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Age-Specific Motivational Differences Among Long-Term Female Clients of Health-Focused Fitness Companies

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Abstract
Fitness facilities require long-term product and service developments in order to attain competitiveness and market presence. This is critical because customer satisfaction may be reached by focusing on meeting customer expectations, which has a beneficial impact on customer loyalty and financial success. All of the fitness studio's value generating processes must be perfectly aligned with consumer expectations. Findings from studies on motivations in fitness sports can help, on the one hand, to build offers that take athletes' special wishes into consideration, and on the other hand, to achieve more effective marketing due to a more defined target group orientation. Female members of a health-orientated fitness club in a large city were surveyed. The questionnaire consisted of 15 items that could be summarised into seven motive areas. The questionnaires were available in the fitness club and could either be completed directly on site or taken away and completed at home. A total of 350 questionnaires were distributed, 278 of which were completed and returned. The response rate was therefore 79.4 per cent. The respondents were members who trained exclusively on equipment. The gender distribution is almost equal with a slight surplus (just under 53%) of male respondents. The sample consists of N=131 female respondents. The average age of the respondents is 55.4 years with a spread around the mean of 13.5 years. The age distribution shows a clear concentration of middle-aged to very old respondents, while younger respondents are comparatively rarely represented. Among respondents with a membership of more than one year, the average length of membership is 12.4 years (spread: 8.2 years). The results show demonstrably significant differences in 6 of the 17 significance tests. In detail, the following significant correlations between motives and age can be found, which are therefore not to be regarded as purely random effects of this specific sampling: a) People who mention the motive 'Positive influence on physical complaints' are older than people who do not mention this motive (mean values 59.9 years to 47.0 years), b) People who mention the motive 'Special figure training (body shaping)' are younger than people who do not mention this motive (mean values 47.1 years to 58.4 years), c) People who mention the motive 'Balancing every day and professional stress' are younger than people who do not mention this motive (mean values 51.0 years to 62, 1 years), d) people who mention the motive 'Continuous guidance and training control' are older than people who do not mention this motive (mean values 59.3 years to 51.3 years), e) people who mention the motive

'Muscle building (bodybuilding)' are older than people who do not mention this motive (mean values 57.9 years to 52.7 years) and f) people who mention the motive 'Pleasant and relaxed training' are older than people who do not mention this motive (mean values 57.4 years to 50.7 years). Of all the age differences, the difference in the motive 'Positive influence on physical complaints' is the most pronounced at 12.9 years. Finding out what motivates clients is crucial if you want to keep them around for the long run. You should also get to know them, classify them, and offer personalised action and fitness advice. The knowledge acquired also contributes to improving the standing of fitness sport overall and establishing the framework for the long-term prosperity of fitness clubs.

Keywords: *Motives, Motivation, Female Participants, Customer loyalty, Fitness Companies*

Introduction

The prominence of the two main areas of life, "work" and "leisure," is changing significantly as a result of the alienation of labour, rising income, and shifting conventional societal norms. These basic shifts also have an impact on sport, which is a component of leisure. There are new sports on the rise that take health considerations into consideration while satisfying the desire for adventure, pleasure, and enjoyment. Sports related to fitness are a prime example. They mix the need for self-expression, the obsession with youth, the pursuit of one's own identity, and the drive to preserve and advance one's health, among other human addictions and aspirations (Zarotis, 1999; Zarotis, 2021). Sports providers must understand the psychological and motivational elements that affect people's leisure sports behaviour in order to satisfy their requirements and preferences. Research on motivation provides useful data and insights on the motivations behind leisure activities as well as sports in general (Zarotis et al., 2002; Zarotis, 2021). Since motivational psychology examines both the internal and environmental factors that influence human behaviour, it begins with the issue of why. It uses the sociological and psychological concepts of "motive" and "motivation," which also refer to a fictitious construct, to explain the variety of this human conduct. Based on behavioural observations and theories, this hypothetical construct explains a phenomenon that is neither directly observable or quantifiable (Heckhausen & Heckhausen, 2010; Zarotis, 2020; Zarotis, 2021). Motivational psychology focusses on the target behaviour. Which states are avoided and which goals are sought, as well as how much work and perseverance are put into them, are all influenced by motivation. It is the outcome of the interplay between situational and organismal factors. Motives sharpen awareness of situations, rewards, and happenings that are likely to meet demands. These incentives have a very strong emotional appeal. Latent evaluative dispositions known as motives are triggered or activated by rewards before manifesting as motivation and conduct (Puca & Schüler, 2017). There are two types of motivation: internal motivation and motivation derived from outside sources. Extraneous elements like avoiding punishment, maintaining social status, or material values are characteristics of extrinsic motivation. In this context, extrinsic refers to the use of replacement methods to satisfy requirements that originate from extrinsically motivated conduct rather than the behaviour itself. The original behaviour has no direct bearing on the actual fulfilling of wants. Since they do not allow for the immediate satisfaction of demands, rewards — which often just define the amount of work input — are useless in and of themselves (Kroehler & Berti, 2014). It is relevant because intrinsic motivation is produced by the object itself. Extrinsic basic requirements must be partially satisfied before the stimulating potential of intrinsic motivation can be realised. Only when one's material life is reasonably secure can people look for new non-material experiences (Reinhardt, 2018; Zarotis, 2020; Zarotis, 2021). According to Csikszentmihalyi, intrinsic motivation is contingent upon the best possible balance between performance requirements and performance competence. The flow area is where this optimum occurs, which pushes people without being too demanding and therefore creates a feeling of accomplishment. Csikszentmihalyi asserts that flow can be found in the conflict between an individual's degree of abilities and skills and the demands of their surroundings. Since intrinsic motivation differs from external motivation, the conduct itself is what makes it satisfying. Behaviour and need satisfaction happen at the same time. Intrinsic

behaviour enhances a good sense of freedom since needs are met without the help of outside rewards. Therefore, the same task may be perceived as easy and satisfying when motivated by intrinsic factors or as challenging and unpleasant while under the influence of extrinsic rewards. Any activity can be internally rewarding, provided it is well designed and our talents match the demands, according to Csikszentmihalyi's studies on intrinsically motivated behaviour (Csikszentmihalyi & Jackson, 2000; Schueler et al., 2020; Zarotis, 2021). For those who work in the sports industry, the topic of why individuals participate in sports is especially significant. In addition to making human behaviour easier to grasp, the answer to this question offers fresh perspectives on methodology, didactics, and sports program design. Recreational sports motivations stem from complex, multi-motivated structures that have historical, social, psychological, and physical roots rather than being monocausal (Elbe, 2020; Beckmann et al., 2009). Changes in preferences were the main cause of the rise in fitness sports. Motives including health, exercise, enjoyment, relaxation, and well-being replaced competition and performance (Dilger, 2008). In the various scientific fields of sport, it is crucial to comprehend motivations in the context of sport. On the one hand, control procedures in fitness studios can be identified as motivated by economic objectives. Similarly, from the standpoint of training science, different motivational traits — which may be construed as either excessive or insufficient motivation — can be essential for improving performance. When compared to other actions, the psychological motivations behind the behaviour are also noteworthy. Designing training, products, and target group marketing with the individual in mind requires that training be geared to client motives (Hackfort, 2001; Zarotis, 2021). The motivations for fitness have been the subject of numerous studies in recent years, thus by this point, a comprehensive picture of the current fitness motivations appears to exist. A change may nonetheless occur, for example, as a result of societal shifts or individual circumstances, even when a certain stability is ascribed to the person's motivational orientation. Furthermore, it's probable that research with distinct focusses or those conducted at various times have different motivational orientations. These disparities may result from social reasons as well as, for instance, industry changes. This review emphasises the need for recurrent assessments of motivational orientations from an economic as well as psychological standpoint. In order to better take individual objectives into account when creating the offer and offering training support, it should be beneficial to compare the goal of identifying the underlying motivations and individual prerequisites (Middelkamp & Steenbergen, 2012). From a psychological perspective, the motivational phase is associated with expectations about the results of actions, among other things. Initially, a particular purpose is linked to a certain condition, which must be met by completing specified actions (Nitsch, 2004). Research on fitness motivations offers a useful perspective on their traits and importance. They typically provide insight into the reasons behind the popularity of fitness sports, allowing for the distinction of various fitness motivations among various demographics (Zarotis & Tokarski, 2005). It should be underlined in this context that there are ways to differentiate between reasons for joining, continuing, and leaving. It's also possible that the initial motivations for choosing a fitness membership evolve over time, become less significant, or are replaced by a variety of new or different factors (Gabler, 2002; Hackfort et al., 2004). Understanding the reasons behind the population's participation in leisure sports is always a good place to start when creating and organising offerings tailored to a particular target group. This can help to keep existing members and draw in new fitness athletes (Zarotis, 2021). 278 members of fitness clubs in all were polled. A total of 15 reasons for joining a fitness club were questioned about as multiple-choice answer options, along with sociodemographic data including age and gender, the length of time spent as a member, and information about prior memberships at other clubs. The following seven dimensions can be used to categorise these 15 reasons:

Fitness/Health	General improvement of physical fitness
	Cardiovascular training with emphasis on endurance
	Positive impact on physical problems • Cardiovascular problems • Orthopaedic problems

Appearance	Weight loss (general fat loss)
	Specific bodyshaping
	Bodybuilding
Psychological experience	Compensation for daily routine and occupational stress
	Pleasant and relaxed training
Cognitive dimension	Continuous guidance and training control
	Information about exercise effects and anatomical background knowledge
Social dimension	Being able to plan and control training independently
	Training with a partner
Performance	Specific sporting performance
Motor dimension	Supplement to my own sport
	Preparation for my own sport

The subject was also questioned, using multiple-choice questions, if the purpose of influencing physical symptoms was mentioned, and if so, whether the complaints were orthopaedic or cardiovascular. The following analyses investigate whether age has a substantial impact on the frequency of motive mentions. The frequency distributions throughout the entire set of respondents are presented in the presentation, which is first restricted to solely descriptive statistics. In the framework of these assessments, neither hypotheses about potential correlations — whether between motives or about how motives depend on other traits — are developed nor tested (Willimczik & Ennigkeit, 2018). The results help build a recreational sports fitness program that is tailored to each individual's needs and goals, establish the groundwork for fitness clubs to succeed in the long run, and enhance the perception of fitness sports in general.

Methodology

Survey methodology

A study was conducted among the members of a fitness club located in a big metropolis. There are fifteen elements in the questionnaire, which can be broken down into seven smaller dimensions. There are 15 alternative responses to the multiple-choice questions regarding the reasons for fitness training in this studio. In one instance, there are two more sub-questions on particular complaints (the question regarding physical complaints as a purpose). Thus, there are 15, or 17 questions in total, including the sub-questions and bits of information about motives, each of which the responders can choose to include or not. The fitness club provided the surveys, which could be filled out there or taken away. Up of the 350 questionnaires that were provided, 278 were filled up and sent back. Thus, the response rate was 79.4%. A study was conducted among members who exclusively train on equipment. Members who had been going to the club for 26 years and those who had just been going for six months were among the respondents. The questionnaire consisted of multiple-choice questions about each person's motivations. Each reason has two options at the data level: "mentioned" and "not mentioned." A statement of the respondents' ages in years was required. The age data was further separated into four age groups for descriptive purposes: Between the ages of up to 40; 41 and 55; 56 and 65; and over 65 One metrically scaled characteristic is age in years. Each case has two case groups based on whether the individual motives are mentioned or not. The significance of the associations with age is tested using t-tests for independent samples. To ascertain whether there is a significant difference in the mean values of two groups, the t-test is utilised. A correlation between age and motive choice is demonstrated if the mean age of respondents

who indicated a motive is substantially different from the mean age of those who did not. A causal interpretation of this would be that age affects the motivational decision. One metrically scaled characteristic is age in years. Each case has two case groups based on whether the individual motives are mentioned or not. The significance of the age-related correlations is examined using t-tests for independent samples. To determine whether there is a significant difference in the mean values of two groups, the t-test is utilised. A correlation between age and motive choice is demonstrated if the mean age of respondents who indicated a motive is substantially different from the mean age of those who did not. This can thus be read causally as indicating that age affects the motivational decision. A separate test for the dependent variable's normal distribution is not performed because the sample size is significantly larger than N=30. In this instance, we can presume that the t-test is resilient for a breach of the normal distribution assumption based on the central limit theorem. This indicates that if the data in the dependent variable are not regularly distributed, the t-test also yields accurate results in the significance analysis. The Levene test is used in each instance to verify the precondition of the model assumption of homogenous variances. The corrected t-test (Welch test), which accounts for variance differences in the significance test, is used to determine the significance in the event of a substantial departure from the model assumption of homogeneous variances (Willimczik & Ennigkeit, 2018).

Results

Sample description

The sample consists of N=131 female respondents. The mean age of the respondents is 55.4 years, with a dispersion around the mean of 13.5 years. The age distribution shows a clear accumulation of respondents in middle to old age, with younger respondents being comparatively rare.

Table-1: Age distribution in the sample

Feature	Characterisation	Quantity	%	Mean value	Std. dev.
Age categories	up to 40 years	16	12,2%		
	41 to 55 years	40	30,5%		
	56 to 65 years	44	33,6%		
	Older than 65 years	31	23,7%		
	Total	131	100,0%		
Age in years		131		55,4	13,5

The duration of membership is over one year for 96.9% of respondents (127 out of 131). In 8 cases (3.1%), membership was between six months and one year; there were no shorter membership periods. Among the respondents with a membership of more than one year, the average length of membership was 12.4 years (spread: 8.2 years). 50 of the women surveyed stated that they had previously been a member of another gym. The average duration of these previous memberships is 5.6 years (spread: 5.9 years).

Age influences on the naming of motives - descriptive statistics

Table 2 shows the mean values (MW) and standard deviations (SD) by age when naming or not naming the respective motives.

Table-2: Age and motives cited

	not named		named		Total	
Motives	**MW**	**SD**	**MW**	**SD**	**MW**	**SD**
Motive area: Fitness / Health						
Improve physical fitness in general	**56,9**	10,1	**55,3**	13,7	55,4	13,5
Endurance-orientated cardiovascular training	**55,4**	15,4	**55,5**	10,8	55,4	13,5

Positive influence on physical complaints	**47,0**	15,1	**59,9**	10,1	55,4	13,5
if yes: cardiovascular complaints	**59,9**	10,0	**60,0**	11,7	59,9	10,1
if yes: orthopaedic complaints	**62,2**	8,4	**59,3**	10,5	59,9	10,1
Motive area: Appearance						
Weight reduction	**57,4**	13,1	**53,3**	13,6	55,4	13,5
Specialised figure training (body shaping)	**58,4**	11,6	**47,1**	15,0	55,4	13,5
Training to build muscles (bodybuilding)	**52,7**	14,7	**57,9**	11,8	55,4	13,5
Motive area: Mental experience						
Balance out every day and professional stress	**62,1**	12,5	**51,0**	12,3	55,4	13,5
Exercise in a pleasant and relaxed way	**50,7**	18,4	**57,4**	10,2	55,4	13,5
Motive area: Cognitive dimension						
Continuous guidance / training control	**51,3**	14,4	**59,3**	11,4	55,4	13,5
Info on exercise effect / anatomical knowledge	**54,4**	13,9	**57,5**	12,6	55,4	13,5
Motive area: Social dimension						
Planning and managing training independently soon	**55,0**	13,4	55,8	13,7	55,4	13,5
Training with a partner or other people	**56,2**	13,4	51,5	13,6	55,4	13,5
Motive area: Performance						
Concrete sporting performance	**54,0**	12,9	**58,2**	14,4	55,4	13,5
Motive area: Motor dimension						
Supplement to my sport	**55,3**	13,9	**56,1**	11,9	55,4	13,5
Preparation for my sport	**55,6**	14,0	**53,7**	5,1	55,4	13,5

Descriptively, only slight mean differences were found in most cases between the ages of people who mentioned the corresponding motive and those who did not mention the motive. From a purely descriptive point of view, the most striking differences are in the influence of physical complaints, the compensation for everyday and occupational stress and the special figure training. For the first motive mentioned, the persons are older on average, and for the other two motives, younger.

Effects of age on the mention of motives – significance testing

Table 3 shows the results of the 17 t-tests for independent samples. The significance as the probability for the validity of the null hypothesis in the population as well as the associated test statistics, i.e. the t-value and its degrees of freedom (df), are given. Degrees of freedom that show non-integer values indicate that, in this case, the significance was calculated using the Welch test due to inhomogeneous variances.

Table-3: Significance test for motives and age

Motives	t	df	Significance
Motive area: Fitness / Health			
Improve physical fitness in general	0,334	129	0,739
Endurance-orientated cardiovascular training	0,030	129	0,976
Positive influence on physical complaints	6,166	65,241	**<0,001**
if yes: cardiovascular complaints	0,042	84	0,966
if yes: orthopaedic complaints	1,007	84	0,285
Motive area: Appearance			
Weight reduction	1,784	129	0,077
Specialised figure training (body shaping)	4,511	129	**<0,001**
Training to build muscles (bodybuilding)	2,212	129	**0,029**
Motive area: Mental experience			
Balance out every day and professional stress	5,008	129	**<0,001**
Exercise in a pleasant and relaxed way	2,140	48,183	**0,037**
Motive area: Cognitive dimension			

Continuous guidance / training control	3,522	129	**0,001**
Info on exercise effect / anatomical knowledge	1,277	129	0,204
Motive area: Social dimension			
Planning and managing training independently soon	0,341	129	0,733
Training with a partner or other people	1,490	129	0,139
Motive area: Performance			
Concrete sporting performance	1,669	129	0,098
Motive area: Motor dimension			
Addition to my sport	0,286	129	0,775
Preparation for my sport	0,928	27,189	0,362

The results show significant results in 6 of the 17 significance tests. In two cases, the age differences are significant at the 5% level, in one case at the 1% level and in three cases at the 0.1% level. In two further cases (weight reduction and specific sporting performance), the significance is only just missed.
In detail, the following significant correlations of motives with age can be found, which are therefore not to be regarded as mere coincidental effects of this specific sampling:

- Persons who mention the motive ‘positive influence on physical complaints’ are older than persons who do not mention this motive (mean values 59.9 years to 47.0 years).
- Persons who mention the motive ‘special figure training (body-shaping)’ are younger than persons who do not mention this motive (mean values 47.1 years to 58.4 years).
- People who name ‘relieving every day and occupational stress’ as their motive are younger than people who do not name this motive (mean values 51.0 years to 62.1 years).
- People who name ‘continuous instruction and training control’ as their motive are older than people who do not name this motive (mean values 59.3 years to 51.3 years).
- People who name the motive ‘muscle building (bodybuilding)’ are older than people who do not name this motive (mean values 57.9 years to 52.7 years).
- People who name the motive ‘pleasant and relaxed training’ are older than people who do not name this motive (mean values 57.4 years to 50.7 years).

Discussion of the Results

For athletes, the question of why they do sports is particularly relevant. Answering this question not only makes human behaviour more understandable, but also leads to new insights for methodology and didactics as well as for the design of sporting activities. This optimisation of processes can lead to training successes that experience a positive influence. Lehnert et al. (2011) emphasise that exercise programmes in fitness clubs, regardless of the context, must take into account the different needs in order to create loyalty. Eleven of the selectable motives show no dependency on age, at least none that goes beyond purely coincidental fluctuations in the context of random sampling. The six motives for which significant age differences exist show a largely plausible picture with regard to the direction of the influence of age: Those who want to influence physical complaints as a motive, appreciate continuous instruction and training control and want to train in a pleasant and relaxed way tend to be older. Of all the age differences, the difference in the motive ‘physical complaints influence’ is most pronounced at 12.9 years. With regard to the specification of this motive as cardiovascular or orthopaedic complaints, however, there are no longer any demonstrable age influences. The majority of elderly fitness athletes feel that their health is in danger due to the rising incidence of lifestyle ailments brought on by modern industrial societies. Through appropriate recreational sports, they attempt to preserve and advance their health as much as possible (Zarotis, 1999; Zarotis et al., 2011; Zarotis, 2021). Additionally, studies have shown that regular fitness training has a good impact on human health (Zarotis & Tokarski, 2020; Tokarski et al., 2023). This health-promoting effect, particularly of combined strength and endurance training, is also demonstrated by

Riess et al. (2014) in their scientific study. Furthermore, other research indicates that back pain can be avoided (Stephan et al., 2011). With advancing age female clients say they value a comfortable and laid-back training environment. This suggests that senior fitness athletes are more interested in fitness sports for enjoyment and well-being than younger ones. Clearly, ongoing care is more crucial for the elderly than for the younger generation. Because they don't want to make mistakes when working out, older adults feel safer when they receive professional guidance. Because they are afraid of the potential repercussions of improper training, they place a high value on the diligent and accurate performance of the exercises (Zarotis, 1999; Zarotis, 2021).
The finding that the motive of muscle building (bodybuilding) tends to go hand in hand with older age is somewhat out of line with the picture. It can be derived from the results that female clients with advancing age pursue muscle building due to the decrease of muscle mass.

Those who value ‘special figure training’ or ‘balance to everyday and professional stress’ tend to be younger female clients. One of the main goals of fitness training is weight loss and specific figure training. The findings of this study reflect the societal misperceptions of younger fitness athletes, who are represented by a slim, taut and trained figure. It is clear from the study that fitness sports offer younger people a significant opportunity to balance the demands of their daily lives and careers. The high-performance standards, which frequently result in a depressing work environment, and the lack of workplace recognition are making professional integration more and more difficult. As a result, there is frustration and a lack of mental stability. This is a significant reason why younger people are motivated to "adjust to the stress of their daily and professional lives" (Zarotis, 1999; Zarotis et al., 2002). Exercise improves cognitive function, lowers anxiety, and manages stress (Battaglia, 2014). A promising foundation for the sector's future growth is the growing knowledge of and willingness of women to take proactive measures for their own health. The same is true in other nations where the fitness sector is more commonly acknowledged as a provider of services for people's health. Older age groups that have not received as much attention from the sector up to this point are being increasingly reached by a progressive movement towards health-oriented offers. It's critical to proactively manage development and take advantage of opportunities that present themselves in a changing environment. A quality idea must be centred on the customer and their specific objectives, and it should always be produced from their point of view. The failure to meet or accomplish their needs, wants, and goals is likely one of the reasons why members leave. Intrinsic motivation should therefore be the foundation of health-oriented exercise training from the beginning. Additionally, encouraging positive fitness training experiences and decreasing negative ones should enhance the sport-related consequence experience (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Zarotis et al., 2017; Zarotis, 2021).

Conclusion

The way society views fitness sports has evolved throughout time. These days, being physically fit is an indication of an active, health-conscious, and body-aware lifestyle. Among other factors, the industry's strong emphasis on health has helped to halt the downward trend. This allows people to integrate their motivations for relaxation, health care, and physical exercise in a meaningful way. Understanding the motivations of fitness enthusiasts can help to better customise the offers to meet their individual needs. Additionally, more targeted marketing might result from a more focused approach to the target audience. In a good third of the motives recorded for fitness training, there is a significant influence of age with regard to the mention of these motives; this is not the case for two thirds of the motives. Physical complaints, pleasant and relaxed training, continuous instruction and training control, and muscle building are more likely to be cited as motives by older people. Stress reduction and figure training, on the other hand, are more likely to be cited as motives by younger people. Without a doubt, only happy clients will genuinely stick with a fitness supplier. While some fitness providers steer clear of customer satisfaction entirely, others attempt—sometimes successfully — to conduct regular surveys of their members and clients. Even if the fundamentals of empirical survey methodologies should be taken into account, some fitness providers find it challenging to assess and analyse the data they collect. Nonetheless, taking significant action based on the survey's findings can help to maintain a positive impact on

customer satisfaction and, consequently, their loyalty. Finding, comprehending, and classifying their motivations in a thorough and sincere manner is crucial to gaining the loyalty of long-term customers. It is also crucial to provide suitable, personalised action and fitness advice. The knowledge acquired also contributes to the long-term prosperity of fitness centres.

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