

# Chapter 2

## Customer Retention in the Fitness Area A Case Study at Ginásio My Gym in Portugal

**Felipa Lopes dos Reis**

*Universidade Lusófona, Portugal*

**Helena LDR Pimentel**

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0323-1472>

*Universidade Lusófona, Portugal*

### **ABSTRACT**

*With the growth of the fitness market in Portugal, there is a constant need on the part of gym managers to understand how it works in order to be competitive. Capturing new customers and keeping them has become a permanent concern. Thinking about this reality, the present study intends to collaborate to clarify the problem of customer retention. For this, hypotheses were developed to verify whether the quality of service, the social environment, global satisfaction, price perception and the average weekly attendance of a member influence their retention at the Gym. This quantitative investigation was carried out at My Gym in Lisbon where, after applying questionnaires, a sample of 84 respondents was obtained. The analysis of the results allowed us to verify that overall satisfaction and the quality of the services provided have a strong impact on retention. It was also possible to observe that there is a new profile of people who see the gym as a way of socializing and, therefore, the social environment has a positive influence on retention. Price perception is an important dimension when choosing a gym, however it does not influence retention as well as the number of times a member attends the gym.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Globalization phenomenon is something that has influenced the world economy, and it couldn't be different with the fitness sector. In recent decades, the number of gyms and health clubs has increased significantly. This increase in competition suggests that every organization seeks to create competitive advantages to stay in business and make profits.

In Portugal there are some initial barriers that need to be overcome by gyms, one of them is sedentary lifestyle. Although there are currently government incentives for people to practice physical activities in order to maintain their well-being and avoid future health problems such as diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, oncological diseases and obesity, more than half of the population does not practice physical activity at satisfactory levels. Another barrier to be overcome is the practice of outdoor activities. Of the people who practice physical activity, many of them prefer not to make a financial investment in a gym and do activities in the parks and public spaces that exist in Portugal for leisure.

After overcoming these initial barriers, which impact on attracting new customers, it is necessary to understand what makes a person look for a gym and work on this motivation, which can be weight loss, body toning, medical prescription, well-being or even socialization. It is also necessary to pay special attention to people who arrive as new clients in gyms. Most new clients have never trained or haven't trained for over two years, and more than 90% don't like to train (Amaral, 2018).

The main fitness trends in Portugal are “Licenses (titles) for fitness professionals”, “Employing certified fitness professionals”, “Personal trainer”, “Exercise for weight loss” and “Healthy lifestyle and behavioral change”. Portugal has its own fitness trends, and these trends are more similar to those in Europe than to the World. Portuguese legislation (Law no. 39/2012, of August 28) requires the existence of a title to act as a fitness professional, which may lead to these trends (Franco et al., 2022).

Training is inevitably associated with pain. Therefore, it is necessary to do an effective job in the sense of prescribing adequate training for each member to minimize the physical discomfort that is naturally caused at the beginning of a muscular work and in this way promote those clients remains linked to the gym.

The lack of customer retention strategies can represent a major concern in fitness business, because some are not able to maintain satisfied customers, and a competitive advantage for a much longer period. Customers' loyalty is a fundamental goal for companies due to its positive consequences in terms of repurchase and long-term relationships. Social media can be a fundamental tool for gyms and managers who are seeking to attract and retain customers, which highlight the important role of the internet for gym can promote a successful marketing campaign in the gym setting (Tsitskari & Batrakoulis, 2022).

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