

# Identifying the behavioural habits of gym-goers to inform an emotional 'hook' campaign for boutique gym classes



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## Executive Summary

This report assesses the experiences and behavioural habits and preferences of gym-goers who have or have had gym membership. Free-text responses from a survey constituting 68 gym-goers were analysed to gain an insight into how they feel about gym accessibility, their emotional and physical reactions to gym classes, the impact the gym has on their lifestyle (i.e. diet, sleep, and spending), and their preferences for types of training formats and fitness classes. The survey was designed using Google Forms and distributed by Big Cat Limited via multiple social media channels.

Gym-goers had physical and emotional reactions to attending the gym and fitness classes. They noted their awareness that attending the gym improved their mental and physical strength such that they were making healthier food choices, sleeping better, and felt empowered and comfortable with their own body image and self-care.

At times there were mixed effects evident in their responses. For example, while most gym-goers suggested that going to the gym motivated them to make healthier food choices, others stated that it enabled them to eat freely without the guilt of eating food that is considered to be unhealthy. This can be seen as going to the gym having mixed effects on people's food habits, or that going to the gym liberates people and gives them more control over their lives and decisions. There was a general consensus that going to the gym improved quality of sleep, by sleeping better, sleeping longer, and going to sleep earlier.

Gym-goers preferred to work out on their own because it was more convenient for their lifestyle, gave them a sense of independence, allowed them to focus on their training and productivity during their workout. Gym-goers who preferred training with a partner or in a group were motivated to do more than they would if working out individually. Those who attended classes appreciated the structure and knowledge these classes could give them. The access gym-goers had to a supportive community through training with a partner, in a group, or as part of a class seemed to be more impactful on boosting their personal strength by increasing their confidence, positive energy, self-esteem, and good mental health.

While fitness classes were considered to be motivational, informative, and diverse, many gym-goers noted that these classes can be expensive and therefore they would only go occasionally as an 'indulgence' or 'treat'. CrossFit was the most well-known and received the most effective variation. Club nights and boutique classes were lesser known.

The most important factors to gym-goers that were reported were affordable classes, a sense of community, and the accessibility and facilities of the gym. Moreover, the analysis has revealed that working out at the gym and attending

fitness classes can have a positive impact not only on physical strength (i.e. healthier diet and better quality of sleep) but also mental strength (i.e. improving confidence, positivity, self-esteem, and general good mental health).

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# 1. Introduction

In partnership with Big Cat, Samantha Ford, a cognitive linguist from the University of Birmingham analysed the responses of 68 people who are present or past gym-goers. Participants talked about gym accessibility, the effect completing gym sessions has on their physical condition (i.e. diet and sleep) and mental condition (i.e. feelings about missed gym sessions), their preferences for different types of training formats and fitness classes, and their general experiences about their gym habits and choices.

For each question, we used a thematic analysis approach to identify the common concepts, thoughts, and opinions gym-goers had in response to the questions posed. From this analysis we were able to draw key behavioural practices and emotional reactions to attending the gym and fitness classes.

## 2. Results

Here we discuss the findings in six parts: (1) gym accessibility; (2) emotional relationship with the gym; (3) reflections on the impact going to the gym has on their physical and mental wellbeing; (4) the impact going to the gym has on their behavioural practices, such as diet sleep; (5) preferences for specific kinds of gym classes; and (6) general experiences about gym habits and choices.

### 2.1. Gym accessibility: What are the barriers preventing you from going to the gym?

Of 10 responses, the majority of gym-goers were **concerned with managing their time and money** spend and **fitting going to the gym around their job and home life** (Figure 1).

#### **Time and price:**

*Finding time and basing it around work and commuting + parking being a big issue!*

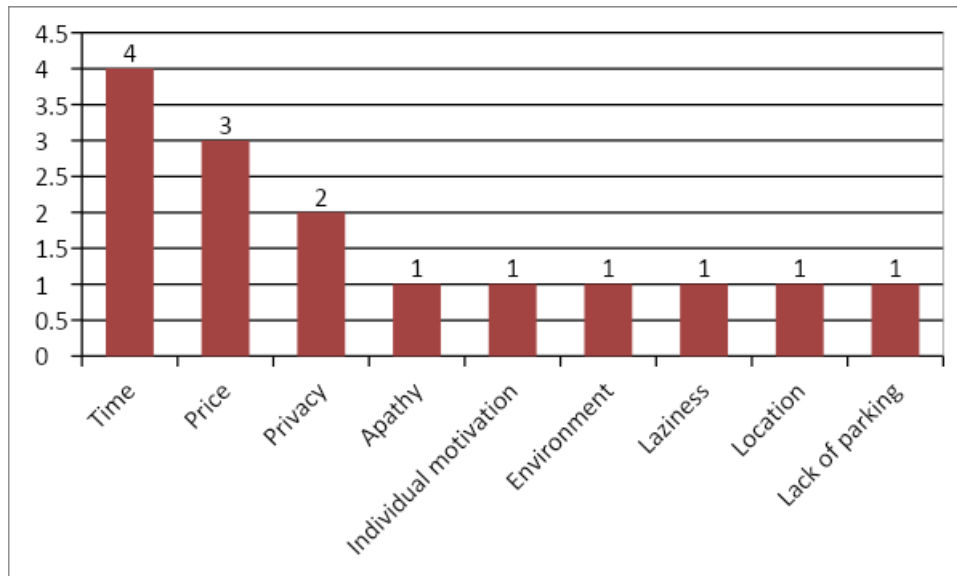
*Cost of membership and how much I would be able to use it with a full time job*

#### **Apathy:**

*Small child at home*

#### **Location:**

*If there was a gym on my way to or from work it would make sense to go, but as I walk and don't drive, there are no gyms within a suitable distance for a suitable price.*



**Figure 1: Thematic count of barriers for gym accessibility**

**Recommendation:** Flexible packages for time and price of gym classes may be attractive to gym-goers whose concern is how it will fit in with their busy work and home life.

## 2.2. Emotional relationship with the gym: How do you feel if you miss a few gym sessions?

A total of 33 gym-goers mostly provided **negative emotional responses** to this question, stating that they **commonly felt guilty** if they missed gym sessions. Gym-goers also felt physical effects such as **lethargy**, and practical effects such as a sense that they were **wasting their money** on gym membership and classes, when they missed sessions. Results that yielded two or more responses are shown in Figure 2. All responses are shown in Table 1. The positive and negative emotional, physical, and practical categorised responses are presented in Figure 3.

**A sense of guilt was the most common reaction** to missing gym sessions:

*"Guilty and the fear builds but I usually push past it for the benefits of a good workout out way the negatives of having not been for a brief amount of time."*

Some gym-goers suggested that their **reaction would depend on their mood**:

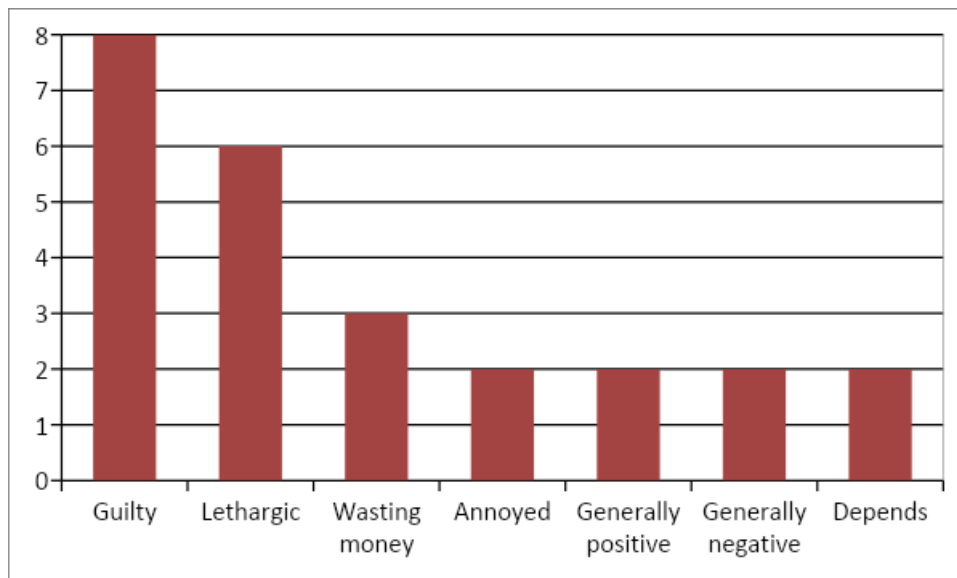
*“Disappointed if I’ve planned to get them in and I haven’t been able to. If I haven’t planned to go and then don’t go I don’t feel as guilty.”*

*“All depends on the type of day I’m having, if I’m having a productive day then it wouldn’t bother me. If a stressful one that probably will bother me more.”*

**Few gym-goers reacted positively** about missing gym sessions, while others were indifferent or able to manage their expectations when missing gym sessions:

*“Fine” and “Great!”*

*“Don’t sweat about it, but rarely miss sessions, its part of my routine”*

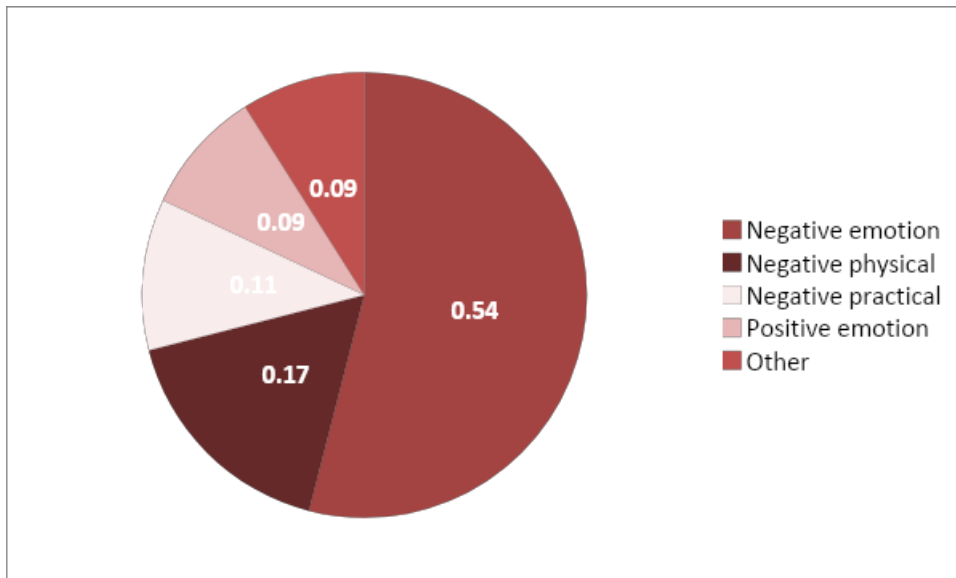


**Figure 2: Reaction to missing gym sessions**

**Table 1: Reaction to missing gym sessions**

Feeling	N	% of responses
Guilty	8	23.53
Lethargic	6	17.65
Wasting money	3	8.82
Annoyed	2	5.88
Generally positive	2	5.88
Generally negative	2	5.88
Fearful	1	2.94
Disappointed	1	2.94

Need to prioritise fitness	1	2.94
Missing out	1	2.94
Unachieving	1	2.94
Depends	1	2.94
Demotivated	1	2.94
Neutral	1	2.94
Different	1	2.94
Relaxed	1	2.94
Stressed	1	2.94
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>100.00</b>

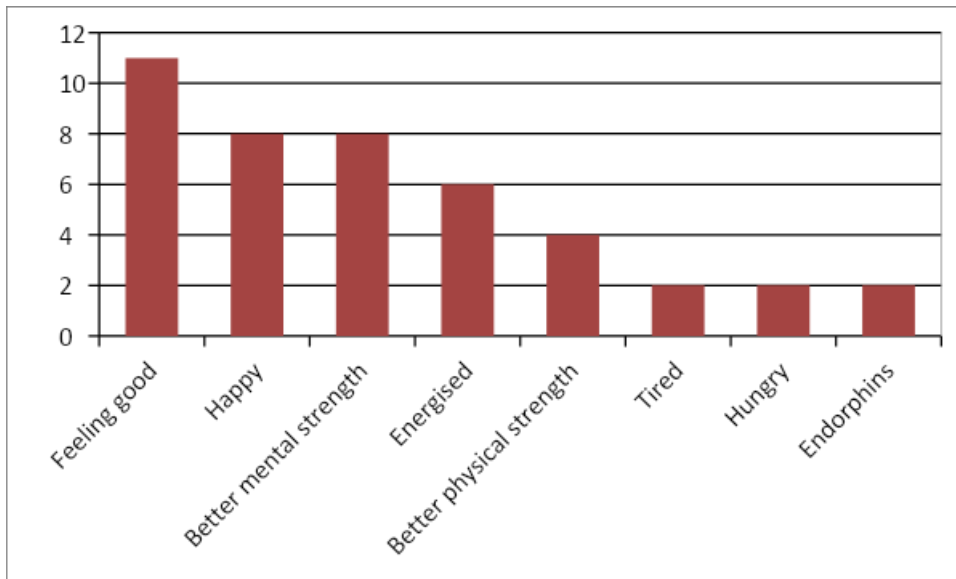


**Figure 3: Categories of emotional, physical, practical, and other responses to missing gym sessions**

### 2.3. Reflections on the impact going to the gym has on physical and mental wellbeing

This section addresses the overall physical and mental changes gym-goers experience after completing a gym session. In addition to their activity at the gym producing more positive emotions, gym-goers were also aware that attending the gym improved their mental and physical strength such that they felt empowered and comfortable with their own body image and self-care. See Figure 4 for responses that received two or more mentions and the frequency and percentage breakdown in Table 2. Gym-goers were also aware of the impact going to the gym has on their hunger and tiredness levels. This is explored in more depth in the following sections (2.4.1 and 2.4.2).





**Figure 4: Changes gym-goers experienced after attending the gym**

**Table 2: Changes gym-goers noticed after attending the gym**

Change	N	% of responses
Feeling good	11	22.45
Happy	8	16.33
Better mental strength	8	16.33
Energised	6	12.24
Better physical strength	4	8.16
Tired	2	4.08
Hungry	2	4.08
Endorphins	2	4.08
Better diet	2	4.08
Meditative	1	2.04
Self-caring	1	2.04
Relaxed	1	2.04
Better sleep	1	2.04
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>100</b>

**Comments on gym-goers experiencing improved mental and physical strength often co-occurred**, suggesting that good mental health can be supported by good physical health that comes from going to the gym. They also stated that this helped them to replenish their mental and physical strength. Some examples are:

*"I feel physically and mentally sharper."*

*“Free on a mental capacity almost like I've recharged my batteries, Physically fitter.”*

*“Alert, focused, less tired.”*

*“My gym time is my time to clock-off mentally and leave the stress of everyday life behind - I feel recentred and energised after finishing a session.”*

Moreover, that **improved mental and physical health empowered gym-goers and made them feel content and comfortable with their own body:**

*“Being reminded of my Physical strength bolsters my belief in my mental strength.”*

*“I always feel better about myself, feel like my clothes look nicer, have more energy for the day.”*

Gym-goers were also conscious of their gym attendance having a **positive impact on their diet and physical fitness:**

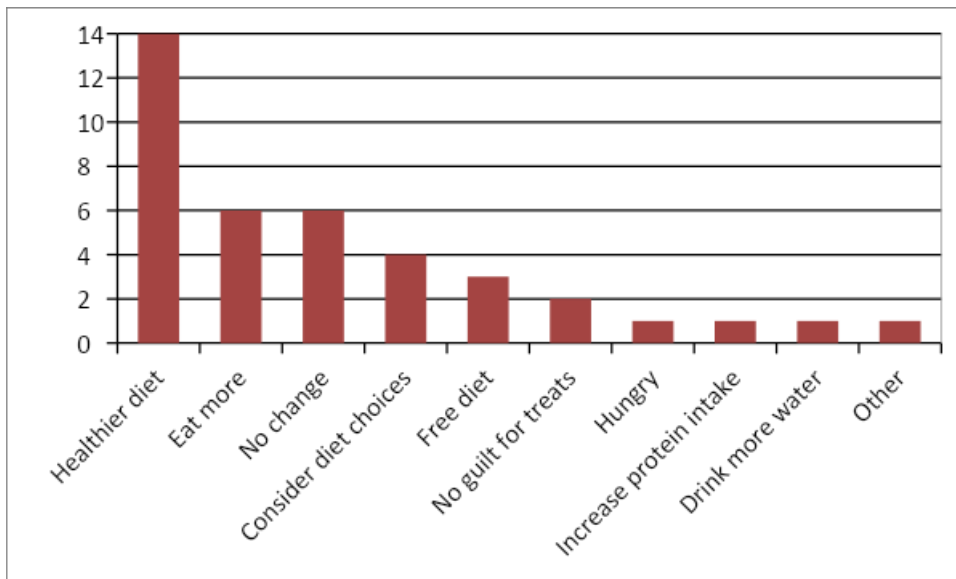
*I'm more inclined to eat healthier, I don't get out of breathe doing simple things like walking up stairs, my body feels a lot stronger*

## **2.4. Impact of going to the gym on behavioural practices**

This section explores the specific effects going to the gym has on the behavioural practices of gym-goers including their diet (2.4.1) and sleep habits (2.4.2). These are taken in turn.

### **2.4.2. How does going to the gym affect your food habits?**

The majority of responses from gym-goers were that going to the gym made them eat healthier and thus improved their diet and made them consider their food choices more. However, some gym-goers stated that it enabled them to eat freely without the guilt of eating food that is considered to be unhealthy. Therefore, the responses show a mix on the impact going to the gym has on people's food habits. These trends are shown in Figure 5 and Table 3 and explained below.



**Figure 5: The effect going to the gym has on people's food habits**

**Table 3: The effect going to the gym has on people's food habits**

<b>Effect on food habits</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>% of responses</b>
Healthier diet	14	34.15
Eat more	6	14.63
No change	6	14.63
Consider diet choices	4	9.76
Free diet	3	7.32
No guilt for treats	2	4.88
Hungry	1	2.44
Increase protein intake	1	2.44
Drink more water	1	2.44
Other	1	2.44
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>100.00</b>

For the majority, **going to the gym provides motivation to eat healthily and to consider healthier food choices:**

*"It makes me motivated to eat healthier"*

*"The more I go, the better I eat - and vice versa"*

*"Healthier choices as I don't want to undermine the work out I've done..."*

However, some also stated that it gave them **more freedom with their diet**, meaning that they could eat things that may be considered unhealthy without any guilt or concern:

*"...Alternatively it makes me feel less guilty if I eat something unhealthy!"*

*"I always eat well but when I've been for a swim I know I have an extra 500 calories in the bank for that day so I can treat myself because I've earned it."*

This can be seen as going to the gym having **mixed effects on people's food habits**. But it can also be interpreted that going to the gym liberates people and allows them to do what they want to do with their lives.

### 2.4.3. How does going to the gym affect your sleep habits?

There was a general consensus that going to the gym improved quality of sleep, by sleeping better, sleeping longer, and going to sleep earlier (as shown in Figure 6).

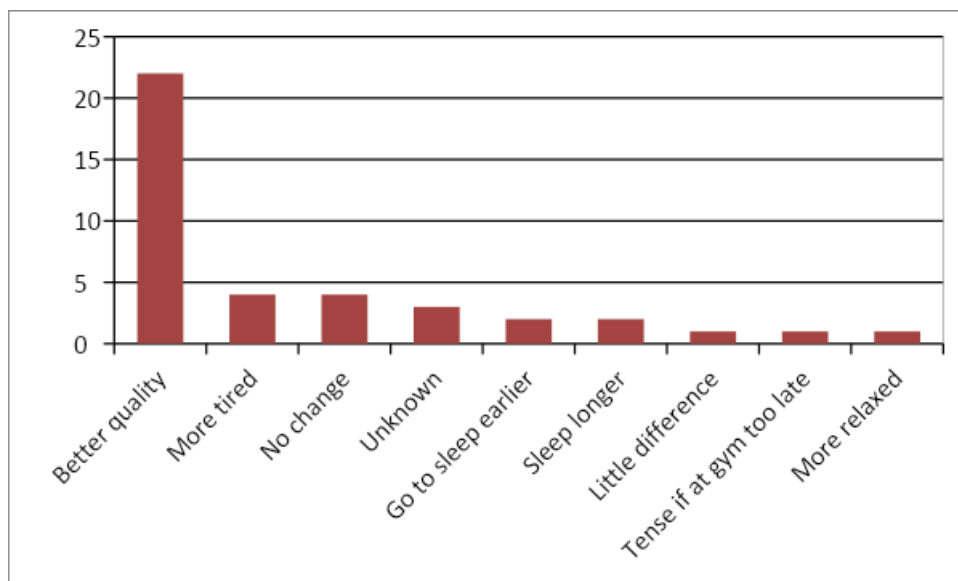


Figure 6: The effect of going to the gym on sleep habits

Table 4: The effect of going to the gym on sleep habits

Effect on sleep habits	N	% of responses
Better quality	22	55
More tired	4	10
No change	4	10
Unknown	3	7.5

Go to sleep earlier	2	5
Sleep longer	2	5
Little difference	1	2.5
Tense if at gym too late	1	2.5
More relaxed	1	2.5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>100.00</b>

## 2.5. Preferences of kinds of training in gym classes

This section uncovers what kinds of training format (2.5.1) and classes (2.5.2) gym-goers prefer and why.

### 2.5.1. What is your preferred training format?

Responses concerning why gym-goers preferred were tallied against the training formats (or their combination) provided: 'on my own', 'training with a partner', 'in a group', and 'I mostly attend classes'. The full table of responses can be found in the Appendix 1. Table 5 offers a summary of reasons that were given twice or more within each category.

**Gym-goers preferred to work out on their own because it was more convenient for their lifestyle** and allowed them to be flexible with when they go to the gym; this was largely dependent on their work commitments and having to get up at unsociable hours early in the day. These solo gym-goers **preferred their independence, to focus on their training, and to train at their own pace**, which made them more productive during their session because they did not have to wait for anyone else. Some solo gym-goers stated that **it gave them some 'me time'** that allowed them to leave the world at the door and focus on training, while **others said that they deliberately wanted to avoid socialising with others at the gym** and were content listening to music and working out individually. Working out solo empowered some gym-goers and improved their confidence in their selves:

*"More confident on my own and you can do exactly what you want. More of an escape from day to day life as well."*

**Gym-goers who preferred training with a partner did so because they found it motivating having mutual support with someone else**, encouraging each other to go further than they would on their own by **making each other accountable for achieving their targets**. They also said it was more enjoyable to train with

someone else and suggested that it can **strengthen relationships between partners** such as friends or family:

*"I go with my dad and we motivate each other to go."*

Reactions from gym-goers who preferred training in a group were similar to those who preferred training with a partner; it offers support and pushes them harder in training than they would push themselves individually:

*"Group environment encourages me to work harder and push limits."*

**Those who attended classes preferred the structure a class could give them** and stay in the present moment, in addition to building their knowledge on how to work out and improve their health:

*"I mainly attend yoga classes, where i find the guidance of an instructor really useful to keep focus."*

**Gym-goers also chose a combination of options.** Their preferences largely reiterated the points raised above; for instance, **those who worked out on their own and with a training partner said that they liked their independence in addition to their access to a supportive community that boosted their personal strength, increasing confidence, providing positive energy, bolstering self-esteem, and being healthy for the mind:**

*"On my own coz I count this as a "me time" & in classes to get more positive energy"* (On my own + I mostly attend classes).

*"Seeing improvements from one session to another bolsters my self esteem. Having this noticed and reiterated by others almost doubles the effect. Team mentality helps keep you going, challenge you beyond your comfort zone and increases the pool of knowledge you can delve into"* (With a training partner + In a group).

*"Classes are motivating as lots of us, less comparison between people. i wouldnt train with a partner as its direct person to person comparison."*

*"Community is healthy for the mind, likewise helps gives you a push to go a step further in workout"* (With a training partner + I attend most classes).

**Table 5: Reasons for preference of training format**

	On my own	With a training partner	In a group	I attend mostly classes	On my own + With a training partner	On my own + I attend mostly classes	Training with a partner + In a group	TOTAL

<b>Motivation</b>	1	5		1	1	2		10
<b>Support</b>		2	2					4
<b>Convenience</b>	5							5
<b>Enjoyment</b>	1	3				1		5
<b>Push harder</b>		2	2				1	5
<b>Personal strength</b>	5						1	6
<b>Focus</b>	4			1	1	1		7
<b>Own pace/targets</b>	8				1			9
<b>Structure</b>				2				2
<b>Accountability</b>		2		1	1		1	5
<b>Community</b>			1				2	3
<b>Independence</b>	3				2	2		7
<b>Productivity</b>	4	1				1		6
<b>'Me time'</b>	3					1		4
<b>Dislikes socialising in the gym</b>	4							4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>5</b>	

## 2.5.2. What are your thoughts on fitness classes?

After indicating their awareness of specific kinds of fitness classes, gym-goers gave their thoughts on these classes. These thoughts were tallied against the types of fitness classes gym-goers were aware of, which included: 'Club Nights (DJs mixing it up in a cardio zone)', 'F45', 'CrossFit', and 'Boutique (e.g. Blaze by David Lloyd)'. It was also noted when gym-goers were unaware of any of these classes. The full table of responses can be found in Appendix 2. Table 6 offers a summary of reasons that were given twice or more within each category.

**Most of the classes were positively evaluated; however, gym-goers noted that many of the classes available are expensive and more exclusive to those who can afford them.**

*"Good but stupidly priced!" (F45)*

*"Very good if you're well off!" (F45 + CrossFit)*

*"Very good for motivation and pushing yourself further than normal, but too expensive to go to regularly"*

Instead, **some of them suggested that these classes are for occasional attendance as an ‘indulgence’ or ‘treat’ to go on their own or with a friend, or as a lesson to acquire knowledge on a specific kind of training:**

*“Brilliant. An indulgent treat. Investment in wellness. Learn new exercises and training methods.”*

*“Good motivation for people but same outcome can be achieved without a class if you already know what you are doing.”*

**CrossFit was the most well-known type of fitness class (N = 53, 75.7%).** With this in mind, it is more likely that gym-goers had previously attended some CrossFit sessions and thus had **a stronger opinion on these kinds of courses.** The classes were **believed to be fun and diverse;** however, some gym-goers stated that they were not interested in this type of fitness class. **Club nights (N = 15, 21.4%) and boutique classes (N = 19, 27.1%)** were lesser known, but **were believed to be informative (i.e. acquisition of knowledge) but also expensive.**

**Table 6: Thoughts on fitness classes available**

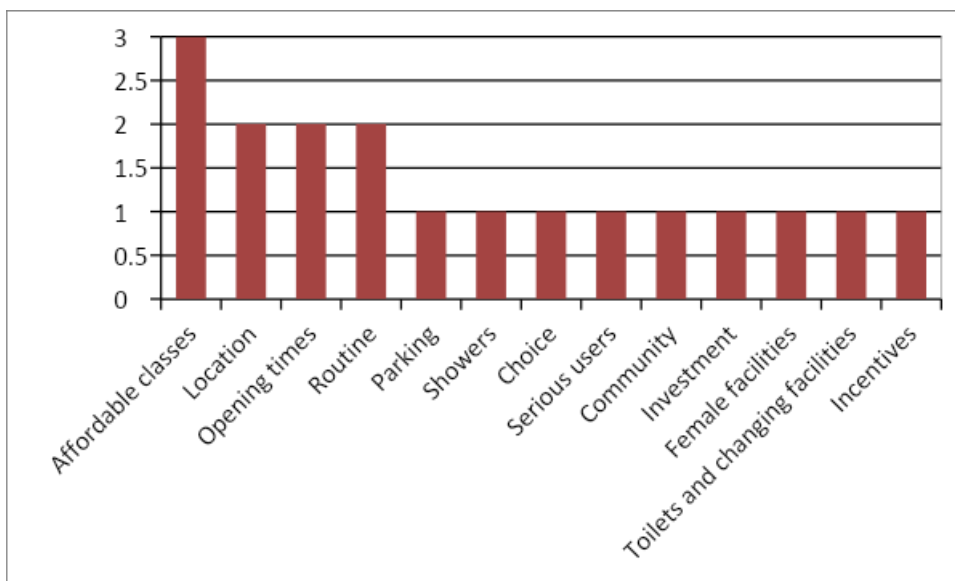
	F45	CrossFit	Club Night + CrossFit	F45 + CrossFit	CrossFit + Boutique	F45 + CrossFit + Boutique	All	Unaware	TOTAL
<i>Fun</i>		5		1		1	2		9
<i>Variety</i>		2	1				2		5
<i>Interested</i>				1				2	3
<i>Acquisition of knowledge</i>						2	1		3
<i>Motivation</i>			1		1		1		3
<i>Expensive</i>	2			1		1	2		6
<i>Community</i>		1		1					2
<i>For the less experienced</i>		1		1					2
<i>Treat</i>							2		2
<i>Unsure</i>		2	1			1			4
<i>Uninterested</i>		6		1	1		1	1	10
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>5</b>	



**Recommendation:** Consider running fitness class packages that vary in price to make them affordable and attractive to a broader customer base.

## 2.6. General gym habits and choices

Gym-goers were finally asked: ‘Please let us know anything else you think would be helpful in terms of your gym habits and choices’. Gym-goers answered this question in terms of what was important to them about the gym. The most important factors were affordable classes, a sense of community, and the accessibility and facilities of the gym.



**Figure 7: Gym habits and choices**

**Table 7: Gym habits and choices**

Gym habits and choices	N	% of responses
Affordable classes	3	16.67
Location	2	11.11
Opening times	2	11.11
Routine	2	11.11
Parking	1	11.11
Showers	1	5.56
Choice	1	5.56
Serious users	1	5.56
Community	1	5.56
Investment	1	5.56

Female facilities	1	5.56
Toilets and changing facilities	1	5.56
Incentives	1	5.56
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Three people mentioned that they look for **affordable classes and a sense of community**:

*“A reasonable monthly fee for unlimited classes, much like a yoga membership.”*

*“With regards the question about 'price willing to pay per class', there should be an option that recognises that gym classes at many clubs are part of the membership fee, so thinking about my gym usage, I wouldn't be happy to pay any more for these classes. If it was outside of gym membership, then £5-£6 seems about right.”*

*“I spend 125 a month on semi Private PT sessions- our gym is a community so its more than a gym I have met new friends too.”*

**Accessibility of the gym** was also an important factor, which included opening times and parking:

*“Opening times: 24/7 access is a major factor I consider.”*

**The facilities provided** were commonly mentioned, including showers, the state of the changing facilities, *“A shoddy changing room can turn you off a gym no matter how good the equipment is!”*, and gyms that *“offer essentials like hairties, makeup remover, period products, hair dryers etc.”* for female gym-goers.

### 3. Conclusion

In light of the results, first we summarise the key points here (3.1) and then discuss ideas for a campaign that involves figurative messaging (3.2). Through the collaboration between the University of Birmingham and Big Cat, consciously applying figurative messaging such as metaphor in campaigns has proved very effective.

### 3.1. Summary and recommendations

1. Gym-goers were concerned with managing their time and money spend and fitting in going to the gym around their job and home life.

**Recommendation:** Flexible packages for time and price of gym classes may be attractive to gym-goers whose concern is how it will fit in with their busy work and home life.

2. Gym-goers commonly felt guilty if they had missed a few gym sessions.

**Recommendation:** Transferrable gym sessions and an easy book and manage system for gym sessions may enable gym-goers to feel like they are not missing out on the sessions on offer while enjoying the thrill going to the gym has for them to keep wanting to go back.

2.3. Gym-goers were aware that attending the gym had an impact on their physical and mental wellbeing. Going to the gym was said to improve their physical and mental strength by (a) helping to relieve stress, lethargy, and making them feel empowered and energised; (b) improving their health through fitness, diet, and sleep, and (c) increasing their confidence in their own body image. Gym-goers felt they could escape the daily grind by working out at the gym, which allowed them to focus on caring for their selves.

2.4. Most gym-goers stated that going to the gym made them make healthier food choices, while others said that it gave them the freedom to eat what they wanted without feeling guilty. Going to the gym could therefore have mixed effects on people or be seen as liberating people in their food choices. There was a general consensus that going to the gym improved quality of sleep, by sleeping better, sleeping longer, and going to sleep earlier.

2.5. The choice of training formats meant that there was something that suited everyone's training preferences: gym-goers said that they liked their independence while working out on their own, their ability to build relationships with their training partner and make each other accountable for their targets that pushed them further than they would individually, and appreciated their access to a supportive community through training in a group and classes that helped motivate them to achieve more. These training formats appeared to have a positive impact in boosting their personal strength by increasing confidence, providing positive energy, bolstering self-esteem, and being healthy for the mind. While fitness classes were considered to be motivational, informative, and diverse, many gym-goers noted, however, that these classes can be expensive and therefore they would only go occasionally as a 'treat'. CrossFit was the most well-known and received the most affective variation. Club nights and boutique classes were lesser known.

**Recommendation:** Consider running fitness class packages that vary in price to make them affordable and attractive to a broader customer base.

**2.6.** The most important factors to gym-goers that were reported were affordable classes, a sense of community, and the accessibility and facilities of the gym.

## **3.2. Figurative messaging for fitness gains**

The University of Birmingham has partnered with Big Cat since 2018 to investigate how figurative messaging can be applied in advertising, and to measure how successful it can be in marketing campaigns. The collaboration builds on findings from a project founded in 2015, the EMMA project, that explored how multimodal metaphor (i.e. the combination of text, image, sound, etc.) can be used in advertising and the optimum way of doing so to get the best results (i.e. positive attitudes and behavioural intentions toward the product or brand). Metaphor can be used to form figurative messages that are engaging, shocking or subtle, nuanced, creative, complex, informative, appealing, and persuasive. So far, the collaborative project has conducted numerous studies that provides an insight into how metaphor may be effectively used in advertising and improves the connection between the client and their customers. Considering the reported results of the survey, there is a particular metaphor that would involve consumers on a physical and conceptual level that requires lifting weights and improving physical and mental strength.

### **Lifting weights: Improving physical and mental strength through metaphor**

We use metaphors to talk about one thing in terms of another. Metaphor does this by allowing us to compare one thing with other unrelated thing that gives us an insight into what we are referring to and the new meaning it brings to the conversation. It helps us understand something that is not necessarily easy to talk about, or that we 'have no words for', or is uncomfortable to voice. For example, we use metaphor to understand the feeling of something that troubles us, 'I need to get the weight off my chest', 'That will help ease the burden', and 'something is heavily on my shoulders'.

We use weight metaphorically to talk about problems or concerns as a 'burden' that we hold, quite often on our shoulders or chest, as in 'Something is weighing heavily on my shoulders' and 'I need to get this off my chest'. In these instances, we search for something we can do help 'ease the burden', to 'lighten the load', or

eradicate it completely. Conceptualising these abstract ideas of a burden and concern in terms of a metaphor for weight allows us to talk about these ideas indirectly as something more physical that we can relate to. The metaphor here is *Problems are Burdens*. Indeed, gym-goers stated that they are aware that going to the gym enables them to leave their problems at the door and allows them time to focus on themselves, to rest their mind, and to – literally and figuratively – lift their fitness and confidence.

While metaphor allows us to process multiple meanings – the literal and the figurative – at once, metaphor can also influence how we respond to things. For instance, a ‘heavy’ topic can refer to a topic that is important or dense with information. We get this idea through our associations with weight; if something is heavy, it is usually great in size or very dense in substance. This metaphorical association can influence how we react to stimuli. For example, an experimental study showed that when given a book to hold, people holding a book with a concealed weight inside thought the information in the book was more important than those holding the book with its original lighter weight. The metaphor here is *Importance is Weight*, such that we talk about important things being heavy.

Many gym activities involve weights and indeed lifting weights to gain strength. As we have seen from the results, many gym-goers gain a sense of improved physical and mental strength from gym activities. Some suggested that going to the gym takes their mind off their day-to-day lives; as such, attending the gym lifts weight of stress and tension, putting it somewhere else so that it does not dwell on their mind during their gym session. Through this process, gym-goers posit that it makes mentally stronger as a result. As such, one creative concept may be able to play on the conceptual and embodied metaphor of weight by relating to the physical weights one lifts in the gym, which can also lift the mind simultaneously. In this sense, lifting weights in the gym can not only improve physical strength but also lift the weights of the mind to improve mental strength. Moreover, the idea that this kind of metaphor involves action can also relate to how people process their experiences. Studies have shown that metaphor, particularly those involving action such as ‘grasping an idea’ (conceptualising an idea as if it is something physical we can hold), can activate our simulation of the action in our minds that fires parts of the sensorimotor cortex as if we were physically doing the action with our body. Thus, the experience of going to the gym that relates to the energy people feel and the appeal it has for us to return for another session can not only help gym-goers improve their physical fitness but also their mental strength.

## Appendix 1

### Reasons for preference of training formats

	Motivation	Support	Convenience	Enjoyment	Push harder	Personal strength	Focus	Own pace/targets	Structure	Accountability	Community
<i>On my own</i>	1		5	1		5	4	8			
<i>With a training partner</i>	5	2		3	2					2	
<i>In a group</i>		2			2						
<i>I attend mostly classes</i>	1						1		2	1	
<i>On my own + with a training partner</i>	1						1	1		1	
<i>On my own + in a group</i>	1						1				
<i>On my own + I attend mostly classes</i>	2			1			1				
<i>With a training partner + in a group</i>					1	1				1	
<i>With a training partner + I attend mostly classes</i>		1			1						
<i>Own + group + classes</i>	1	1									
<i>Unknown</i>	1										
<i>Training partner + group + classes</i>	1						1				

## Appendix 2

### Thoughts on types of fitness classes

	Club Nights	F45	CrossFit	Boutique	All	Unaware	Club Night + CrossFit	F45 + CrossFit	F45 + Boutique	CrossFit + Boutique

<b>Fun</b>			5		2			1		
<b>For the physically fit</b>								1		
<b>Variety</b>			2		2		1			
<b>Interested</b>						2		1		
<b>Good investment</b>					1					
<b>Acquisition of knowledge</b>					1					
<b>Motivation</b>					1		1			1
<b>Push harder</b>					1					
<b>Expensive</b>		2			2			1		
<b>Compatibility</b>						1				
<b>Community</b>			1					1		
<b>For the less experienced</b>			1					1		
<b>Treat</b>					2					
<b>With friend</b>					1					
<b>Exclusive</b>										
<b>Energetic</b>			1							
<b>Focus</b>										1
<b>Unsure</b>			2				1			
<b>Uninterested</b>			6		1	1		1		1
<b>No comment</b>		1	1			2				