Encouraging employees use of fitness clubs in Employee Wellness Programs

Helen Watts
Dr Jan Francis-Smythe
Dr Derek Peters
Prof. Dominic Upton
Overview

• Introduction to Employee Wellness Programmes (EWPs) and the business benefits
• Do EWPs always increase well-being...or
• ...do EWPs create negativity?
• ...does this negativity then prevent participation?
• Presentation of my research findings
• Discussion of the implications for organisations seeking to implement EWPs
Business benefits of a healthy workforce

  - Improved brand
  - Improved retention
  - Improved resilience
  - Higher commitment
  - Higher productivity
  - Fewer accidents
  - Reduced sickness

  - Direct link between expenditure on EWPs and reduced health care costs and positive ROI
Employee Wellness Programmes (EWPs)

- On or off-site services sponsored by organisations which attempt to promote good health
- Off-site- offering of corporate fitness club memberships

- Why the need for EWPs…
But are fitness clubs places of well-being?

- Can be places of anxiety and stress (Mintel, 2009)
- Interview study (n=24) with various fitness club members
  - Examination and inclusion of affective variables and their effect on attendance
Affective variables

People can often become…

• Anxious
• Alienated
• Averse
Anxious

- State social anxiety (SSA) (Gammage et al 2004, Martin & Fox, 2001)
- A form of social anxiety induced by a certain situation or environment
- E.g. a fitness club
- Feeling anxious about how we look, how capable we are and how fit we are
- Triggered by either other members or staff
Alienated

• Social identification (Leach et al, 2008)
• Feeling like you have something in common with other fitness club members (Self- stereotyping)
• Feeling like your fitness club members are distinct from other clubs’ members (homogeneity)
Averse

• Self-determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000)
• External motivation- pressure
• Motivation is external rather than internal
• Pressure to attend a fitness club
Method

• Questionnaire was distributed to 716 members
• 68% response rate after an initial ‘face-to-face’ asking for consent to send questionnaire
• Reduced sample based on attendance levels
Measuring attendance

- Intention to attend
- Controlled for planned absences i.e. any with planned absence removed from sample
- Recoded into ‘low’ and ‘high’
  - ‘low attendees’ 2-6 times per month (n=46)
  - ‘high attendees’ 11+ times per month (n=278)
‘High’ attendees of fitness clubs?

- Advised to be at least twice a week (11+ times per month, ‘high attendees’)
- Attending a fitness club is a form of exercise - a ‘planned physical activity’
- Different guidelines for exercise as opposed to physical activity e.g. 5 x 30 minutes per week
Analysis

• Item level of analysis
• Identifying predictive items first then generating predictive factors
• Pragmatic approach- to develop an efficient questionnaire
• Logistic regression models where outcome variable is dichotomous i.e. retain vs. cancel, insufficient vs. sufficient attendance
## Final model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>B</th>
<th>S.E.</th>
<th>Wald</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Exp(B)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have a lot in <strong>common</strong> with the average member of my fitness club</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>5.47</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>1.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I worry about how <strong>weak or unfit</strong> I look in front of other <strong>members</strong></td>
<td>-0.20</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel under <strong>pressure</strong> from my family/friends/partner to go to a fitness club</td>
<td>-0.29</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.75</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Limitations

• Intention to attend not actual attendance
• Hard to capture those who don’t go
• Longitudinal analysis has been conducted in order to validate predictive factors in relation to both attendance and fitness club cancellation
Implications for EWPs?

- Three stages of implementation
Reduce alienation

- **Planning phase** - selecting the right Wellness Option by matching EWP partner clientele to workforce
Reduce anxiety

- **Execution phase** - offering personal counselling or personal training to begin with, away from other a shared environment with other members.
Reduce apathy

- **Management phase** - work on intrinsic motivation through social marketing efforts and development of a wellness brand as opposed to just financial incentives or direct pressure to go.
- ‘Engage’ rather than ‘monitor and remind’
Thanks- any questions?

h.watts@worc.ac.uk