did not seem appropriate to categorise state anxiety (staff). Also, it is conceptually plausible to consider intention to cancel as being an outcome of other variables; often having been used as the only dependent variable and a proxy of actual cancellation. Therefore analysing what might predict which category of intention to cancel a member may fall into using the independent variables using logistic regression was considered appropriate. However, given the proposed independent variables, state anxiety was not considered conceptually to be an outcome of those variables.

Fig. 7.3 State anxiety (staff) distribution
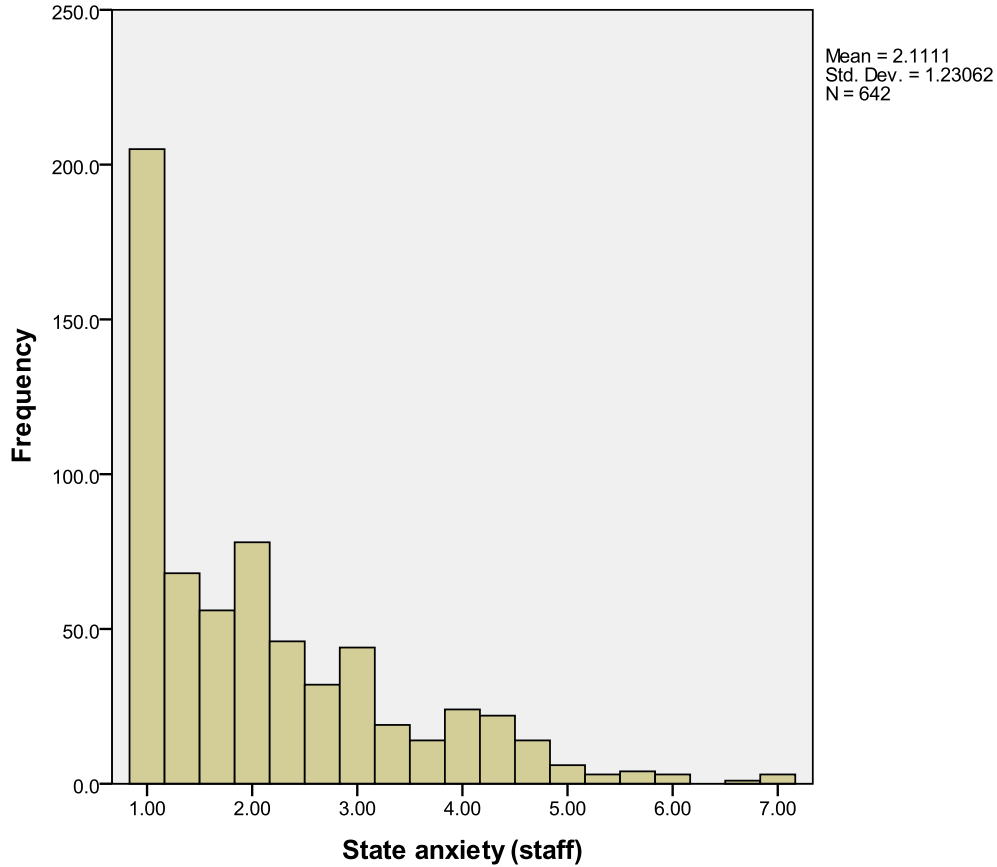
Overall, logistic regression was appropriate for predicting intention to cancel, as it was considered categorical and was also considered conceptually to be an outcome variable, something which could be predicted. However, state anxiety (staff) was not considered suitable for logistic regression, due to it being considered as a linear variable (albeit positively skewed) and not conceptually as an outcome of the other variables. As such, due to the positive skew rendering state anxiety inappropriate to be used in parametric analysis, and also not considered conceptually appropriate to be seen as an outcome of the other variables, a Spearman's Rho correlation was conducted.

The result of the correlation analysis is presented in Table 7.10, showing the correlations on the full dataset, the first half and the second half.

Table 7.10 Spearman rho correlations with state anxiety (staff)

	Full dataset	First-half	Second-half
State anxiety (members)	.818***	.803***	.833***
Social physique anxiety	.643***	.568***	.703***
External regulation	.534***	.566***	..508***
Introjected regulation	.265***	.210***	.316***
In-group homogeneity	.163***	.167**	.164**
Perceived value for money	-.175***	-.134*	-.210***
Intrinsic regulation	-.215***	-.192**	-.234***

Note: * p< .05.

As can be seen from the table above, state anxiety (staff) is positively related to state anxiety (members), Social physique anxiety, as well as external regulation and introjected regulation. This is perhaps unsurprising given that state anxiety (staff), state anxiety (members) and external regulation factored together to produce a composite variable predictive of intentional cancellation, discussed earlier. In-group homogeneity also related positively to state anxiety (staff) (albeit a weak correlation). This suggests that as state anxiety (staff) increases, then so do state anxiety (members), Social physique anxiety, external regulation, introjected regulation and in-group homogeneity. Perceived value for money and intrinsic regulation are negatively related to state anxiety (staff), suggesting that as state anxiety (staff) increases, perceived value for money and intrinsic regulation decrease.

7.4.5 Intention to cancel influencing positive word-of-mouth

Not only was intention to cancel found to be predictive of actual cancellation, but its influence over positive word-of-mouth was also assessed. An ANOVA was conducted to see if there was a significant difference between the groups of intention and the frequency of positive word-of-mouth. Positive word-of-mouth, was considered to be normally distributed, as such a parametric analysis of variance could be conducted. This was with the aim of addressing research Objective 4; to assess the efficacy that intentional cancellation has over predicting positive word-of-mouth of current fitness club members. Not only was it necessary to ascertain whether intention to cancel influenced actual cancellation but also to assess whether intention to cancel influenced other consumer behaviours linked with organisational effectiveness; acquiring new members. With the independent variable (intention to cancel) being categorised (6 categories), and the dependent variable (positive word-of-mouth) being continuous (measured on a scale of 1-

7), the most appropriate test (given intention to cancel was categorised) was to conduct a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) test.

A one-way ANOVA was used to ascertain whether positive word-of-mouth could significantly account for variance between intention to cancel categories. The descriptive statistics are detailed in Table 7.11 below.

Table 7.11 Descriptive statistics of intention to cancel categories

	N	Mean	SD	SE
Full dataset				
0	442	4.87	1.45	0.07
1	96	4.37	1.33	0.14
2	49	4.29	1.61	0.23
3	29	3.84	1.30	0.24
4	7	4.05	2.07	0.78
5	13	3.54	2.13	0.59
Total	636	4.67	1.50	0.06
First-half				
0	235	4.92	1.44	0.09
1	45	4.59	1.30	0.19
2	22	4.36	1.37	0.29
3	15	3.36	1.26	0.33
4	3	4.11	1.84	1.06
5	8	3.83	2.48	0.88
Total	328	4.73	1.48	0.08
Second-half				
0	207	4.82	1.47	0.10
1	51	4.18	1.35	0.19
2	27	4.23	1.80	0.35
3	14	4.36	1.17	0.31
4	4	4.00	2.51	1.25
5	5	3.07	1.53	0.69
Total	308	4.60	1.51	0.09

A critical assumption when using the ANOVA test is that there must be homogeneity of variances between each independent category. However, when conducting the ANOVA, Levene's statistic of equality (homogeneity) of variance was significant, indicating that homogeneity of variances cannot be assumed. As such, the Welch statistic (which can be used as an alternative test to the ANOVA when homogeneity of variances cannot be assumed) was interpreted instead.

On the full dataset, (n=636), the Welch test indicated a significant difference between intention to cancel categories, *Welch's F* (5, 38.36) = 6.04, *p* < .001. Further, on the first half of the dataset, (n=308), the Welch test indicated a significant difference between intention to cancel categories, *Welch's F* (5, 16.97) = 2.86, *p* < .05. On the second half of the dataset (n=328), the Welch test indicated a significant difference between intention to cancel categories, *Welch's F* (5, 15.43) = 4.32, *p* < .05.

The assumptions of normality must also be met when conducting ANOVAs. The dependent variable must be normally distributed for each category of the independent variable. However, after exploring the data, it was found that three of the intention to cancel categories (groups 3, 4 and 5) displayed a significant Kolmogorov-Smirnov test result, meaning that they violated the assumptions of normality within their category. Considering this, a follow-up Kruskal-Wallis test was conducted, which allows comparisons between groups even when the groups are not normally distributed. For the full dataset, there was a statistically significant difference between the intention to cancel categories (H(5) = 30.49, P < .001) with a mean rank of 343.08 for group 0, 281.54 for Group 1, 269.03 for Group 2, 214.81 for Group 3, 257.93 for Group 4 and 206.23 for Group 5. For the first half of the dataset, there was a statistically significant difference between the intention to cancel categories (H (5) = 15.22, P < .01) with a mean rank of 167.26 for group 0. 128.45 for Group 1, 133.04 for Group 2, 138.29 for Group 3, 128.38 for Group 4 and 74.20 for Group 5. For the second-half of the dataset, there was a statistically significant difference between the intention to cancel categories (H (5) = 20.82, P < .01) with a mean rank of 176.41 for group 0, 155.14 for Group 1, 135.02 for Group 2, 78.10 for Group 3, 128.17 for Group 4 and 124.00 for Group 5.

Of particular interest is the post-hoc comparison on the full dataset between members with a low intention to cancel (group 0), compared to members with a moderate level of intention to cancel (group 3), shown in Table 7.12 overleaf.

With homogeneity of variance not being assumed, Games-Howell post-hoc comparisons were ascertained, which indicated that those with a low intention to cancel have a significantly higher mean score of positive word-of-mouth (M= 4.87, SD 1.45) compared to those with a moderate intention to cancel (M=3.84, SD 1.30).

Table 7.12 Differences of positive word-of-mouth between intention to cancel categories

Intention to cancel category	Intention to cancel category	Full dataset		First-half		Second-half	
		Mean Difference	SE	Mean Difference	SE	Mean Difference	SE
0	1	0.50*	0.15	0.64*	0.21	0.33	0.21
	2	0.58	0.24	0.58	0.36	0.56	0.31
	3	1.03***	0.25	0.46	0.33	1.56***	0.34
	4	0.82	0.78	0.82	1.26	0.81	1.06
	5	1.33	0.59	1.75	0.69	1.09	0.88
1	0	-0.50*	0.15	-0.64*	0.21	-0.33	0.21
	2	0.08	0.27	-0.06	0.39	0.22	0.35
	3	0.53	0.28	-0.18	0.37	1.23*	0.38
	4	0.32	0.79	0.18	1.27	0.47	1.08
	5	0.83	0.61	1.11	0.71	0.75	0.90
2	0	-0.57	0.24	-0.58	0.36	-0.56	0.31
	1	-0.08	0.27	0.06	0.39	-0.22	0.35
	3	0.45	0.33	-0.12	0.47	1.01	0.44
	4	0.24	0.81	0.23	1.30	0.25	1.10
	5	0.75	0.63	1.17	0.77	0.53	0.92
3	0	-1.03***	0.25	-0.46	0.33	-1.56***	0.34
	1	-0.53	0.28	0.18	0.37	-1.23*	0.38
	2	-0.45	0.33	0.12	0.47	-1.01	0.44
	4	-0.21	0.82	0.36	1.29	-0.76	1.11
	5	0.30	0.64	1.29	0.75	-0.48	0.94
4	0	-0.82	0.78	-0.82	1.26	-0.81	1.06
	1	-0.32	0.79	-0.18	1.27	-0.47	1.08
	2	-0.24	0.81	-0.23	1.30	-0.25	1.10
	3	0.21	0.82	-0.36	1.29	0.76	1.11
	5	0.51	0.98	0.93	1.43	0.28	1.38
5	0	-1.33	0.59	-1.75	0.69	-1.09	0.88
	1	-0.83	0.61	-1.11	0.71	-0.75	0.90
	2	-0.75	0.63	-1.17	0.77	-0.53	0.92
	3	-0.30	0.64	-1.29	0.75	0.48	0.94
	4	-0.51	0.98	-0.93	1.43	-0.28	1.38

Note: * p< .05. *** p< .001.

7.4.6 Visual representation of the analyses

Overall, firstly, one binary logistic regression model was conducted (Analysis 1), finding that state anxiety (staff) and intention to cancel were significantly predictive of actual cancellation. Secondly, after categorising intention to cancel, an ordinal logistic regression was conducted (Analysis 2), finding that two factors (labelled as 'internalised motivation' and 'external regulation and anxiety') were significantly predictive of intention to cancel.

Thirdly, a Spearman's Rho correlation analysis was conducted (analysis 3), finding that state anxiety (members), Social physique anxiety, external regulation, introjected regulation and in-group homogeneity were all positively related to state anxiety (staff) whilst also finding that perceived value for money and intrinsic regulation were both negatively related to state anxiety (staff). Fourthly, a One-way ANOVA was conducted (analysis 4), finding that a member's intention to cancel category can account for variance in their propensity to engage in positive word-of mouth behaviour. Now that all of the analyses have been detailed, a full model which represents these analyses is presented (Fig 7.4).

Fig. 7.4 Visual representation of the analyses
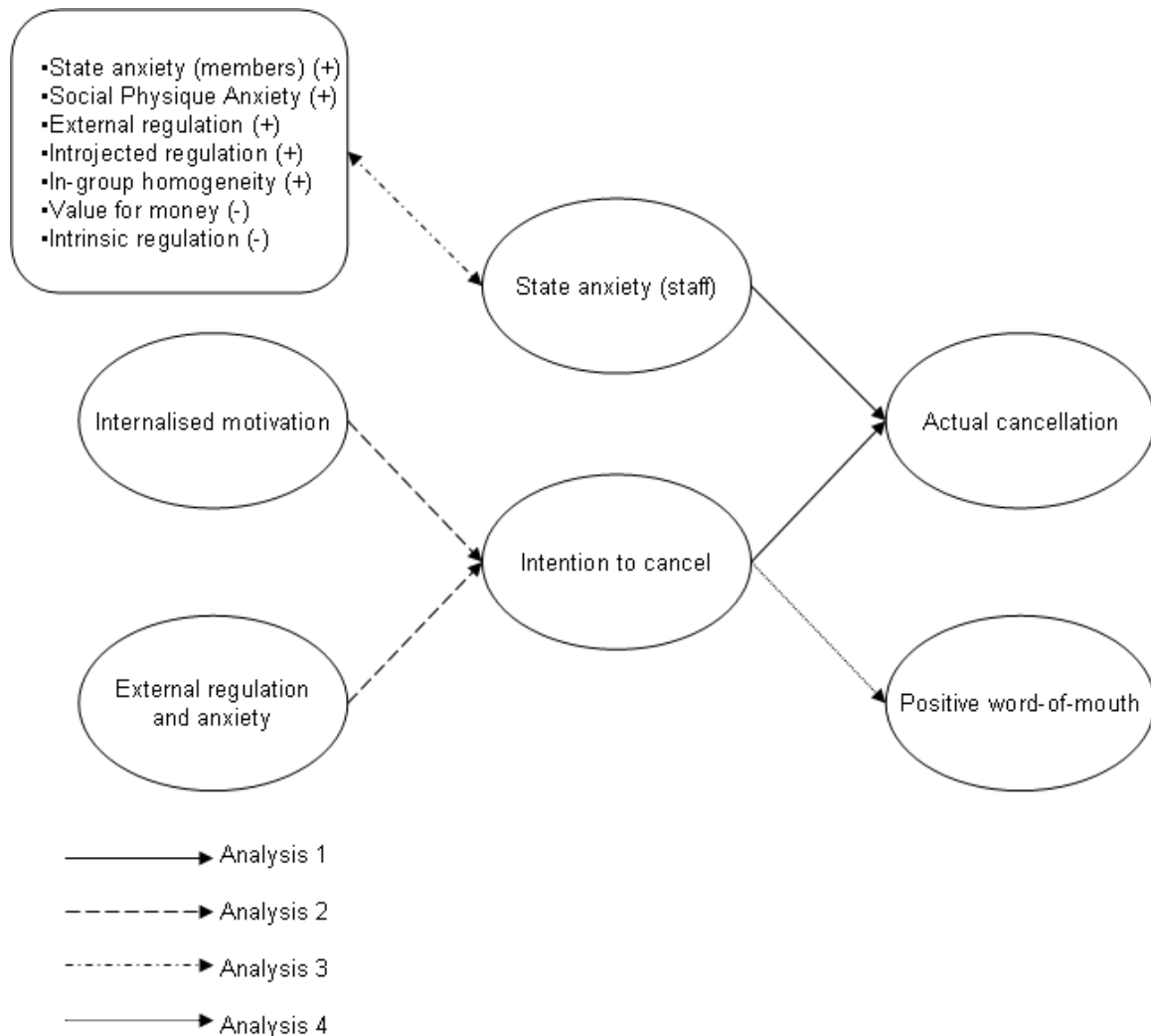
Intention to cancel as a mediator

Because intention to cancel significantly predicts actual cancellation, it can be argued that anything that predicts intention to cancel will indirectly be predictive of actual cancellation. It is therefore argued that intention to cancel acts as a 'mediator'. A mediator variable is one that explains the relationship between a predictor and an outcome variable, i.e. it represents the process by which a predictor influences an outcome (Baron & Kenny, 1986). Baron and Kenny state that to test for a mediator effect, four conditions have to be met: 1) that there is a significant relation between the predictor and the outcome, 2) that the predictor is related to the presumed mediator, 3) that the mediator is related to the outcome and 4) that the strength of the relation between the predictor and the outcome is significantly reduced when the mediator is added to the model. However, it is also argued that the 'first condition' need not be met; that actually as long as the predictor is related to the mediator and the mediator is related to the outcome then mediation can be inferred. Kenny, Kasher and Bolger (1998, p.260) state the following:

"*One might ask whether all of the steps have to be met for there to be mediation. Certainly Step 4 does not have to be met unless the expectation is for complete mediation. Moreover, Step 1 is not required, but a path from the initial variable to the outcome is implied if Steps 2 and 3 are met. So the essential steps in establishing mediation are Steps 2 and 3.*"

Therefore intention to cancel, with its already assessed predictive relationship to actual cancellation, is argued as being an 'implied' mediator between the predictors of intention to cancel and actual cancellation. To further support the idea of intention to cancel having a mediating role, it was important to ascertain that intention to cancel as an independent variable (predicting actual cancellation) was measured in the same way when being considered as a dependent variable (being predicted by internalised motivation, and external regulation and anxiety). This meant re-testing the actual cancellation model, included intention to cancel as a categorical predictor along with state anxiety (staff). The significant results are shown in Table 7.13.

Table 7.13 State anxiety (staff) and intention to cancel (categorised) predicting actual cancellation

	B	S.E.	Wald	Exp(B)	Model chi-square
Full dataset (n=642)					
State anxiety- staff	-0.29	0.10	8.71	0.75*	40.66***
Intention to cancel			32.64		
Intention to cancel -3	-1.59	0.43	13.50	0.20***	
Intention to cancel -5	-2.60	0.59	19.31	0.07***	
Constant	3.09	0.29	111.87	21.90***	
First-half (n=333)					
State anxiety- staff	-0.33	0.15	4.85	0.72*	31.05***
Intention to cancel			19.77		
Intention to cancel -1	3.01	0.83	13.18	20.23***	
Intention to cancel -2	2.52	0.90	7.89	12.42**	
Constant	0.44	0.84	0.27	1.55	
Second-half (n=309)					
State anxiety- staff	-0.30	0.14	4.75	0.74*	16.02*
Intention to cancel			11.41		
Intention to cancel -1	2.23	0.86	6.73	9.31**	
Intention to cancel -2	2.07	0.96	4.66	7.95*	
Constant	0.64	0.88	0.53	1.89	

Note: * p< .05. ** p< .01. *** p< .001.

The results in Table 7.13 confirm that intention to cancel as a categorical variable is both significantly predictive of actual cancellation, as well as significantly predicted by internalised motivation, and external regulation and anxiety (see Table 7.9).

7.4.7 Why members with low intention to cancel actually cancel membership

After conducting all of the analyses, two further questions arose that were considered essential to answer; 1) why do members who intend to stay actually cancel their membership, and 2) why do members who intend to cancel actually retain their membership? These questions relate to questions that have been of interest throughout the consumer behaviour literature, but have not directly been explored in relation to fitness club member retention.

Jones and Sasser (1995), in their paper titled 'why do satisfied customers defect', proposed a typology of consumers, which can be explained in relation to fitness club members.

Those with low intention to cancel, that retain their membership, could be described as 'loyalists'; happy consumers that expectedly stay. Those with high intention to cancel, that do cancel their membership could be described as 'defectors'; unhappy consumers that expectedly leave. Those with low intention to cancel that in fact cancel their membership could be described as 'mercenaries', happy customers that unexpectedly leave. Those with high intention to cancel that in fact retain their membership could be described as 'hostages', unhappy customers that unexpectedly stay.

To answer question 1, members who had a low intention to cancel were categorised into two groups dependent on whether they cancelled their membership or not. Thus, the aim was to identify, using logistic regression analysis, what might increase the likelihood of a member, who had previously expressed a low intention to cancel, to cancel their membership.

Table 7.14 shows the results of the logistic regression analyses, finding that the three anxiety related variables (State anxiety (staff), state anxiety (members) and Social physique anxiety) were the only variables found to significantly increase the probability of a low intention to cancel member actually cancelling their membership.

Table 7.14 State anxiety (staff), state anxiety (members) and social physique anxiety predicting low intention to cancel members actually cancelling membership

	N	B	S.E.	Wald	Exp(B)	Model chi-square
State anxiety- staff	458	0.31	0.12	6.88**	1.36	6.32*
State anxiety- members	457	0.32	0.11	8.36**	1.37	7.79**
Social physique anxiety	456	0.34	0.12	7.61**	1.41	7.43**

Note: * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

To answer question 2, members who had a high intention to cancel were categorised into two groups dependent on whether they cancelled their membership or not.

Thus, the aim was to identify, using logistic regression analysis, what might increase the likelihood of a member, who had previously expressed a high intention to cancel, to retain their membership. However, no significant increases in likelihood were found.

7.5 Discussion

7.5.1 Predicting actual cancellation

Intention to cancel was one of the variables in the final model predicting actual cancellation. It has previously been advised that intentions are not treated as a proxy for actual membership behaviour, and as such actual membership behaviour be collected in addition to intentional data (Alexandris et al, 2001). This study, however, provides support for the intention-behaviour link in membership cancellation. Whilst actual cancellation has been measured before (Bodet, 2008), it has not been significantly predicted. Building on Bodet's work, this suggests that measuring intentional membership behaviour (cancellation or renewal) directly as opposed to measuring broader retention-related variables such as satisfaction or attitudinal loyalty is more effective in predicting actual behaviour. Whilst attitudinal loyalty, as measured by Bodet, includes one intention to renew item in the scale, this study suggests that a uni-dimensional scale of intention to cancel is more effective in predicting actual membership behaviour than satisfaction and the multi-dimensional scale of attitudinal loyalty (which includes intention, positive word-of-mouth and happiness with choice to become a member).

However, intention was not the only variable in the final model predicting actual cancellation. State anxiety (staff) was also found to be predictive of actual cancellation, alongside intention to cancel. This suggests that the more nervous members feel during their experiences and interactions with the fitness club staff, the more likely they are to actually cancel their membership. Whilst state anxiety in relation to members was found individually to also be related to actual cancellation, when modelled together with state anxiety (staff) and intention to cancel, it lost its predictive efficacy. State anxiety has been widely researched regarding what causes such anxiety. For instance, exercise environment (Gammage et al, 2004, Lamarche et al, 2009) and also leadership style (Martin & Fox, 2001) have been found to induce state anxiety. This has mainly been of concern due to state anxiety's negative influence over exercise participation (Leary, 1992). However, state anxiety has not been researched in relation to leisure membership cancellation. As such, this finding extends the importance of state anxiety as a variable in a leisure context.

Interestingly, Kocovski et al (2000) found that people with higher state anxiety may have lower expectancy to achieve goals, perhaps suggesting why state anxiety may lead to cancellation of membership; if members who have high state anxiety also perceived their goals as being less attainable this may render the retention of their membership to be pointless. This finding places emphasis on the role of staff in making members feel comfortable during their time at the club; that they are not being negatively evaluated. These findings helped to meet Objective 2) to assess the efficacy that the potentially predictive variables have over predicting the cancellation (actual and intentional) of current fitness club members, and Objective 3) to assess the efficacy that intentional cancellation has over predicting actual cancellation of current fitness club members.

As part of understanding actual cancellation, it was also necessary to explore the predictors further; intention to cancel and state anxiety staff.

7.5.2 Predicting intention to cancel

Intention to cancel was explored in relation to the other independent variables. It was felt that perhaps those variables, whilst not seeming to have an effect on actual cancellation may have an effect on intention to cancel; thus indirectly impacting on actual cancellation through the implied mediation of intention to cancel. Many of the variables, at an individual level, predicted intention to cancel. However, their relative predictive efficacy when modelled together was essential to explore. In order to achieve this, and to maintain an appropriate number of events per variable, composite variables of the predictors (except intention to go, which was ordinal) were made using the results of a factor analysis. Five factors were found to underpin the predictors of intention to cancel; perceived service quality and brand, external regulation and anxiety, internalised motivation, rapport and value.

7.5.2.1 Composite predictors

Perceived service quality and brand

Perceived service quality and all of the brand identification variables factored together; brand attractiveness, brand distinctiveness, brand prestige and brand similarity. This suggests that the brand variables are an extension of the perceived service quality construct, as opposed to being separate.

Perhaps if these brand variables are rated highly, this is seen as indicative of the club's quality as opposed to being more indicative of a separate, more intrapersonal identification process. Interestingly, individual stereotyping also factored with perceived service quality and brand. Again, this suggests that a member's perception of how well integrated they are with other clientele is indicative of the club's quality.

External regulation and anxiety

State anxiety (staff and members) factored with social physique anxiety which, given anxiety as a broad construct underpins all of these, is perhaps unsurprising. However, this does suggest a relationship between Social physique anxiety and state anxiety; perhaps those with a higher level of Social physique anxiety are more prone to state anxiety. Interestingly, however, external regulation (being motivated to have fitness club membership through external pressure from other people) factored with the anxiety variables. This suggests that not this type of 'motivation' is in fact equivalent to inducing anxiety, which is surely not the intended outcome of the other people who are trying to motivate the individual to have fitness club membership.

Internalised motivation

All of the more autonomous self-determination factors (identified regulation, integrated regulation and intrinsic regulation) factored together. Given that the less autonomous self-determination factor external regulation factored separately, this supports the distinction between autonomous and controlled motivation. However, this doesn't support the distinction between identified regulation, integrated regulation and intrinsic regulation as separate constructs.

Rapport

Both of the rapport variables factored together; rapport with staff and rapport with members. Rapport being distinct from the other positive factors, perceived service quality and brand, and internalised motivation, suggests that rapport is not seen as indicative of a club's quality, nor is it seen as motivational. It is a distinct construct, relating to the relationships had by members with other people at the fitness club.

Perceived value for money

Perceived value for money was seen as a distinct construct.

7.5.2.2 Final model

After the composite variables had been created they were included in a predictive model of intention to cancel, along with intention to use the club which was also found to be predictive of intention to cancel but couldn't be included in the factor analysis due to the ordinal nature of the variable. However, the final model included just two predictors; internalised motivation, and external regulation and anxiety.

Internalised motivation

Internalised motivation was found to predict intention to cancel, suggesting that if members have a high level of internalised motivation, the less likely the member is of being in higher category of intention to cancel.

External regulation and anxiety

External regulation and anxiety was also found, alongside internalised motivation, to predict actual cancellation; the more external regulation and anxiety, the more likely the member is of being in a higher category of intention to cancel. This suggests that state anxiety (part of this composite) has both a direct effect on actual cancellation as well as an indirect effect, through the implied mediation of intention to cancel.

These findings regarding internalised motivation and external regulation and anxiety extend the predictive efficacy of the self-determination levels in an exercise context, not only does more internalised motivation increase exercise participation (Chatzisarantis et al, 2003, Ingledew & Markland, 2008, Ingledew & Markland, 2009), but internalised motivation reduces intention to cancel fitness club membership, as opposed to external regulation. Also, according to a review of studies by Martin Ginis et al, 2007, the predictive efficacy of social physique anxiety in general is mixed, and has never been researched in relation to fitness club cancellation.

This finding therefore adds support for the social physique anxiety construct, specifically in relation to predicting fitness club cancellation, a previously unexplored relationship in the social physique anxiety literature.

Perceived service quality and brand, rapport, perceived value for money, and intended usage

Interestingly, perceived service quality and brand, rapport, and perceived value for money were not found to be predictive in the final model. Whilst, when analysed at an individual level, all perceived service quality attributes (apart from childcare), all brand variables, both rapport variables, perceived value for money, and intended usage were found to be predictive of intention to cancel, when tested along with other variables, perceived service quality's predictive efficacy was not supported. Whilst this study found support for the reliability of the perceived service quality constructs (Lam et al, 2005), brand identification constructs (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003), rapport constructs (Gremler & Gwinner, 2000) and social identification constructs (Leach et al, 2008), support for criterion validity for these constructs was not found.

For instance, this does not support other studies which have found that perceived service quality is predictive of membership intentions (Alexandris et al, 2001, Alexandris et al, 2004, Dhurup et al, 2006, Murray & Howat, 2002, Pedragosa & Correia, 2009, Ferrand et al, 2010 and Wei et al, 2010). This study does not offer support for literature claiming brand association (Alexandris et al, 2008, Ferrand et al, 2010) or brand identification (Ahearne et al, 2005, Kuenzel & Halliday, 2010, Tuskej et al, 2011) are predictive of membership intentions. Instead, this study offers support for Kim et al (2001) who also did not find a relationship between brand identification and repurchase intentions. However, this is the only study where brand identification (not association) has been researched in a fitness industry context, rendering comparisons with the aforementioned brand-related (brand association) literature in the fitness industry context difficult to make.

This study also does not offer support for literature claiming rapport to be a predictor of loyalty (Gremler & Gwinner, 2000, Guenzi & Pelloni, 2004, Kim & Ok, 2010 and Macintosh, 2009). It has been argued that customers' need for rapport will depend on their interpersonal orientation; the degree to which they desire personal interaction (Gabbott, 1996). It cannot be assumed that all customers of any service firm will desire a relationship with staff (Bendapudi & Berry, 1997) which is perhaps why rapport was not found to be predictive in this study.

This study also does not support literature advocating the importance of perceived value for money in predicting retention (Cronin et al, 2000, McDougall & Levesque, 2000, Ferrand et al, 2010).

Finally, intention to use the club was not found to be predictive in the final model. This refutes the findings by Ferrand et al (2010) and Lin and Wu (2011), who found that perceived usage of a fitness club has a positive influence over intentions to continue membership. This suggests that the reason why a member uses the club is more important than how much they intend to use the club; the source of motivation (internalised motivation) is more important than the amount of motivation one has to use the club.

Overall, regarding the prediction of intention to cancel, perceived service quality and brand, rapport, perceived value for money, and intended usage were not predictive of intention to cancel when modelled alongside internalised motivation, and external regulation and anxiety. This is surprising, given the extant amount of literature advocating their importance, and also given that, when included in the model individually, they were all significant predictors of intention to cancel. Further, as shown in Table 7.6, the service quality and brand factors individually had comparable, if not higher, estimations of the odds ratios compared to the odds ratios of composite predictors which were maintained in the final model. However, it was the relative contribution of each predictor that was considered to be most important, as opposed to the isolated contribution of the predictors, as the relative contribution is indicative of which are the most resilient predictors.

Incidentally, all of these variables (aside from rapport) were the a priori variables; identified before the qualitative study. Given their relative unimportance to intention to cancel, the qualitative study, in its elicitation of the self-determination and anxiety variables which were predictive, was critical to the understanding of intention to cancel, and subsequently actual cancellation. Broadly, the anxiety-related variables and the self-determination variables (aside from introjected regulation) were predictive of intention to cancellation. It can be argued that a member's source of motivation to use the club, and comfort of their experience whilst in usage, is critical to their future membership at the club.

7.5.3 State anxiety (staff)

It was also necessary to explore state anxiety (staff) in more detail, given its role in predicting actual cancellation. Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the factor structure of 'external regulation and anxiety', state anxiety (members), social physique anxiety and external regulation, correlate positively with state anxiety (staff). Also, given that intrinsic regulation factored onto an opposing variable to external regulation and anxiety (internalised regulation), it is unsurprising that intrinsic regulation was found to correlate with state anxiety (staff).

Interestingly, whilst introjected regulation was not predictive of intention to cancel or actual cancellation, it was significantly positively associated with state anxiety (staff). This suggests that guilt-based motivation to use the club a fitness club is associated with anxiety. Similarly to external regulation factoring with state anxiety staff, this suggests that guilt-based motivation has some equivalence with anxiety.

Also, similar to introjected regulation, in-group homogeneity was not predictive of intention to cancel or actual cancellation at an individual level but was found to relate to state anxiety (staff). Interestingly, it was found to be positively associated; the more in-group homogeneity, the more state anxiety (staff). Interestingly, this suggests that a heterogeneous clientele, not a homogenous clientele, has a positive effect on members' perceptions of their membership. Individual stereotyping and in-group homogeneity are considered in the literature to be sub-scales of the same broader scale of 'social identification' (Leach et al, 2008). However, the individual analyses in this study suggested that individual stereotyping reduced intention to cancel, thus having a positive effect on retention. However, in-group homogeneity was found to be positively associated with anxiety, thus indirectly having a negative effect on retention. This suggests that these are opposing constructs and have contrasting influences over fitness club members' perceptions of their membership.

As opposed to the literature, perceiving your social group to be homogenous and thus distinct from other groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) is not desirable by fitness club members and is instead related to anxiety. Prior to this study, social identification has not been researched in a fitness club context. As such, this finding introduces a body of literature

relating to fitness club membership and social identification that could be investigated further in future research.

Regarding perceived value for money, whilst relative to external regulation and anxiety and internalised regulation value was not predictive of intention to cancel, it was found to be associated with anxiety; as anxiety increases, perceived value for money increases. This offers some support for its importance as a variable in explaining intention to cancel.

These findings helped to explore Objective 2 of this thesis; to assess the efficacy that the potentially predictive variables have over predicting the cancellation (actual and intentional) of current fitness club members By understanding more clearly intention to cancel and state anxiety (staff), the prediction of actual cancellation also becomes clearer.

7.5.4 Intention to cancel and positive word-of-mouth

Intention to cancel was found to account for variance in the level of positive word-of-mouth behaviour that is engaged in; those with a moderate level of intention to cancel (group 3; a mean score of intention to cancel between 4-5) engage in a significantly lower amount of positive word-of-mouth behaviour than those with no intention to cancel (group 1; a mean score of intention to cancel between 1-2). This finding supports Murray and Howat (2002), and Alexandris et al (2004), who both found a positive relationship between fitness club members' satisfaction with membership and positive word-of-mouth. However, they both used satisfaction (not intention) to predict word-of-mouth. In a broader marketing context, this also supports the findings of Dick and Basu (1994), Brown et al (2005), and de Matos and Rossi (2008). Interestingly, however, de Matos and Rossi found that the relationship between loyalty and positive word-of-mouth was stronger when it was positive word-of-mouth intentions being predicted, rather than positive word-of-mouth behaviour (as was measured in the present study). As such, perhaps the F ratio of the ANOVA analysis may have been stronger if positive word-of-mouth intentions were measured instead of positive word-of-mouth behaviour.

This helped to achieve Objective 4 of this research; to assess the efficacy that intentional cancellation has over predicting positive word-of-mouth of current fitness club members, thus exploring relationship between retention and acquisition.

7.5.5 Predicting 'mercenaries' from 'loyalists'

Further, during the analysis phase of this study an additional question arose that warranted further exploration; why do members that report a high intention to stay cancel their membership? Jones and Sasser (1996) articulated this question in their notable article 'why do satisfied customers defect', recognising that satisfaction and loyalty are not always related. Based on Jones and Sasser's typology, those who have a high intention to stay, and that do stay can be called 'loyalists whereas those who have a high intention to stay, but that cancel their membership can be called 'mercenaries'. After investigating all of the independent variables, state anxiety (staff), state anxiety (members) and Social physique anxiety were found to significantly increase the probability of a member being a 'mercenary' rather than a 'loyalist'. This suggests that the anxiety variables are responsible for the change between wanting to retain membership but then later deciding to cancel membership.

7.5.6 Limitations

Sampling

The main limitation for this study comes from the sampling strategy that was adopted; convenience sampling. This sampling strategy was similar to that used of Ferrand et al (2010) who sampled users, but instead they asked reception staff to distribute questionnaires to every third and then fifth member (depending on time attending gym and gender). Whilst the sampling frame was generated over a large range of day and times, this sampling strategy only allowed for those members who use the fitness club to be sampled. Whilst it was considered that there was a wide range of usage levels across the respondents, those who do not use the club at all did not have the opportunity to take part, limiting the extent to which these findings represents the membership perception of those who did not use the club during the sampling period. Whilst it was suggested that a questionnaire should be posted to all members, so as to include the non-users, this was not allowed by the facilitating fitness club, as it contravened company policy which prohibits contact with non-users due to a perceived risk of reminding members that they are, in fact, still paying for their membership even though they may not going. Also regarding the sample, perhaps this was not wholly representative in part due to the nature of sampling (face-to-face) whereby perhaps those in a rush (i.e. with children) did not have the time to be approached.

Also, there is the risk of bias; that those with high intention to cancel may not have deemed it 'worthwhile' to take part in research, perhaps giving a disproportionate number of high intention to cancel members. On reflection, whilst every effort was made to approach as many members as possible, the author's own personal subconscious judgements regarding who to sample may have affected who was approached to take part. Further, whilst according to the FIA (2002), the average retention rate is 60.6%, 89% of this sample retained their membership indicating that a large proportion of members who cancelled their membership had not been represented in the study.

Length of membership and intention to use the club

Also, whilst only members who had been a member for at least three months were asked to participate, the length of membership was not validated using the database information. Also, whilst intention to use the club was reported, actual usage was not obtained i.e. from swipe card information on the database.

7.6 Conclusion

This study, on a cross-section of current members, led to the development of three predictive models, predicting actual cancellation, intention to cancel and positive word-of-mouth. Whilst each model was further validated on each half of the dataset, in order to further test the robustness of the independent variables, it was considered necessary to validate the models on another dataset. Further, it was decided that testing the models on a dataset that consisted solely of new members (as opposed to current members) would test the efficacy of the independent predictors in predicting cancellation early on in membership. This study is detailed subsequently, in Chapter Eight.

Chapter 8

Cross-sectional Study: New members

8.1 Introduction

The first quantitative study indicated some interesting findings. State anxiety (staff) and intention to cancel were found to be predictive of actual cancellation. Regarding intention to cancel, two composite factors were found to be predictive; 'internalised motivation', and 'external regulation and anxiety'. The importance of intention to cancel was also further supported, through its suggested efficacy in differentiating the frequency of which members engage in positive word-of mouth. However, the first study was conducted from the perspective of current fitness club members (those who had been there for at least three months). It was considered essential that 'new' members were studied, in order to ascertain the efficacy of the independent variables in predicting actual and intentional cancellation early on in membership. As such, this next study addresses Objective Five; to verify the findings of Objectives Two, Three and Four in relation to new members.

8.2 Positioning within the mixed methods design

The study detailed in the present chapter is a continuation, and completion, of the quantitative phase. As opposed to conducting these studies in parallel, it was essential these studies were sequential; that one of the studies had to be completed before the other. This was so that reliability and criterion validity was tested on just one sample initially, so that the questionnaire could be modified if reliability estimates were too low (below the acceptable threshold) and/or if the questionnaire was shown to yield poor criterion validity. Mainly due to timing, the study focusing on current fitness club members was conducted first, prior to this study. This continued the sequential nature of this mixed method study; the qualitative study precipitated the development of the questionnaire, which was then used to ascertain reliability and to develop predictive models based on a cross-section of members, which were then tested on a sample of new members.

8.3 Method

8.3.1 Sampling strategy

The same fitness club that facilitated this study also facilitated the qualitative study and the first quantitative study (see section 5.3.4 for details of the club and its population characteristics).

This study utilised a convenience sampling strategy, focusing of accessible members who had recently joined their fitness club between the months of January and March. However, unlike the previous study, the author was not present during the sampling process. This instead was carried out by sales employees of the fitness club, who had been asked to give all new members who joined the fitness club between January and March, a letter (Appendix D1) notifying them that they may be sent a questionnaire within four weeks of them having joined the fitness club. Rather than asking members to complete a questionnaire as part of the joining process, it was essential that members' responses to the questionnaire were based on a brief experience (three months) of membership; upon joining, members won't have had any opportunity to evaluate their membership. Also, there was the risk that if the members were asked to complete the questionnaire as part of the joining process they may have considered the questionnaire as 'just another joining form to complete' which may have lessened the validity of their responses. Further, if members were given the questionnaire and asked to complete it in situ (in front of the sales employee), their responses may have been prone to social desirability bias; not wanting to give 'unfavourable' responses relating to the fitness club that the sales person is employed by.

8.3.2 Procedure

At the end of January, February and March, the questionnaire was posted to all new members who had not opted out. The questionnaire was sent to five hundred and seventy-nine in total; to two hundred joiners in January, to one hundred and ninety-two joiners in February and to one hundred and eighty-seven joiners in March. In total, eighty-nine replied (after reminders had been sent out), yielding a response rate of fifteen per cent (n=89, 33 males, 56 females). Three members completed the questionnaire online. As previously in Chapter Seven, an incentive was offered to be entered into a free prize draw to win a £100 retail voucher. Table 8.1 and Fig. 8.1 show the distribution of members per age category and gender.

As in the previous study, further to the questionnaire data, actual cancellation data was obtained from the membership database, whereby all respondents to the questionnaire were checked to see if, after twelve months, they were still members or whether they had cancelled their membership. Again, whilst confidentiality was assured, anonymity was not

assured in order to allow retention to be measured (as discussed in more detail previously; section 7.3.2).

Table 8.1 Age and gender of participants

Gender	Age category	Frequency
Males	16-24	3
	25-34	9
	35-44	11
	45-54	8
	55-64	2
	Total	33
Females	16-24	8
	25-34	22
	35-44	20
	45-54	5
	55-64	1
	Total	56

Fig. 8.1 Comparison of age and gender of participants
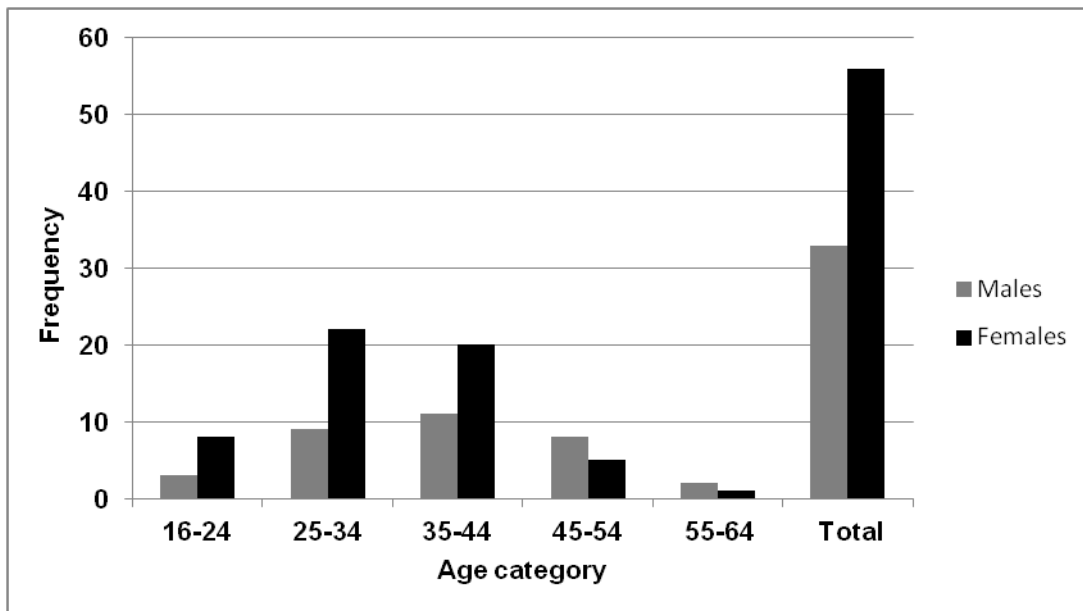
8.4 Results

8.4.1 Preliminary data screening

The dataset was screened as in the previous chapter, ensuring data accuracy, dealing appropriately with missing data, and computing 'true' mean scores, which are presented in Table 8.2. Correlations between variables can be found in Appendix D2.

Table 8.2 Descriptive statistics

	α	Cancelled			Retained		
	α	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
Intention to cancel	.91	15	2.58	1.80	69	1.80	1.14
Positive word-of-mouth	.88	17	4.02	1.82	72	4.80	1.46
Perceived service quality - Staff	.84	5	5.73	0.92	24	5.70	0.91
Perceived service quality - Classes	.84	13	5.46	0.99	51	5.47	0.88
Perceived service quality - Changing Rooms	.76	17	5.33	1.37	71	5.77	1.03
Perceived service quality - Physical Facilities	.83	11	5.28	1.00	62	5.76	0.82
Perceived service quality - Gym Environment	.82	12	5.67	0.92	67	5.91	0.74
Perceived service quality - Pool/Spa	.83	15	6.02	1.22	70	6.07	0.85
Perceived service quality - Bar/Café	.75	14	5.86	0.78	67	5.99	0.89
Perceived service quality - Childcare	.78	4	6.08	0.57	33	5.77	1.07
Perceived value for money	n/a	16	3.75	1.65	71	4.41	1.57
Brand attractiveness	.60	17	4.88	1.17	65	5.06	1.20
Brand prestige	.78	15	4.83	1.51	66	5.04	1.18
Brand distinctiveness	.65	17	5.03	1.45	70	5.31	1.23
Brand similarity	.60	16	3.25	1.76	70	3.84	1.37
Individual stereotyping	.64	15	3.07	1.07	68	3.78	1.27
In-group homogeneity	.63	14	3.43	1.09	70	3.56	1.20
Rapport - Staff	.86	16	2.98	1.46	68	3.11	1.49
Rapport - Members	.87	16	3.20	1.75	69	3.49	1.30
State anxiety - Staff	.85	16	3.25	2.09	69	2.72	1.59
State anxiety - Members	.89	16	3.48	2.43	69	2.88	1.61
Social physique anxiety	.88	15	4.11	1.47	67	3.93	1.44
External regulation	.76	16	1.83	1.16	66	1.90	1.15
Identified regulation	.76	16	4.77	1.46	69	5.30	1.23
Integrated regulation	.79	16	3.47	1.45	67	4.29	1.30
Intrinsic regulation	.86	16	5.28	1.32	69	5.42	1.14
Introjected regulation	.76	14	4.50	1.92	69	4.23	1.56

Regarding reliability estimation, as before, most scales were internally consistent to an alpha level of 0.6. Further, most alpha levels were in excess of the minimum 0.6 threshold. As such, mean scores of the items could be generated with a certain degree of confidence.

Regarding the intention to cancel distribution, due to the non-normal distribution of intention to cancel previously, intention to cancel was checked to see if it was again non-normally distributed, which it appeared to be (see Fig. 8.2).

Fig. 8.2 Intention to cancel distribution
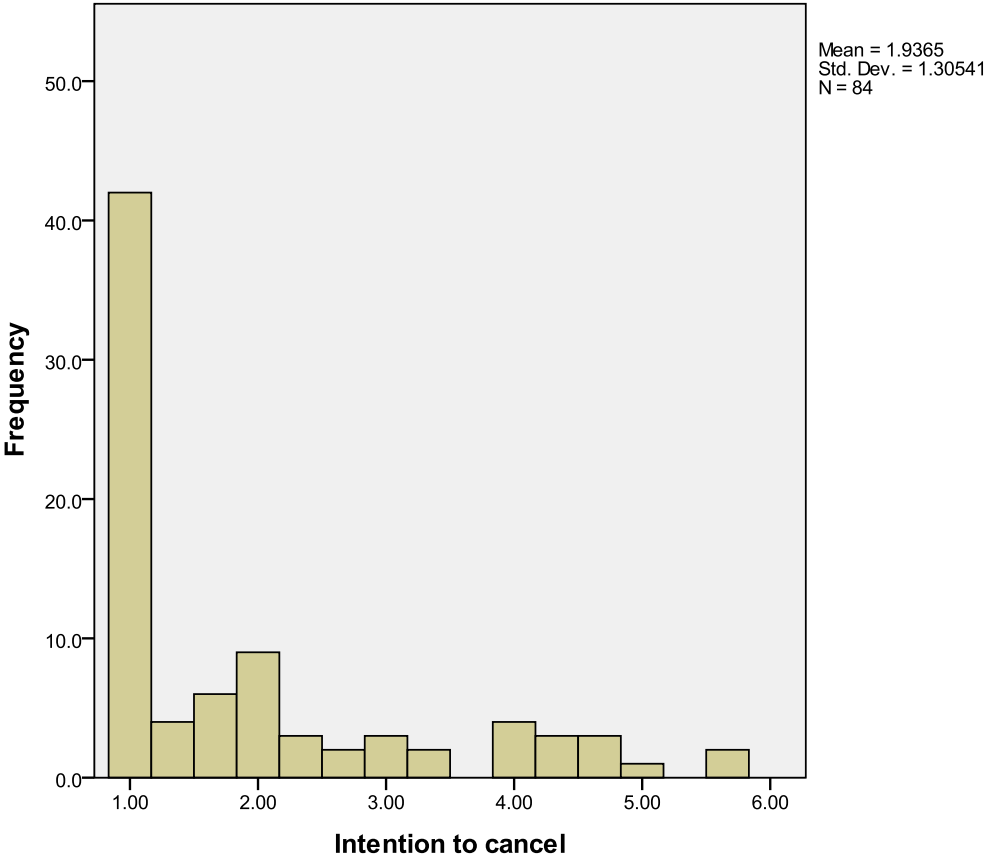
Once again, it was necessary to categorise intention to cancel, to allow it to be tested using predictive techniques in the current study. For consistency, intention to cancel was categorised into equally distanced intervals. Unlike before, when it was evident that all scale points between one and seven had been used in the sample, in the current sample of new members, only scale points between one and six had been used; no members had indicated a high (between 6 and 7) intention to cancel membership, with the highest level indicated of between five and six. Thus, intention to cancel was categorised into five categories based on equal intervals between the mean score; Group 0= mean score between 1-2, Group 1= mean score between 2-3, Group 2= mean score between 3-4, Group 3= mean score between 4-5 and Group 4= mean score between 5-6. Maintaining the categories representing intervals of one mean score allowed, again, a truer

representation of the linear variable, by having categories which were specific enough to avoid losing any linearity of the variable, whilst also recognising Group 0 as being a distinct category of members, with low intention to cancel. Also, however, it was considered that maintaining the same size of categories as used previously would allow consistent measuring of intention to cancel and to be better able to draw comparisons about its performance as a variable.

In order to verify the previous findings, the next step was to test the models developed in the previous chapter (Chapter 7, Fig. 7.3) that were proposed based on a cross-section of current members to see if they could be verified on a dataset of new members.

8.4.2 Predicting actual cancellation

Firstly, the model formed during Analysis One (Chapter 7, Fig. 7.3) conducted in the previous chapter was tested to see if actual cancellation could be predicted, from state anxiety (staff) and intention to cancel using binary logistic regression. However, this model was not significant, and so the previous findings in relation to current members' actual cancellation could not be verified. As such, to explore actual cancellation further in relation to new members, all of the independent variables were tested again for their individual efficacy in predicting actual cancellation. However, in this dataset of new members, no variables were found predictive of actual cancellation

8.4.3 Predicting intention to cancel

To assess whether the previous findings regarding current members' intention to cancel could be verified, the next step was to test the model proposed in the previous study; the model which predicted intention to cancel. However, the model proposed during Analysis Two in the previous chapter (Chapter 7, Fig. 7.3) was tested to see if intention to cancel could be predicted by 'internalised motivation', and 'external regulation and anxiety', using ordinal logistic regression. However, this model was not significant, and the previous findings could not be verified.

As such, to explore intention to cancel further in relation to new members' intention to cancel, all of the independent variables were tested again for their individual efficacy in predicting new members' intention to cancel.

8.4.3.1 Preliminary ordinal logistic regression analyses

The results of the individual analyses are reported in Table 8.3 below.

Table 8.3 Individual predictors of intention to cancel

	Estimation	SE	Wald	Model Chi-Square
Perceived service quality - Classes	-1.22	0.33	13.52	15.92
Perceived service quality - Child Care	-0.65	0.37	3.95	4.62
Perceived service quality - Pool/Spa	-0.50	0.26	3.71	3.89
Overall perceived service quality	-0.81	0.31	6.72	7.26
Brand attractiveness	-0.47	0.20	5.44	6.13
Brand prestige	-0.50	0.18	7.55	8.06
Brand distinctiveness	-0.56	0.19	8.26	8.99
Identified regulation	-0.39	0.17	5.03	4.86
Integrated regulation	-0.54	0.18	9.11	9.30
Intrinsic regulation	-0.50	0.20	6.41	6.04

Note: * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$

Overall, ten variables were found to be predictive of intention to cancel, each showing a negative relationship, as one unit increase occurred in the variable the level of intention to cancel likely to be placed in decreased (Perceived service quality - Classes (Estimate= -1.22, SE=0.33, Wald=13.52, $p < .001$), Perceived service quality - Child Care (Estimate=-0.65, SE=0.37, Wald=3.95, $p < .001$), Perceived service quality - Pool/Spa (Estimate=-0.5, SE=0.26, Wald=3.71, $p < .001$), Brand Attractiveness (Estimate=-0.81, SE=0.31, Wald=6.72, $p < .001$), Band Prestige (Estimate=-0.47, SE=0.2, Wald=5.44, $p < .001$), Brand Distinctiveness (Estimate=-0.5, SE=0.18, Wald=7.55, $p < .001$), Identified Regulation (Estimate=-0.55, SE=0.19, Wald=8.26, $p < .001$), Identified Regulation (Estimate=-0.39, SE=0.17, Wald=5.03, $p < .001$), Integrated Regulation (Estimate=-0.54, SE=0.18, Wald=9.11, $p < .001$), Intrinsic Regulation (Estimate=-0.5, SE=0.2, Wald=6.41, $p < .001$).

These predictive variables were taken forward to be factor analysed, to allow composite variables to be created, subsequently allowing the predictors to be represented together in one model.

8.4.3.2 Factor analysis of predictive variables

Principal Components Analysis was again conducted to identify an underlying structure of the predictive variables. Listwise PCA was conducted on the dataset (n=73). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (KMO) was .75, suggesting that good

sampling adequacy and that the data was suitable for factor analysis (Field, 2005). Table 8.4 below shows the total variance explained by the factors.

Table 8.4 Total variances explained by the factors

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	3.42	48.86	48.86	3.42	48.86	48.86
2	1.34	19.14	68.00	1.34	19.14	68.00

As can be seen from table 8.4, there were two factors extracted, each above an eigenvalue of 1; two different factors that underpin the seven predictors on intention to cancel. The table below (8.5) details the variables that loaded onto these factors.

Table 8.5 Pattern matrix of intention to cancel predictors

	Perceived service quality and brand	Internalised motivation
Perceived service quality	.75	
Brand attractiveness	.66	
Brand prestige	.83	
Brand distinctiveness	.88	
Identified regulation		-.95
Integrated regulation		-.87
Intrinsic regulation		-.72

Composite variables were computed and labelled to represent these two factors ('Perceived service quality and brand' and 'Internalised motivation'), and were then taken forward to be included altogether to assess their efficacy in predicting new members' intention to cancel membership.

8.4.3.3 Full predictive model (intention to cancel)

The two factors as identified in the PCA above, were tested in a full predictive logistic regression model to test their predictive efficacy. However, the factor 'internalised motivation' was not found to be predictive. As such, the analysis was re-run, with just 'perceived service quality and brand', in the model (n=76) (perceived service quality and brand, Estimation= 1.004, SE=.34, Wald= 8.85, p<.002). The results are displayed below in Table 8.6

Table 8.6 Perceived service quality and brand predicting intention to cancel

	Estimation	SE	Wald	Model Chi-Square
Perceived service quality and brand	-1.004	.34	8.85**	9.95**

Note: * p< .05. ** p< .01. *** p< .001.

8.4.4 Relationships with state anxiety (staff)

Previously, state anxiety (staff) was found to correlate with many of the independent variables. The same analysis Spearman's Rho correlation was conducted on this dataset, with the results detailed below (table 8.7).

Table 8.7 Spearman rho correlations with state anxiety (staff)

	State anxiety (staff)
State anxiety (members)	.911***
Social Physique Anxiety	.750***
External regulation	.437***
Introjected regulation	.260*
Identified regulation	-.233*
Intention to use	-.386**
Intrinsic regulation	-.389***

Note: * p< .05. ** p< .01. *** p< .001.

As can be seen from the table above, state anxiety (staff) is positively related to state anxiety (members), social physique anxiety, as well as external regulation and introjected regulation. This suggests that as state anxiety (staff) increases, then so does state anxiety (members), social physique anxiety, external regulation, but introjected regulation. identified regulation, intention to use, and intrinsic regulation are negatively related to state anxiety (staff), suggesting that as state anxiety (staff) increases, identified regulation, intention to use, and intrinsic regulation decrease.

8.4.5 Intention to cancel influencing positive word-of-mouth

The influence of intention to cancel over the frequency at which new members engage in positive word-of-mouth was also assessed, using a one-way ANOVA. However, intention to cancel was not found to significantly account for any variance between positive word-of-mouth.

8.4.6 Why members with low intention to cancel actually cancel membership

Due to the low sample sizes, when cross-tabulating intention to cancel with actual cancellation, this analysis could not be conducted.

8.4.7 Visual representation of the analyses

Overall, after categorising intention to cancel, the ordinal logistic regression analysis (Analysis 1), found that one factor ('perceived service quality and brand') was significantly predictive of intention to cancel. Analysis 2, the Spearman's Rho correlation analysis (see section 8.4.4 above), found that state anxiety (members), social physique anxiety, as well as external regulation and introjected regulation were all positively related to state anxiety (staff), whilst identified regulation, intention to use the club, and intrinsic regulation and were negatively related. Both of these analyses are visually represented below (Figure 8.3).

Fig. 8.3 Visual representation of analyses
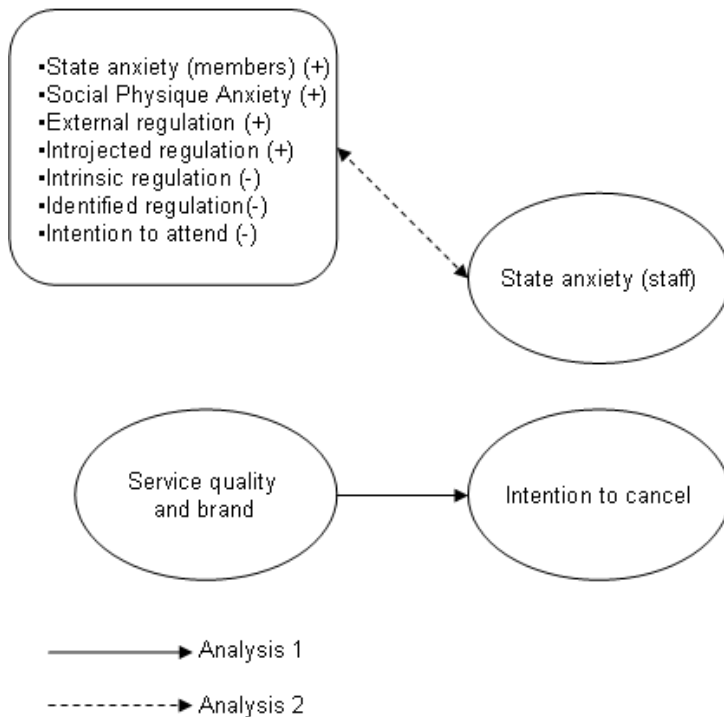
8.4.8 Exploring the differences between current and new members

Due to differences found between the results of the analyses conducted on current members and the analyses conducted on new members, it was deemed necessary to explore these differences between current and new members further. As such, Objective Six became necessary; to explain the differences found between current and new members resulting from Objective Five.

After combining both datasets, moderation effects were tested firstly, to see if the type of member (current or new) had an effect on the predictive efficacy of the independent variables on actual cancellation, however no significant interaction effects were found. Instead, to further investigate the differences, comparisons were made between current and new member's ratings of each of the independent variables. Due to the unequal sample sizes (current=n=716, new= n=89), it was considered that the Mann Whitney U test was the most appropriate test. The details are below in Table 8.8.

As can be seen in Table 8.8, new members perceive the performance of overall service quality, service quality- bar/café, service quality- pool/spa, service quality –staff, brand distinctiveness, brand prestige, state anxiety (staff), state anxiety (members), social physique anxiety and external regulation to be significantly higher than current members do. Also, new members have a higher intention to cancel than do current members.

Conversely, new members rate perceived value for money, intention to use the club, rapport- staff, and intrinsic regulation as significantly lower than current members.

Table 8.8 Comparisons of current and new members' ratings

	Member type	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	MWU	Z
Overall perceived service quality	Current	714	394.83	281908.50	26653.5**	-2.481
	New	89	459.52	40897.50		
	Total	803				
Perceived service quality- bar/cafe	Current	579	321.26	186010.00	18100**	-3.393
	New	81	396.54	32120.00		
	Total	660				
Perceived service quality- pool/spa	Current	635	348.41	221238.00	19308***	-4.297
	New	85	450.85	38322.00		
	Total	720				
Perceived service quality -staff	Current	307	164.81	50597.50	3319.5*	-2.266
	New	29	207.53	6018.50		
	Total	336				
Perceived value for money	Current	655	378.47	247898.00	23927**	-2.480
	New	87	319.02	27755.00		
	Total	742				
Brand distinctiveness	Current	643	351.07	225737.00	18691***	-4.165
	New	81	453.25	36713.00		
	Total	724				
Brand prestige	Current	642	356.70	229002.50	22599.5**	-2.914
	New	87	426.24	37082.50		
	Total	729				
Intention to use	Current	471	270.64	127472.50	11001.50*	-2.530
	New	58	219.18	12712.50		
	Total	529				
Rapport- staff	Current	640	374.55	239709.50	19170.5***	-4.282
	New	84	270.72	22740.50		
	Total	724				
State anxiety - staff	Current	642	353.94	227232.00	20829***	-3.609
	New	85	439.95	37396.00		
	Total	727				
State anxiety- members	Current	641	353.42	226544.50	20783.5***	-3.618
	New	85	439.49	37356.50		
	Total	726				
Social physique anxiety	Current	640	353.41	226184.00	21064**	-2.912
	New	82	424.62	34819.00		
	Total	722				
External regulation	Current	640	354.22	226702.50	21582.5**	-2.754
	New	82	418.30	34300.50		
	Total	722				
Intrinsic regulation	Current	637	367.82	234299.50	23048.5*	-2.237
	New	85	314.16	26703.50		
	Total	722				
Intention to cancel	Current	629	352.52	221734.00	23599.00*	-1.962
	New	84	390.56	32807.00		
	Total	713				

Note: * p< .05. ** p< .01. *** p< .001.

8.5 Discussion

8.5.1 Predicting actual cancellation

The model that was developed to predict actual cancellation in the previous study (with intention to cancel and state anxiety (staff) was not verified in this study. Further, when trying to develop an alternative model that could predict actual cancellation of new members, none of the independent variables (including intention to cancel) were found to be predictive of actual cancellation. Thus, this study did not provide support for the intention-behaviour link in membership cancellation.

8.5.2 Predicting intention to cancel

The model that was developed to predict intention to cancel in the previous study (with intention to cancel and state anxiety (staff) was not validated in this study. Seven of the variables, at an individual level, predicted intention to cancel. However, their relative predictive efficacy when modelled together was explored. Again, as previously, composite variables of the predictors were made using the results of a factor analysis. Two factors were found to underpin the predictors of intention to cancel; internalised motivation, and perceived service quality and brand.

Internalised motivation

As was found in the previous chapter, all of the more autonomous self-determination factors (identified regulation, integrated regulation and intrinsic regulation) factored together. Given that the less autonomous self-determination factor external regulation factored separately, this supports the distinction between autonomous and controlled motivation.

Perceived service quality and brand

Similar to the findings of the previous chapter, perceived service quality and all of the brand identification variables factored together; brand attractiveness, brand distinctiveness, brand prestige and brand similarity. This suggests that the brand variables are an extension of the perceived service quality construct, as opposed to being separate. Perhaps if these brand variables are rated highly, this is seen as indicative of the club's quality as opposed to being more indicative of a separate, more intrapersonal identification process.

After the composite variables had been created they were both included in a predictive model of intention to cancel.

However only perceived service quality and brand was found to be predictive in the final model. This finding does not support the findings from the previous chapter (whereby perceived service quality and brand was not predictive) but corroborates other studies which have found that perceived service quality is predictive of membership intentions (Alexandris et al, 2001, Alexandris et al, 2004, Dhurup et al, 2006, Murray & Howat, 2002, Pedragosa & Correia, 2009, Ferrand et al, 2010 and Wei et al, 2010). This study also supports the literature claiming that brand identification (Ahearne et al, 2005, Kuenzel & Halliday, 2010, Tuskej et al, 2011) are predictive of membership intentions, and more specifically provided support for brand identification using Bhattacharya and Sen's (2003) suggested scales.

Similar to the previous chapter's findings, this study does not support literature advocating the importance of perceived value for money in predicting retention (Cronin et al, 2000, McDougall & Levesque, 2000, Ferrand et al, 2010). Also, similar to the previous chapter's findings, this study refutes the literature by Ferrand et al (2010) and Lin and Wu (2011), who found that perceived usage of a fitness club has a positive influence over intentions to continue membership. Also, this study does not support the notion of rapport being a predictor of loyalty (Gremler & Gwinner, 2000, Guenzi & Pelloni, 2004, Kim & Ok, 2010 and Macintosh, 2009). Finally, Leach et al's (2008) scales of social identification were not found to be predictive.

Overall, regarding the prediction of intention to cancel, perceived service quality and brand, was the only predictive factor of intention to cancel for new members, contrary to the previous chapter's findings which focused on current members,

8.5.3 State anxiety (staff)
Similar to the findings from the previous chapter, it was indicated that as state anxiety (staff) increases, then so does state anxiety (members), social physique anxiety, external regulation, and introjected regulation. These findings are similar to those of the previous chapter; suggesting that the anxiety predictors are highly correlated, and also that guilt-based motivation (introjected motivation) and being motivated solely by other people

(external regulation) are related with state anxiety (staff). However, unlike the previous chapter, in-group homogeneity was not found to be positively related.

Also similar to the previous chapter was the finding that as state anxiety (staff) increases, intrinsic regulation decrease. This again suggests that being self-motivated and motivated to use the fitness club solely by the anticipated pleasure of doing so, is associated with a decrease in state anxiety (staff). However, unlike the previous chapter, perceived value for money was not found to be negatively related to state anxiety (staff). Instead, however, identified regulation and intention to use the club were found to be negatively related to state anxiety.

8.5.4 Differences between current and new members

The findings indicated that new members rate intention to cancel, overall service quality, service quality- bar/café, service quality- pool/spa, service quality –staff, brand distinctiveness, brand prestige, state anxiety (staff), state anxiety (members), social physique anxiety and external regulation as significantly higher than do current members. Conversely, new members appeared to rate perceived value for money, intention to use the club, rapport- staff, and intrinsic regulation as significantly lower than current members. These findings suggest that certain ratings change over time; from when a member has only just joined the fitness club to when a member has been a member for at least three months. These findings are further discussed in light of what was found to be predictive of both current and new members' intentional and/or actual cancellation in the subsequent chapter.

8.5.5 Limitations

Sampling

As in the previous study, the main limitation for the present study is related to sampling. Again, the sampling strategy adopted was convenience sampling; an accessible sample of new members was used. However, unlike the previous study, the process of recruiting participants was different. In the previous study, a large, wide-range of participants was recruited by the author whereas in the present study, a smaller, but more purposefully selected sample of participants were recruited by the sales employees of the fitness club; the only members that participated were new members. The sample size was much smaller than previously; eighty-nine new members compared with the seven hundred and

sixteen current members that comprised the previous sample of current members. There was also a higher level of non response; fifteen per cent response rate compared with a sixty-eight per cent response rate achieved previously. This high level of non-response presents a risk of bias within the sample; those who felt favourably about participating in the research perhaps were also the only members who felt favourable about the fitness club. It should be noted also that the pilot for the questionnaire was only conducted on current members, and not specifically new members, which may have lessened the face validity of the use of the questionnaire in this study.

Because in this study, new members were recruited by the sales employees, it is unknown as to how the questionnaire was described to the new members by the sales staff, as the author was not present during this process. Also, in the present study, one age category (65+) was not represented which limits the representativeness of these findings to only those members under the age of sixty-five.

Further, similar to the previous study, a large proportion of members who cancelled their membership had not been represented in the study, as 81% of this sample retained their membership (in comparison to the expected rate of only 60.6%; FIA, 2002).

8.6 Conclusion

This study, on new members, did not validate the models developed in the previous chapter that were developed in relation to current members. Instead, this study led to the development of an alternative predictive model of intention to cancel. This suggests that the length of membership helps to determine the reasons why members cancel or retain their membership. Also, further changes were detected when comparing both datasets (current members and new members). All of these findings, along with those from the previous studies are integrated and discussed in the subsequent, and final, Chapter Nine.

Chapter 9
Discussion

9.1 Chapter summaries

Chapter One presented an introduction to the research context and objectives. Chapter Two presented a review of retention in the fitness industry. Retention is widely considered to be linked to organizational effectiveness, given the reduced costs of retaining customers versus acquiring them. Also, retained customers tend to have a higher customer value; spending more money with the organization of which they are a customer, and also being more likely to promote the organization to prospective customers via positive word-of-mouth. However, retention can be hard to achieve, especially in service industries which are in some ways more complex than goods-based organisations. As such, service industries have attracted the development of many different typologies and frameworks to help understand service industries better, and subsequently understand service customers' needs with a view to develop effective retention strategies. However, the fitness industry, which falls under the remit of the service industry, is complex making it challenging to understand it in relation to other service industries, thus difficult to apply other generic retention strategies to help retain fitness club members. As such, retention needs to be researched specifically in a fitness industry context

The fitness industry has attracted much research relating to retention, predominantly from a sports management perspective, whereby there has been a heavy focus on researching the relationship between perceived service quality, perceived value for money, usage, and more recently brand associations, and retention (discussed in Chapter 3). However, most of the literature, aside from Bodet (2008) has been limited by its prediction of only intentional retention, not actual retention. Further, most of the literature has been focused on the prediction of renewal and positive word-of-mouth; positive retention behaviours as opposed to the prediction of negative retention behaviours; membership cancellation.

As such, this thesis has been written with a focus on cancellation, and not only intended cancellation but also actual cancellation. Whilst the current literature, specific to the fitness industry and also from the services marketing literature, has supported the importance of perceived service quality, perceived value for money, usage and brand, it was also noticeable that the focus on these predictors has prevented the industry from re-evaluating, on a broader level, the sufficiency of these predictors in accounting for fitness club membership retention. This appears to have resulted in more specific foci being taken on, say, what are the important service quality attributes, or what are important brand

associations, with much research testing slightly different conceptualisations of, say perceived service quality, brand, perceived value for money and usage, seeking to find more powerful, significant findings. This has arguably led to a predominantly positivist, self-confirming body of fitness industry literature rather than a critical body of literature which has been growing through the pragmatic consideration that other predictors may account for fitness club membership cancellation. Thus, an exploratory approach to identify other potential predictors has been long overdue, which this thesis has addressed. However, due to the predictive nature of the research question "why do fitness club members cancel their membership?" it has been necessary to succeed an exploratory, qualitative approach with a predictive approach, mainly achievable through quantitative research, to allow any such unknown predictors to be tested. As such, a sequential, embedded mixed methods approach was taken in this thesis (discussed in Chapter 4), which began with a qualitative study. It was important not to discount the notion that perceived service quality, brand, perceived value for money and usage might play a part in predicting cancellation, whilst at the same time being sufficiently open to allow other predictors to be elicited. This generated the need for Objective One; to identify potential predictors of fitness club membership cancellation, to be addressed.

As such, a semi-structured interviewing technique was employed to enable the testing the four a priori themes; perceived service quality, perceived value for money, usage and brand, using direct questions if necessary whilst also allowing enough flexibility with the use of indirect questions to allow other predictors to be elicited. A template analysis of twenty-three semi- structured telephone interviews with current, ex- and 'frozen' fitness club members (of various levels of usage and lengths of membership) saw the elicitation of five new theoretical concepts; social identification (individual stereotyping and in-group homogeneity), rapport, state anxiety, social physique anxiety and self-determination (intrinsic, integrated, identified, introjected and external regulation), which appeared to underpin current fitness club members' decisions retain their membership, or ex-members' decisions to cancel (discussed in Chapter 5).

The sufficient evidence of these nine themes provided the impetus to operationalize and include them in the development of a quantitative questionnaire, whereby scales which had been reliably used in the literature were adapted and included in the questionnaire produced in both web- and paper-based format, both of which were piloted to a sample of

fitness club members (discussed in Chapter 6). The questionnaire was designed to assess concurrent validity, by also including an intention to cancel scale, whilst also being used alongside actual cancellation data to assess predictive validity in two cross-sectional studies with a large cross-section of 'current' members (members who had been members for at least three months, n=716; Chapter 7) and a smaller cross-section of 'new' members (members who had been members for no more than three months, n=89, Chapter 8).

Chapter Seven's findings indicated that actual cancellation was significantly predicted by state anxiety and intention to cancel. Also, the findings indicated that intentional cancellation was significantly predicted by 'external regulation' (a composite of state anxiety (staff), state anxiety (members), social physique anxiety and external regulation) and 'internalised motivation (a composite of identified regulation, integrated regulation and intrinsic regulation). Further, state anxiety (staff and members) and social physique anxiety were found to predict the likelihood of a member with low intention to cancel as having cancelled their membership twelve months later.

Interestingly, the predictors 'perceived service quality and brand' (composite of overall perceived service quality, brand attractiveness, brand prestige, brand distinctiveness, brand similarity and individual stereotyping), 'rapport' (composite of rapport with staff, rapport with members), perceived value for money, and intention to use the club were not predictive of intention to cancel when modelled alongside 'external regulation' and 'internalised motivation'. Broadly, this suggested that the predictors relating to motivation (self-determination; external regulation, identified regulation, integrated regulation and intrinsic regulation) and anxiety (state anxiety and social physique anxiety) were better predictors of cancellation than perceived service quality, brand, perceived value for money, and usage. Incidentally, these were the a priori predictors, reinforcing the importance of the initial qualitative study, without which, the most predictive variables would not have been elicited.

Overall these findings addressed Objective Two; to assess the efficacy that the potentially predictive variables have over predicting the cancellation (actual and intentional) of current fitness club members. Also, the finding that intention to cancel was a predictor of actual cancellation addressed Objective Three; to assess the efficacy that intentional cancellation has over predicting actual cancellation of current fitness club members.

Further, it was indicated that intentional cancellation accounted for variance in members' frequency of performing positive word-of-mouth behaviour, addressing Objective Four; to assess the efficacy that intentional cancellation has over predicting positive word-of-mouth of current fitness club members.

The next step was to verify these findings on a dataset of 'new' members; members who had joined the fitness club within three months. Whilst the large sample of current members allowed the split file validation of the findings, verifying the findings on a different dataset of new members was considered an additional way of testing the robustness of these findings in predicting cancellation behaviour from the early stages of membership. However, contrary to what was expected, Chapter Eight's findings indicated that actual cancellation was not significantly predicted by any of the variables. Further, whilst intentional cancellation could be significantly predicted, it was not predicted by the same predictors that predicted intentional cancellation of current members. More specifically, the findings indicated that intentional cancellation was significantly predicted by, and only by, 'perceived service quality and brand' (a composite of overall perceived service quality, brand attractiveness, brand prestige and brand distinctiveness). Further, unlike current members, in relation to new members, intentional cancellation did not account for variance in members' frequency of performing positive word-of-mouth behaviour.

These unexpected results meant that Objective Five; to verify the findings of Objectives Two, Three and Four in relation to new members, could not be achieved. Subsequently, Objective Six; to explain the differences found between current and new members resulting from Objective Five, became essential to address which warranted a comparison of datasets and a re-evaluation of the qualitative findings, in order to try to explain the discrepancies found using a full integration of all of the studies.

This integration is discussed in more detail below, detailing the way in which the findings were integrated in order to develop a well-considered and definitive contribution to the literature.

9.2 Integration of findings

The findings of the three studies have not only been summarised but also integrated and considered in light of each other, in order to further understand fitness club membership cancellation. It is imperative that mixed methods research has a rationale for its choice as an approach and that it also details the way in which the integration of different methods helped to enhance the overall findings of the research project. As Bryman (2007) points out, mixed methods research should be "more than the sum of the individual quantitative and qualitative parts" (p. 8). As discussed in Chapter Four, the main rationale for a mixed methods approach was initially 'instrument development' (Bryman, 2006, p.106). At this stage the mixed methods design was a sequential, embedded, 'qual > QUAN' design (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p.22), whereby a qualitative study was initially conducted in order to allow the more dominant quantitative studies to be conducted.

However, another rationale for its choice as an approach came after the first quantitative study did not corroborate the qualitative study, findings in that four out of the nine predictors were not found to be predictive. The findings of the qualitative study suggested that not only would the four a priori themes (perceived service quality, perceived value for money, brand and usage) have a place in predicting the cancellation of fitness club members, but also that five other themes (social identification, rapport, social physique anxiety, state anxiety and self-determination) would have also have a place in predicting the cancellation of fitness club members. However, when these themes were operationalised and tested in the first quantitative study, a discrepancy emerged in that not all of the nine predictors (as per the qualitative study) significantly predicted the cancellation of fitness club members. For instance, perceived value for money, usage, social identification (individual stereotyping and in-group homogeneity) and rapport (staff and members), were not found in the final models to be significantly predictive of cancellation; actual or intentional. This raised the question of 'why were these themes elicited in the qualitative study but not supported in the quantitative study?'.

One argument could be that these predictors were indeed themes, but only themes relevant to the sample in the qualitative study, but not to the sample in the quantitative study, meaning that the sample of the qualitative study was not representative of the samples in the quantitative studies. However, on reflection, looking back at the sampling of the qualitative study, a maximum variation sampling strategy was used to ensure a degree

of triangulation between a variety of different data sources (current members of different usages levels and lengths of membership, 'frozen' members, and ex-members) within the sample to make the sample as representative as possible. As such, it was considered that further arguments needed to be considered as to why this discrepancy occurred.

For each predictor; perceived value for money, usage, individual stereotyping, in-group homogeneity and rapport (staff and members), there are two potential arguments that can be used to explain this discrepancy. Firstly, there is the argument that the predictors were wrongly elicited during the qualitative analysis. Secondly, there is the argument that these predictors were correctly elicited, but were poorly operationalised in the quantitative studies causing, in essence, the theme to be lacking in construct validity. Both of these arguments are discussed in relation to perceived value for money, usage, social identification and rapport, in order to explain why they may have not been predictive. This led to a re-visitation of the qualitative study; a re-consideration of whether the themes were justifiably elicited, and also a re-visitation of the questionnaire development; a re-consideration of whether the themes were validly measured in the questionnaire.

9.2.1 Qualitative study and quantitative study (current members)

Perceived value for money

Perceived value for money was proposed as being an important predictor of fitness club member retention by Murray and Howat (2002), and Ferrand et al (2010). However, this was not corroborated in the quantitative study. In relation to the qualitative study, looking back at the template analysis, there was one anomaly in that one ex-member considered their previous membership with the club to be good value for money, rendering value for money not being the reason for cancellation, thus giving disconfirming evidence that perceived value for money is a predictor of cancellation. Also, there did seem to be some confusion regarding the interpretation of 'value for money', with some members considering value being related to actual usage, some members considering value to be related to opportunity to use rather than actual usage, with other members considering value to be related to service quality. In relation to the measurement of perceived value for money in the questionnaire, perceived value for money was measured using a one-item measure (as did Murray & Howat and Ferrand et al, 2010), which, given the complexity of what 'value for money' means, is perhaps too simplistic and too broad.

Future research is needed specifically on how members perceive value for money, and to subsequently develop an improved scale which measures the construct of perceived value for money more validly.

Usage

Usage was found in the fitness industry literature to be predictive (Lin & Wu, 2011; Ferrand et al, 2010) and also in the qualitative study. However, this was not corroborated in the quantitative study. In relation to the qualitative study, on closer inspection of the analysed transcripts, as mentioned in relation to perceived value for money (above) in the template analysis, perceived value for money and usage seemed to be somewhat confusingly related. Interestingly, one high volume user considered not to be receiving good perceived value for money, whereas one low volume user considered their value for money to be good. This perhaps suggests perceived value of usage is more important than anticipated level of usage; how much value a person perceives their usage to provide is perhaps more important than their quantified level of anticipated usage. For instance, one member may consider that visiting the fitness club two to three times per month is infrequent, and therefore not good value for money, whilst another member may consider this level of usage to be frequent, and thus good value for money. In relation to the measurement of usage in the questionnaire, the way in which usage was measured was based on pre-identified categories based on the distribution of other members from the same fitness club, suggesting that the ordinal categories used were appropriate to the distribution. Future research, therefore, could explore this by creating a scale which measures how valuable members perceived their anticipated usage to be as opposed to measuring just their anticipated quantity of usage.

Social identification

Unlike perceived value for money and usage, social identification was not an a priori predictor, and was elicited during the qualitative study. In a services marketing context, or a fitness industry context, social identification has not been found to be predictive of retention behaviours, and instead has mainly been explored qualitatively within social psychology. However, in relation to the qualitative study, it was suggested that how well members can identify with their 'group' of other members of the club is important. The notion of 'fitting in' became apparent in the qualitative study, as well as the 'group' being heterogeneous with a wide variety of members being seen as a positive aspect of the club.

As such, initially the theme of 'commonality/ diverse community' was elicited. In the first quantitative study, however, this was not corroborated, as in-group homogeneity was not predictive even at an individual level of analysis, and whilst individual stereotyping was predictive at an individual level of analysis and did load onto the factor 'perceived service quality and brand', that factor was not predictive of current members in the final model. A re-visitation of the evidence provided during the qualitative study, showed that the evidence for this theme (compared to the other themes that were elicited) was weaker. This perhaps casts doubt on whether, on strength, the theme should have been elicited. In relation to the measurement of social identification in the questionnaire, Leach et al (2008) provided a quantitative scale of social identification which was used to measure the relationship between social identification and cancellation. This scale measured two aspects of social identification; individual stereotyping and in-group homogeneity. Individual stereotyping was focused on the degree of perceived similarity a member had with the other people at the club, whereas in-group homogeneity was a measure of how similar the other members were to each other. It was expected that members the opposite of homogeneity would be important to members; heterogeneity. As such it was expected that individual stereotyping would be negatively related to cancellation and in-group homogeneity would be positively related to cancellation.

After re-visiting the template analysis, this is considered to be a measurement issue and it is doubted as to whether or not Leach et al's measure sufficiently captured the phenomenon relating to the theme 'commonality/ diverse community' that was initially elicited during the analysis. Future research could explore the importance of this theme further, and perhaps develop a scale measuring feelings of 'fit' and heterogeneity of members to explore this concept further.

Rapport
The theme of 'Interactions/connections/familiarity' was elicited after much related evidence was provided. Further exploration of the literature supported the importance of 'rapport' in relation to retention, which was considered sufficient to capture this theme. Gremler and Gwinner's (2000) model of rapport comprised two dimensions; enjoyable interaction and personal connection. In relation to the qualitative study, there was much evidence and very few disconfirming anomalies. However, this was not corroborated in the first quantitative study. Compared to the other themes elicited, rapport as a theme had a strong amount of

evidence, suggesting that the lack of predictive efficacy is more likely to be a measurement issues. Whilst it was posited that their scales measured care, friendliness, affiliation and identification a person has with each other, Gremler and Gwinner's scales perhaps did not sufficiently measure the other type of interactions that were considered important; warmth, care and sincerity. As such, further research is needed to develop a scale of rapport which includes the measurement of warmth, care and sincerity of interactions of members to explore this concept further.

9.2.2 Quantitative studies (current and new members)

As well as the lack of corroboration between four of the themes elicited in the qualitative study and the final predictive models of underpinning cancellation of current fitness club members, there was a lack of corroboration of the findings between the quantitative study on current members and the quantitative study on new members. Further, not only were the models underpinning current member cancellation not corroborated in the study on new members, but they were contradictory. For instance, the finding that actual cancellation was predicted by state anxiety and intention to cancel in relation to current members, was not corroborated in relation to new members. The finding that 'external regulation and anxiety' predicted intention to cancel of new members was not corroborated and instead was contradicted in examination of what predicted intention to cancel of new member, seeing as 'perceived service quality and brand' was predictive of intention to cancel of new members.

This led added another rationale for utilising a mixed methods approach; a rationale of 'unexpected results' (Bryman, 2006, p. 106). These unexpected results led to a closer integration of the quantitative studies; a comparison of the current and new members by integrating the datasets, as well as a reconsideration of whether the evidence provided during the qualitative study was representative of both current and new; any under-representation could account for discrepancies between the current and new member findings. As such, the denotation of the mixed methods design became 'qual > QUAN > qual' (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p.22).

As discussed in Chapter Eight, interaction effects were tested for to assess whether the predictive relationships between the independent variables were moderated by whether the member was 'current' or 'new'. However, no interaction effects were found. To explore

this further, the ratings of the predictors were compared between the current and the new members. It was indicated that new members generally have a higher intention to cancel than do current members.

Most notably, it was found that new members rate state anxiety (staff), state anxiety (members), social physique anxiety and external regulation as significantly higher than do current members, and conversely current members rate intrinsic regulation as higher. For new members, these predictors were not predictive of cancellation. However, they were predictive of cancellation of current members. This suggests that new members, whilst perhaps being more anxious about their physiques (social physique anxiety), more anxious when at the fitness club in relation to staff and members (state anxiety), more pressured to be a fitness club member (external regulation) and less intrinsically motivated to be a fitness club member, they are perhaps more resilient to these feelings, seeing as these feelings do not, in the early stage of membership, manifest as predictive of cancellation. Whilst current members seem to feel less anxious and pressured, their level of anxiety and pressure does manifest as predictive of cancellation, unlike new members. This suggests an element of change, that whilst anxiety and pressure levels may decrease, so does a new member's 'be strong' driver; an individual's propensity to 'be strong' and to persevere even when experiencing negative affect, such as anxiety or pressure (Transactional Analysis theory, Berne, 1961). Upon further investigation of the more recent literature, it is known that anxiety causes emotional ambivalence, whereby feelings of anxiety cause uncertainty about acting on the behaviour (King & Emmons, 1990; Harber 2005). In the present case this behaviour would be fitness club cancellation.

It is, then, no surprise that persisting with fitness club membership, is perhaps a way for new members to manage the impact of anxiety; a strategy showing 'consumer emotional intelligence' (Kidwell, Hardesty & Childers, 2008; Mayer and Salovey, 1997). Regarding the qualitative evidence, evidence suggesting the importance of anxiety and pressure was provided by both current and new members, suggesting that there should have been no differences between current and new members in the quantitative stages.

Overall, through the integration and comparison of the current and new members' datasets, it can be argued that current members' propensity to allow their anxiety and pressure to manifest into cancellation is not due to members become more anxious as membership

progresses, but instead is due to their resilience to persevere and to 'be strong' to diminish. A longitudinal research design would be more appropriate to track changes to these variables and relationships; a potential future research direction.

Also it was found that new members rate overall service quality, brand distinctiveness and brand prestige significantly higher than do current members. These factors were also included in the composite predictor 'perceived service quality and brand' that was predictive of new members' intention to cancel. However, the similar composite predictor was not in the final model predictive model of intention to cancel for current members. This suggests that perhaps perceived service quality, brand prestige and brand distinctiveness makes a positive impression on new members which may cause members to feel positive about their cancellation, however, as membership progresses, perhaps the other factors related to anxiety and motivation become more important to their future membership. Regarding the qualitative evidence, the perceived service quality of classes, changing rooms, childcare, bar/café, pool/spa, and brand attractiveness and brand similarity were not evidenced as being important by new members to their membership. This suggests that for new members, whilst perceived service quality and brand were rated more highly than current members when asked directly in a questionnaire, and were more predictive of their intentional cancellation, they were not salient enough to be elicited in the qualitative study. Similarly brand distinctiveness was not evidence in the qualitative study at all, but was found to be predictive of new members' intentional cancellation.

In retrospect, a maximum variation sampling strategy (Patton, 1990), which sought only to include breadth in the qualitative sample but not to specifically compare differences between groups of members, enabled the new members' predictive model of intention to cancel to be developed. This is because if different predictive models had been developed specifically for current and new members, based on their evidence in the qualitative study, quantitative support would not have been found as certain perceived service quality and brand factors would not have been included in the final mode for new members. That being said, to have compared groups within a qualitative sample more rigorously, the groups under comparison would have been larger groups, as opposed to comparing just two 'new' members with four 'current members'.

If it was known that there would have been differences between current and new members, then perhaps a comparative qualitative study would have been conducted instead. Perhaps future research could explore this.

9.3 Limitations and future directions

The limitations of each stage of the thesis have been discussed throughout. However, summaries of the limitations are presented below, and their implications for future research. It is important to recognise that mixed methods research, in its integration of studies also integrates the limitations of those studies. Not only, then, are the findings more than the 'sum of parts' (Bryman, 2007), but also are the limitations, whereby the error created by a limitation of stage one, adds to any error that may be created by a limitation of stage two. As such, as well as summaries of each stage's individual limitations, the integration of these limitations is discussed below.

With regard to the qualitative study, in accordance with Creswell and Miller (2000), the qualitative study was assessed in relation to 'credibility'. Whilst discussed In far more detail in Chapter Five, in brief, the limitations of this study, included a lack of member-checking and inter-rater reliability mainly due to time constraints imposed by the sequential nature of this study needing to be fully completed in order to progress to the next stage of questionnaire development in a time-scale that was also agreeable to the facilitating fitness club. According to Creswell and Miller, such limitations respectively indicate that neither 'the lens of the researcher' nor 'the lens of the external reviewer' have been looked through, reducing the overall credibility of the study.

Further, the use of telephone interviews could be argued as being a limitation to the credibility of the research, as this choice of data collection method may have restricted the sample of people able to take part i.e. only those with valid telephone numbers, telephone access, and only those without hearing impairments. Also, during telephone interviews there is a risk that participants may be less engaged due to a lack of face-to-face interaction which can be more stimulating (Bryman, 2008). This could result in less credible data being collected; less credible themes being elicited in the analysis. Future studies should seek to ensure such limitations are avoided.

As well as these being limitations to the qualitative study's credibility, creating the risk that more error could have been generated during this stage, any such error would have been added to any error created in the questionnaire development stage. For instance, any themes that were perhaps 'wrongly' elicited would have been included in the questionnaire. Any method of data collection has its limitations before the data is even collected.

It was considered that the main limitations of the questionnaire were due to its self-administered nature, which made it impossible to clarify any items for the participant or to probe the participant for further explanation. Whilst both web- and paper-based formats of the questionnaire were developed to ensure that both those members with and without computers/internet access could take part, there is the risk that self-administered questionnaires of any format restrict the sample to only those who are not literacy limited, as well as the risk of participants becoming bored and fatigued during the data collection process. (Bryman, 2008). Overall, including the qualitative study whereby telephone interviews were used, there was no face-to-face data collection throughout the studies of this research project. In general, the main limitation of the questionnaire was that it was designed to measure multiple predictors at the same time. Whilst the questionnaire data was not the only data collected (secondary data was also collected twelve months after the questionnaire's data collection for both of the quantitative studies) there is still the issue of 'common methods variance'; ''variance that is attributable to the measurement method rather than to the constructs the measures represent'' (Podsakoff et al, 2003, p. 879). This is discussed in detail in Chapter Six.

Finally, another limitation inherent to the questionnaire before its distribution was that is was designed with the intention of estimating reliability of the scales using the internal consistency approach. Internal consistency co-efficients (e.g. Cronbach alpha) should be interpreted with caution (Bartram, 1990) as they may suggest overstated estimates of reliability. As discussed in Chapter Six, future studies should seek to use other methods of estimating reliability, such as split-half, test re-test, or alternative form.

These limitations are identifiable during the questionnaire development stage, but have impact during the data collection stages for which it is used. For example, the choice to adopt self-administration and to measure multiple variables using the same 'common' method, creates further risk to the validity may have reduced the validity and

representativeness of the participant's responses, hence casting doubt on any of the findings.

With regards to the quantitative studies, the main limitation for both was related to sampling. For instance, with regard to quantitative study of current members, whilst the sampling frame was generated over a large range of day and times, this convenience sampling strategy only allowed for those members who use the fitness club to be sampled. As mentioned in Chapter Seven, whilst it was suggested that a questionnaire should be posted to all members, so as to include the non-users, this was not allowed by the facilitating fitness club, as it contravened company policy which prohibits contact with non-users due to a perceived risk of reminding members that they are, in fact, still paying for their membership even though they may not going. This presents a risk of not being wholly representative of members at that particular fitness club. In the quantitative study related to new members, a smaller, but more purposefully selected convenience sample of participants were recruited by the sales employees of the fitness club. The sample size was much smaller than previously; eighty-nine new members compared with the seven hundred and sixteen current members that comprised the previous sample of current members. There was also a higher level of non-response in the study of new members; a fifteen per cent response rate compared with a sixty-eight per cent response rate achieved in relation to current members. Also, in the study of new members, one age category (65+) was not represented which limits the representativeness of these findings to only those members under the age of sixty-five. Further, across both quantitative studies, members who cancelled their membership were not sufficiently represented, with the current and new members samples respectively consisting of 89% and 81% in comparison to the expected rate of only 60.6%; FIA, 2002.

The integrated, sequential nature of the study, allowing any error generated to be carried forward and to impact on subsequent stages of the research project, the integration of the findings also raised some limitations of the studies. For instance, the integration of the quantitative studies brought to light differences between current and new members, which was unexpected. If this had been expected, the sampling strategy of the qualitative study would have been comparative (seeking to compare responses from larger groups of current and new members) rather than maximum variation. Whilst, comparisons were still made and the qualitative study was revisited to try and explain any differences and to

account for 'discrepancies' between the findings, larger groups that represented current and new members sufficiently would have been an improvement. Also, if length of membership was anticipated as being a potential moderator of findings, then an interval measurement of length of membership would have been included in the questionnaire, as opposed to simply comparing 'current' and 'new' members. Also, a longitudinal study that consisted of different time points at which the questionnaire was distributed to a cohort of members would have been a better measure of how predictive factors changed during the course of membership. Also, the consideration that perhaps perceived value for money, usage, social identification and rapport may have not been sufficiently measured, hence their exclusion as predictors of cancellation in the final models, raises the question as to whether it is always appropriate to adopt researcher's scales. As mentioned earlier when discussing these predictors, perhaps future work could consider the development of scales to specifically measure these constructs and to capture the evidence that was provided during the qualitative study which suggested these variables as being predictors.

Another limitation may be present in that non-controllable variables were not considered (e.g. personal injury/illness, lifestyle changes). Controlling for the non-controllable variables may have helped yield more powerful findings. However, the focus of this thesis was on psychological variables, which being more susceptible to change are perhaps more controllable and can potentially be influenced through the development of appropriate retention strategies. Perhaps future research could include a combined approach; measuring psychological, contractual and demographic variables.

Another limitation of this research project is concerning external validity. Whilst the fitness club itself was not the unit of analysis and thus this project was not considered to be a case study, all of the research was conducted with the facilitation of one large private fitness club, of a leading operator in the UK. It was originally planned that more than one club within the operator would facilitate the research. However due to managerial changes within the operator, it became only possible to collect data from one club. This limits the extent to which the findings can be generalised to the operator, as well as to other fitness clubs. Further, generalising the findings to clubs with less/different facilities and local authority leisure centres is especially problematic; both of which may attract different clientele than private fitness clubs do. Clubs with less facilities ('gyms') may have a more homogenous clientele of members with a similar interest in body enhancement (as there

may not be the provision of relaxation facilities e.g. sauna/spa area). Local authority leisure centres are usually less expensive and so may attract members who are less affluent (or members who are less willing to pay a higher price for membership). Also, single-site clubs, who are not part of a larger operator, may also attract members who want to be a member of a prestigious, yet 'niche' club, and so may be deterred by a large operator. As such, brand identification may play a different role for these members.

However, the match-funded nature of this thesis, was borne out of a pre-arranged facilitation between WellWithin (the consultancy who match-funded this research) and the fitness club. Further to this, the author was asked to sign a non-disclaimer which provided anonymity for the club. Also, due to the competitive nature of fitness clubs, the author was asked not to conduct research with other 'competitors'. As such, this limitation reflects a challenge when conducting applied research.

9.4 Contribution to literature

The findings within the thesis contribute to the literature in three ways; the prediction of actual cancellation, the difference in predicting current and new members' intention to cancel, and the prediction of positive word-of-mouth.

Prediction of actual cancellation

The most striking finding of this thesis relates to the prediction of actual cancellation of current fitness club members. Whilst this relationship was not found in the study of new members, by collecting cancellation data twelve months after current members had completed the questionnaire, it was indicated that state anxiety (in relation to staff) and intention to cancel were together predictive of the likelihood that a member would have cancelled their membership. Previously, whilst other literature has aimed to predict actual retention behaviours (e.g. renewal; Bodet, 2008), this is the first study which has been able to find a significant predictor of actual cancellation of membership. Thus, this thesis extends the literature on membership retention in the fitness industry. Other than intention to cancel, it was a variable previously untested regarding its efficacy in predicting cancellation that was found to be predictive; state anxiety, thus also extending the literature on state anxiety.

Not only does this thesis provide support for the internal consistency of an adapted state anxiety scale (Martin and Fox, 2001) this thesis also provides predictive validation of state anxiety's role in predicting a criterion (cancellation of membership) that is different to the other criteria that it has previously be used to predict (e.g. motivation to partake in exercise, (Leary, 1992). As such, this extends the literature relating to the state anxiety; it can now also be argued as having an important predictive in role in the prediction of fitness club membership cancellation.

The difference in predicting current and new members' intentions to cancel

A notable finding elicited through the integration of studies is that current and new members are fundamentally different regarding what is predictive of their intention to cancel membership. This relates to Ferrand et al (2010), who found that length of membership can influence repurchase intentions of fitness club membership; the longer the membership, the higher the intention to repurchase. However, in Ferrand et al's study, length of membership was tested as an independent variable but not as a moderator of the other predictive relationships found. Whilst moderation effects were not explicitly found in this thesis, moderation can be implied by the fact that different models were necessary to predict intention to cancel for current members and new members. Also, there was a difference in current and new members' intention to cancel; new members had a higher intention to cancel than current members. This builds on Ferrand et al's study, and also suggests that further research is needed to confirm such moderating effects.

Regarding current members, 'external regulation and anxiety' (a composite of state anxiety, staff and members, social physique anxiety and external regulation) was found to predict the likelihood of a member with low intention to cancel as having cancelled their membership twelve months later. Those with a higher score of 'external regulation and anxiety' were found to have a higher likelihood of cancelling their membership twelve months later.

Thus, not only does this thesis provide further reliability support for the adapted scales of state anxiety (Martin & Fox, 2001), social physique anxiety (Martin et al, 1997) and external regulation (Wilson et al, 2004), this composition of 'external regulation and anxiety' suggests an interesting equivalence between external regulation and anxiety. This thesis suggests a link between the state anxiety literature and the self-determination literature,

which could be further explored. Such a link relates to the work of Maltby and Day (2001), who found that intrinsic motivation for participating in exercise, is related to increased psychological well-being.

Further, this thesis provides concurrent validation of state anxiety (staff and members), social physique anxiety and external regulation in predicting intention to cancel, as 'external regulation and anxiety' was found to be predictive of intention to cancel. This suggests that state anxiety (staff) has both a direct and an indirect relationship with actual cancellation. Also, this builds on the social physique anxiety literature by providing concurrent validation of its role in predicting intention to cancel. As similar to state anxiety, this extends the criteria that social physique anxiety can be considered as being concurrently predictive of intention to cancel. Not only has it previously been found to be related to usage (Lantz et al, 1997), but also now intentional membership cancellation can be added to the list of social physique anxiety's potential outcomes.

Further, state anxiety (staff and members) and social physique anxiety were found to predict the likelihood of a member with low intention to cancel as having cancelled their membership twelve months later. 'Internalised motivation' (identified, intrinsic and integrated regulation) was found to be predictive of intention to cancel; a higher score of 'Internalised motivation' predicted a lower score of intention to cancel. Overall, this thesis extends the self-determination literature, by indicating concurrent validation of four of the self-determination scales (external regulation, identified, intrinsic and integrated regulation) that were all included in the final composites that were predictive of intention to cancel. Self-determination theory has previously been researched in relation to the prediction of exercise participation (Chatzisarantis et al, 2003, Ingledew & Markland, 2008, Ingledew & Markland, 2009), but not in relation to membership cancellation.

Regarding new members, the composite predictor 'perceived service quality and brand' (perceived service quality, brand attractiveness, brand prestige and brand distinctiveness), was found to be predictive of intention to cancel.

As such, this thesis provides reliability support for Lam et al's (2005) perceived service quality scale but also adds support for the previous studies that found perceived service quality to have a predictive influence over retention intentions (Alexandris et al, 2001, Alexandris et al, 2004, Dhurup et al, 2006, Murray & Howat, 2002, Pedragosa & Correia, 2009, Ferrand et al, 2010 and Wei et al, 2010).

Also, with regards to brand identification, this inclusion of three of the four brand identification scales; brand attractiveness, brand prestige and brand distinctiveness in the composite adds support to previous studies that have found brand identification to be indicative of retention (Ahearne et al, 2005, Kuenzel & Halliday, 2010, Tuskej et al, 2011). Also, this thesis found reliability support for the previously unvalidated brand identification scales (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003), which were previously suggested by the authors but, up until now, had not been empirically validated. Not only does this thesis provide reliability support for these scales, but also provides concurrent validation of Bhattacharya & Sen's (2003) brand identification scales in their prediction of intention to cancel.

However, whilst finding support for the predictive roles of perceived service quality and brand identification, this thesis suggests that there is a caveat to these predictive roles; in that 'perceived service quality and brand' was only found to predict the intended cancellation of new members, but not of current members when modelled alongside 'external regulation and anxiety' and 'internalised motivation'. This suggests that perceptions of service quality and brand identification become less important to members as their membership progresses. This refutes the notion of brand identification developing over time, as was suggested by Papista and Dimitriadis (2012).

On a broader level, these differences perhaps represent a difference a shift from 'rational' members to 'emotional' members. A new member rates 'rational factors' (service quality and brand identification) as higher than current members, possibly due to these factors being used to make a decision to select that club instead of an alternative. As mentioned earlier, fitness clubs can be considered as being 'search-dominant'; the customer can evaluate the attributes and anticipate the service quality performance in advance of joining. So, it they have made the decision to join, it have may have been on the basis of a favourable perception of these salient service quality and brand factors. As such, these favourable perceptions may still be present in the earlier stages of membership. However,

whilst these rational factors may be favourably rated by new members in comparison with current members, the salience of these factors also leads to on-going evaluation, possibly at the expense of the evaluation of more 'emotional' (experiential and motivational) factors, which the members may disregard. For instance, even though new members may have higher levels of anxiety, they perhaps attribute any such high feelings of anxiety or pressure to 'still being new' and a belief that such feelings might fade over time. Subsequently, new members, even after acquisition, perhaps continue to only use 'rational' aspects of the club (service quality and brand) to evaluate their decision, post-purchase. New members also have higher intentions to cancel than current members, perhaps further suggesting that they have a have more reserved, unemotional outlook to the future of their membership; they will cancel their membership unless it meets their needs.

However, regarding current members, the rational factors of service quality and brand whilst being rated lower by current members than by new members, are ironically less important to current members. Current members, who have been members for longer than new members have, have perhaps had more exposure to the club and its facilities, increasing the chance that they may have noticed any service quality flaws or any brand issues, causing the current members to feel less identified with the brand. However, perhaps any perceived declines in service or brand factors is more tolerated by current members with current members being more pre-occupied by the negative effects that anxiety and external motivation bring. Whilst current members are more critical in their evaluation of service quality and brand identification, they are also more 'emotionally' driven than new members. A current member, whilst having lower anxiety and higher external motivation than a new member, are more affected by these 'emotional' factors, which are more important than the rational factors regarding the future of their membership.

Also in a fitness club context, Crossley (2006) noted that motivations for starting membership at a fitness club may well be different from motivations from continuing membership; "joining a gym is different from sticking at it…a new set of motives kicks in for regular gym goers" (p. 46). As such, perhaps a change in motivation can explain a change in 'key factors' (Bodet, 2006); what may be a key factor for a new member, based on the perceived need to make tangible change to his/her body, may become secondary, as the member's need become less tangible over time, as experiential/motivational factors become key.

According to Crossley, members that start membership at fitness club are more driven by tangible motivations i.e. to lose weight, 'get fit' all of which represent a perception that the "agent's [member's] self was at stake" (Crossley, 2006, p.31). Such tangible motivations require a focus and need for tangible aspects of the club e.g. equipment, classes, pool/spa facilities. However, members who have continued their membership, develop motivations relating to 'enjoyment', 'social interaction' and 'relaxation and release'. This change to less tangible motivations perhaps then lead to the member focusing more on the intangible aspects of the club e.g. atmosphere, social interactions, level of comfort. According to Crossley, the more a member "relies upon exercise as a technique of relaxing and unwinding, the more incentive they have for continuing at the gym" (p.42). Such reliance perhaps explains why anxiety and motivation were found to be predictive of fitness club membership retention for current members.

The prediction of positive word-of-mouth

Previous fitness industry literature has considered positive word-of-mouth to be analogous to membership intentions, including positive word-of-mouth items and purchase intention items in the same scale (Bodet, 2008; Pegragosa & Correia, 2009). However, this thesis adds to this literature by suggesting that positive word-of-mouth and membership intentions should be classed as different constructs (in agreement with Söderlund, 2006) and that intention to cancel is predictive of members' performance of positive word-of-mouth behaviours. This supports the marketing literature that has found a predictive relationship between purchase intention and positive word-of-mouth (Brown, 2005; De Matos & Rossi, 2008; Dick & Basu, 1994).

Overall, the mixed methods nature of this thesis has led to a multi-disciplinary approach being taken in order to explore the question; 'why do fitness club members cancel their membership?'. Whilst this question represents a specific problem of the fitness industry, the previous fitness industry literature has not been broad enough to sufficiently answer the questions, rendering a solution to the problem difficult to provide. The predictors most discussed in the previous fitness industry literature regarding retention (perceived service quality, perceived value for money, usage, brand associations) do not in themselves answer the question.

As such, this thesis has also uncovered the predictive influence of concepts rooted within sports psychology (state anxiety, social physique anxiety, self-determination theory) and rooted within services marketing (brand identification) in order to suggest an answer to the question and subsequently to develop and evaluate membership cancellation interventions (not within the scope of this thesis).

9.5 Future publications scheduled

A list of previous publications is provided in Appendix E1. In addition, the following journal articles are scheduled for submission:

Watts, H.N., Francis-Smythe, J.A., Peters, D. & Upton, D. A predictive model of membership retention in the fitness industry. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour* (in preparation).

Watts, H.N., Francis-Smythe, J.A., Peters, D. & Upton, D. The role of service quality and brand identification in predicting membership retention. *Journal of Brand Management* (in preparation).

Watts, H.N., Francis-Smythe, J.A., Peters, D. & Upton, D. Exploring the roles of self-determination and anxiety in predicting fitness club retention. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology* (in preparation).

9.6 Implications for fitness club management

Any research which has had identified predictors of retention, or retention intentions, has direct implications for relationship marketing strategies. Relationship marketing can be defined as "attracting, developing, and retaining customer relationships" (Berry & Parasuraman, 1991, p.133).

One approach that can be taken to try and strengthen the organization's relationship with the customer is to target the customer based on their profile. Such a profile can be based on demographic, psychographic or behavioural variables. These variables, or a combination or the three, may be used to indicate 'risk'; risk of defection.

With relation to the fitness industry, profiling has been offered by consultancies to fitness clubs to help them identify members with a high risk of cancelling membership (e.g. The Retention People; http://www.theretentionpeople.com, 2012). The findings of this thesis suggest that psychographic profiling should form the basis of such profiling and intervening; psychological variables do play a part in determining likelihood of retention. However, another interesting implication of this thesis for fitness clubs is that the customer life cycle; their stage of membership, should determine how psychological information is used to intervene.

For instance, given that for new members, perceived service quality and brand identification appeared to be more predictive than other psychological variables in predicting likelihood of retention intentions, fitness clubs managers could be advised to identify members with relatively poor perceptions of service quality and low brand identification. This could be achieved by profiling new members one month after joining to measure their perceptions of service quality and brand identification. Whilst for the sample of new members in this thesis, perception of the classes, childcare and pool/spa were important service quality dimensions, these specific dimensions may simply be a product of the specific sample and the facilities they used, and so it might be too restrictive to focus on just these three dimensions. In general, it is recommended that new members, after one month, that indicate a low perception of overall service quality (comprised of whichever aspects they feel able to rate) are targeted with information relating to recent, current or future service quality improvements. Also, members with a low perception of their identification with the brand could be targeted with corporate information, communicating the values of either the club's brand or the club operator's brand.

Given that for current members (defined as members who have been a member for at least three months), perceptions of anxiety and type of motivation appeared to predictive of retention and/or retention intentions, fitness clubs managers could be advised to identify members with relatively high levels of anxiety and those who are relatively highly externally motivated. Again, this could be achieved by profiling members after six months of membership, and measuring their levels of anxiety and those who 'score' relatively high could be targeted with information promoting a positive, friendly atmosphere, promoting a social, 'fun' side of the club. Also, members with a relatively high level of external motivation could be targeted with information relating to the 'enjoyable' aspects of exercise;

fun classes and equipment, with less emphasis on the benefits and more on the pleasure that can be experienced. This implies that fitness clubs should play a part in connecting members at an industry/product category level, promoting an enjoyable, empowering image of exercising in a fitness club, rather than just focusing on external benefits e.g. weight loss.

Overall, this suggests an iterative strategy, combining profiling (after one month), with targeted intervention, followed by more profiling (after six months) and another targeted intervention.

To ensure that such interventions are successful, it is essential that a customer-focused culture is developed (Reicheld & Kenny, 1990) and that the marketing function successfully liaises with other business functions during the implementation. For instance, regarding the first, 'new member' intervention, operations management/facilities management would need to be liaised with, in the compilation of the necessary service quality information, as well as liaising with brand management to help compile information relating to recent corporate/brand value developments.

Regarding the second, 'current member' intervention, fitness trainers and other front-line staff could be liaised with to gain an understanding of 'how things are' in the actual fitness club itself, as well as working with creative communications experts to help develop imagery and post-purchase advertisements, aimed at showing fitness club exercise in a positive, pleasurable and empowering light. Also, given that front-line staff members are perhaps well placed to shape the customer experience, there may be implications for staff training; how to develop the interpersonal skills necessary to help increase pleasure and comfort in the fitness club environment, and also to help internalise the motivation for being a fitness club member.

Further, the relationship suggested between current members with a low intention to cancel and positive word-of-mouth implies that fitness club managers should lever the 'safety' of their low intention to cancel members and perhaps encourage them to participate in any blogging, social networking activities that the club may have in place.

Of course, a more simplistic approach could be taken; to simply target all new members with service quality and brand information, and to target all current members promoting an experiential, atmospheric and enjoyable image of exercise in the fitness club. Another approach could be for fitness club managers to identify where their highest point of attrition occurs in the customer life cycle, and focus an intervention just on, say, new members or current members. However, such aggregated approaches, as opposed to more individualised approaches, risk wasting marketing resources on 'safe' members who may have high service quality perceptions, high brand identification, low anxiety and low external motivation. In addition an aggregated approach such as this may have a negative impact on these 'safe' members by exposing a perceived lack of customer intimacy.

In relation to other retention strategy advice posited in the literature, this thesis suggests that rather than a 'hierarchical' approach being taken (developing financial bonds (Level one), then social bonds (Level two), then structural bonds (level three); Hurley, 2004), this thesis suggests that different bonds are more useful to develop depending on the members. Hurley, using Berry and Parasuraman's (1991) retention strategy framework, suggested that fitness clubs who use all three bonds (financial, social and structural strategies are likely to have higher retention rates. This thesis suggests that structural strategies (implementing risk identification, and membership tracking), even though perhaps more costly and resource-intensive, are indeed essential in deciding which retention strategy is needed; implementing activities which promote quality and brand developments (to new members with low service quality perceptions and low brand identification), and implementing activities which promote positive feeling, comfort and motivation (to current members with high anxiety and high external motivation). Further, the type of activity (education, staff training, point of contact) should all be integrated into the retention of both new and current 'high risk' members, with the content of such activities differing according to the member's current/new status.

Further, fitness club management need to make clear to their employees that they have a direct role in affecting fitness club member's propensity to cancel. As such, staff training initiatives focused on how staff can reduce the anxiety of their current members should perhaps be developed. Staff could also perhaps play a part in the way in which fitness club members are motivated. Focusing on external regulation; creating an extrinsic motivation or pressure for members to retain their membership will potentially have the unwanted,

reverse outcome of attrition whereas helping to develop more internalised motivation (intrinsic, identified and integrated regulation) will potentially increase a member's likelihood of retaining their membership.

9.7 Reflection on the research process

This section offers my reflection on the research process; what I have learnt and what has challenged me. Throughout, I also refer to the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education's (QAA) Framework for Higher Education Qualification (FHEQ) published in 2008 to reflect on the doctoral skills I consider myself to have demonstrated and my application of learning in the process of completing this thesis.

At the beginning of the research process, it quickly became apparent that the research area lent itself to be investigated by considering the fitness club member as not only a leisure participant but also as a leisure consumer and, on a broader scale, a consumer of a service. As such different literatures became necessary to search; not just literature relating to exercise participation, but also literature relating to leisure marketing and services marketing. Also, after searching the various literatures it became apparent that psychological factors were at the root of the literature, either as being causal to retention (e.g. perceptions of service quality) or as representing a measurable outcome (e.g. intentions to renew membership).

Further into the research process, a wider variety of psychological constructs emerged as being potential contributors to membership retention. For me, the cross-disciplinary nature of the different literatures, and the range of psychological factors that were researched throughout this project represented a challenge for me. Whilst my background in Psychology, and also Occupational Psychology had provided me with a rounded knowledge of various psychological concepts, this thesis has definitely necessitated my engagement in more concepts and more literatures than I envisaged would be necessary at the beginning. However, I feel this has been an important learning point; that in order to take a more pragmatic approach in the exploration of a 'real-world problem', it is essential to consider the role of other factors and bodies of literature which may initially be out of one's 'comfort zone'. I have learnt about the importance of using a critical review of the literature to determine a specific research question, one which will have enough specificity to be clearly researched and to also allow a clear and specific contribution to be made to

the existing literature. For instance, by specifying 'cancellation' as opposed to 'retention' as the target outcome variable, this allowed a clearer understanding of the dependent variable whilst also helping to address a gap in the literature caused by a focus on renewal. This is similar to also specifying actual versus intentional cancellation; addressing another bias in the literature caused by focusing only on intentions not behaviour.

Further, according to QAA (2008, p.24) doctoral students must demonstrate "a systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an academic discipline or area of professional practice" which I feel the cross-disciplinary nature of this thesis, and the necessity to engage in different literatures, has helped me to demonstrate.

From the beginning of the research process there have been various challenges and learning points for me. The nature of a match-funded thesis suggests that the topic and the research question have been pre-determined. However, in order to ensure an academic grounding for the research, it was important to ensure that the specific research question could be positioned within the existing literature. WellWithin were the funders but were not the facilitating fitness club, as such the fitness club that facilitated this project did not appear to have a vested interest in this research. However, the fitness club management were keen to ensure that the research would not be invasive or have a negative impact on their members, which restrained the nature of the data collection to some extent, for example not being able to contact the non-users through the risk of them becoming cognisant of their low usage and then deciding to cancel. This was at the heart of the sampling limitations of the two quantitative studies. On a wider note, this represents a challenge of applied research; trying to satisfy the requirements of the facilitating club whilst also conducting rigorous representative research. However, working with my supervisors, WellWithin and the fitness club management, has developed my skills in managing research relationships.

Also, at the beginning of the research process, I feel that I was much more of a positivist researcher, having come from completing an MSc in Occupational Psychology whereby the dissertation project was purely quantitative with a clearly defined research question at the beginning which was just tested during the project.

However, throughout completing this thesis I feel that I have developed an equal appreciation of both positivism and constructivism, through conducting mixed methods research.

Conducting the qualitative study made me engage with a challenge in qualitative research; being systematic and rigorous in my approach, systematically coding transcripts, whilst also trying not to lose the richness of the data. It was interesting to learn about the notion of qualitative research being evaluated by a different set of criteria and through different procedures, and that quantitative values are not completely analogous to qualitative values.

When designing the questionnaire, I had to make decisions regarding whether I would operate at a theoretical level, testing theoretical constructs and working with parcels of variables, or whether I would operate at an empirical level, working with individual items. Also, the question of 'how much scales can be adopted an adapted' arose, which made me question the value of adapting scales versus the value of developing scales.

During data collection with the questionnaire, whilst achieving a large sample for the first study, this made me realise the importance of having contact with participants before asking them to take part in research. However, this also had the potential risk of creating social desirability, or even creating a sense of obligation to complete the research due to a previous indicated 'agreement' to do so, by offering me their email addresses for me to send them a questionnaire. There was also the risk that those that felt favourable enough to complete questionnaire were also those who felt favourable about their membership. As such, due to a high amount of participants who had a low intention to cancel, the nature of the intention to cancel variable had to be changed. Any such prior expectations of using parametric analyses had to be changed to allow a more suitable analysis to be used. Having a large sample, but which could have been more representative led me to think of other ways I could ensure rigorous analysis. For instance, it was important to ensure that the large sample was not the only cause of any significant findings, and so I learnt about the value of split file analysis, and testing models on two halves of a dataset, not just on the full dataset.

Overall, I feel that the research and analyses detailed in this thesis demonstrate the QAA's (2008, p.24) requirement that doctoral students must demonstrate "the general ability to conceptualise, design and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge, applications or understanding at the forefront of the discipline, and to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems". Further, the QAA (2008, p.24) states that doctoral students must demonstrate "a detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry" which I feel has also been demonstrated through the variety of research methods and analytical techniques adopted to complete this thesis.

It is also important to reflect on transferable skills and applications of learning that have resulted from the completion of this thesis. According to the QAA (2008, p.25), holders of a doctorate qualification will be able to "continue to undertake pure and/or applied research and development at an advanced level, contributing substantially to the development of new techniques, ideas or approaches". Towards the end of this thesis, I have been involved in further retention research, designing a research process and helping to design and conduct interviews with a regional housing association seeking to retain its tenants to a fitness scheme.

Further, according to the QAA (2008, p.25), holders of a doctorate qualification will be able to "make informed judgements on complex issues in specialist fields, often in the absence of complete data, and be able to communicate their ideas and conclusions clearly and effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences". Perhaps the most notable application of learning and communication of ideas to non-specialist audiences, is represented by the securing of a Knowledge Transfer Project grant, whereby the University was awarded a grant to allow the knowledge generated throughout my thesis to be transferred to the development of a retention service for WellWithin. A framework was developed regarding how retention can be researched and recommendations made, which was piloted on a large aeronautical society, and enabled WellWithin to develop a membership retention service that can be used to improve their clients' retention rates. This represented the first Knowledge Transfer Project grant that was awarded to the University.

Finally, I would like to reflect on how I have applied my learning from the completion of this thesis, in other areas of my career. According to the QAA (2008, p.25), holders of a doctorate qualification will be have "the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex and unpredictable situations, in professional or equivalent environments."

Towards the end of the completion of this thesis, I secured a full-time lecturing position in Worcester Business School, whereby I have been teaching on a range of consumer psychology and consumer behaviour modules, as well as research methods modules, which would not have been possible without the learning that I have achieved throughout this thesis. Also, my achievement of Chartered status as an Occupational Psychologist I feel was facilitated by taking an evidence-based approach to the completion of projects. To complete my Chartership, I conducted research in a variety of business contexts in order to develop interventions, which my experience of conducting research throughout this thesis strongly facilitated.

Overall, the completion of this thesis has strengthened my identity as an applied psychology researcher, after engaging with multiple areas of psychology, multiple bodies of literature and multiple methods all with the aim of further understanding membership retention in the fitness industry.

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Appendices

INTRODUCTION
- *Helen- research student looking at fitness club membership.*
- *Receive a letter from [fitness club]?*
- *Research project- not market research.*
- *Approx. 20-30 minutes.*
- *Okay to record? Confidential, anonymous, can stop at anytime.*

QUESTIONS
1) (Current & frozen members only) How would you describe your intention to [cancel or maintain] your membership at the moment?
   (Ex-members only) What do you think led to your decision to cancel?

2) What do you think makes you feel like this?

3) What do you think could change your mind?

4) If you were a fitness club manager, what would be the most important aspects of a fitness club that you would invest in and why?

5) What else could [fitness club] do to try and increase their members' loyalty?

6) What [do/did] you think of the service quality?

7) What role [do/did] you think service quality [has/had] on your intentions to [cancel/maintain] your membership?

8) What [do/did] you think of the value for money there?

9) What role [do/did] you think value for money has on your intentions to [cancel/maintain] your membership?

10) What [do/did] you think of [fitness club] a brand of fitness clubs?

11) What role [do/did] you think the brand has on your intentions to [cancel/maintain] your membership?

12) What [do/did] you think about your own usage of the fitness club?

13) What role [do/did] you think your usage has on your intentions to [cancel/maintain] your membership?

14) Lastly, is there anything else you think you can add to my understanding of why people might choose to stay or to cancel their fitness club membership?

CONCLUSION
- *Thanks for your time*
- *Any more information about this project?*
- *Any questions, write to University of Worcester address as shown on the letter.*

Appendix A2 Letter to interview participants

Address

<div align="right">Date</div>

Dear [First name],

At [Fitness club], we are currently facilitating a research project into fitness club membership, which is being conducted at the University of Worcester in collaboration with WellWithin.

As part of this research project, it is hoped that brief, confidential telephone conversations with some of our members and ex-members can be carried out over the next two weeks. There is a possibility that you may be contacted and asked to take part.

If you do not give your permission for us to pass on your details so that you can be contacted, please complete and return the portion at the bottom of this letter by the 10th December to Helen Watts (CP@W), Comm. & Development Dept., University of Worcester, Freepost WR333, Henwick Grove, WORCESTER WR2 62D who will forward on your request not to be contacted.

Yours sincerely,

[Fitness club] Member Services

I do not give my permission for my details to be passed on, and I do not wish to be contacted as part of this research project.

Name _____

Signed _____

Date _____

Appendix A3 Template analysis matrix

		M/F	Comments relating to maintaining or rejoining membership
Current (5 years)	*Interviewee 1*	M	Quote 1: Pretty strong [my intention to maintain. Quote 2: I wouldn't contemplate it [looking for a different club].
	Interviewee 2	F	Definitely yes [I intend to maintain]
Current (1 year)	*Interviewee 3*	F	Quote 1: I cancelled it before, because I couldn't get my son into the crèche at reasonable times so I couldn't go...but then I rejoined. Quote 2: It fluctuates from day to day. Quote 3: I would say I'm fairly satisfied there.
	Interviewee 4	F	I don't think I'm going to cancel any time soon.
Current (3 months)	*Interviewee 5*	M	I'll be there long term.
	Interviewee 6	F	Quote 1: Quite happy staying there. Quote 2: If all else gets on top of me it'll be the first thing that I drop.
High volume users (15 visits)	*Interviewee 7*	M	Quote 1: Yeah I intend to keep it. Quote 2: I wouldn't say it's the best thing since sliced bread, but I wouldn't say it's poor either. I'm fairly satisfied.
	Interviewee 8	F	Quote 1: I think I'll keep it going...yes definitely keep it going. Quote 2: Yes, I am quite satisfied.
Average volume users (5 visits)	*Interviewee 9*	M	I'm not intending to have any thoughts about cancelling... I'm quite happy there for the foreseeable future.
	Interviewee 10	M	Yeah I'll be maintaining it.
Low volume users (1 visit)	*Interviewee 11*	F	Quote 1: I will maintain it. Quote 2: [I am] very satisfied yes.
	Interviewee 12	F	Quote 1: I'll be cancelling it in September because I'm moving away. Quote 2: It's good, I really like it.
Frozen members	*Interviewee 13*	F	So, long term yeah... I mean, it's got to be.
	Interviewee 14	F	Quote 1: Undecided on hold at the moment... Quite likely to cancel it. Quote 2: I don't know whether I will or not, we'll just see. In the Summer I might do more swimming.
	Interviewee 15	F	Quote 1: Not at the moment no [no intention to cancel]. There's always the hope I'll resurrect it. Quote 2: I'm thinking about going back at some point. Quote 3: It's a door I never wanted to close.
Ex-members	*Interviewee 19*	M	Quote 1: I probably wouldn't join again. Quote 2: If I was to ever rejoin a gym again it would be [fitness club]. I suppose I'd rejoin [fitness club] again.
	Interviewee 20	F	I'd join again when I had the money, I'd go back to that gym.
	Interviewee 22	F	If I was going to go, it would definitely be a gym where I paid as I went.
	Interviewee 23	F	I've just never bothered to rejoin. I wouldn't bother [joining another club]

		M/F	Perceived service quality (general)
Current (5 years)	*Interviewee 1*	M	Yeah they have the lot, it's such a cross section of services that you don't fully appreciate 'til you've been there a while.
	Interviewee 2	F	Quote 1: They did make a couple of changes but they didn't really keep you informed about it...maybe a mail shot would have been nice. Quote 2: Yeah what you get is very good value, the classes the spa. Quote 3: [fitness club] has always felt clean and hygienic looking.
Current (1 year)	*Interviewee 4*	F	The quality of facilities, friendliness of staff, the pool, gym, classes, top of the range equipment and the general atmosphere...it's got to be a friendly place.
Current (3 months)	*Interviewee 5*	M	It all just has to be clean and work... I'm not interested in anything else.
	Interviewee 6	F	Quote 1: Spacing things out, classes, motivational tools, personal trainers good range of equipment at all times. Quote 2: My friends say that [fitness club] is much bigger, more space and equipment I would say it's very good value for money.
High volume users (15 visits)	*Interviewee 7*	M	Quote 1: Principally because the facilities are pretty good. Quote 2: It's all about providing a good environment, the latest equipment, good cafe facilities, friendly staff... You've got to have the best facilities and friendly staff.
Average volume users (5 visits)	*Interviewee 10*	M	There are gyms that are closer but that haven't got the same facilities. The facilities are very good there- it's clean, convenient, people are friendly enough...if I need assistance there's always someone around, that's quite important that there's someone around and if you do want to join in and be part of the gang that would be fine.
Low volume users (1 visit)	*Interviewee 11*	F	It's service I want, cost is not the main priority...that would keep me a member... If I did find that the service deteriorated or there were any major changes then I would look elsewhere.
Frozen members	*Interviewee 13*	F	Quote 1: If it got too busy [this would affect my intention to stay there. Quote 2: If you know more about what's going on there and you've got people interested in what you're doing there as an exercise it does encourage you to maintain it I think. That's why a lot of people drift away, because they don't show any interest in them after they have been there for two or three months.
	Interviewee 15	F	It was fine when I was there- it has lovely facilities. It's always clean and there's always hot water and showers. The people there, they sort of guided you, when I used to use the machines in the gym they were helpful. And that was good. And of course you have the TV as well which is good, takes the pain away.
Ex-members	*Interviewee 19*	M	Quote 1: It was a good gym and had everything covered. Quote 2: Sometimes it would be a mad rush and that's what puts me off.
	Interviewee 20	F	Friendliness from the staff and facilities.
	Interviewee 21	M	It's well set up and it's got all the facilities and everything.
	Interviewee 22	F	I was very satisfied, It was a nice club, I liked it. They had a women's only section, a pool, nice changing rooms, it was a good atmosphere.

		M/F	Perceived service quality (Staff)
Current (5 years)	*Interviewee 1*	M	Quote 1: they'll [staff] come over and they'll say "do you want to try this". Quote 2: For me, I think the key thing that I would invest in would be the staff. The staff have to be approachable, friendly, open, understanding and willing to be perceived as actually caring.
	Interviewee 2	F	Personal training would be good, but it's very expensive. I know there are people wandering around, but there's nothing like having a personal trainer...getting reassurance that you're doing the right thing.
Current (1 year)	*Interviewee 3*	F	Quote 1: Staff, I would invest in staff. They need to, you know, make a good impression. At the end of the day, if you pay peanuts you get monkeys. Quote 2: They [the staff] seem nice enough but there's not enough of them to be able to do what's important. They should make they're customers feel like they're important.
Current (3 months)	*Interviewee 5*	M	The staff are nice and friendly.
	Interviewee 6	F	Quote 1: The staff are always quite welcoming, they always say bye to you, they ask you if you feel troubled at all. Quote 2: I don't get badgered even though I have membership and haven't been there in a while so I'm quite happy.
High volume users (15 visits)	*Interviewee 7*	M	Quote 1: The only think I'm not entirely happy with is some of the service levels of the people there...Frankly, I can go running there, it's a pleasant environment but if I feel I'm faced with surly staff and unresponsive, that's what would make me change my membership. Quote 2: As a general rule, we get very little feedback from them at all. Actually, on balance [if they did send more information] I'd be thinking 'bloody hell, I wish they'd stop sending me these flyers'.
Average volume users (5 visits)	*Interviewee 9*	M	Quote 1: They're friendly down there...it sort of doesn't make you shop around when you're being treated like that. Quote 2: If the attitude of the staff changed dramatically. Quote 3: All the staff are welcoming and relaxing when you arrive.
	Interviewee 10	M	They've got enough staff.
Low volume users (1 visit)	*Interviewee 11*	F	There's a welcome when you go in, everyone's very pleasant.
	Interviewee 12	F	There's people around to help when you don't really know what you're doing.
Frozen members	*Interviewee 13*	F	Quote 1: It would be nice for somebody to say contact you, find out what you're doing, how you're getting on....they lose a lot of members during the year because people don't feel valued. Quote 2: I'd like to think that I'd invest in the staff because if you've got good happy staff, I think the rest of the club benefits.
	Interviewee 14	F	Quote 1: My grandson is taught to swim, and I'm not that impressed... The person they've got now, I've got my reservations about him.
	Interviewee 15	F	Quote 1: Friendliness of staff and hygiene have got to be top... And then I suppose the facilities. Quote 2: And the quality of advice that you're given, that's important else you could easily do yourself damage.

Ex-members		*Interviewee 17*	F	The staff were always helpful*. The staff have got to be approachable, able to communicate, and able to inform the client and not just be for the ultra fit.
		Interviewee 18	F	Quote 1: The staff were totally blaze about it and really took absolutely no notice. Quote 2: I suppose from about July onwards [I was thinking about cancelling] because the attitude of the staff and the so-called management, the management all being about twenty, they really couldn't care less. Quote 3: They pay lip service to customer satisfaction but really they couldn't care less.
		Interviewee 19	M	Quote 1: There were no other issues...everyone there was welcoming.* Quote 2: It might have helped [having a personal trainer]… I mean I would have been subconsciously thinking that someone would have been checking the records and that, but it's not as though they can turn around and give me a bollocking. That wouldn't help me because I just end up doing what I want to.
		Interviewee 22	F	Quote 1: I would probably invest in more staff- there wasn't a lot of staff around… They gave you an induction when you first joined but it would be nice if there was more around if you were a bit stuck or weren't sure what to do. Quote 2*: They were very nice, always quite welcoming... there were an awful lot in the reception area greeting people and working on the desk but when you went to the gym there was only probably two or three. There wasn't an awful lot compared to how big the gym was. Quote 3: I think they had a text service and you'd get standard texts from them saying on certain days something was half price, but they were standard ones so I would imagine they send them to all members, it didn't feel that they were personally targeting me. Quote 4: I would have appreciated it [more texts] if it was now and again, but if it was all the time I would have been a bit annoyed and almost felt hassled...it would have been nice to get a mail now and again, I mean the only letters I ever got from them were ones complaining that I'm late with membership fees or when I was trying to leave. Those were the only letters I got from them- I didn't get any encouragement letters. Quote 5: To start with they were emailing me at work, encouraging me to join but that might have been a promotional thing just to try and get members to join because I didn't get that same thing after I joined.

		M/F	Perceived service quality (Classes)
Current (5 years)	*Interviewee 2*	F	What you get is very good value... the classes.
High volume users (15 visits)	*Interviewee 8*	F	Quote 1: The classes really, they do really good classes there. Quote 2: I like the classes, the ones where you don't have to do much really like yoga...where you just lay on a mat.
Low volume users (1 visit)	*Interviewee 11*	F	When I went to aerobics once, quite a lot of the girls were talking as a group and I was made to feel welcome the first time I joined in.
Frozen members	*Interviewee 13*	F	Quote 1: It's great...I can do classes which I quite enjoy and I can do the exercise. Quote 2: You can book the classes on the website, which they haven't got quite right yet. You've got to have very good eyesight to be able to read the classes. And also they don't really give an explanation as to what the classes are about.*
	Interviewee 15	F	I never used to enjoy the exercise classes oddly enough.*
Ex-members	*Interviewee 18*	F	Quote 1: On some occasions we were working, doing yoga, through a plastic sheet, with a Polish work team on the other side of the plastic Quote 2: It [class room] turned out to be a long narrow room that reminded me of a mausoleum- an internal room, artificially lit by a light sequence which flashed gentle different colours which really, if you squinted, might have had an epileptic fit. They put on classes, at times of course when I couldn't actually go, and here I am, I thought, tied in to a membership in a room that gives me claustrophobia and often you can't actually book it so I left. Quote 3: It [class room of other fitness club] is a very little room but it's tucked away and there's no nasty music.
	Interviewee 22	F	They had exercise classes but the ones I was interested in tended to be during the day or at weekends when I wasn't going.

		M/F	Perceived service quality (Changing rooms)
Current (1 year)	*Interviewee 3*	F	[during the change] they sectioned off part of the changing rooms as if to say ' that's where you should be changing your children'.
Current (3 months)	*Interviewee 5*	M	The only thing really is… I don't like seeing small children in the changing rooms, it makes me feel uncomfortable.*
Low volume users (1 visit)	*Interviewee 11*	F	The changing rooms are upmarket, quite relaxing and clean... You've got everything, showers, hairdryers; everything's just laid out for you.
Ex-members	*Interviewee 17*	F	The changing rooms were very good, with the hairdryers and everything. They were kept clean, the showers were good.*
	Interviewee 22	F	Quote 1: Yes they [the pool and changing rooms] were quite good. Quote 2: I think in all the changing rooms I've been in, in different places, they were the nicest I've ever seen*...but I would have preferred more cubicles rather than communal changing areas...it's not that I think anyone is going to be looking at me, it's just something I don't really like.

		M/F	Perceived service quality (Childcare)
High volume users (15 visits)	*Interviewee 7*	M	It can be bloody difficult getting her [daughter] into the crèche.
Average volume users (5 visits)	*Interviewee 9*	M	It's more than just a gym, we can go and drop the little one of in the crèche, and we can go and do the gym.
Frozen members	*Interviewee 15*	F	There's a lot of young parents, but they've got the crèche which is a huge advantage.

		M/F	Perceived service quality (Physical facility)
Current (5 years)	Interviewee 1	M	The car parking can be a challenge because I'm going there after work and it's the busiest period...I know if I went any earlier or later then it wouldn't be a problem so I know that and I understand that and it's acceptable. Service wise, there's everything there I could possibly need. I don't use everything, but there's everything there. It's unfair to call [fitness club] a gym anymore, because there's so many more things involved and that's why I'm still a member and don't begrudge what I pay.
	Interviewee 2	F	[fitness club] has always felt clean and hygienic looking.
Current (1 year)	Interviewee 4	F	Quote 2: The facilities there are unrivalled.
Current (3 months)	Interviewee 5	M	The general facilities are good.
	Interviewee 6	F	Being able to go when you want to... being able to do what you want when you want.
High volume user (15 visits)	Interviewee 8	F	Quote 2: I like the music that they have on, and they have tellies in there too... They're quite high tech I think.
Average volume users (5 visits)	Interviewee 9	M	Plenty of parking and that.
	Interviewee 10	M	Quote 1: They've got a nice big car park, which is important. Quote 2: Decoration is okay.
Low volume users (1 visit)	Interviewee 12		Maybe more car parking spaces would be good.*
Frozen members	Interviewee 14	F	The place is okay.
Ex-members	Interviewee 17	F	There was no problem with the actual place.*
	Interviewee 18	F	Quote 1: They started to knock the place down, which meant it was full of dust, the noise got worse and worse. Quote 2: There was competing noise, because the louder the building works got, the louder the jungle music which they played. Quote 3: There's no nasty music in the place [other fitness club] anyway, just very gentle background music.
	Interviewee 23	F	Quote 1: We had to go down there on a Thursday night, when there was a special hour for teens, which seemed a bit ridiculous because she's a big girl, wanted to go in the gym but she wasn't allowed because she wasn't 16… we found that quite restrictive. Quote 2: We wanted to go there and use the facilities when it suited us, not when it suited the gym.

		M/F	**Perceived service quality (Gym environment)**
Current (5 years)	*Interviewee 1*	M	Yes that's one thing I like....they're always putting new machines in there on a regular basis…
	Interviewee 2	F	Quality of equipment, layout so people have enough space. I know gyms have social factors but sometimes you need your own space.
Current (3 months)	*Interviewee 5*	M	The machines all work.
	Interviewee 6	F	I think 'cos of all the space provided you're not all scrunched together- you can hide yourself in the corner.
High volume users (15 visits)	*Interviewee 8*	F	Up to date equipment, and music as well I think, and bright decor. They've got a big window there which I can look out of... easily pleased me.
Average volume users (5 visits)	*Interviewee 9*	M	Quote 1: They do keep up to date, there's always new equipment. I don't use it, but it all looks up to date.
	Interviewee 10	M	Quote 1: Getting on the equipment I want without queuing. So having enough machines [is important to me]. Quote 2: They've just spent a lot of money refurbishing the gym it was getting a bit tired looking.
Low volume users (1 visit)	*Interviewee 12*	M	Quote 1: Getting some decent machines that people can figure out how to use on their own. Quote 2: But they've got loads of different machines and loads of space which is good.
Frozen members	*Interviewee 13*	F	Quote 1: I was quite impressed by the refurbishment because there is a lot more equipment but it's still nicely spaced out, you're not standing on top of each other whereas some other clubs I've been too have always been a little too busy for the equipment they've got. Quote 2: I'd like to have less equipment but better equipment.
	Interviewee 15	F	Quote 1: Not so much the variety [is important] but more the quality of the machines.
Ex-members	*Interviewee 17*	F	Quote 1: My husband wasn't keen on the gym, a lot of the machines were broken and not repaired.
	Interviewee 19	M	Quote 1: Just literally getting on the kit... The gym was always clean and tidy.* Quote 2: It was always an issue trying to get on the equipment, and not all the equipment was there... When you go down there and you can't get on any equipment it's pretty disheartening.
	Interviewee 21	M	Just good new equipment and getting good value
	Interviewee 22	F	Perhaps there could be equipment that you haven't used before.
	Interviewee 23	F	There was plenty of machinery, there was still spare capacity when we used to go.

		M/F	Perceived service quality (Bar / café)
Current (5 years)	Interviewee 2	F	Because they've got the cafe which is nice, internet access...it's like a one stop shop.
High volume users (15 visits)	Interviewee 7	M	It's got a decent cafe where you can sit and have a read of the paper and have a coffee.. . it's just somewhere that I can workout, and then go and have a coffee like I would if I was going to a coffee shop in town and relax a bit and it's quite a nice environment to do that...the only thing I don't like is when they have that bloody piped music which is a bit irritating when you're sitting there reading the paper.*
Average volume users (5 visits)	Interviewee 9	M	Afterwards, we can go and have a coffee and a snack.
	Interviewee 10	M	I think they've sorted the food/ beverage side - this used to be quite important but I guess recently people haven't spent as much money there.
Low volume users (1 visit)	Interviewee 11	F	I used to be in and out within 40 minutes but here my friend and I go in Sunday morning at 8am and don't get home till 10am after having a coffee afterwards- very relaxing.
Ex-members	Interviewee 18	F	The other thing about the cafe is that you can't take guests in. [Other fitness club] had a very nice cafe which you could take guests into.

		M/F	Perceived service quality (Pool/ spa)
Current (5 years)	*Interviewee 2*	F	Quote 1: What you get is very good value... the spa. Quote 2: The spa area [after the changes] looked worse than it did originally*. Quote 3: They do have a spa area, with warm water and bubbles but it would be nice to have a jacuzzi.*
Current (1 year)	*Interviewee 4*	F	Quote 1: In extreme circumstances, like closing the pool then that might make me want to quit. Quote 2: Periodically, they close the entire wet area and you think 'God, I really wanted to go for a swim today'.
High volume users (15 visits)	*Interviewee 7*	M	It's got a decent pool for the kids so they can do their lessons.*
	Interviewee 8	F	They've got a nice spa there.
Average volume users (5 visits)	*Interviewee 9*	M	Quote 1: I normally have a long week, use the sauna and have a bit of a swim. Even the sauna area, it's all just been done up and they've changed the lighting in there which makes it look fresh. Quote 2: It's a place where I can just take myself off to the sauna or the jacuzzi and just chill out. Quote 3: He [son] can come in the pool afterwards with us.
	Interviewee 10	M	One other gripes is about the pool... Kids are great but not when you want a quite swim. Also, at least once a week or every two weeks, they close the steam room and sauna and jacuzzi for maintenance work. For a club that size and facilities, it should be done overnight.*
Low volume users (1 visit)	*Interviewee 11*	F	Quote 1:...and you go through to the pool and I'm a slow swimmer but I find it so relaxing...the worst part is when you go in and it's cold. Quote 2: When they did the refurb, the pool wasn't affected at all but the only criticism I have is you have to go down on these little steps into the water.*
Frozen members	*Interviewee 13*	F	Quote 1:...but I do like the swimming and that sort of thing because they've got a nice pool. Quote 2: It's great... I can go swimming...and I can do the exercise.
	Interviewee 14	F	Quote 1: I mostly just use the swimming, but they're having problems with the pool at the moment.
	Interviewee 15	F	Quote 2: My only criticism would be that the children's pool wasn't really for children. *
Ex-members	*Interviewee 20*	F	That's why I joined [the pool] so, it was more the pool I was happy with*
	Interviewee 22	F	Yes they [the pool and changing rooms] were quite good.*
	Interviewee 23	F	I liked the pool… sos did the kids.*

		M/F	Usage
Current (1 year)	Interviewee 3	F	It [intention to cancel] fluctuates from day to day... Sometimes I think I should cancel because I don't go, but then I think I should go, and take the kids swimming. If I was happier about going, if the staff were friendlier, I'd perhaps like to go more and then I'd feel like I was getting value for money.
	Interviewee 4	F	Quote 1: I go regularly and really enjoy it, so I don't think I'm going to cancel anytime soon. Quote 2: I'm about to start a first year of teaching so I might not get the chance to go as much as I like [which might lead to cancellation]
High volume users (15 visits)	Interviewee 8	F	If you can get up there more, you obviously feel like you're getting more value because you're getting more out of it...but if it's going to be a thing in your life, you've just got to think if I don't go, I don't go.
Average volume users (5 visits)	Interviewee 9	M	Quote 1: It's there as a luxury really, I mean I don't use it to its full extent but it's just nice to know its there.* Quote 2: I don't think I use it enough to warrant the money I pay for it.*
Low volume users (1 visit)	Interviewee 11	F	It is good value for money, I don't use it a lot but that is my choice.*
	Interviewee 12	F	I don't really have enough time to use it at the moment...my attendance is really bad at the moment.*
Frozen members	Interviewee 14	F	It's due to the usage and how much it costs.
	Interviewee 15	F	I wasn't using it enough to warrant the monthly fee.
Ex-members	Interviewee 17	F	We weren't going so we stopped.
	Interviewee 22	F	Quote 1: It was mainly the fact that I wasn't going. Quote 2: Some days I'd think 'yes, I'm really going to go and get my money's worth' and other times I was like 'I'm fed up... I might as well just cut my losses and get out of it.
	Interviewee 23	F	We weren't using enough… we were paying like for a family but we weren't going enough. We didn't have enough spare time to make it worthwhile.

		M/F	Perceived value for money
Current (5 years)	Interviewee 1	M	Because I signed up with a personal trainer I'm actually paying four times more a month than normal...because I think if you're not a fitness freak then you can fall into the trap of 'oh, I'll just run half a mile and oh, my back hurts'. But if you're paying x amount for a training session, you'll go and you'll do the extra and you'll have regular measurements of how you're doing...because I'm getting such a positive result from being a member and going regularly I don't begrudge it. I'd probably pay more but don't tell anyone that... I mean how much are you willing to pay for quality of life?
	Interviewee 2	F	Quote 1: Just the money side of it I suppose [would make me think about cancelling]. Quote 2: For that membership, you get use of the spa, classes, pool area so it's all thrown in which I think is a very good price especially for the price, especially for the facilities and the quality of the facilities.
Current (1 year)	Interviewee 4	F	Quote 1: Nothing [might make me want to cancel] unless they increased the price dramatically.
High volume users (15 visits)	Interviewee 7	M	Quote 1: I sometimes think I'm not getting value for money, especially seeing as it's an expensive membership. Quote 2: It's no so much that I feel that I'm not getting enough value for money but if you are paying that sort of price you expect the service to go with it. It's more about service levels than cost. Quote 3: I do it for a reason and I feel it's money well spent in that respect otherwise I'd obviously pack it in.
Average volume users (5 visits)	Interviewee 10	M	Quote 1: They've reduced the fees; it's gone down to 35 so it keeps me there. Quote 2: It's purely based on a financial point of view [the reason that I'll be maintaining it]. Quote 3: For me personally the value for money is excellent.
Low volume users (1 visit)	Interviewee 11	F	It's quite expensive for the luxury of it, but it's so much better than the public swimming bath.
Frozen members	Interviewee 13	F	Cost is always important...people compare clubs based on that… but then once you're there you sort of go 'but my club's got swimming pools and everything else...and a nice whirlpool and saunas and jacuzzis and everything else'.
	Interviewee 14	F	It's due to the usage and how much it costs. Value for money is down to me- I pay I should use it.
	Interviewee 15	F	Value for money that's a debatable one. The more you go the more it becomes value for money.
Ex-members	Interviewee 19	M	Quote 1: It was too expensive really. Quote 2: I thought why continue paying that amount for the amount of time I was using it. Quote 3: The cost issue wasn't that I couldn't afford it, it was why am I paying if I'm not going?
	Interviewee 20	F	Value for money was fairly good.*
	Interviewee 21	M	Quote 1: Knowing that you've paid the money for the month, sometimes you think, well, okay, I'd best go down, but I'm only going because I've paid £50 not because I want to.
	Interviewee 22	F	The amount of time I was going it wasn't worth the money. I think to get value for money I think you'd have to go more or less every day.

		M/F	Brand identification (attractiveness)
Current (1 year)	Interviewee 3	F	Quote 1: It [fitness club] doesn't seem to have the same ethos any more. Quote 2: It had a refurb about six months ago, it [image] has a completely different look to it now...it's more swish...it doesn't look as family friendly...it's like children being seen and not heard.
	Interviewee 4	F	I feel proud to be a member, to say I'm a member… it's been a good year.
High volume users (15 visits)	Interviewee 7	M	Did I have a view of what [fitness club's] image was? None at all. It could be any other fitness club that's a national chain of gyms.
Average volume users (5 visits)	Interviewee 9	M	The [fitness club] brand is quite big, so it's recognised more... When I first joined [fitness club], it is a big name that seemed to appeal to us.
Frozen members	Interviewee 13	F	I think it's seen as a family club which maybe puts some people off joining, but it suits me down to the ground- I like being in a family environment.
	Interviewee 15	F	The name [fitness club] gives people confidence that it's going to be done correctly, because it's a well known brand.
Ex-members	Interviewee 17	F	I don't think there is an image at all.*
	Interviewee 20	F	I liked it because it didn't have a specific image.*

		M/F	Brand identification (Prestige)
Current (5 years)	*Interviewee 2*	F	Quote 1: The facilities are first-class. Quote 2: [fitness club] is by far the best. Quote 3: I think [fitness club] is well liked, recognised and trusted brand
Current (1 year)	*Interviewee 3*	F	I wouldn't want to take the kids to a grotty communal pool.*
	Interviewee 4	F	It has a good perception- it's seen as a posh place but viewed in a positive light.
Current (3 months)	*Interviewee 5*	M	Quote 1: I used to be a member of [ex-fitness club] but that's got a snobby image, that's why I prefer [fitness club].* Quote 2: There's just as nice cars in the [fitness club] than at [rival fitness club].
	Interviewee 6	F	They [outsiders] love the higher profile, but concerned about joining and the cost. People do say 'oooh you go there' cos it's quite pricey and attracts a higher clientele shall we say.
High volume users (15 visits)	*Interviewee 8*	F	Quote 1: Because [fitness club] is such a big, as you say, 'brand', I think they've got to keep their image up whereas the other ones, well they're not a patch on [fitness club]. Quote 2: Its brand is a bit snobby.
Low volume users (1 visit)	*Interviewee 12*	F	It's seen as being a lot better, as far as I know.
Ex-members	*Interviewee 19*	M	Quote 1: I always considered [fitness club] or the brand of [fitness club] to be at the top of their game. [fitness club]... I see them as first class...without sounding up my own arse you don't expect to go to [fitness club] and see a load of hoodies or chavs running around. Quote 2: [fitness club] was probably the best gym that I've been to.
	Interviewee 22	F	It was definitely seen as an elite type of gym.*

		M/F	Brand identification (Similarity)
Current (5 years)	*Interviewee 2*	F	Everyone goes there 'cos they wanna look good, presentation, wanting to look after yourself which fits with the [fitness club] brand...I definitely feel more comfortable telling people I'm a member of [fitness club] than the local council!*
Current (1 year)	*Interviewee 4*	F	The [fitness club] brand is definitely seen as funky and trendy. I guess it does reflect me a bit; it's a fun, funky, trendy place. Naturally, I'm very energetic and enthusiastic and bubbly, so I guess it fits with me wanting to expend energy.

		M/F	Social identification- Individual stereotyping
Current (5 years)	Interviewee 1	M	Quote 1: ....Hopefully I'll carry on being proud of myself and that's only because I wasn't made to feel out of place initially I think that's the biggest barriers to gym membership, that when you go there and you're out of shape and you don't fit in then you're made to feel like an outsider.
Current (1 year)	Interviewee 4	F	Quote 3: I looked at a few other gyms, and there's an atmosphere of 'you're a size 12 how dare you come in this place' so yeah I feel normal and part of the community in this place.
Average volume users (5 visits)	Interviewee 10	M	Quote 1: ...That's quite important that there's someone around and if you do want to join in and be part of the gang that would be fine. Quote 2: ...anyone can go there and not feel out of place...it's one of the most important things for any gym.
Frozen members	Interviewee 13	F	It's not a cliquey club...I think that's quite important to me. It isn't cliquey where you've got to wear the latest kit or anything like.
Ex-members	Interviewee 19	M	Yes, I mean they're my sort of people... If I thought for a minute there were a load of idiots there … I just wouldn't end up going.
	Interviewee 20	F	I just wanted to be somewhere that was clean and full of normal people. That's not quite the right word, but you know what I mean... rather than full of trendy young people.
	Interviewee 22	F	It was all the same sort of people as me really.*

		M/F	Social identification- In-group homogeneity
Current (5 years)	Interviewee 2	F	It a mixture of people there.
Current (1 year)	Interviewee 3	F	It's [clientele] a nice mixture actually.
	Interviewee 4	F	Quote 2: There's a huge variety of people, old, young people, family members.
High volume users (15 visits)	Interviewee 7	M	I'm not aware that it's geared up to a particular profile of people.
Ex-members	Interviewee 17	F	I think it approaches most sorts of people really... A cross border.*

		M/F	Rapport
Current (5 years)	*Interviewee 1*	M	Quote 1: Now that was key to me continuing my membership at the gym because there was a different level of understanding there [about my fitness goals]. Quote 2: But it's [intention to stay] also because one of my friends is a gym instructor there and she helps me quite a lot. Quote 3: Last night, I did ten minutes on the rowing machine and my friend, the gym instructor, was with another client and I went over, waited patiently and said 'nothing's wrong I just wanted to share with you that I've done 10 minutes'. She was so proud of me, did a little round of applause and that's why I do it.
	Interviewee 2	F	Quote 1: Social factors, people that you meet, I go down with my partner as well and that's nice, working out together, spending time together. More with the other members rather than staff, but they're always roaming round so you do get to know a fair few of them. Quote 2: I know gyms have social factors but sometimes you need your own space.*
Current (1 year)	*Interviewee 3*	F	Quote 1: Also, there seems to be a high turnover of staff, you never see the same faces and get that recognition. My mum used to belong to a gym and she left because there wasn't that friendliness from staff... She joined [fitness club] down the road, it's very personal, very intimate, they remember your name, they actually talk to you. Quote 2: The staff on reception, they're friendly but kind of automated... I want to belong somewhere, I like it when I go to my greengrocer and they say 'how are you today', but you don't get that in a supermarket and so [fitness club] is a bit like a supermarket gym and it just feels like you're a number... Quote 3: They need to make it more familiar.
	Interviewee 4	F	It's got to be a friendly place...If it was a miserable place with miserable people I wouldn't want to go.
Current (3 months)	*Interviewee 5*	M	Quote 1: No one has spoken to me since I joined…then again I think a lot of people just want to be left alone. Quote 2: Most people I know, friends etc. are members.
	Interviewee 6	F	Well I don't have much interaction with staff when I'm down there, unless there was a problem taking money or something...
High volume users (15 visits)	*Interviewee 7*	M	Quote 1: I don't use it as a social thing really…but just a nod of acknowledgement [from staff] when they see you there regularly is, as far as I'm concerned, that's all I want.
	Interviewee 8	F	Quote 1: I've definitely had some of my friends saying 'what do want to do that for?' [go to the gym]. Quote 2: The people there are all really nice.
Average volume users (5 visits)	*Interviewee 9*	M	Quote 1: It's sort of the atmosphere, it's sort of creative when you get there, sort of friendly and relaxing. Quote 2: It's sincere... It's not just a 'hello'... Some of them stand out, they sort of recognise you a bit more... It's all the staff even the cleaners. Quote 3: It's the atmosphere... a lot of people use the gym to de-stress ... the atmosphere is quite important and yeah I really think [fitness club] has it. Quote 4: The people there, they're not open but not shy either, sort of get talking quite easily which makes it comfortable being there really.
	Interviewee 10	M	The fact that I'm a member makes no difference, they're too big if you were a member of a private gym you would have that more personal service but you wouldn't have the range of equipment... It's swings and roundabouts.

Low volume users (1 visit)	*Interviewee 12*	F	Quote 1: Just that generally when you walk in everyone knows you. .. It just makes you smile a bit really. Quote 2: My family laugh at me because I don't go. Quote 3: Everyone is really friendly, some keep themselves to themselves, but some are really chatty. Quote 4: It's generally just the people, everyone's really friendly and chatty that helps.
Frozen members	*Interviewee 13*	F	I've got quite a few friends that go to they gym.
	Interviewee 15	F	There is always some kind of communal chat... Quite a few people that I know are members themselves.
Ex-members	*Interviewee 18*	F	...When I go there [other fitness club], they [staff] call me by my name. Quote 2: There's a sense of relaxation and friendliness and the staff are glad we are there. Quote 3: The software that [other fitness club] is using, to ensure that they are giving customers that sense of personal identity, they will, when a gym user logs in any conversational items like 'Oh, I've just had an operation' or 'the cat has died' is logged so that next time they see him they can ask, 'how are you today, feeling better? which makes people feel like 'somebody knows me, somebody bothers'. This is what we need in this big faceless society which is developing.
	Interviewee 19	M	I've still got a lot of friends that go there.*
	Interviewee 22	F	They recruited quite a lot of people from work and because there were a lot of people going to it, or not necessarily to that one but to a different one, so it was kind of like everyone was talking about it but then it just kind of fizzled out. Quote 2: I didn't really have any close friendship with anyone there. I think most people were there on there own. You didn't get many people that would go to the gym together, so there was no sort of friends there. So everyone kept themselves to themselves pretty much. Quote 2: It [having friends there] probably would have done [added to my membership feelings] if I'd met someone there that I got on with and we'd chatted then yes it probably would have made me want to come a bit more... I mean I wouldn't say I felt isolated but kind of like that feeling that you just went, did whatever you were going to do there, and then you went home. It was very impersonal I think.

		M/F	State anxiety
Current (5 years)	*Interviewee 1*	M	Quote 1: So I think the staff is the key thing because it doesn't matter which pieces of equipment are available or which classes are on, if people aren't made to feel like they're doing the right thing then there's no will. Quote 2: Other gyms, yeah they might have an introductory offer, it might save me x amount of pounds, but I would maybe lose that sense of comfort that I have with...I know where everything is, where the running machines are.
	Interviewee 2	F	Yeah they have a ladies only section which is nice if you're shy and don't want to be seen. You tend to meet people on certain days of the week, they tend to go down at the same time... I suppose that keeps you going.
Current (1 year)	*Interviewee 3*	F	I feel really comfortable, not intimidated at all.
	Interviewee 4	F	It's not the cheapest club, but it's the fact that I'm comfortable there
Current (3 months)	*Interviewee 6*	F	I'm not a gym freak, my only concern when joining was that you might get looks from other people, but the staff don't judge you and all the members are alright- they don't look at you.
High volume users (15 visits)	*Interviewee 8*	F	I was lucky, I was given a TSG key, which is like a key for doing all your exercises and after a couple of weeks I ventured on to doing the other things....but I can imagine if you're not very confident I can imagine people thinking 'oh my god' and never going back, to be honest.
Frozen members	*Interviewee 13*	F	I'm not the sort of person that can go jogging round the streets. I don't feel comfortable doing that. But I feel comfortable going to the gym.
Ex-members	*Interviewee 22*	F	The only time I didn't [feel comfortable] was probably due to the lack of staff, you know if I was a bit worried about how to work a particular machine...because there was nobody around, you used to fiddle with it until you got what you hoped was the right thing...I felt like I didn't know what I was doing to a certain degree. If there had been more staff that would have definitely helped.

		M/F	Social physique anxiety
Current (5 years)	*Interviewee 1*	M	Quote 1: Over the past 12 months I've lost 5 1/2 stone... And it's predominantly because of the contact I've had with [fitness club], they're very supportive. It's a more easy-going atmosphere because I've been to gyms in the past where you get the muscle-bound freaks, do you know what I mean? You know, the steroid pumping nutcases. I don't want that...there's a stigma attached to that and I don't want to be part of that. Quote 2: If the ethos of the gym changes and the membership there changes, I think if it goes more towards the body beautiful and the stigma attached to that then that would change it because I wouldn't feel as comfortable there. Quote 3: I'm not one of the 'iron pumpers', I prefer to go on the floor to work. Quote 4: Initially it's the biggest barrier, your own self-consciousness...if you're out of shape and you're a funny shape surrounded by people that are all the shape you want to be.
Current (1 year)	*Interviewee 4*	F	Quote 1: Some gyms are full of skinny people that look down their noses at you whereas I don't feel like that at [fitness club]. Quote 2: I looked at a few other gyms, and there's an atmosphere of 'you're a size 12 how dare you come in this place' so yeah I feel normal and part of the community in this place.
Current (3 months)	*Interviewee 5*	M	Quote 1: I did stop going a while ago, but then I started developing a spare tyre which made me feel uncomfortable so I had to go back. Quote 2: I just don't like seeing guys my age with beer bellies, it makes them look older. I never want to look like that… that'd get me down.
Average volume users (5 visits)	*Interviewee 10*	M	Quote 1: If I didn't go there, I dread to think what I would look like...with the amount I eat and drink I'd be gross. Quote 2: There doesn't seem to be too many posers which is nice and some gyms have got all the body builders and whatever and all the beautiful people but at [fitness club] they're not like that, anyone can go there and not feel out of place...it's one of the most important things for any gym.
Frozen members	*Interviewee 13*	F	It doesn't matter if you're fat, thin, tall or short...which is good I think, because obviously nobody's intimidated by it which is quite good. Yeah I quite like it because there's no intimation there. I mean you obviously get people there who are very fit but you don't seem to get that feeling that 'Oh God' you know she's walked in and she doesn't look slim with the latest kit on and all that sort of thing. But there are other gyms like that. We can't all be the beautiful people, everyone's different... and that's why I stick to [fitness club] because it hasn't got that.
Ex-members	*Interviewee 21*	M	Quote 1: You often get a load of posers down there at [fitness club] gyms, at those kind of gyms. There's just a few isn't there? It's just one or two people like the girls that go down with so much make up and guys that go and lift a couple of weights and pose in front of the mirror all the time. I won't even go onto the guys in the shower rooms.
	Interviewee 22	F	I think it made me feel more comfortable knowing that in the [women's] area there wasn't any blokes... You're not standing next to some big muscley... You don't feel out of shape coupled with the fact they could be thinking 'ooh look at the state of that' whereas women tend to know how women think...I think women are less judgemental than men.

		M/F	Self-determination
Current (5 years)	*Interviewee 1*	M	Quote 1: It's important that I can go there and spend an hour there and then come home, it's an understanding on their part that it going to the gym can be integrated into your life. Quote 2: Oh no, don't get me wrong I hate it...There's nothing I hate more than being on a running machine...but there's a goal at the end of it... so it's an empowerment because I know I can do it, and that's through having my membership at the gym. Quote 3: I know the same feeling can be obtained from any exercise but when I leave the gym after going for a training session, I feel good. I know that if I go to the gym, afterwards I'll feel positive about things. Quote 4: If I'm feeling miserable, I'll go to the gym.
	Interviewee 2	F	Quote 1: I always enjoy it there. Quote 2: It's [reason for wanting to keep membership] more about image and physique...when you're in a relationship there's a pressure to maintain yourself! Quote 3: Some weeks I think I must get on with it, other times it feels like a chore. Quote 4: A few years ago I split up from my other half and I thought 'right I'll get you back, you just watch me change' so that's why I joined. Quote 5: It [reason for going] is more about image, and physique and wanting to be fit. Quote 6: Exercise is a chore, being red, out of puff, but when you're there getting fitter, the better you generally feel. Quote 7: I would say [the gym] plays a very important role in my life, not just on the outside but the inside as well.
Current (1 year)	*Interviewee 3*	F	Quote 1: It's fluctuating but then I think I'll go 'cos I want to lose weight. Quote 2: I would say helping people to achieve their goals [is one the most important aspects of a fitness club].
	Interviewee 4	F	Quote 1: If I could go more I would, I'm a bit of a 'gym bunny'. Quote 2: I feel the benefits of going so I feel like I want to carry on. Feeling the benefits makes me want to stay. Quote 3: Exercise is scientifically proven to improve well-being... I wanted to do something that would take away the pressure.
Current (3 months)	*Interviewee 5*	M	Quote 1: I like that gym I like to keep fit...as long as I've still got my health, it's not just a fad it's for life. Quote 2: It gives you a fantastic buzz. Quote 3: If I do miss a day, I feel bad, quite guilty. Quote 4: I like to go to the gym, it makes me feel good. Quote 5: People that don't go, it's probably not their thing, they probably go out drinking or take drugs, I'm not interested in drinking, going out like my friends do... My thing is the gym...I would say it's part of me, something I'll do forever.
	Interviewee 6	F	Quote 1: Being able to go when you want to, not feeling pressure by staff or other people, being able to do what you want when you want [makes me feel satisfied]. Quote 2: I'd describe it as a hobby, it's not a personal interest,
High volume users (15 visits)	*Interviewee 8*	F	Quote 1: I like the relaxation side of it really. Quote 2: Yes it's [going to the gym] like my mate.

Average volume users (5 visits)	*Interviewee 10*	M	Quote 1: It's just got to be part of your life... Quote 2: You have to be careful not to sound like one of these people, I wouldn't let it take over my life, running 20 miles a day I wouldn't want to go that far. Quote 3: When I'm in the groove I do get a buzz...the more you get into it the more you get a buzz.
Low volume users (1 visit)	*Interviewee 11*	F	Relaxation and the exercise swimming gives me, the benefit.
Frozen members	*Interviewee 13*	F	Quote 1: I basically go there to keep fit. Quote 2: Once you get into going to gym, it's not so much of a chore. Quote 3: Well I'm never going to be one who actually loves going to the gym. Quote 4: I probably would class it as a personal interest, I mean exercise has got to be...but that doesn't necessarily have to be at a gym. Quote 5: It [going to the gym] is a means to keeping fit.
	Interviewee 14	F	Quote 1: But now I've got the dog, it's the fresh air rather than being cooped up...I'm not one of those people that really likes gyms... I don't really feel like I get a lot of pleasure from it. It's not a great part of my life. They should give everyone a dog. Quote 2: I felt I needed to [join a fitness club] from peer pressure from my family... family really but I suppose that everyone feels they should be doing something. Quote 3: I tend to fit it in around other things in my life- it's never been a major priority.
	Interviewee 15	F	If there was big event coming up when I definitely need to start trimming up and toning up.
Ex-members	*Interviewee 17*	F	The 'gym thing' doesn't suit me.
	Interviewee 19	M	Quote 1: If I was in there with loads of sixteen or seventeen year olds, gangs of them, they'd probably spend more time messing about. You've got to get into that zone haven't you. Going to the gym was such a chore. Quote 2: I'm an impatient person and I need to see results...because those goals didn't come quick enough, I got disheartened. Quote 3: So that's what put me off too, that everything was revolving around the gym.
	Interviewee 20	F	I really just wanted to lose weight.
	Interviewee 22	F	Quote 1: To start with I used to talk about it at work and with my husband. With my friends at work I stopped talking about it really. With my husband, because I was still paying and I wasn't going, he started to nag me...it used to be 'why haven't you been to the gym?'. Quote 2: When I was going I was enjoying it, but when I wasn't going I was thinking about the fact that I was paying for it but not going so it [motivation' was always there but for different reasons. Quote 3: To start with I would have classed it as a personal interest, but not so much towards the end.

Appendix B1 Instructions for pilot study

Name:

Thank you for agreeing to complete the membership questionnaire.

1. Please could you answer each question, whilst also making a note below of any question which either doesn't make sense or is ambiguous to you. Where there are lots of questions under the same number e.g. number 12, please refer to the questions from top to bottom as 12a, 12b,…etc. (continue overleaf if necessary):

Question No.	Comment

2. What else should this questionnaire have asked you in relation to your fitness club membership?

3. How long (approx.) did it take to complete?

4. How difficult was it to complete?

5. How could it have been made easier to complete?

6. Overall, please comment on what the questionnaire was like to complete (good and bad points)

Appendix B2 Questionnaire items

Perceived service quality	Staff	Staff knowledge/skills	1 – 7 Poor-Excellent, N/A
		Staff neatness and dress	
		Staff willingness to help	
		Communication with members	
		Responsiveness to complaints	
		Staff courtesy	
		Amount of individualized attention by instructors	
		Consistency of service	
	Classes	Variety of classes	
		Availability of classes at appropriate level	
		Convenience of class time/schedule	
		Appropriateness of class size	
		Adequacy of space in classes	
	Changing room	Overall maintenance	
		Shower cleanliness	
		Adequacy of changing room	
	Physical facility	Convenience of location	
		Opening hours	
		Availability of parking	
		Accessibility to building	
		Car park safety	
		Temperature control	
		Lighting control	
		Music control	
		Television control	

Perceived service quality	Workout facility	Pleasantness of gym environment	1 – 7 Poor-Excellent, N/A
		Modern-looking gym equipment	
		Adequacy of signs and directions in the gym	
		Availability of gym equipment	
		Overall maintenance of the gym	
		Range of gym equipment	
	Childcare	Quality of childcare staff	
		Cleanliness of childcare equipment	
		Diversity of childcare experience provided	
	Pool/spa	Cleanliness of pool/ spa	
		Adequacy of swimming space / pool/spa	
		Pleasantness of pool/ spa area	
	Bar/café	Cleanliness of bar/café	
		Adequacy of bar/café	
		Pleasantness of bar/café area	
Brand identification	Attractiveness	As a fitness club, I like what my club stands for	1-7 Strongly agree - Strongly disagree
		For a fitness club, my club has an attractive identity	
	Similarity	My fitness club is a club that 'says something about me'	
		My fitness club is a club that matches who I am as a person	
	Distinctiveness	My fitness club stands out from other clubs	
		My fitness club is distinctive from other clubs	
	Prestige	My fitness club is an up-market club	
		My fitness club is a first-class club	
Social identification	Individual Self-Stereotyping	I have a lot in common with the average member of my fitness club	
		I am similar to the average member of my fitness club	
	In-group homogeneity	The members of my fitness club are very similar to each other	
		The members of my fitness club have a lot of common with each other	

Perceived value for money		My fitness club provides good value for money	
Self-determination	External regulation	I go to a fitness club because other people think I should	1-7 Strongly agree-Strongly disagree
		I go to a fitness club because others think I should	
		I go to a fitness club because others will not be pleased with me if I don't	
		I feel under pressure from my family/friends/partner to go to a fitness club	
	Introjected regulation	I feel guilty when I don't go to the fitness club	
		I feel ashamed when I don't go to the fitness club	
		I feel like a failure when I haven't gone to the fitness club in a while	
	Identified regulation	I value the benefits of going to a fitness club	
		It's important to go to a fitness club	
		It's important to make an effort to go to a fitness club	
		I get restless if I don't go to a fitness club	
	Integrated regulation	I go to a fitness club because it is consistent with my life goals	
		I consider going to a fitness club to be a part of my identity	
		I consider going to a fitness club a fundamental part of who I am	
		I consider going to a fitness club consistent with my values	
	Intrinsic regulation	I go to a fitness club because it's fun	
		I enjoy going to a fitness club	
		I find going to a fitness club a pleasurable activity	
		I get pleasure and satisfaction from going to a fitness club	
Rapport	Staff	There are staff at the club that I get on well with	1-7 Strongly agree-Strongly disagree
		There are staff at the club I enjoy interacting with	
		There are staff at the club I look forward to seeing	
		There are staff at the club that I have bonded with	
	Members	There are other members at the club that I get on well with	
		There are other members at the club I enjoy interacting with	
		There are other members at the club that I have bonded with	
		There are other members at the club I look forward to seeing	

State anxiety	Staff	I worry about how incapable I look in front of the staff	1-7 Strongly agree- Strongly disagree
		I worry that the staff are evaluating my physique/figure	
		I worry about how weak or unfit I look in front of the staff	
	Members	I worry about how incapable I look in front of other members	
		I worry that the other members are evaluating my physique/figure	
		I worry about how weak or unfit I look in front of other members	
Social physique anxiety		I wish I wasn't so concerned about my physique/figure	
		In the presence of others, I feel good about my physique/figure	
		When it comes to displaying my physique/figure to others, I am a shy person	
		There are times when I am bothered by thoughts that other people are evaluating my weight or muscular development	
		I am comfortable with how fit my body appears to others	
		I usually feel relaxed when it is obvious that others are looking at my physique/figure	
		Unattractive features of my physique/figure make me nervous in certain social settings	
		It would make me uncomfortable to know others were evaluating my physique/figure	
		When in a bathing suit, I often feel nervous about the shape of my body	
Intention to use		How often do you intend to go to the fitness club?	None, Once, 2-3 times, 4-6 times, 7-10 times, 11-15 times, 16+ times.
Intention to cancel		I intend to cancel my membership as soon as my contract allows	1-7 Strongly agree- Strongly disagree
		I think I will cancel my membership as soon as my contract allows	
		I expect to cancel my membership as soon as my contract allows	
Positive word-of-mouth		How frequently do you say positive things about your club to other people	1-7 Never – frequently
		How frequently do you recommend your club to other people	
		How frequently do you encourage other people to join your club	

Appendix C1 Email message to current members (on-line)

Hi [FirstName],

I spoke to you [time of day] at [Fitness club] regarding my PhD research project on gym membership. You kindly agreed for me to send you my questionnaire.

Here is a link to my questionnaire:
[link]

You will be entered into a PRIZE DRAW to win £100 MARKS AND SPENCERS VOUCHERS once you have finished the questionnaire, as a token of my appreciation.

Thanks again for your participation. This really helps me with my research project.

Kind regards,

Helen N. Watts
PhD Research Student
University of Worcester

Please note: If you do not wish to receive further emails from me, please click the link below, and you will be automatically removed from my mailing list.
[Optout link]

Appendix C2 Letter to current members (postal)

Dear [First name],

I spoke to you about a couple of weeks ago at [Fitness club] regarding my PhD research project on gym membership. You kindly agreed for me to send you my questionnaire (enclosed).

Please could you complete the questionnaire, and return it in the pre-paid envelope provided as soon as possible. You will be entered into a PRIZE DRAW to win £100 MARKS AND SPENCERS VOUCHERS once you have returned the questionnaire, as a token of my appreciation.

Thanks again for your participation. This really helps me with my research project.

Yours sincerely,

Helen N. Watts
PhD Research Student
University of Worcester

Appendix C3 Correlations between variables (current members)

	Intention to cancel	Positive word-of-mouth	PSQ-Staff	PSQ-Class	PSQ-Changing rooms	PSQ-Physical Facility	PSQ-Gym environment	PSQ-Pool/spa	PSQ-Bar/cafe
Positive word-of-mouth	-.238**								
PSQ-Staff	-.279**	.419**							
PSQ-Class	-.117*	.334**	.577**						
PSQ-Changing rooms	-.183**	.259**	.590**	.586**					
PSQ-Physical Facility	-.200**	.392**	.781**	.648**	.620**				
PSQ-Gym environment	-.314**	.404**	.766**	.626**	.679**	.830**			
PSQ-Pool/spa	-.146**	.277**	.563**	.564**	.648**	.670**	.665**		
PSQ-Bar/cafe	-.136**	.263**	.541**	.610**	.570**	.597**	.623**	.665**	
PSQ- Childcare	-.110	.268**	.549**	.493**	.539**	.548**	.539**	.697**	.514**
PVFM	-.225**	.326**	.379**	.232**	.218**	.323**	.330**	.319**	.188**
BI-Attractiveness	-.208**	.532**	.412**	.401**	.307**	.452**	.468**	.324**	.351**
BI-Distinctiveness	-.138**	.478**	.366**	.276**	.243**	.422**	.403**	.289**	.307**
BI-Prestige	-.211**	.472**	.457**	.375**	.346**	.451**	.489**	.377**	.368**
BI-Similarity	-.140**	.430**	.216**	.244**	.133**	.277**	.240**	.161**	.237**
In-group Homogeneity	.008	.268**	.192**	.190**	.111**	.193**	.127**	.167**	.183**
Individual stereotyping	-.127**	.401**	.337**	.294**	.209**	.329**	.287**	.202**	.262**
Rapport-staff	-.096*	.375**	.287**	.200**	.140**	.236**	.237**	.189**	.193**
Rapport-members	-.094*	.361**	.171**	.235**	.171**	.169**	.120**	.206**	.174**
State anxiety-staff	.145**	.092*	-.015	.014	.030	.001	-.025	.011	.013
State anxiety-members	.135**	.066	.023	.020	.079*	.021	.019	.001	.039
Social physique anxiety	.074	-.004	.052	.005	.057	.047	.032	.019	.017
SD-External regulation	.207**	.005	-.004	.026	-.033	-.007	-.057	-.012	-.001
SD-Identified regulation	-.270**	.284**	.054	.109*	.082*	.145**	.128**	.024	.108*
SD Integrated regulation	-.181**	.315**	.057	.111*	.035	.110*	.106*	.069	.074
SD- Intrinsic regulation	-.312**	.421**	.307**	.261**	.259**	.306**	.303**	.253**	.197**
SD- Introjected regulation	-.032	.158**	-.038	.028	-.029	.038	.019	-.044	.037

*Note: ** p< .01, * p<.05. PSQ=Perceived Service Quality, PVFM=Perceived Value for Money, BI=Brand Identification, SD= Self Determination.*

	PSQ-Childcare	PVFM	BI-Attractiveness	BI-Distinctiveness	BI-Prestige	BI-Similarity	In-group Homogeneity	Individual stereotyping	Rapport-staff	Rapport-members	State anxiety-staff
PVFM	.203**										
BI-Attractiveness	.306**	.370**									
BI-Distinctiveness	.266**	.324**	.650**								
BI-Prestige	.339**	.318**	.688**	.657**							
BI-Similarity	.157*	.247**	.614**	.513**	.479**						
In-group Homogeneity	.125	.109**	.385**	.404**	.318**	.426**					
Individual stereotyping	.177*	.247**	.493**	.416**	.420**	.648**	.527**				
Rapport-staff	.269**	.300**	.397**	.354**	.297**	.363**	.262**	.345**			
Rapport-members	.264**	.247**	.358**	.304**	.257**	.372**	.292**	.377**	.646**		
State anxiety-staff	.054	-.141**	-.013	.086*	.044	.060	.145**	.058	.082*	-.011	
State anxiety-members	-.003	-.101*	.000	.077	.059	.021	.081*	.033	.060	-.058	.818**
Social physique anxiety	.057	-.107**	-.027	-.005	.017	-.060	.027	-.020	-.023	-.129**	.660**
SD-External regulation	-.019	-.123**	-.059	.025	-.030	.016	.129**	.010	.043	-.058	.466**
SD-Identified regulation	.210**	.219**	.396**	.327**	.333**	.352**	.143**	.225**	.200**	.229**	.000
SD Integrated regulation	.119	.205**	.424**	.384**	.307**	.590**	.291**	.372**	.334**	.366**	.068
SD- Intrinsic regulation	.219**	.408**	.438**	.335**	.372**	.376**	.143**	.293**	.368**	.423**	-.127**
SD- Introjected regulation	.050	.005	.224**	.253**	.212**	.240**	.116**	.121**	.086*	.066	.279**

*Note: ** p< .01, * p<.05. PSQ=Perceived Service Quality, PVFM=Perceived Value for Money, BI=Brand Identification, SD= Self Determination.*

	State anxiety-members	Social physique anxiety	SDT-External regulation	SDT-Identified regulation	SDT Integrated reregulation	SDT- Intrinsic regulation
Social physique anxiety	.701**					
SD-External regulation	.486**	.359**				
SD-Identified regulation	.019	.016	-.103**			
SD Integrated regulation	.016	-.045	-.035	.595**		
SD- Intrinsic regulation	-.123**	-.174**	-.253**	.496**	.455**	
SD- Introjected regulation	.326**	.340**	.167**	.511**	.359**	.113**

*Note: ** p< .01, * p<.05. PSQ=Perceived Service Quality, PVFM=Perceived Value for Money, BI=Brand Identification, SD= Self Determination.*

Appendix D1 Letter to new members

Dear New Member,

At [Fitness club], we are currently facilitating a research project into fitness club membership.

It is hoped that you might be able to take part in this research by completing a quick questionnaire.

If you do not give your permission for us to pass on your details to complete this questionnaire, please complete the back of this slip and return it within 14 days to Helen Watts (CP@W), Comm. & Development Dept., University of Worcester, Freepost WR333, Henwick Grove, WORCESTER WR2 62D.

Warm regards,

[Fitness club] Member services

Appendix D2 Correlations between variables (new members)

	Intention to cancel	Positive word-of-mouth	PSQ-Staff	PSQ-Class	PSQ-Changing rooms	PSQ-Physical Facility	PSQ-Gym environment	PSQ-Pool/spa	PSQ-Bar/cafe	PSQ-Childcare
Positive word-of-mouth	-.159									
PSQ-Staff	-.184	.453*								
PSQ-Class	-.465**	.215	.639**							
PSQ-Changing rooms	-.180	.340**	.774**	.489**						
PSQ-Physical Facility	-.216	.360**	.744**	.625**	.807**					
PSQ-Gym environment	-.136	.414**	.744**	.594**	.747**	.829**				
PSQ-Pool/spa	-.189	.351**	.771**	.482**	.709**	.697**	.697**			
PSQ-Bar/cafe	-.130	.359**	.840**	.438**	.618**	.672**	.618**	.757**		.
PSQ- Childcare	-.240	-.057	.498*	.670**	.436**	.483**	.499**	.600**	.514**	
PVFM	-.240*	.346**	.432*	.329**	.383**	.377**	.371**	.349**	.406**	.421*
BI-Attractiveness	-.283*	.472**	.408*	.420**	.348**	.460**	.408**	.363**	.411**	.355*
BI-Distinctiveness	-.352**	.337**	.482*	.423**	.350**	.420**	.367**	.494**	.511**	.335*
BI-Prestige	-.334**	.434**	.495**	.438**	.554**	.576**	.516**	.521**	.429**	.217
BI-Similarity	-.194	.414**	.385*	.342**	.238*	.261*	.252*	.230*	.246*	.143
In-group Homogeneity	-.059	.228*	.351	.319*	.223*	.347**	.328**	.247*	.284*	.081
Individual stereotyping	-.004	.289**	.276	.313*	.213	.258*	.356**	.155	.168	-.053
Rapport-staff	.222*	.100	.341	-.043	.072	.009	.029	.023	.044	-.003
Rapport-members	.076	.250*	.287	.065	.015	.066	.051	-.042	.029	.061
State anxiety-staff	.197	-.081	.083	-.150	-.120	.001	-.120	-.087	-.028	.167
State anxiety-members	.154	-.194	.006	-.182	-.141	-.052	-.159	-.107	-.060	.193
Social physique anxiety	.199	.003	.126	-.152	-.074	.094	.023	-.106	-.003	.179
SD-External regulation	.099	-.043	.193	-.029	-.129	.000	-.204	-.215	-.097	.027
SD-Identified regulation	-.281*	.325**	.222	.248	.183	.267*	.232*	.106	.145	-.080
SD Integrated regulation	-.329**	.229*	.284	.403**	.135	.143	.138	.043	.002	.129
SD- Intrinsic regulation	-.259*	.322**	.132	.414**	.246*	.215	.326**	.188	.193	.052
SD- Introjected regulation	-.043	.048	.084	.068	-.128	.066	.111	-.041	-.133	-.174

*Note: ** p< .01, * p<.05. PSQ=Perceived Service Quality, PVFM=Perceived Value for Money, BI=Brand Identification, SD= Self Determination.*

	PVFM	BI-Attractiveness	BI-Distinctiveness	BI-Prestige	BI-Similarity	In-group Homogeneity	Individual stereotyping	Rapport-staff	Rapport-members	State anxiety-staff	State anxiety-members
BI-Attractiveness	.424**										
BI-Distinctiveness	.302**	.496**									
BI-Prestige	.291**	.553**	.688**								
BI-Similarity	.384**	.473**	.534**	.497**							
In-group Homogeneity	.227*	.344**	.262*	.320**	.325**						
Individual stereotyping	.219*	.280*	.170	.281**	.433**	.464**					
Rapport-staff	.258*	.029	-.177	-.185	.186	.160	.156				
Rapport-members	.209	.238*	-.038	-.058	.253*	.260*	.349**	.622**			
State anxiety-staff	.067	.022	-.049	-.223*	-.025	.015	-.080	.122	.173		
State anxiety-members	.056	.008	-.051	-.234*	-.101	-.045	-.205	.054	.091	.909**	
Social physique anxiety	-.001	.138	-.007	-.118	-.083	-.113	-.180	.038	.132	.765**	.741**
SD-External regulation	-.007	-.114	-.016	-.035	.161	.130	.080	.267*	.175	.390**	.367**
SD-Identified regulation	.268*	.473**	.232*	.322**	.440**	.328**	.178	.187	.190	-.164	-.156
SD Integrated reregulation	.342**	.371**	.285*	.371**	.591**	.256*	.236*	.144	.201	-.175	-.129
SD- Intrinsic regulation	.164	.303**	.376**	.315**	.463**	.205	.238*	.174	.223*	-.384**	-.404**
SD- Introjected regulation	.109	.359**	.019	.111	.307**	.308**	.221*	.169	.288**	.251*	.200

*Note: ** p< .01, * p<.05. PSQ=Perceived Service Quality, PVFM=Perceived Value for Money, BI=Brand Identification, SD= Self Determination.*

	Social physique anxiety	SDT-External regulation	SDT-Identified regulation	SDT Integrated reregulation	SDT- Intrinsic regulation
SD-External regulation	.341**				
SD-Identified regulation	-.030	-.058			
SD Integrated reregulation	-.127	.004	.701**		
SD- Intrinsic regulation	-.308**	-.261*	.615**	.485**	
SD- Introjected regulation	.294**	.114	.575**	.507**	.152

*Note: ** p< .01, * p<.05. PSQ=Perceived Service Quality, PVFM=Perceived Value for Money, BI=Brand Identification, SD= Self Determination.*

Appendix E1 List of publications

Watts, H.N. & Francis-Smythe, J.A. (2010*). Encouraging employees use of fitness clubs in Employee Wellness Programs.* Paper presented at 2nd Biennial IWP Conference on Work, Well-Being and Performance. Institute of Work Psychology, Sheffield.

Watts, H.N., Francis-Smythe, J.A., Upton, D. & Peters, D. (2009). *How managers can predict customer retention rates through psychological profiling.* Poster presented at the Leadership & Management Conference, University of Worcester.

Watts, H.N., & Francis-Smythe, J.A (2008). Membership retention in the fitness industry: The development and validation of a predictive model. In Annual Conference of the British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences 2008. *Journal of Sports Sciences*, *26(1),* S1 — S143.

Watts, H.N & Francis-Smythe, J.A. (2008). *Membership retention in the fitness industry: A qualitative study and the development of a predictive model.* Proceedings of the International Conference for Social Science. Izmir, Turkey.

Watts, H.N & Francis-Smythe, J.A. (2008). *To go or not to go? Factors affecting fitness club attendance.* Paper presented at Health and Social Care Research Focus Conference on 'Health and Well Being', University of Worcester.

Watts, H.N. & Francis-Smythe, J.A. (2008). *Assessing the role of personality in fitness club membership retention: Future directions for the Membership Retention Questionnaire (MRQ).* Paper presented at PsyPAG Annual Conference.

Watts, H.N. & Francis-Smythe, J.A. (2008*). Organisational Development within the health and fitness Sector: Measuring, predicting and improving membership retention rates.* Proceedings of the Postgraduate Occupational Psychology (POP) Conference 2008.

Watts, H.N. (2007). *Can the research-practice gap ever really be bridged? Applying the 'applied' in evidence-based organisational practice.* Paper presented at PsyPAG Conference, London South Bank University.

Watts, H.N. (2007). *Membership retention in the health and fitness industry: The development of a predictive model.* Paper presented at Annual Research Student Conference, University of Worcester.