



What Impact Does Group Exercise Have on Retention?



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Group Exercise vs Gym Only

Who Does What and Does It Predict Retention?

Imagine following a member from the point of joining through their visits, interactions, cancellation, re-joining your competitors, cancelling – all the time analysing their behaviour and asking how they feel and why they are making the decisions they are doing. Doing this with 5 people would generate incredible understanding... doing it with 10,000 would give our industry the knowledge it needs to grow the market, meaning a bigger slice for all.

What is TRP 10,000™?

TRP 10,000™ is the biggest and most comprehensive survey of member behaviour ever carried out in the health and fitness industry. 10,000 health and fitness members completed a baseline survey of their exercise habits and membership behaviour between July and September 2013. During regular intervals over the coming years they will be followed up to measure changes to their habits and membership behaviour.

The survey included topics such as:

- Membership history
- Reasons for choosing current club
- Frequency of club usage and activities
- Recent progress
- Use and reasons for personal training
- Club communication strategies and how members value them
- Motivation for exercise
- Fitness staff activity
- Club hassles and uplifts
- Net Promoter Score®

The longitudinal study design allows us to examine what happens over the course of a membership and in what way members' experiences, at a given time and during the whole life of their membership, determines retention rates. The focus of this article will be on what club activities members do and specifically who participates in group exercise and who uses the gym only. This article will also examine whether members who usually attend for group exercise have higher retention rates than members who workout in the gym only

Data and analysis

The results reported in this article are for members who completed the survey between July and September 2013 and

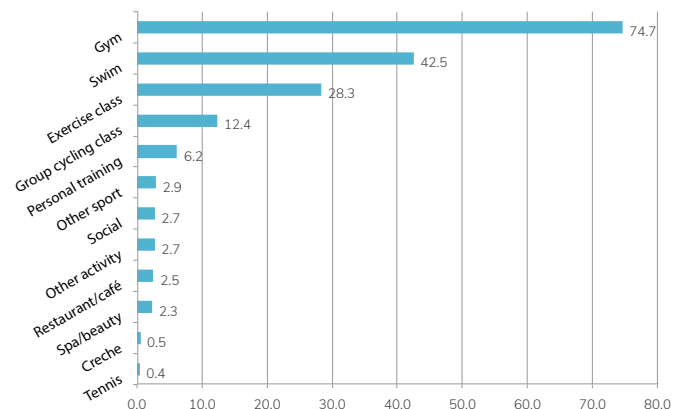
who were followed up until the end of January 2014. During the follow up period 1,526 of participating members cancelled their membership.

From a list of 11 possible options (they could also tell us about things not on the list), members were asked what they usually visited their club for and could give multiple answers. Members who listed either 'exercise class' or 'group cycling class' in their answers were classed as group exercisers and members who only listed 'workout in the gym' were classed as gym only.

Results

Figure 1 shows what members reported they usually did when they made a club visit. Quite clearly working out in the gym is the most common reason for attending followed by an exercise class, swimming and group cycling classes.

Figure 1. Proportion of members reporting activities they usually visit their club to do*



*Activities are not mutually exclusive



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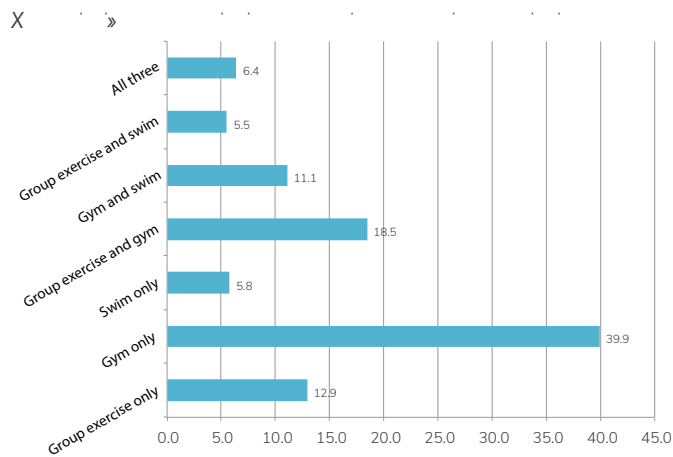


Table 1. Activity group by gender, age group, length of membership, club history and visit frequency

	Gym only	Group Exercise
Gender		
Female	26.5	73.5
Male	64.4	35.6
Age group		
16-24	51.4	48.6
25-34	44.9	55.1
35-44	42.3	57.7
45+	39.3	60.7
Months since joining		
<6	49.7	50.3
>=6 to <12	48.3	51.7
>=12 to <36	45.0	55.0
>=36	27.7	72.3
Club history		
First club	34.6	65.5
1	38.8	61.2
2	41.1	58.9
3	44.0	56.0
More than 3	48.2	51.9
Monthly visits (mean)	6.0	6.3

Does group exercise increase retention compared to gym only?

Retention rates were calculated based on the time from questionnaire completion (when all members were live) to either the cancellation date (for cancelled members) or the 31st January 2014 for live members. Figure 3 (overleaf) shows that the retention rate is higher for group exercisers compared to gym only exercisers. As of the 31st of January 2014, 88% of group exercise members retained their membership compared to 82% of gym only members.

The risk of cancelling between completing the questionnaire and the end of January 2014 was 56% higher in gym only members compared to group exercisers (27.6 cancellations per thousand per month versus 17.7). However, gym only members differ from group exercisers by the factors in Table



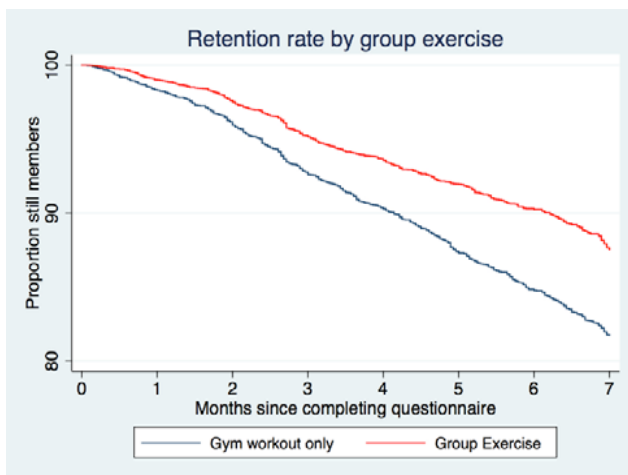
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1 that in themselves may effect retention and the risk of cancelling. Therefore it is important to test whether differences in cancellation rates are definitely due to group exercise rather than these other factors. When we do this (some fancy statistics) group exercisers are still 26% less likely to cancel than gym only members. This means that there is something unique about group exercise that leads to better retention that is not fully explained by gender, age, length of membership, club history or visit frequency.

- ▽ Think about the barriers that stop members attending group exercise and overcome them. Remember – the uninitiated look into a group exercise studio and see a room full of lycra clad people all completing complicated moves in perfect harmony. While we know the reality can be very different to this, what can be done to break down this intimidating first impression?

- ▽ $\frac{3}{4}$ of members who report group exercise as their usual reason for attending also report working out in the gym.

Figure 3.



Summary

The results of this study are not a test of exercise classes versus gym as 66% of members who report group exercise as their usual reason for attending also report working out in the gym. What the results do tell is that in both sexes and all age groups, including group exercise as part of a members exercise routine increases membership retention compared to the members who exclusively workout in the gym (4 in 10). Gym only members tend to be younger males who are new joiners entering the industry for the first time. The longer they remain a member they more likely they are to include group exercise in their routine. So in young males there is a challenge to encourage them into group exercise earlier in their membership, which if successful would improve their retention and their churn rate.

Recommendations

- ▽ Create ways to engage more members in group exercise – especially younger members new to the facility, male members and members who joined other clubs previously.
- Think about the new member journey – can this include a trial/taster of group exercise?





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