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**A STUDY OF A COMMERCIAL FITNESS  
CENTRE DURING ITS FIRST THREE YEARS OF  
PROVIDING A CLIENT SERVICE**

**Stakeholder perspectives on the characteristics,  
developments and changes**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements for the degree of

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in  
Management

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Sheridan Hunt

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## ABSTRACT

Physical exercise and leisure is an integral part of New Zealand society. The scale of the fitness centre industry today and its continual growth has been influenced by an increase in public participation over the past 100 years. With an increase in demand for greater access and availability of leisure and fitness activities, the progressive development of commercial and non-profit fitness centres has occurred.

The objective of this study was to examine the characteristics, developments and changes within a fitness centre in its establishment phase of providing a client service. The underlying assumption of the research was to assist the fitness centre industry, as there was concern about the significant number of fitness centres in the Auckland region that closed within five years of establishing their operation.

A mixture of quantitative and qualitative research methodology was used to access the fullest range of relevant data within one particular fitness centre. The mixed methodology consisted of interviews and questionnaires in order to elicit stakeholder perceptions. The data was progressively subjected to the process of grounded theory, which formulated significant categories and properties of the characteristics, developments and changes of a fitness centre. This in turn generated a comprehensive set of theoretical propositions.

The theoretical propositions became the basis for a model on organisation development and the impact of change. In this setting the model illustrates that the operational effectiveness of the fitness centre is dependent on the planned developments and consequential changes that occur. The model is also seen as relevant to other service organisations besides the fitness centre industry.

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## CHAPTER ONE

# INTRODUCTION

### CHAPTER OUTLINE

This chapter introduces the study, providing an outline of the research. The researcher's interest in the proposed subject is discussed, along with the studies objectives and research sequence.

- 1.1 Background to the study
- 1.2 Research objectives
- 1.3 Research sequence

## 1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The development of physical exercise and leisure activities in New Zealand has had a notable influence on the establishment of the commercial fitness centre industry in this country. Participation in physical exercise and/or leisure activities has become an integral part of society and is one of the prevailing domains of social experience in New Zealand. The foundation of the fitness centre industry in New Zealand can be traced to the prominence of physical exercise and leisure activities in early Maori and European societies.

There was great emphasis placed on the importance of physical exercise and leisure activities in both cultures. In Maori society a great amount of free time was devoted to recreation and the use of physical exercise to assist in military training. Although early European settlers were faced with the challenges of laying the foundations of a frontier society, by the end of the 1860s social attitudes towards leisure activities began changing. Crawford (1978) noted that recreational activities were becoming woven into the fabric of society and were felt to possess cathartic, rehabilitative functions as well as educational benefits.

A significant influence in the development of the fitness centre industry in New Zealand was the impact of overseas trends and movements. There is documented evidence (Brown, 1907; Davidson, 1935) to presume that Maori games and pastimes resembled

activities conducted in other parts of the world. This was the first of many influences that developed physical exercise and leisure activities in New Zealand. A combination of overseas trends and movements and a nation's desire to participate in physical exercise and leisure activities ultimately created the need for fitness centres. As society embraced the ideologies of the fitness and recreation movements, demand increased for greater access to leisure activities.

Although it is difficult to conclude what factors had the greatest influence on the establishment of the commercial fitness centre industry, it can be substantiated that in the last 40 years the number of fitness centres in the Auckland region alone, has grown immensely. Grantham, Patton, York and Winick (1998) speculated that the health and fitness movement in America also had unclear origins, and it is assumed that it began with the development of physical education programmes in schools, the YMCA's, or the more recent phenomenon of the aerobics movements in the 1970s. The developments that occurred in New Zealand appear to have reflected similar health and fitness trends that occurred in America, especially with the exponential increase in participation in fitness centres after 1960.

The researcher had difficulty in substantiating the growth of commercial fitness centres in New Zealand after 1960 due to a dearth of historical literature. In hindsight, the scope of the study was confined to establishing the growth of the fitness centre industry in the Auckland region.

There have been numerous overseas trends and movements that have contributed to the growth of the commercial fitness centre industry in New Zealand. However, the most influential was the jazzercise movement of the late 1970s, and early 1980s. The Department of Statistics (1990) highlighted the impact of jazzercise and aerobics during the 1980s by reporting that sports such as aerobics, had experienced phenomenal growth and were inhibiting traditional team sports of their following. In 1991 aerobics was the third most popular activity in New Zealand after swimming and cycling (Hillary Commission for Recreation and Sport, 1991).

What eventuated from the jazzercise and aerobics movement, was an increase in the number of people being influenced by their experience in attending a fitness centre.

There is evidence to suggest that the jazzercise movement impacted on the growth of the number of fitness centres opening during the 1980s:

Aerobics had increased the number of people in gyms dramatically, leading to the opening of more than one hundred new fitness centres throughout New Zealand over the last decade (Mills, 1990, p.6).

The phenomenal growth of the fitness centre industry in Auckland during the 1980s resulted in an oversupplied market (Greenwood, 1989). Subsequently, price wars occurred, resulting in aggressive marketing techniques which focused on selling more memberships at a hugely reduced price. With the cost of fitness centre memberships being reduced by up to 50%, twice as many memberships had to be sold to cover overheads. This resulted in member servicing being reduced due to inadequate resources. What occurred was a marketing strategy that fundamentally focussed on member numbers rather than quality of service (Hurst, 1993; Matterson, 1993).

Eventually, the market could not sustain the increased competitiveness. As data from the Auckland Yellow Pages telephone directory illustrates, a substantial number of fitness centres closed between 1991 and 2000. According to research the main problem with the fitness centre industry is the ease with which individuals can establish and operate a fitness centre (Balcombe, 1999; Branch, 1991; Matterson, 1993). It has been identified that the most critical stage of a fitness centre is the establishment phase of operation (Grantham et al., 1998). This has been supported by Victor Brick (Chairperson of IRSA Small Clubs Group) who noted that the biggest problem with the fitness centre industry is:

It's too easy to get into, and too hard to get out of. You get in for a song - you lease equipment, you rent a space, you get your supplies on credit, but then things don't go well. Membership isn't what you expected, you have incidental costs you didn't plan for, you can't get out of your lease, the company won't take the equipment back, and you can't meet your debts (Branch, 1991, p.83)

As a consequence of the significant growth that occurred in the fitness centre industry, an adverse effect transpired. Due to increased competition, a struggling economy and inexperienced managers, a considerable number of fitness centres closed within five years of establishing their facility.

The researcher's experience, firstly as a member of various fitness centres for the past 10 years, then in the operational management of a fitness centre for three years was a major influence in the selection of this topic. The accessibility with which to conduct this research and the researcher's trepidation about the commercial viability of the fitness centre industry was the impetus behind this study. The researcher's experience and the interpretation of the literature highlighted some of the unprofessional operations that exist in this industry. The origins of the study were furthered by the researcher's reflections on the need for sufficient literature/research on the characteristics, developments and changes within a fitness centre during the establishment phase of operation. The need to examine the fitness centre industry was reinforced by the significant number of commercial fitness centres in Auckland that closed within five years of establishing their operation.

This study examined a single fitness centre in order to explore the dimensions of the characteristics, developments and changes that occurred during its first three years of operation. It is envisaged that the research theory that was illuminated in this study is applicable to the fitness centre industry. However, the researcher believes it could also be closely associated to other service organisations.

## **1.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The objective of this research was generating theory with the underlying assumption of assisting the fitness centre industry in the establishment phase of operation. The use of grounded theory was seen to be particularly appropriate for this study, as it was the intention of the researcher to access the fullest range of relevant data using the appropriate methodologies. This process led to the formation of significant categories and properties indicating the domain of a fitness centre in the establishment phase of supplying a client service.

Critical reflection from the researcher's involvement in the fitness centre industry and the dearth of literature available on fitness centre management generated two broad research objectives:

1. *To elicit stakeholder perspectives for the purpose of answering the following question:  
(a) What are the characteristics, developments and changes within a fitness centre?*
2. *To make practical recommendations for the effective operation of commercial fitness centres.*

The proposed research questions was:

*What are the characteristics, developments and changes within a fitness centre during its first three years of providing a client service?*

### 1.3 RESEARCH SEQUENCE

The following is an overview of the research, providing a summary of each chapter and its association with the development of the research towards its completion. The structure of this study was based on inductive research, in order to compile a body of information to provide a greater understanding of the characteristics, developments and changes within a fitness centre in the first three years of providing a client service.

The thesis commences with **Chapter Two: Physical exercise and leisure activities in New Zealand**. This is the first chapter of the literature review and provides an overview of the historical development of physical exercise and leisure in New Zealand. The specific areas covered include pre-European and early European exercise and leisure pastimes, and the development of physical education in New Zealand schools. Although this chapter does not provide an in-depth historical analysis of physical exercise and leisure in New Zealand, it sets the scene and provides discussion on specific events that have influenced the development of the fitness centre industry.

The literature review continues with **Chapter Three: The history of gymnasiums and fitness centres in New Zealand 1853 to 1960**. This chapter focuses upon the establishment of the fitness centre industry in New Zealand and the significant fitness

and recreation movements that influenced the development of the commercial fitness centre industry.

**Chapter Four: The commercial fitness centres 1960 to 2000** is the final dimension of the literature review. This chapter outlines the early development of the commercial fitness centre industry, analysing the growth of the industry in the Auckland region. Fitness centre characteristics, developments and changes are discussed throughout this chapter in an attempt to answer the proposed research question.

The methodological outline is discussed in **Chapter Five: Methodology**. This chapter details the methods used by the researcher to explore the characteristics, developments and changes within a specific fitness centre. The considerations of the research are discussed, while the chapter concludes with an explanation of the grounded theory technique used in this study.

**Chapter Six: Current members**, is the first of four results chapters that present the data of the perspectives of the stakeholders on the characteristics, developments and changes of the fitness centre. Questionnaires were used to generate data from this population. Within this chapter the background information of current members is provided, along with their perceptions of the fitness centre. The data generated from the questionnaires was progressively analysed using grounded theory, with categories and properties being presented at the end of the chapter.

**Chapter Seven: Former members**, presents data generated by questionnaires from former members who had either cancelled or not renewed their membership. Background information is provided on these participants, along with their preferences and objections of the fitness centre, their perceptions of the fitness centre's developments and changes that have influenced their experience and reasons for not continuing their membership. Again, the categories and properties generated through grounded theory analysis of the data are presented in the chapter's concluding section.

**Chapter Eight: Subordinate Employees** and **Chapter Nine: Management Employees** provides perspectives from the fitness centre employees concerning the fitness centre's characteristics, developments and changes. Questionnaires were

completed with subordinate employees to elicit their perspectives on the fitness centre's work environment, remuneration structure, employee training and management supervision. Interviews with management employees provided perspectives on the organisation's culture, systems and structure, management positions and employee training, employee issues and the fitness centre's marketing. At the conclusion of each chapter is the presentation of categories and properties arising from the data.

**Chapter Ten: Discussion: From data to propositions** illustrates firstly the master list of categories and properties which were generated from the research data from the process of grounded theory analysis. This master list of categories and properties provided the basis for theoretical propositions that are presented in this chapter. The chapter discusses the study's findings, highlighting the correlation that exists between organisation development and perceived change. At the conclusion of this chapter a theoretical model represents the basis of an effective fitness centre.

The study concludes with **Chapter Eleven: Conclusions and recommendations** which reflects on the research, summarises the discussion, provides recommendations for the fitness centre and for further research in order to enhance the effectiveness of fitness centres.

## CHAPTER TWO

# PHYSICAL EXERCISE AND LEISURE ACTIVITIES IN NEW ZEALAND

### CHAPTER OUTLINE

This chapter outlines the context and background against which the research is set, presenting a brief history of the role of physical exercise and leisure in early New Zealand society.

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Pre-European physical exercise and leisure activities
- 2.3 Early European physical exercise and leisure activities 1840 to 1900
- 2.4 Physical education in New Zealand schools 1850 to 1950
- 2.5 Summary and review

## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines an historical perspective of the development of physical exercise and leisure activities in New Zealand and also sets the scene of the study, providing informative dialogue and establishing a background to the research question proposed in the introduction. This chapter is not intended to provide an in-depth historical analysis of physical exercise and leisure activities in New Zealand, but to present discussion on specific developments that have influenced the commercial fitness centre industry.

## 2.2 PRE-EUROPEAN PHYSICAL EXERCISE & LEISURE ACTIVITIES

The documented research on the leisure patterns of Maori, recorded in the Nineteenth Century is very superficial. Early writers, such as Polack (1838) and Yate (1835) indicated that Maori lacked any substantial games or significant leisure pursuits. Polack (1838, cited in Best 1976) remarked on the lack of any definite arrangements with regard to games, while Yate (1835, p.34) wrote, "their list of games are very short: their most delightful recreation is talking, and telling wonders, which occupies most of their idle hours".

Other accounts of Maori pastimes were noted by Rev. J. Stack (1891, cited in Best, 1976) who indicated that, “children played a variety of games with tops, balls, kites and swings” (p. 16). While the Rev. W. Colenso (1869, cited in Best, 1976) stated:

The New Zealanders (natives) had several games, some of them remarkably innocent. For children they had the whipping top ... Young men often strove for the mastery in short spear exercises; and in wrestling, running, leaping, hopping, climbing, swinging, paddling canoes, swimming and diving (p. 18).

However, Elsdon Best, author of numerous books on Maori people, claims that the above writers have shown insufficient detail to their customs and games. Best (1976) believes that the native people of New Zealand played a number of simple games in former times, but unfortunately, no early European resident took the trouble to record them. This discussion on various exercises that were performed in pre-European settlement draws strongly upon Elsdon Best’s (1976) writings on *the games and pastimes of the Maori*.

The comprehensive literature (Best, 1976; Buck, 1949) that is available on Maori physical exercise and leisure activities accentuates the significant role it had in society. The documented evidence that is available illustrates the first involvement in New Zealand of people participating in physical exercise and leisure.

There were two categories of physical exercise and leisure activities that were performed by Maori. These involved exercises associated with military training or leisure activities specifically designed for recreational enjoyment. The participation in such activities depended strongly upon the seasons. During the seasons of crop planting and harvesting, there was little time for exercise and leisure. In other periods of the year, Maori had a large amount of free time which they usually devoted to leisure activities. The recreation time of children was usually all hours of the day and night, and according to Best (1976) the children led a carefree, joyous, outdoor life until old enough to participate in domestic tasks.

#### Military exercises

The first notable characteristic of Maori exercise was the relationship of certain athletic games and leisure activities associated with training youths for bearing arms in hand to

hand combat. These activities demanded strength, endurance and agility. According to Buck (1949) the safety and welfare of a tribe depended on its military strength and efficiency. A marked feature of Maori life was the encouragement of all activities and contests that assisted boys and young men in developing agility and speed of eye movements. At an early age, children were taught to spar by their parents using a flax flower stalk (*korari*). This form of training remained a game until they were old enough to be trained by an expert warrior (*Ika a Whiro*).

The practice and use of weapons was known as *whakahoro rakau* and *whakatu rakau*. The young men were trained in using various weapons, both thrusting and striking. A form of military exercise known as *paramako* was recorded by Rev. R. Taylor (1870, cited in Best, 1976):

It consisted of throwing sharp pointed sticks at each other, and skilfully warding them off by turning the body away when they saw the dart coming. The *para toetoe* was more a harmless game. It consisted in throwing the reed like stalks of the *toetoe*, blunted, at each other (p. 26).

Figure 2.1

**The kataha or whip for casting spears**



Source: Best (1976), p. 37.

Other forms of exercises that were closely associated with military training were wrestling (*whatoto*, *nonoke*, *mamau* or *takaro mamau*) and boxing (*mekemeke* or *whawhai mekemeke*). Wrestling was the most highly regarded of all athletic exercises (Buck, 1949) and both males and females took part. Much distinction and honour was

granted to the champion wrestler of the tribe, and it is believed that matches were arranged with competitors from other tribes.

Maori had two forms of boxing. The first form of boxing was when in conflict with an adversary, Maori preferred to have an instrument or weapon in their hand. The second form of boxing appears to have been fought with their hands alone, when in a disagreement with a family member. Best (1976) stated that the *meke* mode of boxing resembled Twentieth Century European style of boxing - the strike would be with a clenched fist so as to hit with the knuckles, whereas the *moto* method implied striking with the side of the fist. A corporal on board the *HMS Resolution* in Cook's third voyage was quoted as saying:

They had both hands clenched and bound round separately with small cords, which were perhaps, intended to prevent their clenching each other when closely engaged, thus preventing foul play; or it may be to preserve the joints of their fingers, and especially the thumb, from being dislocated ... They are very expert and intrepid in these performances (Best, 1976, p. 29).

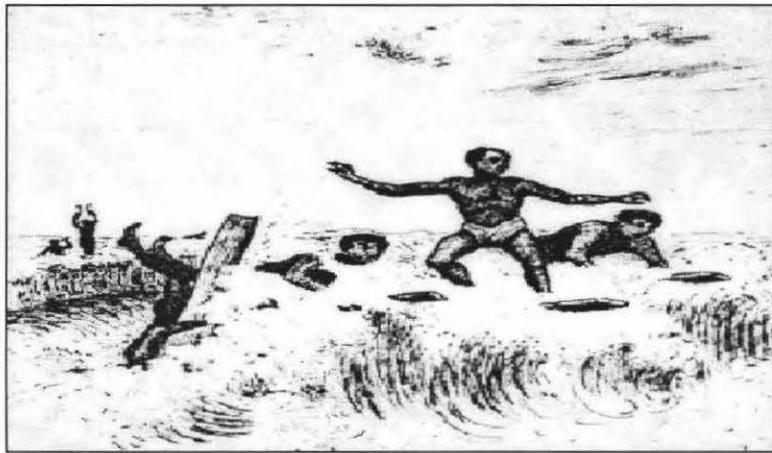
### Leisure activities

While boxing and wrestling served to aid in the military training of the youth, jumping (*takaro tupeke*) and running (*omaoma* and *takaro omaoma*) was used for both exercise and leisure activities. Forms of jumping had a resemblance to that of long jump, while vaulting with a pole was apparently used for crossing streams. Running was a significant pastime for children and young men, who ran long distances to test their powers of endurance. In some cases, competitors had to run to a distant place, and on their arrival, leave identification either by marking a tree, or depositing a stone before running back to the start (Best, 1976).

Another activity carried out by Maori, which did not have a direct association with military training, was *ti rakau*, which was a useful activity conducted by young boys and men. Girls also practised it and from the research of Best (1976) *ti rakau* was intended to make young women active, adroit and lissom through the performance of posture dances. The game was played with sticks, about half a metre long, which were thrown vertically by one individual and caught by another. The game involved two lines of twenty children, facing each other across a space. The children generally sang songs while participating.

Other favourite leisure activities of Maori, were the aquatic pastimes of swimming (*kau whakataetae*), surf-riding (*whakaheke ngaru*), water jumping (*kokiri, ruku*), canoe racing (*waka hoehoe*) and waterside swinging (*moari, morere*). At an early age Maori children were taught to swim and as indicated by Best (1976) Maori children seemed to take to water as though it was their natural element.

Figure 2.2  
Surf-riding



Source: Best (1976), p. 43.

Posture dances or the *haka* had a very similar resemblance to that of modern aerobics. The *haka* was intended as a performance dance, and was one of the most preferred exercises of Maori. The *haka* was performed at important occasions, and was accompanied by songs. The *haka* was also used as a war dance and in an account by Earle (1827, cited in Best, 1976) the *haka* was:

Conducted with so much fury on both sides that at length I became quite horrified, and for some time could not divest myself of the feeling that our visitors were playing false, so closely did this mock combat resemble a real one. The dreadful noises, the hideous faces, the screeching of the women, and menacing gestures of each party, were so calculated to inspire terror, that stouter hearts than mine might have felt fear (p. 87).

The *haka* was also mentioned in the *Journal of Captain James Cook*. The extract revealed that:

The children are initiated at a very early age, into the practices, good or bad, of their fathers. So that you find a boy or girl, nine or ten years old, able to perform all the motions and to imitate the frightful gestures, by which the more aged use to inspire their enemies with terror (Reed, 1969, p. 253).

There is evidence to presume that there is a direct correlation between the *haka* and modern aerobics. The literature identifies that Fred and Ettie Hornibrook (nee Rout), early physical culturists, had travelled from New Zealand to England to lecture on the physiological value of native dance exercises. As mentioned in *The People*, May 31, 1925, “if the decadent white races are to be brought back to good health and physical fitness, they must adopt the native dances of New Zealand, the Congo and the South Sea Islands”.

The *Daily News*, June 1, 1925 noted that 46 doctors and a number of eminent scientists attended the demonstration in London, by Mr Hornibrook. The *haka* was performed by Hohepa Rake Te Kiri, an Arawa chief of the Maori, who “gave a display of astonishing intestinal and muscular agility in a kilt of coloured beads” (*The People*, May 31, 1925). After the demonstration of the Maori *haka*, Mr Hornibrook adapted the *haka*, and conducted exercises useful for civilised men and women. During the lecture, Sir William Arbuthnot Lane, a famous London surgeon stated:

Mr Hornibrook’s recognition of the health value of native dances was a splendid vision, a vision for which he was unquestionably the pioneer of an entirely new movement in the cultivation of the body (*The Star*, December 18, 1926).

Figure 2.3

**The start of the jazzercise/aerobics movement**



Source: *The People*, Sunday May 31, 1925 (Alexander Turnbull Library, National Library of New Zealand, Te Puna Matauranga o Aotearoa).

Even today the *haka* has a direct link with New Zealand sporting teams. Whether the pre-game *haka* is to entertain, to challenge, arouse the psyche or instil terror in the opposition, the traditions of such a dance relate closely to that of exercise and amusement. Although there is evidence to presume that modern aerobics may have developed from Mr Hornibrook's efforts to promote the Maori *haka* as a method to improve health and fitness, further research is needed to substantiate this claim.

#### International similarity of physical activities

The games and pastimes of the Maori resemble many forms of activities conducted in other parts of the world. It is noted by Brown (1907) that many of the Maori children's games were similar to those of Japanese and European children. An example is tobogganing (*papareti*) which was a favourite sport for Maori boys. The toboggan was used on smooth grassy slopes and has a distinctive similarity to tobogganing in Europe (ibid.).

There is research to indicate that Maori played a game similar to European style bowls. In Tauranga and North Taranaki small discs have been discovered, and on trial they acted perfectly well as bowls. The average weight of these discs was 4lb. 9ozs., and they averaged 5 ¼ inches in diameter. When the discs were found in 1910, local Maori knew nothing of the discs or any game that they may have played with them (Journal of the Polynesian Society, 1933). Although information is scarce on the possible use of these discs by Maori, a game using similar size and weight discs are used in other Pacific islands.

The *haka* was another leisure activity which prevailed through Polynesia. There appears to be a significant difference between what developed in New Zealand and dances conducted in the Pacific Islands. Brown (1907) perceived the Maori dance as wild, had 'gobliness' movements of body and limbs, and facial features, and was a piquant contrast to the soft, posturing, licentious dances of Polynesia.

Another game, which was prevalent in Oceania as well as being observed in territories bordering the Pacific Ocean, was the Maori game of *paramako*. This game involves the throwing of reed like stalks or javelins. Davidson (1935) suggests that the appearance of

this game is fundamentally alike in most countries and that it is therefore justifiable to conclude that the game was carried from Polynesia to other countries where it became characteristic.

As with other modern developments in physical exercise and leisure, the participation of Maori in certain physical and leisure activities appears to have been influenced by overseas cultures. Although these games and leisure activities may be fundamental to each culture, there is speculation by the researcher that migration influenced the development of Maori physical exercises and leisure activities. Although there is a lack of research information within this area, the literature that is available provides evidence that these overseas customs had a bearing on what developed in New Zealand prior to the arrival of the early European settlers.

#### The influence of European settlement

After the arrival of European settlers to New Zealand, many of the Maori games and leisure activities practically disappeared. They were replaced with activities and exercises brought to New Zealand by the new settlers. As noted by Best (1976) the arrival of Europeans and of their customs had a startling and permanent effect on native life. This foreign contact resulted in the relatively sudden abandonment of certain old usages, including the indulgence in Maori sports and leisure activities. Sutton-Smith (1959) indicated that:

In the new cultural environment provided by the meeting of these two cultures, there has been a tendency for the unique pastimes of the submerged culture to be cancelled out, and for the pastimes which both cultures shared to be strengthened (p. 106).

This trend was not an isolated occurrence. British colonisation had a profound effect upon the lives of the indigenous people of Australia and Singapore. For the Australian aborigines, settlement by the British resulted in the virtual annihilation of their culture (Horton, 1997). The aborigines had sports that promoted skills for hunting and warfare but also had leisurely games of foot races, ball games, wrestling, spear and boomerang throwing. However, Aboriginal cultures were fragmented by white invasion of tribal lands, and by the imposition of European beliefs and values (Adair & Vamplew, 1997).

The influence of European settlers had a detrimental effect on Maori games and leisure activities. Firstly, according to both native and European evidence missionaries (Best, 1976) instituted a policy of repression, prohibiting the participation or involvement in certain activities. One account identifies an old Maori man explaining his bewilderment of new laws that restricted him from spinning humming tops on Sunday. Secondly, the introduction of public schools influenced what games were taught and played. Although the spinning tops survived, as the European children used them, the Maori children forgot the chants that accompanied them.

The arrival of the early Europeans was the first influential factor that impacted on the traditional methods of Maori participation in physical exercise and leisure. The cultural contact that occurred eventually merged the physical exercise and leisure activities that were performed by the early Europeans and Maori. The majority of traditional games and leisure exercises that were prevalent amongst all Maori villages seemed to fade as the two races amalgamated (Buck, 1949).

### **2.3 EARLY EUROPEAN PHYSICAL EXERCISE & LEISURE ACTIVITIES 1840 TO 1900**

By the mid 1840s the first immigrants from Europe were arriving at the major seaports of New Zealand. These immigrants, of various nationalities, brought with them a new way of life. Shipboard diaries provide detailed accounts of leisure activities conducted by immigrants aboard ships during their 12 week voyage from England. It is noted by Crawford (1978) that these diaries give a colourful, dramatic and diverse picture of the extent and nature of such leisure activities. For example, Robert Graham, a single passenger on the ship, *Jane Gilford* in 1842, explained an activity he conducted one morning on the voyage from England to New Zealand:

I rose early this morning for the express purpose of shooting and entangling birds. A person can have no idea how fond people get of such childish amusements on board a ship and especially a long voyage (Historical display, TePapa National Museum of New Zealand, 1999).

It could be concluded that the voyage from England to New Zealand was the first time a large proportion of these immigrants had experienced a substantial time for leisure and exercise. This could be substantiated on the basis that the first settlers were middle

class, varying in occupation from weavers, tailors, and bakers to unskilled labourers. Migration was based on developing rural and small town communities comprising of all social strata from gentry to respectable working folk, while excluding the nobility and the very poor (Cushman, 1989).

According to Crawford (1978) physical activities conducted during the voyage included children's assorted playing activities, catching albatrosses, somersaults and swinging exercises on ropes, volunteer rifle drill practices, gymnastics, boxing, skittles, snowball fights, skipping, rowing, rifle shooting at birds, quoits, sea swimming, and pedestrianism (a walking race).

#### The challenges of early settlement

The period of 1848 to 1860 was a time of very limited growth for physical exercise and leisure activities in New Zealand. It was a time of consolidation and then expansion in both leisure and cultural areas (Crawford, 1978). The main factors of restriction for the early development of exercise and leisure in New Zealand related to the challenges the settlers faced with laying the foundations for a frontier society. Pioneers worked long days and with the harsh conditions and hard labour of setting up a new colony, there was limited time for any recreation. An article in the Otago Witness, February 19, 1859 (Crawford, 1978) illustrates the predominant focus upon work and the limited reflection and time for leisure:

It is one of the misfortunes of settling in a new country, that the demand upon the time of everyone for the performance of the common duties of life are so great as to leave little opportunity for matters of a more intellectual or pleasurable nature. Indeed it would almost appear, as if it were the opinion of many amongst us that any kind of amusement is wrong, and the devotion of any portion of our time to anything but hard work is a sin (p.184).

Although it was a time of hardship, some families were able to participate in regular leisure activities. A biography of pioneering families in New Zealand in 1865 identified the interest in certain sporting pursuits:

J.D could spare time occasionally to indulge in his sporting interests. He still loved to get out with his gun, and he and McLean imported birds such as grouse and thrushes for both game and sentimental reasons; while later J.D. brought in trout and salmon over from San Francisco to indulge his fishing interests. He also had a growing number of racehorses, and in 1866 he helped found the Hawkes Bay Jockey Club (Caughey, 1994, p. 95).

Away from the frontier communities, leisure was predominately family centred. Cushman and Perkins (1993) indicate that the middle class and respectable working class families created their own recreational activities. The churches provided a social and spiritual focus for the community, while hotels served as social centres for a different section of society.

Unlike Maori children, there was limited recreational time for early European children. Just like their parents, the children had to do their share of work around the house. For the boys, this involved attending to the land and clearing scrub, while the girls assisted their mothers in household duties. Nevertheless, the children did enjoy traditional unorganised games, but much of their spare time was spent exploring the natural environment. These activities included swimming, tree climbing, exploring the bush, bird nesting, making catapults, fishing, eeling, and searching for berries and other edibles (Sutton-Smith, 1972).

Although there was limited free time for the settlers, the occasional sporting event did occur. Pearson (1978) suggested that the development of New Zealand sport and values was closely related to the nature of the developing society, and that sport harmonised with work values of skill, performance, achievement and efficiency.

Despite sport struggling to survive, community festivals and city anniversaries had a dominant influence on the development of sport and physical exercise before 1860. The editor of the Otago News, March 7, 1849, found the prospect of celebrating Anniversary Day with leisure activities as being both enjoyable and exhilarating (Crawford, 1978). The pioneers watched athletic races, wrestling matches, caber tossing, egg and spoon races and also bet on horse races.

In Auckland, the Anniversary Day regatta involved Maori war canoe, schooner and cutter races. Lieutenant Colonel Montagu Gradock (1905) noted, "there was certainly no lack of excitement amongst the competitors or onlookers". He continued to mention that:

In Australia, however, yachting and yacht racing is as popular as it is in England, so I suppose it will not be very long before New Zealand catches the infection, and the day may come when there is as much interest taken as there is now when *Vigilant*, *Defender*, and *Valkyrie* meet to

fight for that jealously guarded trophy, The America's Cup – May that day be not far distant!"  
(p. 103)

Who would have imagined New Zealand having an interest in challenging for the America's Cup in 1905? Lieutenant Colonel Montagu Gradock would be elated that ninety-five years on New Zealand had not only challenged for the cup, but also had successfully won and then defended that "jealously guarded trophy". This is a reflection of New Zealand's ardent view on participating in physical exercise, leisure, and recreational and sporting activities.

#### A change in perception of sport and physical exercise and leisure activities

By the end of the 1860s there was a change in social attitudes towards leisure activities, recreation and amusement. With the continual growth of sport and leisure, many people became involved in some form of leisure pursuit during their free time. Crawford (1978) asserts that recreational activities were becoming woven into the fabric of society and were felt to possess cathartic, rehabilitative functions as well as educational components.

Sport and leisure activities increased as changes in transport occurred. The improvements in public transport and the introduction of the bicycle made it possible for many people of varying ages to travel distances to participate or be a spectator in a sporting activity. The bicycle itself had an impact, not only as a means of transportation, but as the first physical activity fad. It was also an indication to a few entrepreneurs that sport and recreation activities could provide a financial gain.

With the growth of sport, certain class distinctions became apparent in leisure patterns. Cricket was seen as a gentleman's game, middle class men participated in athletics, and women played tennis. Working class men found their pleasures in prize-fighting, cock baiting and in pub related activities with games of chance, cards, billiards and snooker. For men, rugby was a sport that also quickly cut across class lines (Cushman and Perkins, 1993).

Class distinction within sport was also prevalent in Australia. The Australians organised bird and animal contests such as cock fighting, dog fighting and rapping, but there was

close co-operation between the classes involving these activities. It is mentioned by Adair and Vamplew (1997) that this form of prize fighting involved men of unequal wealth and social positions. The lower orders provided the fighting, while the higher orders sponsored the contests. In the 1830s and 1840s a middle class society was beginning to emerge in Australia and this altered sport and leisure pastimes by class. An example is that the gentry preferred not to swim in the sea, because convicts often bathed in the water, and this was perceived as a tarnished recreation. The establishment of the Adelaide Hunt Club in 1840 was designed to be an enclave for social elitism, with membership being restricted to individuals of wealth and social importance.

The evolution of class distinction in sport within New Zealand is symbiotic of British society. Holt (1989) mentions that cricket was dominated by the nobility and was the first team game that the upper class were expected to exert themselves in, without the aid of a horse. The noblemen of society first dominated cricket in New Zealand, as in accordance with class distinction in England. There was distinct segregation of certain sports and class in England, and in the colonies the upper class were aware that as in England sport could be used to exclude or differentiate themselves from the lower class and assert their own social significance.

#### The importance of sport and physical exercise and leisure activities

By 1870, leisure activities had moved from the periphery of social behaviour to become firmly embedded as an acceptable and expanding social custom (Crawford, 1978). Sports such as cricket and rugby began to provide an identity for the early settlers. When the All-England cricket team visited New Zealand in 1864, it was the first time that the pioneers had competed against the mother country, and a sense of nationalism and pride eventuated. As noted by Crawford (1978) the tour of 1864 symbolised in many respects the colonies' move away from their settling in phase, identifying that they had the resources, skills and support to tackle the sporting might of the mother country.

By 1870 many sporting and recreation clubs had established themselves. The first golf club in New Zealand was founded in Dunedin on September 28, 1871, accompanied by an article being published in the Otago Daily Times (Crawford, 1996). Lawn bowls,

cricket, tennis, hockey, agriculture clubs involving sheep shearing, and mustering, hunting and shooting clubs were all established. But rugby was to become the dominant sport in New Zealand. By 1890, there were nearly 700 rugby clubs and 18 provincial unions in New Zealand (Nauright, 1990). Rugby was played by a wide cross section of the community and it seemed that it was a game that suited the climate and living conditions of a frontier society. Crawford (1978, cited in Pearson, 1978) draws attention to the tough nature of the game and its reliance upon strength, fitness, tenacity, physical contact and domination over the opposition. It is further claimed that these characteristics appealed and catered to the needs of the early pioneers.

As sport developed, various institutions began to recognise the benefits of physical exercise. Numerous reports in the Appendix to the Journals of the House of Representatives of New Zealand (AJHRNZ) indicate the utilisation of exercise to provide either stimulation, or entertainment. A report on the lunatic asylums in the colony (AJHRNZ, 1872) refers to a yard which was used for outdoor exercise:

At present it is distressing to see the miscellaneous way in which all these men, in their forms and degrees of insanity, are obliged to intermingle in their outdoor exercises (p. 4, G27).

Another report on the colonial New Zealand Navy (AJHRNZ, 1895) identified the recreational activities which occurred on the ship, and while the crew were stationed on land. It was noted that there was a set period in which these activities took place. Facilities were provided for recreation both on board and on shore. Each ship provided games such as bagatelle, chess, dominoes, cricket, skittles, football and quoits (p. 1, H26).

Various institutions used recreational activities as a tool to assist in the development of individuals. The New Zealand school system was one institution which had a remarkable effect on the development and growth of physical exercise and sport within society. It is understood that from the 1860s the games and sports played within a school setting, and the interschool sports competitions assisted community sport and leisure. Schools made a significant contribution to the wider community, with young athletes leaving school proficient in the technical skills and rules of play. From the 1870s the schools and the manner in which they exposed students to athletic pursuits

loomed as an ever increasing source of stimulus and encouragement to the expansion of sports participation (Crawford, 1978).

## **2.4 PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN NEW ZEALAND SCHOOLS 1850 TO 1950**

In the early years of European settlement, Christianity influenced the very few schools that existed. Due to the isolation many towns faced in the early stages of settlement, schools had to make their own provision for education. At this time the curriculum made no provision for any form of physical exercise, but it is reasonable to assume that children played traditional games during lunch breaks and after school:

Schools indulged in games after the English custom and playground areas were always added to the schools but organised exercise of any type in the school time was almost unknown. Teachers voluntarily stayed behind after schooling was over to conduct what games and organisation there was (Bedggood, 1954, p. 13).

### The early beginnings of a national education system

In 1852 Provincial Councils took over education, but there was no framework for a national syllabus (Department of Statistics, 1940). The structure of the schools was based on the type of school previously set up in the area, which were predominantly mission schools.

An inspector's report of Kawhia Native School in 1862, clearly identified that the school was affiliated with the church, with the teacher being the local Rev. C.H Schnakenberg. The inspector described the school as a "large, old fashioned, comfortable Mission House, in bad repair" (AJHRNZ, 1862, p. 21, E4). This school did not provide for any form of exercise but, instead, confined outdoor recreation to field work for the boys and sewing for the girls. In Auckland, St Mary's College's syllabus included horticulture. James McDonald (AJHRNZ, 1865, p. 4, E3b) emphasised that the work carried out in the garden, was a form of exercise that was beneficial to the pupils' health.

Seemingly, there was no set curriculum for any type of physical exercise during this period. Playgrounds were often segregated and, sometimes in larger schools, the boys

were separated from the girls by a fence. There was no provision for regular organised physical activity, but there were a few enthusiastic teachers who taught cricket or soccer out of school hours (Stothart, 1991). The majority of schools provided no physical exercise for their pupils, but in 1871 W.B. Long became the first gymnastics master at Otago Boys High School. In 1872 J.Q. Walker became drill instructor for the North Canterbury Education Board, while in 1876 Christ's College constructed the first purposely-built school gymnasium.

### The development of military drill

The first school related physical exercise that became encouraged officially in New Zealand, involved a close connection with the military. This trend was similar to what was occurring overseas. The gymnastics movement in Denmark and Sweden had been a deliberate response to the defeat and demoralisation in the Napoleonic Wars. It had therefore, been political and even military in character (McIntosh, 1968, cited in Redmond, 1986).

The emergence of such exercise, involving military drills, dates back to the time of the Maori Land Wars in the 1870s. There appears to be a similar characteristic between Maori and European children in relation to athletic games and pastimes reflecting the need for military training. Historical records (Best, 1924; 1976; Buck, 1949) have identified a significant correlation between games and military exercises of the Maori, while other cultures have used sport and games to develop military prowess. Coakley (1994) for example, notes that Roman sports (100 BC to 500 AD) were used to train soldiers, and geared athletic training to the preparation of disciplined military men. Wills (1972) identifies that New Zealand was not unique in adopting this pattern to suit the prevailing political mood. Other countries such as Germany and England embraced similar activities. Whether it was to do with the current political situation, the first types of organised physical exercise in New Zealand schools illustrates this trend.

The strong military association with physical education in schools remained and was reinforced when the New Zealand Education Act was passed in 1877. The act gave recognition for the need for physical activity. This is apparent in Clause 85 of the Act:

In public schools provision shall be made for instruction in military drills for all boys and in such schools as the Board may from time to time direct provision shall be made for physical training,

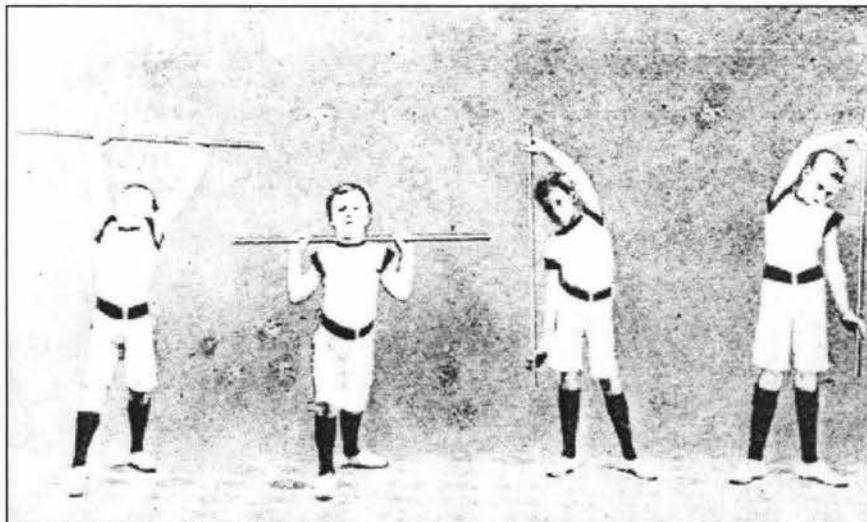
and whenever practical there shall be attached to each school a playground of at least a quarter of an acre (Stothart, 1974, p. 7).

The reference to military drill in the New Zealand Education Act was linked closely to that of the Forster Education Act of England, which was passed in 1870. The Forster Act stated, “attendance at military drill under a competent instructor for more than two hours per week and twenty weeks in the year may be counted as school attendance” (Redmond, 1986).

This was the first official recognition of physical exercise within schools. Accordingly, schools began to employ people with military experience to provide training for pupils. There was a lot of tension in the years following 1877, based on some school boards preferring to appoint staff educated in exercise, compared to those that were devotees to military education/drill (Stothart, 1974).

Figure 2.4

### Military drill



Source: Stothart (1974), p. 13.

In 1878, an immigrant from Switzerland, Oscar David arrived in New Zealand. His main responsibility was to advise the Education Board on physical education in South Island schools. David envisaged that New Zealand needed a national system for physical education and believed it imperative that gymnasiums were constructed in schools. Although a few schools conducted some type of gymnastic programme

involving rhythms and dumb-bell activities, it was to be military drill that was to flourish until 1905.

The Education Report from the inspectors of schools in 1880 identified the inclusion of military drill in the Wanganui district. The inspector also referred to apparatus which was supplied to the schools: dumb-bells, rings, parallel bars, horizontal bar, bar bells, poles, vaulting horse and a ladder arch. The inspector reported:

Drill is practised in twenty schools, the girls even partaking of its advantages. The exercises are generally simple extension motions and company drill. In precision and rapidity of movement, the Wanganui District High School for boys did admirably. The value of drill as a disciplinary agent, as well as a physical exercise, is admitted by all who have given it a fair trial. Many of the School Committees have provided apparatus for gymnastic exercises, which are thoroughly enjoyed by the children (AJHRNZ, 1880, p. 8, H1r).

Criticism of military drill continued. The main issues centred on a suitable programme designed for boys, but nothing comprehensive for girls. There was also increasing discontent with the focus on military based exercises rather than a syllabus which offered greater educational physical training. As stated by Bedggood (1954):

This military association of drill and physical training was the greatest obstacle in achieving a liberalised programme of health education for all pupils, boys and girls (p. 13).

A report that focused on state education in England, France, Switzerland, Italy, Germany, Belgium and the United States of America in 1886 identified the importance of physical education. There was a perception in many of these countries of the necessity of regular exercise and its influence on the developing mind and body. For instance, in France:

Physical training occupies a prominent position in the school programmes. It is provided that even the infant schools and classes shall be exercised in gymnastics, graduated to favour the physical development of the child.... It is provided that in addition to evolutions and exercises, which can accompany the movements of the class, gymnastic exercises are to be taught every day, or at least every two days, in the afternoon. In the communal Colleges and Lyceums, the exercises occupy four lessons per week, of half an hour's duration each (AJHRNZ, 1886, pp 35-36, E12).

The recommendations from the report suggested that New Zealand follow a physical training policy based upon scientific principles. It emphasised that organised gymnastic

exercises should be performed and the quantity and frequency increased. It is important to note that there was still reference made to military drill within the concluding comments, even though no form of military training was mentioned in any country that was investigated.

Military drill was established in many schools by the late 1890s, and cadet corps were flourishing throughout New Zealand. In 1893 the government made officers from the army available to any school to instruct drill, free of charge. The revived interest in military drill was based upon the interest that the war in South Africa was creating. In 1900 the government passed a vote to purchase 2,000 model (dummy) rifles for use in public schools. The use of these model rifles was intended to increase interest in drill, paving the way for the general instruction of the youth of the colony in the elementary principles of defence (Department of Statistics, 1900).

Although the cadet corps were under the control of the Education Department, there was an amendment to the Defence Act making full provision for the organising of cadet corps in public schools. In 1901 the Public and Native Schools Act made it compulsory for military drill to be taught to all children over the age of eight years (Stothart, 1991).

By 1902, over 95,000 children had received instruction in military drill and by 1905, there were 246 cadet corps, with a total of 15,524 members. A similar trend was occurring in Australia. It was quoted by H.R.H the Prince of Wales on return from visiting the colonies:

I am anxious to refer to an admirable movement which has taken strong root in Australia and New Zealand – that is the establishment of the cadet corps (AJHRNZ, 1905, p. 11, E1d).

The significant difference between the New Zealand cadet corps and that of the Australian and Canadian corps was that the New Zealand Education Department controlled, organised and funded the corps. In Australia and Canada the military had a very close affiliation with the corps and funded the cadet military system.

Military training was still strong in 1908, but a book published by Mr B. Dovey, the *Manual of Physical Exercises* was approved as the official manual for primary schools. The ideas within the book gained a lot of support, and there was a general opinion that

this was to be the transition between military drill and physical education. Although there was progress in de-emphasising the military cadet programme in schools, the threat of war in Europe reinforced the need for military drill for children.

Figure 2.5

**Gymnastics session at Otago Girls' High School, 1905**



This sedate gymnastics session at Otago Girls' High School, 1905, was probably similar to what the Peace Scouts would be doing. Here the onlookers' open umbrellas suggest the demonstration was dampened by rain, but the girls' heavy uniforms, bloomers and stockings do not suggest they were going to do much vigorous exercise.

Source: Cox (1993), p. 7.

Major changes occurred in 1912 with the passing of the Education Amendment Act. The Act substituted the cadet corps with a structured system of physical training. It was recognised that the highest aims of state education were to fit the child for a useful and active life of citizenship with a well balanced personality in which physical, mental and moral qualities are equally developed and disciplined (Department of Statistics, 1913). It was noted (ibid.) that the Junior Cadets organisation, although excellent in some respects, was not suited to providing the desired physical training. Moreover, it involved only some 29,000 boys and did not provide any training for girls.

The limitations of military drill had been recognised by the government. As mentioned by Wills (1972), the main purpose of military training was disciplinary, to make

children more obedient and tractable. There is no indication that military drill was intended to promote the strengthening and mobility of muscles and to educate pupils in hygiene and specific games.

Figure 2.6  
Gymnastics class of 1912



Source: Wood (1985), p. 5.

### A change in direction

Although military drill was the predominant type of physical exercise for many children, prior to 1910 there were a few individuals who had a profound influence on the development of physical education in New Zealand. In 1883 John Hanna was appointed gymnastics instructor for Dunedin schools, creating a demand for gymnasiums. He convinced people of the need for gymnasiums. The school board and the parents each paid half of the total cost. The gymnasiums were usually 30ft by 60ft with an 18ft stud and contained the following equipment: a horizontal ladder, wall bars and back boards, climbing ropes, roman rings, trapeze, travelling rings, vaulting horse, spring board, mats, parallel bars, Indian clubs, wands and dumb-bells (Stothart, 1974). There were similar developments in Southland, with the school board and the parents building a gymnasium and appointing an educational specialist to conduct drill and monitor truancy.

A headmistress at Otago Girls' High School in 1893 supported the idea of gymnasiums in schools. She is quoted as saying:

It is necessary that parents should insist upon children devoting a reasonable time to evening preparation; but it was still more imperative that children not be over worked and the importance of gymnasiums could not be too strongly insisted upon (AJHRNZ, 1893, p. 15, E12).

By 1915 there were nineteen of these gymnasiums in Dunedin. But due to the change in syllabus and the retirement of Hanna in 1915, a proportion of these gymnasiums were turned into classrooms and the equipment either went missing or was destroyed.

Royd Garlick, a practitioner of health and exercise, and owner of a private gymnasium in Wellington, was appointed as the first Director of Physical Education. He adopted the 1909 English syllabus of Physical Education with slight modifications to suit New Zealand's education system. The syllabus was a combination of Swedish exercises and as noted in the AJHRNZ (1915, p. 239) the course of instruction specially prepared the teachers for:

- 1) the theory and practice of exercise,
- 2) a definite series of progressive daily exercises in physical drill and correct methods of breathing,
- 3) personal hygiene,
- 4) a course of organised games,
- 5) swimming, life saving and resuscitation.

Wills (1972) identified that the syllabus was based on lessons that were to be enjoyed by the children and that this form of physical training had a mental as well as a physical effect.

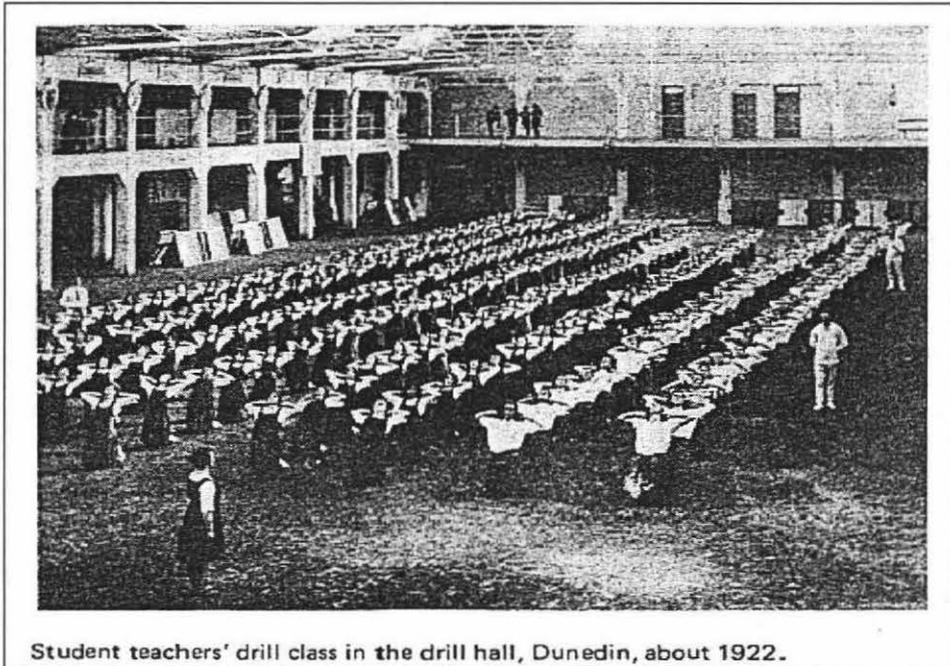
The direction and development of physical education in New Zealand was principally due to the adoption of the English syllabus. Welshman (1998) notes that a report issued by the English Education Board identified the correlation between exercise and the curriculum applied in English schools to what the New Zealand Education Board adopted. The English syllabus incorporated Swedish exercises, and included marching, dancing, skipping and gymnastic games.

The private Protestant girls' schools at this particular time were further advanced than the public system. These schools had organised a specialist physical education

programme, often termed “gym”. The schools arranged immigration of gym mistresses or sports mistresses from England to co-ordinate these classes. Many of these women were fully trained at a three year specialist college.

Figure 2.7

**School drill class, 1922**



Student teachers' drill class in the drill hall, Dunedin, about 1922.

Source: Stothart (1974), p. 14.

With the outbreak of World War One and the sudden death of Royd Garlick in 1915 there was a period of disorganisation. The development of a rigid physical education syllabus was prevented by the Depression in the 1920's. Funding for education was reduced by the government, the building programme for gymnasiums was suspended and physical education staff were demoralised as their numbers were reduced (Stothart, 1996).

By the 1920s games were becoming prominent. Rugby, cricket and netball spread through primary schools, and interschool sport competitions were becoming popular (Stothart, 1991). The same trend was occurring in England:

The need for playing fields became more pressing for both elementary and secondary schools. Many local authorities were establishing school football, cricket and rugby associations (Welshman, 1998, p. 60).

A significant turning point in the physical education syllabus in New Zealand occurred in 1928, when teachers were introduced to Renfrew White's syllabus. In 1932, Renfrew White's book *The Growing Body* officially replaced the 1920 syllabus. The book contained a great number of Swedish exercises, dances, athletic games and posture exercises. The sheer enjoyment of vigorous physical activity was highlighted and greater emphasis given to the more natural activities in which children were interested in (Wills, 1972).

There was a lot of criticism of White's ideas. The main reasoning was that primary school teachers had inadequate training in anatomy and physiology. There was also the concern that there was little classroom space to enable the teaching of pupils in the suggested exercises. The previous physical education syllabus was conducted outdoors, whereas this book recommended more classroom learning. Stothart (1974, p. 25) commented on the book, stating, "*The Growing Body* was extensively misunderstood and actively ignored and, as a consequence, physical education was neglected."

This was supported by Wills (1972) who identified that physical education was at a directionless stage, and most teachers supervised perfunctory lessons if they arranged physical education at all. Many teachers, in fact, ignored the subject and in the prevailing gloomy economic climate the physical education system struggled (ibid.).

In 1939 White's book was dropped and the British 1933 Syllabus of Physical Training for schools was officially adopted. The report on education of native children in 1939 provides a clear example of how Renfrew White's syllabus affected the structure and development of physical education in New Zealand.

Physical drill is, perhaps the worst taught subject in many native schools. This weakness, due to a considerable extent to the general vagueness of the present scheme, must be overcome. Physical education properly organised, can pay such high dividends – pleasure, relaxation, grace, mastery of muscles, and (more remotely but none the less definitely), confidence, courage, initiative, and leadership. These are rich rewards, well worth seeking" (AJHRNZ, 1939, p. 2, E3).

The appointment of Phillip Smithells in 1939 as Superintendent of Physical Education was the beginning of a new syllabus and the development of a modern system of physical education. It has been regarded that Smithells gave physical education status

and acceptability (Stothart, 1996). The physical education course became comprehensive, covering body mechanics, physiology and anatomy, posture, gymnastics, ball handling and games, athletics, recreation, improvised equipment, Maori hand games, stick games, taiaha games, teaching techniques and class organisation, and remedial work of breathing and strengthening

Phillip Smithells encouraged his staff to collect evidence of Maori activities as they travelled around New Zealand. He was quoted as saying:

During 1942 to 1946 our field staff was particularly active in rescuing games and rhythmical activities from oblivion. They found that the children knew few games, their parents hardly knew any but it was the grandparents who were the real sources of games and activities. I think it is to the credit of our profession that we were possibly the first predominately Pakeha group in New Zealand that ever made it explicit that the Maori had something to teach the Pakeha (Smithells, 1950, cited in Stothart, 1974).

Physical education did not become compulsory as a core subject until 1946 (Jones, 1978). But due to the efforts of Phillip Smithells and also Dudley Wills (Superintendent of P.E 1949-1971), physical education in New Zealand developed, influencing both pupils and society.

In 1946 very few secondary schools had halls or gymnasiums. This highlights the impact of the change in the physical education syllabus in 1915, the economic depression and the retirement of John Hanna, when the building of gymnasiums virtually stopped. However, twelve recreational halls built for the American troops in New Zealand were taken over by the Education Department, and given to secondary schools with no facilities (Jones, 1978). A huge oversight occurred in 1949 when the Cabinet Works Committee reported that gymnasiums were not an essential part of secondary schools. So in the period of 1949 to 1959 when numerous secondary schools were built, no facilities were supplied for recreational or physical education purposes.

The pioneering schoolteachers had a precarious beginning, struggling to adapt a syllabus that emphasised physical education. The determination of a few individuals developed a comprehensive curriculum that assisted the progress of physical activity. The development of the learner swimming pool, the revival of playground equipment as

a means of exercise, the idea of allowing children to work to their own levels of ability, and a need to attain proficiency and skill in activities reinforced the necessity of compulsory physical education.

The evolution of the physical education system in New Zealand influenced society remarkably. From the early beginnings of military drill to an established syllabus for physical education, a development was occurring. The vision of a few individuals, who challenged the education system and inspired change, need to be noted for their dedication and enthusiasm. These few individuals ultimately influenced society and developed a structured framework for physical education. This fostered increased sports participation, the adoption of exercise equipment and the building of gymnasiums. Due to their efforts, public awareness was raised on the health benefits of physical exercise.

## **2.5 SUMMARY AND REVIEW**

This chapter encapsulated a number of critical factors that have influenced the commercial fitness centre industry. Firstly, physical exercise and leisure was deeply embedded in both Maori and European societies with specific leisure activities being performed either to entertain or improve an individual's physical fitness.

Secondly, overseas countries influenced the physical exercises and sporting activities performed in New Zealand. For example, Maori had games and pastimes that resembled many forms of activities conducted in other parts of the world. The influence of the early Europeans had a detrimental effect on traditional Maori activities, with the amalgamation of the two cultures. Furthermore, early European physical exercises and leisure activities were dominated by class distinction due to New Zealand's colonial heritage.

Thirdly, social attitudes towards leisure activities and recreation changed. More people became involved in some form of leisurely pursuit during their free time, with many sporting and recreation clubs being established. Anniversary Day activities and sporting events also provided an identity for the early settlers, which eventuated into a sense of nationalism and pride.

Fourthly, international trends had a notable influence on the development of physical exercise and leisure activities in New Zealand schools. The introduction of military drill was based on international political disposition, while the development of a physical education syllabus was strongly influenced by immigrants and physical education developments in England.

Finally, there was greater public awareness of the benefits of physical exercise due to the introduction of a physical education syllabus. Communities began supporting the development of gymnasiums and there was an expansion in sports participation due to schools involving students in physical exercise.

## CHAPTER THREE

# THE HISTORY OF GYMNASIUMS AND FITNESS CENTRES IN NEW ZEALAND 1853 TO 1960

### CHAPTER OUTLINE

This chapter draws upon historical literature to provide an outline of the development of the fitness centre industry in New Zealand and the significant influences that have embedded it in our society.

- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 The establishment of a new industry 1853 to 1900
- 3.3 The fitness and recreation movements 1900 to 1960
- 3.4 Summary and review

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

A critical examination of the literature identified that physical fitness became part of New Zealand's society because of a nation's (European and Maori) desire to participate in leisure and recreational activities, the awareness and importance of leisure time and the fundamental growth of the leisure and sports industry. Furthermore, overseas trends and the development of the physical education system in New Zealand had a significant influence on the increased participation in physical activities. The establishment of the fitness centre industry was influenced by these developments, and grew as society embraced the ideologies of the YMCA, the New Zealand school system, physical culturists and the fitness and recreation movements.

### 3.2 THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A NEW INDUSTRY 1853 TO 1900

It is the belief of the researcher that a significant contributing factor in the development of the fitness centre industry in New Zealand was the introduction of the YMCA in Auckland in 1853, by its founder R.B Shalders. His objectives were to conduct lectures, Bible classes, prayer meetings and mutual improvement classes (Shalders, 1912).

Shalders intentions were to replicate the American YMCA, with its purpose to provide wholesome religious fellowship.

However, the overall philosophy of the YMCA in America changed in the 1860s. The YMCA increasingly embraced secular programmes, launching recreational, social, educational, and athletic activities in an attempt to compete with the commercial leisure facilities. Soon the organisation's "social, educational, athletic, and recreational functions started to overshadow the YMCA's religious work" (Mjagkij and Spratt, 1997, p. 4). The influence of this resulted in 348 gymnasiums being built in North America. By 1892 these facilities were staffed by 144 full time physical culture leaders and serviced over 250,000 members (Riess, 1991). It is speculated that the change from religious teaching to an overall educational perspective of the American and English YMCA's had a great influence on the New Zealand association.

#### The first gymnasiums

There was great public interest when the Auckland YMCA purchased the first gymnastics equipment in 1860 from the Narragansett Gymnastic Equipment Company of America (Stothart, 1982) and began conducting gymnastics and callisthenics classes. Although gymnastics is not primarily associated with the fitness centre industry these days, the popularity of the YMCA and its gymnastics classes did assist the development of other exercise programmes. This is recognised by Stothart (1982) who acknowledged that the YMCA has had a profound influence in New Zealand in the development of numerous sports.

There is debate whether the Auckland YMCA was the first to conduct physical exercise classes in New Zealand. As noted in the *Otago Witness*, January 19, 1859 (cited in Crawford, 1978) a J.E Lowe, the son of the Balmoral dancing master to Queen Victoria's vacationing family, organised classes in Scottish country dance, deportment, and callisthenics. Lowe conducted a series of stretching, mobilising, and strengthening exercises to a rigid and disciplined pattern. It seems likely that Lowe may have been the first to establish conditioning classes in New Zealand, as conditioning activities and physical training were unknown during this era (Crawford, 1978). Although the YMCA may have been conducting gymnastic exercises at this time, there is no evidence to

confirm this. There is only reference to the purchase of gymnastic equipment in 1860, with no indication that gymnastic exercises were conducted before this date.

As noted in Chapter Two, physical education within schools was at the forefront of increasing the public awareness of the benefits of physical exercise and leisure. It is not surprising that the Education Board supported the first commercially operated gymnasium in New Zealand. This gymnasium was opened in Christchurch in 1866, and was owned and operated by Harold Palmer with the North Canterbury Education Board employing James Walker to conduct public and school classes at Palmer's gymnasium up until 1888. The format and structure in which this gymnasium operated is unclear, but it indicates that there was a public demand for this type of physical activity.

Figure 3.1

**Christ's College gymnasium, 1876**



Source: Hamilton (1991).

However, the first ever purpose built gymnasium in New Zealand was constructed by Christ's College, in Christchurch in 1876. The Christ's College gymnasium was like a wooden shed. It eventually became too small, and in 1886 the school erected another gymnasium, which was a reproduction of McLaren's gymnasium in Oxford, England. The cost of the new gymnasium was 700 pounds, and Hamilton (1991) mentions that the 1886 Register described the gymnasium:

As a large lofty building, crowded with ropes with knots, ropes without knots, thin poles, thick poles, poles that stand firm in the ground and poles fixed on a slant, that twist around as the puffing youngster climbs them. Then there are horizontal and parallel bars, rings, trapezes, an enormously long, elastic horizontal ladder ... in fact, a world of apparatus bewildering to the uninitiated (p. 36).

Figure 3.2

**Christ's College gymnasium, 1886**



Source: Hamilton (1991).

The building of school gymnasiums became common. An influential figure in this process was John Hanna. He had a significant involvement in the development of physical education in Dunedin as well as creating a demand for gymnasiums in the Dunedin area. Between 1883 and 1915, 19 school gymnasiums were built. The astonishing aspect of this gymnasium development programme was that the school board and the parents paid half each of the total building cost.

The development of school gymnasiums illustrates that physical exercise classes were becoming an important part of society. The school gymnasium development programme may well have increased the demand for publicly operated facilities offering programmes in gymnastics and callisthenics. This is apparent with the Christchurch YMCA building the first community gymnasium in 1884, at a cost of 191 pounds. J.C

Davies was the Physical Director of the gymnasium and he conducted weekly gymnastics and callisthenics classes.

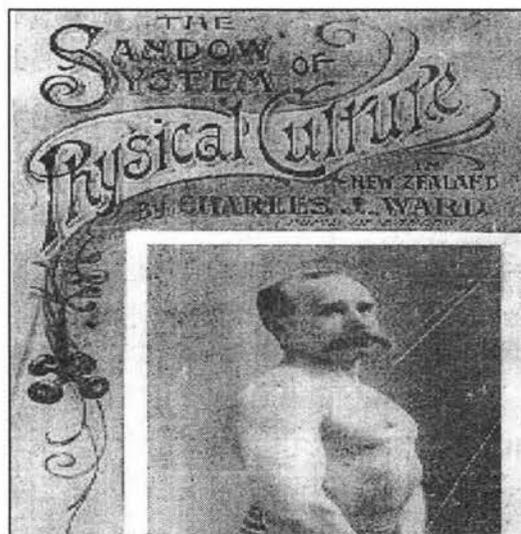
Between 1880 and 1890 gymnastics became a popular activity within the Auckland area. There is evidence to suggest that there were forty or more gymnastic groups conducting regular meetings, and almost every church with an adjacent hall had a gym club (Stothart, 1982). With religious groups conducting gymnastics classes, it must be considered that the church played an influential role in developing a need for physical fitness. The demand for such leisure activities may have encouraged more individuals in establishing commercial operations.

### Physical culturists

In addition to schools, churches and public organisations there were individuals at the forefront of establishing physical exercise classes and gymnasiums in New Zealand. These individuals were known as “physical culturists”. They conducted stage performances in music halls, and entertained audiences by tearing packs of playing cards, breaking chains or lifting huge dumb-bells. According to Stothart (1994) the physical culturists used this publicity to inspire potential customers to become followers of their particular method of strength and fitness training.

Figure 3.3

### **Eugene Sandow**



Source: New Zealand Memories (1998), p. 817.

The early physical culturists in New Zealand were influenced by Eugene Sandow, a Prussian who published books and magazines promoting his system of physical culture all around the world during the late 1800s and early 1900s. Four of the leading physical culturists in New Zealand at that time were Dick Garrett, Fred Hornibrook, Royd Garlick and J.P Northey.

Another individual who conducted physical exercise classes in the community was Oscar David. As mentioned in Chapter Two, Oscar David was an adviser to the Education Board on physical education in South Island schools. As David had no fixed salary he supplemented his income by conducting private classes in Dunedin. In 1882 he resigned from his position at Normal School in Dunedin, to establish regular businessmen's classes and private lessons in callisthenics. Stothart (1974, p.5) states that Oscar David was years ahead of his time in New Zealand, and a paper presented to the Otago Educational Institute in 1889 reveals the breadth of his thinking and knowledge. David commented on the deleterious effects of poor posture, faulty sitting positions, the dangers of women's corsets, the importance of correct breathing, and made a plea for a more liberal system of general education.

### **3.3 THE FITNESS AND RECREATION MOVEMENTS 1900 TO 1960**

In 1901 the government passed the Public and Native Schools Act, making it compulsory for military drill to be taught to all children over the age of eight years (Stothart, 1991). This act highlighted the emphasis on physical fitness, and identifies a shift in perspective by the government on the need for regular exercise. With the development of sport in New Zealand, it is a reasonable assumption that the community was becoming more aware of the benefits of physical fitness. This is based on the rapid growth of particular social movements and the establishment of sport clubs and commercial gymnasiums. It is also substantiated by the following article, which was published in *The Lyttelton Times*, Tuesday, May 16, 1911:

Fifteen years ago an awakening took place in regard to the physical culture movement, and the British people found that the work being done by the other nations of Europe was worth emulating. Medical men, especially, began to recognise the theoretical value of physical exercises, although the bulk of the people were still hopelessly ignorant. In New Zealand over 30

years ago Dr Francis B. Hutchinson preached the doctrine of national ideals in physical education (p. 13).

### The influence of the Boys' Brigade, Boy Scouts and the Girl Guides

The children's movements of the Boys' Brigade (established 1886), the Boy Scouts (established 1908) and the Girl Guides (established 1922) had a substantial influence in encouraging participation in both outdoor and indoor recreation. The groups' focus on physical recreation programmes has shifted with social trends and current needs. For instance, when military drill was becoming part of the school curriculum, both the Boys' Brigade and the Boy Scouts focussed their physical exercise programmes on this popular trend. Hoare (1982) notes that on May 14, 1887 at the St James Presbyterian Hall, in Auckland, 50 very unruly and disrespectful boys were the first Boys' Brigade Company to perform military drill in New Zealand. It is mentioned in the extracts from the constitution of the Boys' Brigade that "military organisation and drill shall be a means of securing the interest of the boys" (ibid. p. 17).

The extent of the influence that these movements had on the establishment and development of the fitness centre industry is unclear. However the researcher believes that these groups popularised physical activities. For instance, the Girl Guides were instructed in physical activities in the late 1920s. An Englishman taught them "the Swedish system of physical movement" which did not put strain on any body parts (Cox, 1993). This activity resembled the physical education syllabus which was being taught in schools at the time. These groups encouraged participation and gave children the opportunity to experience new physical activities and skills. It is an assumption of the researcher that when these children became adults, they may have wanted to continue similar activities. This may have placed a greater demand on sports and other leisure pastimes, which influenced the development of the fitness centre industry.

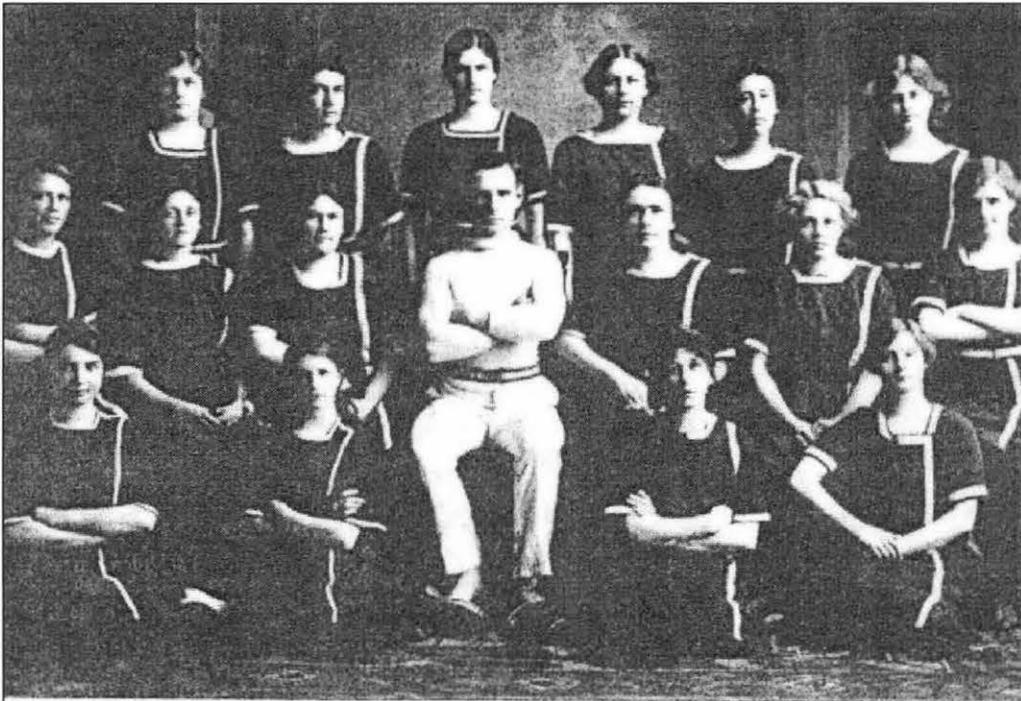
### The development of physical culture

There is a dearth of literature from the 1900s to the 1920s about physical culture in New Zealand, with a few writers making passing references to this industry. The information that is available illustrates a growing demand for physical culturists and gymnasiums at the turn of the last century. It is assumed that New Zealand was following other nations in the development of physical culture. According to MacFadden (1914) the modern

gymnasium was an institution that had come to stay, growing out of the need for adequate provision in our cities for that physical activity and muscular training which, under more natural conditions, would occur outdoors.

Figure 3.4

**The Hastings YMCA, 1912**



*"Ladies' class at the Hastings YMCA gymnasium, 1912".  
 Top row: Doris Corban, Vi Pitt, Alice Corban, —, Leila Pitt, Chloe Bush.  
 Second row: Jean Thompson, —, Ivy Thompson, Mr Buchanan, Elsie Pitt, Amy Watts, Miss Read.  
 Third row: Buntly Mitchell, Bessy Mitchell, — Horton, — Reed.*

Source: Knox (1995), p. 8.

An interesting fact that Coney (1993) conveys is that in the early 1900s the physical culturists in New Zealand were seen as either daringly advanced or otherwise as cranks. This was evident in America. Bernarr MacFadden was one of the most ardent advocates of health and fitness in the early Twentieth Century, but it is noted by Grover (1989) that MacFadden was viewed as an obsessive and mercurial eccentric to those who were not his followers.

The literature that is available identifies that there was a School of Physical Culture managed by Ettie Rout and Fred Hornibrook in Christchurch in 1902. Hornibrook once described himself as "infected with the virus of physical culture" (Tolerton, 1992, cited in Stothart, 1994). As noted by Stothart (1994), Hornibrook is reputed to have been



regions. *The Harding and Billing Guide to Auckland (1906): An illustrated pocket guide to Auckland* illustrates the YMCA's provision to supply sport and physical exercise to the public:

For the benefit of the physical side of the man, athletics of all kinds are cultivated. A gymnasium is open during the winter months, while football, cricket, swimming, rambling, and other clubs are organised in their respective seasons. The association stands for all that is noble in sport, and is the uncompromising opponent of the evils which often attend it (p. 25).

An article published in the *Canterbury Times*, June 14, 1911 illustrated the increased involvement in physical culture at that time, with the formation of a national body for physical culture:

A meeting to form a New Zealand Physical Culture Association was held on Friday at Mr F.A Hornibrook's physical culture school. Mr C.R Woledge was chairman, and amongst those present were Lieutenant-Colonel Hawkins, Drs J.R Thomas, W.F Browne, N. Gutherie and J.F Duncan. It was decided that the association should be registered as "The New Zealand Physical Culture Association" and that the Association should be formed for the purpose of governing New Zealand physical culture championships.

Figure 3.6

**Physical culture for New Zealand women, 1921**



Source: The National magazine of Health, Physical Culture and Sociology, 1921 (Alexander Turnbull Library, National Library of New Zealand, Te Puna Mātauranga o Aotearoa).

By 1912, Royd Garlick, an advocate of a deep breathing technique, and a practitioner of health and exercise, managed a private gymnasium in Wellington which was described as “one of the most up to date and elaborately equipped in the colony” (Smithells, cited in Stothart, 1994, p. 26). Even in smaller towns, there was a demand for physical culture. In Karori in 1912, a Mr J. W. M. Harrison, a gym instructor, had a school of physical culture. A newspaper report states:

Not only were the male members of the very large classes in the pink of condition and thoroughly adept, but the ladies showed a remarkable facility in the squad drills and in the various routine work of the gymnasium (Wood, 1985, p. 14).

### The influence of the YWCA

There was a regression in the fitness centre industry during World War One. Nevertheless, the YMCA and YWCA - strong advocates of physical culture, continued to promote the benefits of exercise during this period. The YWCA regarded physical development as one of the four cornerstones of ideal womanhood (Coney, 1986). However, there were opponents to girls participating in sports or physical exercise. These people deemed it as unladylike, promulgating notions about damage to the ovaries and breasts, which they claimed could impede a girl’s ability to fulfil her role of motherhood (Coney, 1986). In spite of opposition, the YWCA continued their efforts to promote strenuous work with dumb-bells in its gym classes. During World War One the YWCA stated the importance of physical culture, asserting that it made “girls more graceful and the weak much more strengthened” (ibid. p. 19).

In 1916 the YWCA board recognised that to increase women’s involvement in physical culture a facility large enough to manage the increased demand needed to be built. On October 31, 1918, their new building opened in Queen Street, Auckland. It incorporated a sixty four by thirty six foot gymnasium, with changing rooms, showers, and apparatus storage space. Coney (1986) noted that the YWCA had immense appeal to adolescent girls, as no one else in the city was providing physical exercise classes. An advertisement in the *New Zealand Herald* at this time stated:

The first gymnasium in Australasia exclusively for women. Classes for growing girls, employed and leisured women, special remedial work. Tired housekeepers, teachers, business girls and children (Coney, 1986, p. 164).

A gym song was even produced for the YWCA, in 1918 (Coney, 1986, p. 190):

All girls who choose can get rid of the blues,  
 And instead you can be full of vim;  
 A spirit that's bright and a good appetite,  
 You'll have if you join our gym  
 If your hair is falling out,  
 Come, join our gym,  
 If you are too thin and stout  
 Come, join our gym  
 If you want to have fine Grecian curves,  
 If you want to have fine steady nerves,  
 Put on your middies,  
 You'll be healthy kiddies,  
 So come, join our gym.

Membership increased after the YWCA moved to their new premises. There were 1089 members in 1918 and by the following year this had increased to 2,400. According to Coney (1987) World War One had opened up new employment opportunities for women in the city, which influenced the increase in membership. These new employment opportunities included clerks, cashiers and shop assistants. Coney (1987) identified that in 1911, 1,733 women were employed in Auckland City. By 1921 this had increased to 11,974.

#### A public demand for gymnasiums

From the 1920s onwards, American business practices influenced New Zealand, and a gradual cultural change accompanied this commercial dominance (Spoonley, Pearson and Shirley, 1994). However, this American commercial influence may not have prevailed in the fitness centre industry. As noted by Coney (1993), in the 1920s and 1930s the pursuit of health and fitness was popularised, along with a craze for sunbathing, tramping and health foods. Most of this influence was due to the widely admired German mass youth movement. There was also the Health and Beauty movement, which was founded in England in 1930 and was known as the Women's League for Health and Beauty. It seems that the fitness industry in New Zealand was dominated by a European influence during this time rather than by American commercialism.

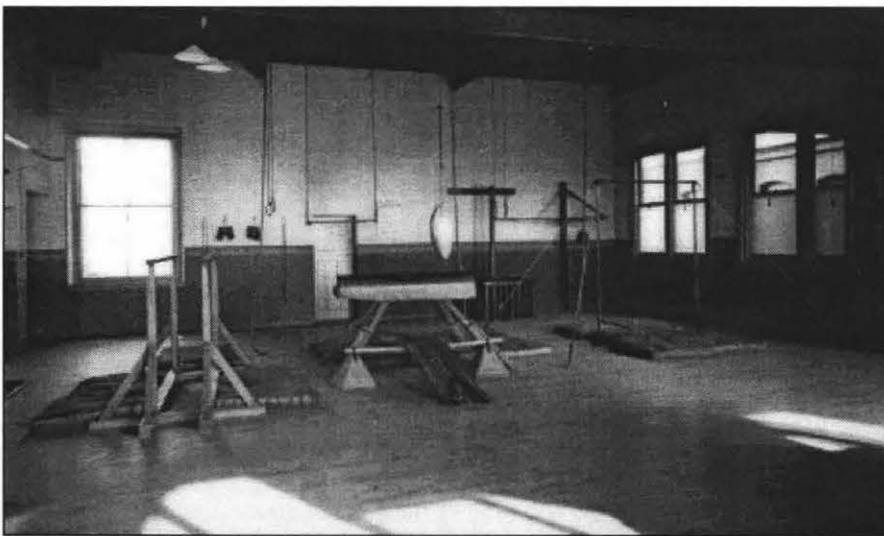
The YMCA and YWCA remained at the forefront of promoting physical culture after World War One. George Kemp (cited in Knox, 1995) remembers going to gym classes at the Hawkes Bay YMCA on Saturday mornings in the mid 1920s:

We would do exercises, lunging and arm stretching, you name it we had it. We had springboard, we had the parallel bars, we had the vaulting horse and the rings, and the big mattress to land on. We thought this was marvellous (p. 7).

As the demand for physical culture increased, individuals began opening facilities to cater for this expanding and growing movement. Jack Hanna, (John Hanna's son) who was obviously influenced by his father, undertook a career in physical education (Stothart, 1982). He worked in the Auckland and Dunedin YMCA's as a physical director before opening a school of physical culture in Dunedin in the Burns Hall in the early 1920s. He organised regular classes in physical culture, gymnastics, tumbling and dancing until his retirement in 1947.

Figure 3.7

**Gymnastics equipment ca1910s**



Source: Press Collection (Alexander Turnbull Library, National Library of New Zealand, Te Puna Matauranga o Aotearoa) G-8325-1/1(PAColl-3031).

Correspondence by an unknown individual (Auckland Scrap Book, 1970) illustrates the need for an Auckland Gymnasium Sports Club in 1927. It states:

Having been convinced for years of the necessity and need for the formation of a Gymnasium Sports Club in Auckland, which would fulfil a long felt want. Several of New Zealand's leading instructors in all round gymnastics, physical culture, swimming, wrestling and tennis, have offered their services. I have interviewed leading business and professional men and women in

Auckland and surrounding districts discussed the proposition in detail, obtained their financial assistance and promises of their physical and moral support (p. 45)

The outcome of this proposed gymnasium is unknown, but it supports the claim that there was a demand for gymnasiums and that there was an increase in participation in physical culture.

#### Significant developments and changes in the fitness industry

The 1930s to late 1940s involved great change and development within the fitness centre industry. Firstly, there was the health and beauty movement that inspired gentle and fluid physical movements, emphasising posture and suppleness. Brought to New Zealand by two English women, Millicent and Caroline Ward in 1937, the chief attraction of these exercises was that they were all scientific and had been approved by leading medical men of the day (Coney, 1993).

Figure 3.8

#### **Millicent and Caroline Ward**



Source: Coney (1993), p. 258.

In 1939, 2400 New Zealand women had become members of this movement. As noted by Coney, (1993) the pattern of membership followed the British one. It was largely an urban movement catering for working women, shop, factory, and office workers as well

as housewives for whom there were few other recreational opportunities. One newspaper proclaimed that the “town’s have gone health mad and blamed it on the imported English blondes” (ibid. p. 259).

There was greater involvement by local and central government in providing and promoting health and fitness. With the British government passing the Physical Training and Recreation Act in 1937, the Hon. W.E Parry, Minister of Internal Affairs (1936 to 38) of the Labour Government, believed that New Zealand needed an Act that would also promote physical activity. A Member of Parliament remarked:

Mr Parry has shown considerable interest for all matters connected with sport and recreation. We know that the minister is a keen devotee of physical training and is to be seen frequently at the punchbag in the gymnasium of this building (Hargest, 1937, p. 421).

Mr Parry believed that a good programme should result in a healthy population and the development of moral fibre and fortitude (Stothart, 1991). The Physical Welfare and Recreation Act was passed in November 1937. Parry stated as the Act was passed:

The most precious jewel in life is good health and physical fitness. Good physical and mental health should be the foundation of a good life, besides making the individual profitable to the nation to which he belongs. Physical fitness gives confidence, its absence weakens moral fibre of the nation (Parry, 1937 cited in Stothart, 1991).

A Physical Welfare and Recreation Branch was established, with its main aim of providing direction for the district committees. These committees were focused on educating the public about leisure, raising the standard of health and fitness, encouraging active participation, training leaders and assisting church and youth groups. A physical fitness week was organised for February 18 to 25, 1939. A correspondent from the Department of Internal Affairs to the Mayor of a city indicated the importance of the week:

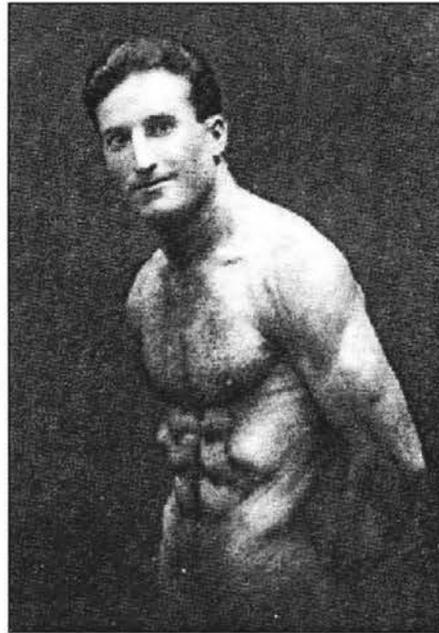
The minister feels that you will realise the importance of interesting the people generally in physical exercise and recreation and the value of the fitness week as a means of cementing that community of interest between your council and the large body of its citizens forming the membership of the various organisations which is so necessary for the purposes of the Physical Welfare and Recreation Act, 1937 (Department of Internal Affairs, 1939).

The first National Fitness Week in 1939 was unsuccessful. The Council for Physical Welfare and Recreation did not meet at all after 1944, with the branch disbanding in

1953 due to a National Government policy. The Physical Welfare and Recreation Branch was the first identifiable step since the Public and Native Schools Act 1901 of any government promoting health and fitness on a national scale. Matthew Alach (1939), an early physical culturist in New Zealand, who wrote the book *Physical Fitness of our Nation*, noted there was a general feeling in favour of physical fitness, but there existed at the same time a general vague conception about its true meaning. He identified that there was increased public interest in physical fitness, and supported the idea of the authorities launching a system of physical education for the country (ibid.).

Figure 3.9

**Matthew Alach (aka. The ‘Muscular Phenomenon’)**



Source: Alach (1939), p. 18.

The community and youth centre movement

The “community centre” movement began in 1936, when the Rangiora High School initiated an association with the community by using its facilities to assist in social and recreational purposes. The first community centre was built in 1938 in Feilding. Dakin (1979) notes that the New Zealand community centre was characterised by a strong educational emphasis that had been prominent in the early community centres in England. The community centre became popular at the end of World War Two, as the Government announced that these halls or centres would be excellent as war memorials.

In 1946 the New Zealand Minister of Internal Affairs wrote:

In its simplest form the community centre is embodied in the village hall providing facilities for dance, shows and meetings of all types, dramatic presentations and concerts, and indoor games and recreation, together with facilities for refreshment, a kitchen or cafeteria (Dakin, 1979, p. 2).

With the government subsidising the construction of community centres between the period of 1946 and 1963 some 350 war memorials in the form of community centres were built.

The youth centre movement of the 1950s and 1970s was designed to direct young people's leisure by encouraging constructive recreation (Ritchie, 1992). The youth centres developed due to a shortage of casual sport and recreational facilities for city teenagers who had no religious interests. Organisations such as the YMCA, YWCA, Boy Scouts, Boys' Brigade and the Girl Guides shared a christian background (Ritchie, 1992).

Opening in 1932, Boystown (recently renamed as Youthtown) could be considered to be the first youth centre in New Zealand. Located in the basement of the old *Kitty O'Brien's* pub in Auckland, it was a non religious facility providing a haven for many of the city's homeless and underprivileged boys (Cooper, 1996). Boystown was established to prevent young men and boys from becoming idle and being corrupted by commercial entertainment. In the late 1930s the organisation moved to Donovan's Gymnasium in Nelson Street, Auckland where they offered many types of physical activities. Today, Youthtown has a 25 metre heated swimming pool, a fitness centre, basketball court, and areas for table tennis, self defence courses and a climbing wall.

By the 1950s the National Youth Council of New Zealand (1980) aimed to provide a place for their predominantly teenage users to meet in an informal setting, and to choose and enjoy activities from the range provided. The activities conducted in these youth centres varied, but general programmes included socials, film evenings, gym evenings and discussion groups. The youth centre movement is evidence of another influential trend that may have assisted the growth of commercial fitness centres. The effect that this movement had on the fitness centre industry is vague. It is an assumption by the

researcher that as the youth centres were advocates of leisure and recreation, they had an indirect influence on the increase in demand for commercial fitness centres.

### **3.4 SUMMARY AND REVIEW**

The establishment of the YMCA and YWCA in New Zealand, the devotion of physical culturists and the building of gymnasiums in schools all had a direct influence on the modern fitness centre industry. This progress meant that physical fitness classes became readily accessible to the public. However the social developments during the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s made people more aware of the need to participate in some form of physical activity. The Labour government of the pre and post World War Two years highlighted the benefits of exercise and leisure, while the health and beauty movement, the building of community centres and the youth centre movement increased the demand for leisure and recreation activities.

## CHAPTER FOUR

# THE COMMERCIAL FITNESS CENTRES 1960 TO 2000

### CHAPTER OUTLINE

The previous chapters reflected on the developments of physical fitness and leisure activities in New Zealand, examining the influences that have assisted in the establishment of the fitness centre industry. This study now examines the growth of commercial fitness centres in the Auckland region, critically considering the available literature in order to provide answers to the research question proposed in the Introduction.

- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 The early development of the commercial fitness centre
  - 4.2.1 The Silhouette American Health Studio
  - 4.2.2 The locality of fitness centres in the Auckland region
  - 4.2.3 The fitness industry boom 1980 to 2000
- 4.3 The growth of the commercial fitness centre industry
  - 4.3.1 The reasons for the growth in fitness centres
  - 4.3.2 The development of the corporate market
  - 4.3.3 The unstable fitness centre industry
- 4.4 The research setting
- 4.5 Summary and review

## 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The development of the fitness centre industry in New Zealand from the 1960s was difficult to substantiate due to a dearth of historical literature. The literature that has been published on this topic primarily concentrates on the period of the 1980s and 1990s. It fails to provide informative dialogue on earlier developments. Although this literature was invaluable, the researcher was limited by the lack of resources which provided factual documentation. The researcher therefore found it necessary to concentrate on researching the establishment and development of commercial fitness centres in the Auckland region. For this purpose the Auckland Yellow Pages telephone directory was utilised as well as information provided through semi-structured interviews with prominent fitness centre owners.

It is important to note that the data represented in this chapter is inconclusive, as it only takes into account fitness centres that advertised in the Auckland Yellow Pages telephone directory for each five year period from 1960. For instance, fitness centres may have advertised one year, but not in the fifth year that followed. Furthermore, the figures do not take into consideration the fitness centres that opened and then closed during the five year period investigated. Although not an accurate portrayal, the data provides a reasonable account of the growth of the fitness centre industry in the Auckland region.

After adequately researching the influences that facilitated the development of the fitness centre industry, this literature review chapter intends to further summarise the significant growth of commercial fitness centres in the Auckland region. This chapter critically considers the developments and changes that have occurred, and examines relevant literature on fitness centre management in order to answer the research question.

## **4.2 THE EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF THE COMMERCIAL FITNESS CENTRE**

In the last 40 years the number of fitness centres in the Auckland region has grown immensely (see Appendix A). The recreation and leisure movement prior to 1960 popularised physical fitness, and as the fitness trends of the 1960s onwards influenced the general population, there appears to have been a greater need for leisure service providers. These developments seem to exemplify similar health and fitness trends that had occurred in America. Grantham, Patton, York and Winick (1998) speculated that the health and fitness movement in America also had unclear origins and may have begun with the development of physical education programmes in schools, the YMCA's, or the more recent phenomenon of the aerobics movement in the 1970s. What has been identified is that the number of Americans participating in programmes offered by fitness centres increased exponentially after 1960 (ibid.).

#### 4.2.1 The Silhouette American Health Studio

In the 1960 Auckland Yellow Pages telephone directory, only one fitness centre was listed. This was Matthew Alach's facility, and as previously discussed (see Chapter Three) he wrote the book *Physical Fitness for our Nation*. There is literature pertaining to fitness centres that were operating at this time. These included the YMCA, YWCA, the Auckland Weight Lifters Association and the Auckland Health Studio. However, they were not listed in the Auckland Yellow Pages telephone directory in 1960. This indicates that the Auckland Yellow Pages telephone directory is inconclusive and further research needs to be conducted to substantiate the fitness centres that may have been operating but did not advertise in the telephone directory.

It is noted by Greenwood (1989) that the modern day commercial health and fitness facility originated in the 1960s with the Silhouette American Health Studio opening in central Auckland. The Silhouette fitness centre was regarded by many as the forerunner of today's modern, high profile, professionally run commercial fitness centres (ibid.). This is supported by Clive Green (C. Green, personal communication, March 2, 2000) who stated:

They popularised it. We were still in the garage type mentality, and we didn't advertise much. When they came in, their presentation was brilliant, mirrors across the walls, carpeted gym. In those days that didn't happen. Everything was chromed it was smart. It didn't look like a gym, but a salon type look.

There was steady growth between 1960 and 1975 with a total of 16 fitness centres operating in 1980. Clive Green (C. Green, personal communication, March 2, 2000) noted that in the early parts of the 1960s the community did not fully understand the reasons for working out in a fitness centre:

Well, if you told someone you did weights, or body building or something like that they probably thought you were gay. But certainly it was a cult thing. Very few people did it. The community thought it was good, but probably a waste of time, only if you wanted to look good or something. Not much understanding of it.

Stothart (1994) supported this supposition and suggested that physical culture was seen as being unworthy and beneath contempt, a sweaty, narcissistic pursuit indulged by men of limited intellect. However, a change in perception occurred when the Silhouette American Health Studio started targeting a greater market, including women. According

to Green (1992, cited in Crossley, 1992) “until then, women didn’t go into gyms” (p. 30). The Silhouette American Health Studios opened up the market, which previously only catered for men participating in body building and weight lifting:

The Silhouette American Health Studio had no big barbells. At that stage they had small machinery. Leg extensions, curls, and those rollers that used to roll your tummies - vibrating belts, all that - it looked magic. It wasn’t frightening, as it didn’t encourage big body building type people. They couldn’t train there because there were no weights (C. Green, personal communication, March 2, 2000).

According to Clive Green (C. Green, personal communication, March 2, 2000); Sue Olason (S. Olason, personal communication, March 6, 2000) and Maureen Oliver (M. Oliver, personal communication, March 6, 2000) the Silhouette American Health Studio targeted business people and women. The following advertisement depicts the separate days for training for men and women to meet the demand of a growing market. Maureen Oliver (M. Oliver, personal communication, March 6, 2000) indicated that there were separate days for men and women as most fitness centres had only one changing room.

Figure 4.1

**Male and female separate training days**

<b>MEN:</b> Monday - Wednesday - Friday	8.00 a.m. — 10.00 p.m.
<b>MEN:</b> Saturday	10.00 a.m. — 6.00 p.m.
<b>WOMEN:</b> Tuesday - Thursday	9.30 a.m. — 9.00 p.m.
<b>PHONE 44-758 FOR EXPERT AND PERSONAL SERVICE AT 23-25 VICTORIA ST. WEST</b>	
<b>LES MILLS LTD HEALTH CENTRE</b>	
● WEIGHT TRAINING	● FIGURE CONTROL
● BODY BUILDING	● SAUNA BATH
● FITNESS TESTING	● STEAM ROOM
● CIRCUIT TRAINING	● MASSAGE
● PLUNGE POOLS	● SUN ROOMS

Source: Cvikota (1975), p. 5.

The growth of the fitness centre industry between 1960 and 1980 in the Auckland region can only be speculated on. There is evidence to suggest that with the establishment of the Silhouette American Health Studio, the fitness centre industry began targeting a more diverse market and influencing people who in the past were not

catered for by the weight lifting and body building centres. The interior design of the Silhouette American Health Studio created an ambience unseen before in fitness centres. According to Evans-Platt, (1992) a fitness centre's ambience in terms of texture, shape and colour can influence the behaviour of both staff and clients. Brooks and Lindenfeld (1999) identified that a fitness centre's appearance can be its first intimidating factor. Advertising messages, current members and the types of exercise offered are all images that portray a fitness centre's identity. It is the researcher's belief that the significant difference of the Silhouette American Health Studio's ambience managed to overcome many of the barriers that in the past had constrained people from joining a fitness centre. The Silhouette American Health Studio offered a comfortable and non-intimidating atmosphere with its facility servicing the needs of the general population.

Clive Green (C. Green, personal communication, March 2, 2000) stated that managing and marketing of Silhouette American Health Studio "taught everyone a lot, they taught me a lot. When I saw their operation I went wow, it opened my eyes". Prior to the opening of the Silhouette American Health Studio, many managers who operated fitness centres failed to target a greater market and as suggested, "we couldn't see the market, as we were still looking at something we wanted to train in" (ibid.).

The growth of the fitness centre industry between 1960 and 1980 may have been due to the influence of the American organisation. The Silhouette American Health Studio changed previous misconceptions about training in a fitness centre and made it acceptable for women to train, while educating people on the benefits of the new concept of a modern health and fitness centre. Furthermore, the development of the commercial fitness centre industry may have resulted in the increased participation by the general population as a consequence of the Labour Government passing the Recreation and Sport Act 1973.

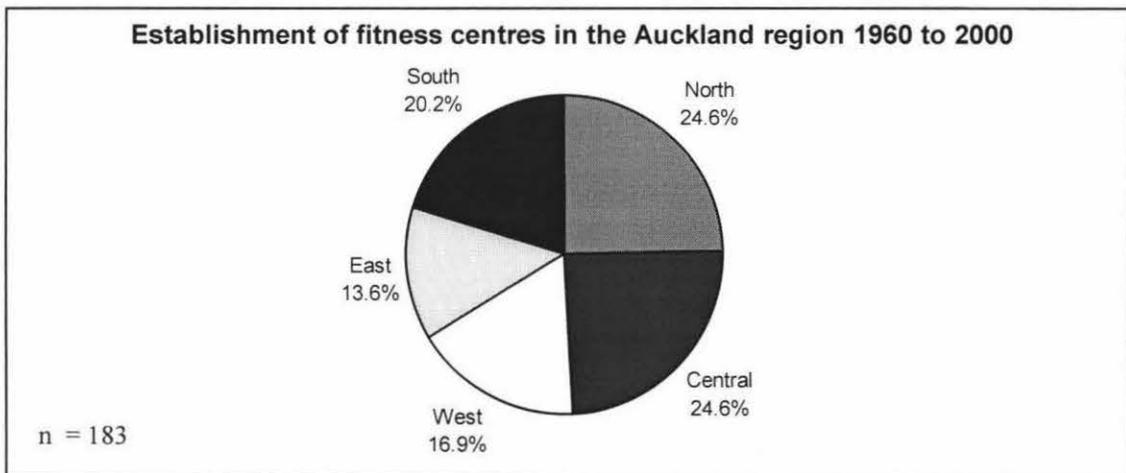
The Recreation and Sport Act 1973 was similar to the English government establishing the Sports Council in 1965, which was set up to advise the government on future policy for sport and physical education (Holt, 1989). The New Zealand government set up a Council and Ministry of Recreation. This development may have influenced the fitness

centre industry, as at the same time local governments were beginning to take an active interest in community recreation (Spoonley, Pearson and Shirley, 1994).

#### 4.2.2 The locality of fitness centres in the Auckland region

Between 1960 and 1970, 83% of fitness centres were located in the central city. By 1980 this figure had reduced to 50%. The following chart (Figure 4.2) represents the location of all fitness centres in the Auckland region between 1960 and 2000, based on the Auckland Yellow Pages telephone directory.

Figure 4.2



Northern and central Auckland suburbs are the areas where the greatest number of fitness centres have established in the past 40 years. Forty-nine percent of the total number of fitness centres established in Auckland have been located in these two regions. Possibly the high number of fitness centres that have been established in central Auckland were in response to the high density working population. The only explanation for the high proportion of fitness centres establishing in northern suburbs of Auckland was the increase in residential and commercial development in the last 20 years. The higher socio-economic group located on the East Coast of northern suburbs of Auckland may also have been a reason for a greater number of fitness centres to open in this region.

The location of a fitness centre is relatively important. It has been suggested that the rate of use reduces progressively as a fitness centre locates further away from the population base (Badmin, Coombs, & Rayner, 1988). The remoteness of a fitness centre from the

traditional high population inner city areas creates particular user problems. As indicated by the Queensland Recreation Council and Department of Local Government (1988) the importance of site and location cannot be underestimated. There are many situational factors that need to be considered when developing a fitness centre, some of which are illustrated in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3

**Situational factors for the location of a fitness centre**

General Location	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Attractiveness of locality</li> <li>2. Availability of services, including water, power, telephone, sewerage, refuse collection.</li> <li>3. Communications and public transport</li> <li>4. Environment, housing and amenities</li> <li>5. Town planning guidelines - carparking requirements, limits on the number and size of buildings.</li> <li>6. Planning restrictions</li> <li>7. Size and suitability of building</li> </ol>
User factors	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Where potential customers live</li> <li>2. Members means of access</li> <li>3. Availability of public transport</li> <li>4. Extent of catchment area of market</li> </ol>
Constraint considerations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Sensory impact (visual effect, sound ambience with existing environment)</li> <li>2. Environmental protection</li> <li>3. General constraints (local authority planning guidelines / restrictions)</li> <li>4. Technical constraints (sanitation, electricity, emergency needs, surrounding infrastructure)</li> </ol>

Source: Queensland Recreation Council and Department of Local Government (1988), p. 87.

In more recent years, there has been a greater emphasis on decentralisation and targeting a suburban market to compete with the oversupply of operations in central Auckland (Greenwood, 1989). Fitness centres are now centring on intensive suburban populations, well supplied with transportation linkages, in line with a more dispersed work force (ibid.).

As noted by O'Malley (1991, cited in Weir, 1991) location is the most important aspect of a fitness centre. American research has shown that 80% of people join a fitness centre because of its location (ibid.). This is supported by Parrot (1996), who suggests that the most appealing attribute of a fitness centre is its location. Clive Green (C. Green, personal communication, March 2, 2000) confirms that the success of a fitness centre is determined by its location:

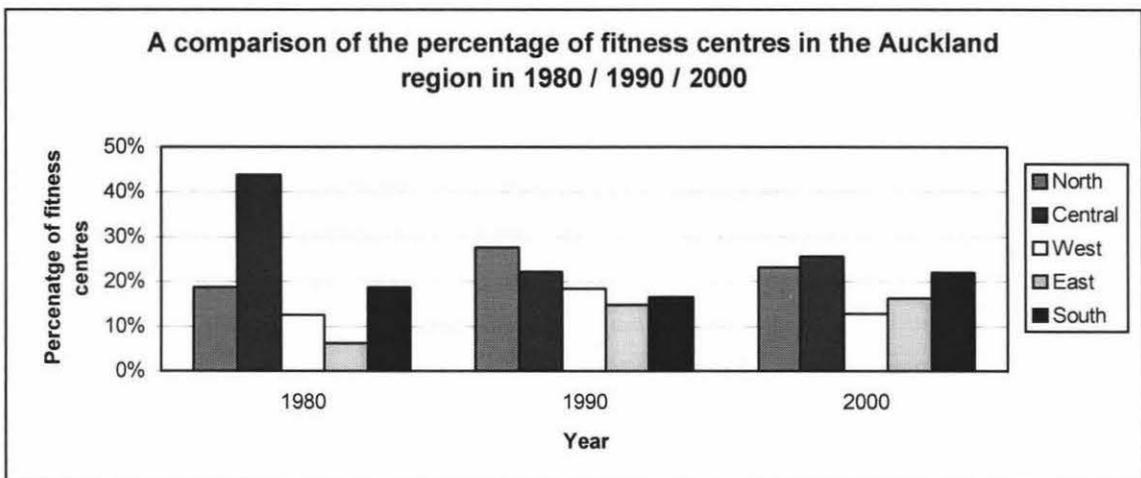
There needs to be a high density population, and you have to make sure that your catchment area is not too competitive. Although competition can establish within your locality, you need a sufficient population base around you.

What can be assumed is that a greater number of fitness centres are now servicing the needs of the suburbs, establishing in areas with a high density of residential housing. Maureen Oliver (M. Oliver, personal communication, March 6, 2000) remembered when they first intended to open a fitness centre in Glen Eden. She stated that:

Clive Green and Les Mills wanted Don to go in as a partner, as we didn't have any money. But he didn't want that, he gave that away, he wanted to open one out here (Glen Eden). Everyone told us that we were idiots going out in the country like this.

Over the past 20 years the areas in which fitness centres have been established has changed. As at the year 2000 there is a greater diverse spread amongst the Auckland regions (Figure 4.4). Of the 86 fitness centres presently operating in Auckland today, the highest concentrations are in central 25.6%, north 23.2% and south Auckland 22.1%.

Figure 4.4



### 4.2.3 The fitness industry boom 1980 to 2000

The fitness centre industry in New Zealand “boomed” in the 1980s. Les Mills (cited in Dawson, 1982) was “not surprised by the growth of the get fit phenomenon” (p. 62) and predicted in 1982 that there would be a huge boom in fitness centres in the following 20 years. This prediction by Les Mills was accurate. Figure 4.5 substantiates the significant growth of the number of fitness centres advertising in the Auckland Yellow Pages telephone directory between 1980 and 2000.

Figure 4.5



The growth of the number of fitness centres opening during the 1980s can be closely linked to the jazzercise movement. Prior to the 1980s callisthenics or physical culture classes were the only exercise classes offered at fitness centres. Generally these classes lacked excitement and enthusiastic presentation (Andrews, 1995, p. 19). In America the YMCA was conducting 40 to 60 minute rhythmical callisthenics classes in the 1940s (Skinner, 1988), which led to the development of the American aerobic dance movement of the 1970s. From this movement jazzercise evolved.

Phillip Mills (owner of Les Mills World of Fitness) introduced jazzercise into New Zealand. Mills repackaged the American version and combined exercise with entertainment. As noted by Mills (1990) the underlying principle was to make it exciting to get a room packed with people and have a party. The jazzercise movement during the decade of the 1980s has had a lasting impact on the fitness centre industry. This cult phenomenon influenced thousands of people, with aerobic instructors

continually enticing more and more people into fitness centres (Andrews, 1995). As stated by Clive Green (C. Green, personal communication, March 2, 2000):

Jazzercise opened the doors for women in a big way. It opened the doors for women to go in and dance and not get muscular as they perceived it and enjoy themselves. The funny thing about it, all of these things have been around a long time, such as the Women's Health and Beauty. Slower kinds of music, but the same type of things all that has happened is that popular music has been added to it. Up beat music with new steps rather than old steps, and it didn't matter about the actual necessary purely scientific technique, it was more movement and that is what the market wanted.

Maureen Oliver also remembers the jazzercise movement, and the fundamental problems associated with establishing such an exercise programme:

We started off with exercise to music, but we got rid of it. I told Don that I never want to have anything to do with that again, because of the instructors. If someone was away sick, who did you get to do it, it was a nightmare. We went overseas, and when we came back jazzercise was here. So, you had to do it. We had the pool at that stage, we had nowhere to do the jazzercise. I had to sit down and do music work out tapes all those sort of things, to get our aerobics going. We had nowhere to do it, so we hired Mt Albert Hall, Prospect Road School Hall, Massey High School, and Te Atatu North Community Hall. We had a mezzanine floor on top of the pool and we had to extend it right down to give us an aerobic studio. That was a major development.

(M. Oliver, personal communication, March 6, 2000)

The impact of jazzercise and aerobics during the 1980s was highlighted by the Department of Statistics (1990). They indicated that sports such as aerobics had experienced phenomenal growth and were inhibiting traditional team sports of there following. The New Zealand Hillary Commission for Recreation and Sport (1991) identified in the *Life in New Zealand Survey* that aerobics was the third most popular recreational activity after to swimming and cycling. This trend follows that of Australia with Cushman, Veal and Zuzanek (1996) identifying the top five sporting activities in Australia as (1) swimming, (2) tennis, (3) aerobics, (4) golf, and (5) cricket.

With a huge influx of people constantly attending these jazzercise classes, a greater number of people were influenced by their experience of attending a fitness centre. Andrews (1995) noted that the jazzercise phenomenon grew exponentially throughout the 1980s and continues to do so as managers repackage the exercise/fitness service to ward off the traditional limited product lifecycle.

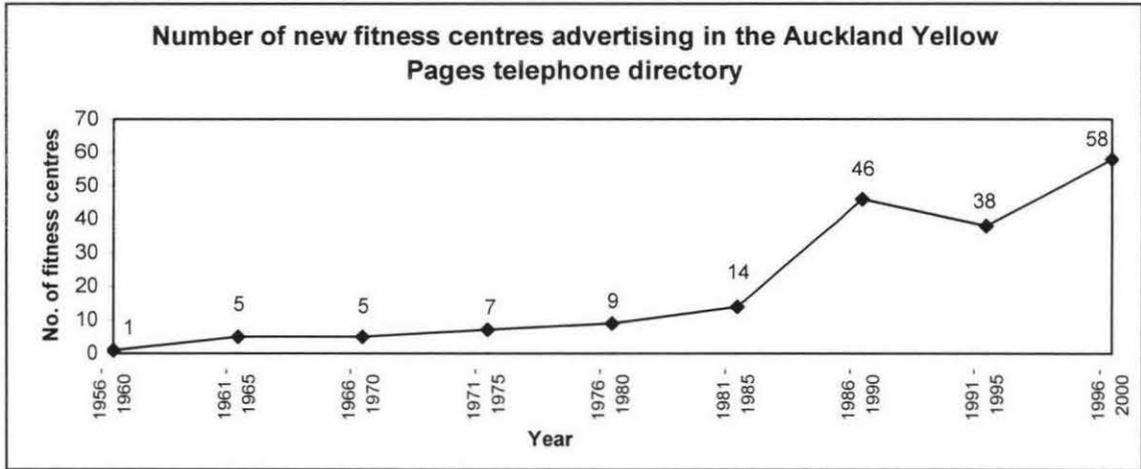
An important component of jazzercise was the way the programme appealed to women who did not find existing physical activities stimulating or inspiring at the time. The jazzercise movement in New Zealand grew considerably, as fitness centres regularly improved, reassessed and continually developed classes. As stated by Russell (1982, cited in Rossman & Edginton, 1989) the key element in programming is embodied in what happens to the participants as a result of their participation. The jazzercise programme was closely related to dance, and women responded to the graceful and effortless inherent in this feminine activity (Andrews, 1995). Furthermore, the playful attitude, smiling faces, vocalised whoops and giggles apparently made the experience even more enjoyable (ibid.).

The programming of jazzercise and aerobics changed over the years. As mentioned by Bray (1992), when jazzercise was first introduced, untrained and uneducated instructors carried out many moves now considered dangerous. It is noted by Russell (1982, cited in Rossman & Edginton, 1989) that for a programme to be successful it should be implemented with a six step planning process. This includes specifying needs, identifying programme objectives, generating programme solutions, selecting a programme design, programme implementation, and programme evaluation. Accordingly, the fitness centre programme should be designed on a fitness assessment (Consumer Magazine, 1994) as this will allow the fitness centre to design a programme tailored for the participants' needs, allowing for participants' varying capabilities and important medical details to be taken into consideration.

### **4.3 THE GROWTH OF THE COMMERCIAL FITNESS CENTRE INDUSTRY**

The extent to which the jazzercise/aerobic movement influenced the growth of the fitness centre industry during the 1980s was extraordinary. The following graph (Figure 4.6) indicates that between 1985 and 1990, when the jazzercise/aerobic movement was occurring, there was a notable increase in the number of new fitness centres.

Figure 4.6



#### 4.3.1 The reasons for the growth in fitness centres

The above information is significant as it identifies that the jazzercise/aerobic movement may have been a catalyst for the rapid growth of new fitness centres during the late 1980s. This is supported by Mills (1990, p.6) who stated, "aerobics has increased the number of people in fitness centres dramatically, leading to the opening of more than one hundred new fitness centres through out New Zealand over the last decade". With the influence of aerobics and the public being more aware of the benefits of healthy living (Bray, 1992), the fitness centre industry experienced rapid growth.

Another reason for increased participation in physical activity may be due to the Labour Government passing the Recreation and Sport Act 1987, and establishing the Hillary Commission. The main aim of the Hillary Commission today is to improve the quality of life by encouraging all New Zealanders to participate and achieve in sport, fitness and leisure (New Zealand Hillary Commission for Sport, Fitness and Leisure, 1996). The establishment of a government funded organisation promoting the benefits of physical activity and educating the community on the need for sustained physical exercise may have influenced a greater number of people to join fitness centres.

Figure 4.7 shows that 52% of the known 183 fitness centres that opened in Auckland since 1960 were established between 1991 and 2000. Compare this to the 15 years between 1976 and 1990 when only 38% of fitness centres opened. Peter Hardwich, owner of Top Shape Fitness Centre, noted that nearly half of the 300 commercial fitness

centres in New Zealand in 1991 were set up over the previous three years (Crossley, 1991).

Figure 4.7



The fact that more fitness centres had opened in the decade of the 1990s may have coincided with the findings of the Hillary Commission, that more adult New Zealanders (57%) in 1991 wanted to increase their physical activities (New Zealand Hillary Commission for Recreation and Sport, 1991). The main reasons that New Zealanders participate in physical activities is to feel good (80%), to have fun (74%) and to keep healthy (72%)(*ibid.*). The jazzercise/aerobics movement satisfied these criteria and is one of the reasons why it became successful (Andrews, 1995).

With the advent of the jazzercise/aerobic movement there was a larger market that had experienced the environment of a modern fitness centre. The public became aware that fitness centres provided an alternative method of physical activity to improve health and fitness. A greater number of people joined fitness centres as they wanted to improve their appearance (48%), improve their health (26%), to feel good (16%) and to continue an active lifestyle (10%) (Brooks, 1994). The fitness centres began providing added value with varying additional services and programmes to cater for the needs of an expanding market.

There was a period of explosive growth in the fitness centre industry between 1986 and 1990. Even the sharemarket crash of 1987 appeared to have little effect on the industry.

The apparent immunity of the fitness centre industry to the recessionary cycle was because people saw fitness as both a luxury and a necessity (Branch, 1991).

#### **4.3.2 The development of the corporate market**

The increase in the number of fitness centres that opened between 1987 and 1995 can be partially attributed to corporate organisations subsidising fitness centre memberships or providing inhouse gymnasiums for their employees. The development of the corporate market further increased public awareness of fitness centres. After the sharemarket crash of 1987, the number of corporate fitness centres operating in New Zealand flourished. Van Dongen (1988) estimated that there were 30 corporate fitness centres in New Zealand in 1988, with a majority of them being situated in Auckland. The trend towards improving corporate employee health, and establishing inhouse gymnasiums is not new internationally (South, 1992). Nimmo (1988) identified that the swing towards corporate health was a worldwide one, with overseas business publications claiming that cities were undergoing a health boom where city sports clubs and fitness centres were becoming almost as common as banks.

The corporate fitness centre market is not a new initiative in New Zealand either. In 1965 Ivor Cox and Frank Hatherty, both with diplomas in Physical Education, resigned from their positions at the Auckland Teachers' Training College to establish a fitness centre dedicated to businessmen. As noted by Hatherty (Auckland Scrap Book, 1965) the Atrium Fitness Centre aimed to fill a gap for middle aged businessmen.

The increase in the number of fitness centres operating in corporate buildings in Auckland after the 1987 sharemarket crash was due to people understanding the benefits of physical activity, and the assumption that it increased productivity (Van Dongen, 1988). Jim Blair (Director of the Institute of Sport and Corporate Health) stated that:

It seems to me that in these economic hard times when people are being laid off work employers are finally realising the employees they have left must be more productive and less stressed at the same time. For once, employers are conscious of the health of their staff and particularly their decision makers (South, 1992, p. 15).

It therefore seems possible that there was a niche in the market to fill. Consequently, the corporate organisations providing inhouse gymnasiums or subsidising memberships

assisted the growth of the fitness centre industry. However, Phillip Mills (1988, cited in Nimmo, 1998) talked bullishly of corporate health as a big growth area and stated:

It is too early to say whether corporate interest has fallen off since the sharemarket crash, ... a corporate campaign that was held earlier that year was not successful (p. 176).

As identified in Figure 4.6 there was a significant increase in the number of new fitness centres established during the period of 1986 to 1990. Due to the jazzercise/aerobics movement and corporate organisations subsidising fitness centre memberships, numerous entrepreneurs may have recognised fitness centres as a potential growth industry. Skinner (1988) noted that in America as more and more people became interested in exercise and health, fitness centres, health clubs and other commercial organisations entered this potentially profitable field.

With groups of individuals establishing fitness centres to capitalise on servicing the corporate health market, companies such as Fay Richwhite, Russell McVeagh McKenzie Bartleet and Co., Fletcher Challenge, Lion Breweries, Middlemore and Auckland Hospitals were also implementing their own corporate health programmes.

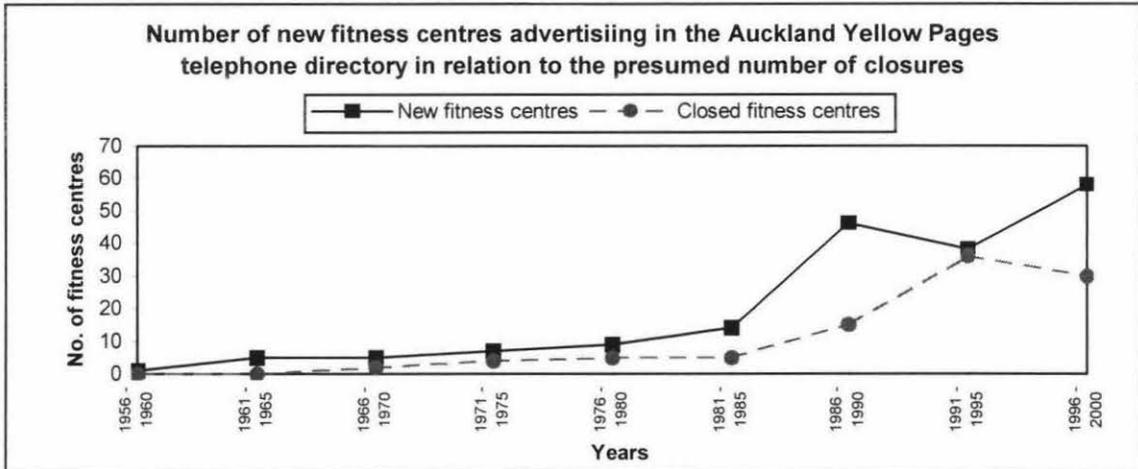
### **4.3.3 The unstable fitness centre industry**

The Auckland fitness centre industry was a growing market between 1986 and 1990. With a significant increase in the number of fitness centres opening to cater for the needs of the public, a state of oversupply may have developed. Rust (1992, cited in South 1992) noted that he was uncertain whether New Zealand's population base and struggling economy could sustain the developing fitness centre industry. The Institute of Sport, operated by Jim Blair was one of many fitness centres that was established to cater for the needs of the business society during the late 1980s. The Institute of Sport operated in a professional manner and had a scientific approach (Shakespeare, 1988) but was a casualty of the competitive and price driven industry.

The following graph (Figure 4.8) illustrates the volatile fitness centre industry, encapsulating previous information (see Figure 4.5) and placing it into perspective. Figure 4.8 clearly identifies the "boom period" in the fitness centre industry, in which there was increased market growth, and the "recession period" where there was still a

substantial number of new fitness centres opening but the growth was countered dramatically by the number of fitness centres that closed.

Figure 4.8



The “boom period” was between 1986 and 1990. This was a period of substantial growth in the fitness centre industry, with the market growing by 120% (see Figure 4.5). The period of 1991 to 1995 illustrates the negative effects of economic pressures, with only a 7.4% growth. The recognisable factor during this period was a total number of 38 new fitness centres opened, but during the same period there were another 36 closures. Of the 36 fitness centres that closed only two appear to have changed their names, and there is uncertainty whether these name changes were as a result of the original fitness centre being sold.

#### Multi-location fitness centres

During the early 1990s many of the established fitness centres that had been operating for a long time, also recognised the increased growth in the market. Fitness centres such as Clive Green Health Centres, Don Oliver’s Family Fitness, and Les Mills World of Fitness expanded their organisations and opened additional fitness centres in other suburbs of Auckland. There were also new fitness centres opening up in multiple locations in Auckland to cater for the increased demand. These fitness centres included Contours Exclusive Womens Health, Gold’s Gym, Warehams Health Centre, and World Gym. The following table (Table 4.9) represents the decline in multi-location facilities to supply the market.

Table 4.9  
**Fitness centres with multi-location facilities**

	Number of Facilities	
	1990 - 95	2000
Clive Green Health Centres	4	3
Contours Exclusive Womens Health	5	3
Don Oliver Family Fitness	2	1
Gold's Gym	3	1
Les Mills World of Fitness	3	1
Warehams Health Centre	4	Closed
World Gym	5	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>10</b>

Given the researcher's experience in the fitness centre industry, it can be reasonably assumed that many of the fitness centre closures were due to insufficient resources, under capitalisation and expanding too quickly. This is combined with external factors: the market being over supplied plus consumers being price sensitive and reactive.

The fitness centre industry was cost and cash intensive. Clive Green (C. Green, personal communication, March 2, 2000) noted that most people go into fitness centre ownership undercapitalised. This is supported by Brick (1991, cited in Branch, 1991) who stated:

You have to be prepared to work at least two years before you see a return on your investment. And in the first year you have to have the finances to carry the business (p. 83).

The starting up of a fitness centre cannot be taken lightly, and much research needs to be undertaken into the priority of location, the target market, staffing and facilities (Matterson, 1993). It has been noted that the basic fitness centre model is not complex, which allows professional managers with alternative sector experience to operate a fitness centre (Balcombe, 1999). However, managers still need to understand the business dynamics of a fitness centre if their operation is to be successful:

It's too easy to get into, and too hard to get out of. You get in for a song - you lease equipment, you rent a space, you get your supplies on credit, but then things don't go well. Membership isn't what you expected, you have incidental costs you didn't plan for, you can't get out of your lease, the company won't take the equipment back, and you can't meet your debts (Branch, 1991, p.83)

There was a greater number of fitness centres opening during 1986 to 1990 to supply the growing number of participants of the jazzercise/aerobic movement and the corporate employees who were benefiting from the subsidised fitness centre memberships. This growth may have resulted in an over supply of fitness centres, enabling people to be more selective as to which fitness centre they joined. During the period of 1991 to 1996 38 new fitness centres opened, but with another 36 closing, the economic pressures of increased competition and subsequent price wars may have caused the closure of many fitness centres.

#### Fitness centre competition

Philip Mills (1990) stated that the explosive increase in the number of fitness centres in New Zealand brought a great deal of healthy competition to the industry. Fitness centre members benefited enormously through bigger and better facilities, better service and the cheapest membership rates in the world. However, contrary to what Phillip Mills believed, Steve Taylor (fitness management consultant) perceived, “two or three hundred dollars wouldn’t buy a quality membership, except if you wanted to exercise with thousands of others. If you want results you need to be looked after” (Matterson, 1993, p. 21).

The outbreak of the price wars subsequently resulted in aggressive marketing techniques that focussed on selling more memberships at a hugely reduced price. Through the 1980s, more fitness centres were springing up, with price wars the inevitable consequence (Green, 1992, cited in Crossley, 1992). In the 1990s fitness centre owners engaged in a price war as a response to fierce competition in a rapidly diminishing market (Greenwood, 1989). The price wars and considerable damage that it was inflicting on the fitness centre industry was a concern to some fitness centre owners. Contrary to what Phillip Mills (owner of Les Mills World of Fitness) had previously stated in 1990, he now believed, “the New Zealand fitness centre industry had been driven too much by price warring and not enough by quality” (Horsburgh, 1994). Matterson (1993) further substantiates the concern regarding the price wars, noting that, “for some time the fitness centre industry has been plagued by discount wars. With accusations in many cases being justified of crowding members in, lack of

follow-up service or supervision, paying qualified staff low rates, and selling memberships up until the day of closure” (p. 20).

It is difficult to determine what the average annual membership price should have been during 1990 to 1995 in a less competitive market. The economic situation at the time, the market positioning of each fitness centre, the quality of service and programmes provided all need to be considered. However, Fitness New Zealand (1995) in their 1995 survey of health and fitness centres in New Zealand established that annual memberships ranged between \$80 per annum to \$1,090 p.a, with the average annual fee being \$352 p.a.

Research conducted by the Waikato University Management Development Centre has identified that motivation behind the purchase of a fitness centre membership has nothing to do with price (Taylor, 1996). Price as a factor in business for gaining or losing a customer is less than 15% in most cases (ibid.). Herbert Lipsman, manager of an American fitness centre stated, “you’ve got to create a perception that membership is worth as much or more than it costs” (Horsburgh, 1994, p. 49). Alder (1993, cited in Matterson, 1993, p. 24) stated, “to discount is suicide. You are undertaking people’s health and well being and it is foolish to compromise”.

The fitness centre industry has been wracked by membership price competition, under capitalisation, the growing home fitness market, and the image problems resulting from increasing fitness centre closures (Parrot, 1996). As noted by Courteen (1993) consumers are becoming more discerning and sophisticated, with constantly higher expectations. The general rise in living standards, the impact of technology, the influence of the media and the greater emphasis placed on leisure have all helped to create a much more demanding and knowledgeable market. This is supported by Clive Green (C. Green, personal communication, March 2, 2000) who stated:

Advertising used to be a unique thing, the customers are better educated than we are. You are not advertising to the uninitiated, you are not advertising to the unknown you can’t make false promises they all know they have been to a fitness centre and didn’t get what they wanted. They are warier, they are more realistic, they know joining a fitness centre for three months isn’t going to change their body. It is a far more educated market.

Studies have shown that consumers pay little attention to mass advertising messages that promote health benefits (Parrot, 1996). The recommended channels of communication are direct mail, promotions, and relationship marketing. Parrot (1996) states that television advertising is relatively ineffective, while radio and newspaper advertising can be marginally effective. It has been identified that the best medium for paid advertising is targeted, direct mail. Assuming the right research has been done, the mailings should be limited to those households most likely to respond, based on lifestyle segmentation, and/or pertinent socio-economic factors (ibid.).

Some industry experts say that the key to a successful fitness centre is the small niche facilities, those that seek a specific clientele (Branch, 1991). They can implement marketing techniques which revolve around customer service, with a goal of retaining membership for life (Matterson, 1993).

#### The service provided by the fitness centres

With the price of a fitness centre membership being extremely low, the service that was provided during this period, was even lower. In some instances fitness centres had to sell twice as many 12 month memberships, as the regular annual membership had been reduced by 50%. Therefore to cover overheads, twice as many people had to join. What occurred was a marketing strategy that fundamentally focussed on selling as many memberships as possible. This resulted in member servicing being reduced due to the fitness centre being unable to provide the resources. According to Matterson (1993), managers concentrated on new member numbers rather than services offered to current members. The retention of members was low, but often this was viewed positively by the fitness centres as it made room to sell more memberships (Hurst, 1993). Consumer Magazine (1998) supports this, claiming that the fitness centre industry relies on membership income from people who never use the facility.

Fitness New Zealand (1995) identified that membership retention in 1995 was 49%. This does not appear to be as low as one could expect, given the reputed poor service. However, there is speculation over the accuracy of this figure. Of the 367 questionnaires sent out to fitness centres by Fitness New Zealand, only 30 fitness centres responded to the retention question. Other research conducted by A'Court (1997), Horsburgh (1994),

and Matterson (1993), identified the retention rate at between 22 - 33% in New Zealand, while the American retention rate in 1991 was 38% (International Racquet and Small Clubs Association – IRSA, 1992). As noted by Collow (1993) members generally stop using a fitness centre because they: move away (3%), develop other friendships (5%), are attracted by competitors (5%), are dissatisfied (19%) or have an indifference to the organisation and staff (68%). Furthermore, Grantham et al. (1998) identified that 71% of members that leave a fitness centre are influenced by factors that are controllable by the fitness centre.

One key concern that faces all fitness centre operators is the high dropout rate of members. It is estimated that within the first 30 days, over 40% of participants have already dropped out or reduced their attendance to a point that eliminates any real chance of renewal (Brown, 1998). De Leede (1998), also supports this assertion, noting the most critical time for member retention is the first month after joining. Fitness centres that track member dropout have found that new members have the highest attrition rate. By reducing the attrition of new members in their first few months of membership, overall member retention is dramatically improved.

To ensure retention of members, fitness centre employees must be aware that they need to provide continuous support and encouragement to every member. As noted by Evans-Platt (1992), the experience of the member immediately following joining will determine whether or not the fitness centre as a whole will satisfy their stated, or unstated needs. Subsequently, if those needs are not satisfied the person simply stops attending and the operator loses a member, never discovering what went wrong. To retain members the fitness centre needs to learn its members' names, manage by circulating, training employees in member relations, soliciting feedback and having regular member newsletters (Collow, 1993).

Clearly, the fitness centre must satisfy the needs of the member. Improving member satisfaction can be achieved by the quality of service and facilities that are provided. Ryan (1992, cited in Coventry, 1992), noted that operators have realised that if they wish to do well financially, they must be seen to be health professionals offering a

quality service. If the leisure industry is to take quality seriously, it must become much more professional (Tawse & Keogh, 1998).

In order to determine whether member requirements are being met organisations need to develop service quality standards as these help to verify performance and provide the means for measuring performance and member satisfaction (Courteen, 1993). A dissatisfied member can be a powerful negative influence. To improve the retention of existing members, as well as attracting new members, it is important to ensure that member problems are monitored and responded to in a timely and appropriate manner (Howat, Milne & Crilley, 1996). Those dissatisfied members can be a concern as they can potentially influence new members willing to try the service. As noted by Horovitz (1990), on average, a dissatisfied member will convey their dissatisfaction to 11 other people, while a satisfied member will tend to relate their satisfaction to only three people.

As noted by Brooks (1994) there are particular components that consumers want in a fitness centre. These include clean facilities, a wide variety of activities and equipment, equipment that is easy to use, individual attention to developing a fitness programme and monitor progress, classes and workouts geared to a variety of fitness levels and an accepting and helpful approach to beginners. Furthermore, members wanted the age range of staff to match those of members, ongoing instruction and coaching from staff, a welcoming atmosphere for people of all ages and fitness levels, low emphasis on fashionable workout attire, and friendly and accepting members.

#### The importance of fitness centre employees

An investigation by Consumer Magazine (1994) found that several fitness centres gave good advice and seemed to look after their members well, but they were disappointed at the high proportion where the service was inferior. People pay for advice, which they should be able to rely on, to obtain the best possible results without putting them at risk (ibid.). Furthermore, there is a concern that there is a shortage of good staff. Richards (1998, cited in Gill, 1998), stated that some people trying to get into the industry have the wrong idea, and are not committed. Kathy O'Malley (YMCA Executive Director, Wellington), Sue Olason (Sales Director for Don Oliver Family Fitness Centre) and

Clive Green (owner of Clive Green Health Centres) have all identified that a key component of a successful fitness centre is providing a good service by employing qualified staff:

Good staff is the key. I think it is about employing people who really believe this is a job that carries a lot of responsibilities. They have to see it, that they are playing a key part in people's health and fitness (S. Olason, personal communication, March 6, 2000).

Collow (1993), indicated that the most important resource an organisation has, is its employees. It is stated that employees set the fitness centres' atmosphere, energy levels and motivates and serves the member. To balance the specific educational and experiential requirements of employees, Grantham et al., (1998) mentions that a number of intangible characteristics are critical in an employee if the fitness centre is going to be successful. These include employee attitudes, interpersonal skills, creativity, personality, appearance and assertiveness. Further intangible characteristics of employees consist of initiative, self-confidence, temperament and maturity.

According to Kerry Lancaster (Contours Exclusive Women's Health), their success was due to employing and training top class staff. Lancaster mentioned that staff must be paid their worth - along the lines of the "if you pay peanuts you get monkeys" philosophy (Matterson, 1993). However, the fitness centre industry is not renowned for its high hourly remuneration rate. Clive Green (C. Green, personal communication, March 2, 2000) identified that wages are not high in the fitness centre industry, because fitness centres can't charge enough for memberships due to competition. It was noted by Fitness New Zealand (1995) that the average hourly remuneration rate paid to staff running classes was \$24.05 per hour, while floor staff were paid an average of \$10.78 an hour. IRSA (1992) noted that staff running classes in America were paid \$US13.00 per hour, while floor staff were paid \$US6.80 per hour. There appears to be a close similarity in the hourly remuneration rate between New Zealand and American employees. However, the exchange rate at the time the research was conducted needs to be taken into consideration to accurately compare the difference in the hourly remuneration rate.

Lipsman (1994, cited in Horsburgh, 1994), stated, "one of the biggest weapons which need not cost more, is having the best staff. They don't have to cost any more because

people want to be associated with the club". This was also the belief of Collow (1993) who acknowledged:

The thirst for knowledge and the motivation for personal growth is increasingly the key to job fulfilment. If you have chosen your people well, these incentives, far more than money, will be the reasons for loyalty and successful employees' (p. 68).

However, to achieve such an attitude in an organisation there needs to be a development programme available to employees. Collow (1993), expressed that such a programme needed to incorporate continual training, supervision and support, and opportunities for growth and career development. It is essential that fitness centres integrate all three areas, as emphasising one particular component only results in failure.

Contrary to the above, De Leede (1998) indicated that if fitness centres want to increase membership retention they need to have the right staff. There is a belief that fitness centres tend to financially neglect the person who sees more members than anyone else. Full-time employees promote stability in the fitness centre. They care about the centre, its members and their needs (ibid.). However, there is contradictory information concerning the importance of full and part-time employees. Grantham et al. (1998) mentioned that there is a significant correlation between the turnover rate in part-time employees and that of membership attrition. It appears that job longevity of part-time employees clearly affects the loss of members, and highlights the importance of employing and retaining high quality part-time employees for integrity and continuity (ibid.).

In New Zealand there seem to be on average more full-time (18) than part-time (8) staff employed in fitness centres (Fitness New Zealand, 1995). The research conducted by Fitness New Zealand (1995) pertaining to the number of full and part-time staff employed at fitness centres is different to the research conducted by IRSA (1992) on American fitness centres. On average there are 12 full-time staff and 32 part-time staff employed at fitness centres in America (ibid.).

The issue of low wages may not be the fundamental problem associated with poor service in the fitness centre industry. Collow (1993), noted that the traditional "top down" management approach may be the problem. This results in major gaps between

decision making and delivery of service as staff responsibilities cross the traditional job boundaries. The most effective management approach was a strong commitment to customer service achieved through a motivational management process that empowers staff to assume greater responsibilities. This process leads to higher motivation, greater job satisfaction, improved performance and reduction in absenteeism and staff turnover. This can be achieved by developing or changing the organisation so that employees perceive personal and job related opportunities. These can include responsibility on the job, feelings of accomplishments, freedom of thought and action, making clear cut and effective decisions, job security, financial incentives and career advancement opportunities (ibid.).

Consumer Magazine (1994), stated that supervision and support of exercising members by qualified staff should be the norm in any gym, but their investigation found that 37% of fitness centres involved in the study were not providing adequate supervision. This is supported by McEvoy & Szeszeran-McEvoy (1998), who noted that they made the mistake within their fitness centre of giving their clients complicated programmes, on hard to use equipment, and then failing to provide them with the supervision and follow-up to ensure their results. Matterson (1993), identified that it is not the parking, the showers, or the cleanliness that influence members to drop out. It is the lack of service and attention. However this can be debated, as research conducted by Grantham et al., (1998) notes that an unclean fitness centre which is not maintained, is a controllable reason for members to leave a fitness centre.

In considering the above information it is possible that a combination of these factors may have forced many of the 36 fitness centres to close during 1991 to 1996. Clive Green (C. Green, personal communication, March 2, 2000), stated, "at the end of the day something does deteriorate, you end up cutting corners, maybe that will be the failure of fitness centres eventually".

#### Management concerns

Another possibility for those fitness centres to close in a short period of time after establishment may have been due to the inexperience or unprofessionalism of managers operating these facilities. Evans-Platt (1992) asserts that the health and fitness sector is

generally underdeveloped in management terms. One of the primary reasons for the failure of fitness centres is poor management. However, Grantham, Patton, York and Winick, (1998) indicated that the greatest reason for failure in newly established businesses within the fitness industry was the lack of adequate reserve capital to sustain the business during the early periods when revenue was inadequate to meet expenses.

Hilterscheid (1991, cited in Crossley, 1991) suggested that most fitness centres have been set up by an enthusiast, operated as a family business, and have just grown incidentally rather than through planning. The most critical stage of a fitness centre is the establishment phase. This includes sustaining the fitness centre through pre opening campaigns, the inevitable contingency costs and the first six months to one year of operation (Grantham et al., 1998).

An example of such a fitness centre chain closing was Warehams Health Centre. Between 1980 and 1999 four Warehams facilities were operated in Auckland by Thomas Priest. During that time, two of his facilities collapsed, with another failing to re-open after their insurance company refused to pay on a suspicious fire that gutted the premises (The Evening Post, 1995, p.14). According to Stutchbury (1995), Priest had been banned in November 1995 under the Companies Legislation Act from being involved in any business venture. During that time he had set up another facility in Wellington which collapsed in November 1997, leaving a debt in excess of \$95,000 and 1300 members without a fitness centre. The outcome of Thomas Priest's business activities was a nine month prison sentence for his second conviction for running a business while being prohibited to do so. Although Thomas Priest apparently operated irresponsibly and unethically, this example does highlight that a number of Auckland fitness centres may have closed due to the inexperience or inability of their managers.

Collow (1993) suggests that one of the most significant factors leading to the success or failure of a fitness centre is its manager and/or supervisors. It is noted that to be successful the management team needs to have relevant qualifications, experience, technical skills and intangible skills such as motivation, organisation and a positive attitude (ibid.). Undoubtedly, the management capability of the organisation's managers/supervisors is an essential component that will determine the overall success

of the operation. Furthermore, the attitude of the person(s) who influences the operation most significantly will become evident in the standards that are implemented, the effectiveness of administration systems, the presentation and quality of services, and the relationship with members (Evans-Platt, 1992).

The researcher concluded that the inability of fitness centres to effectively manage the internal and external forces of change contributed to the significant number of fitness centres that closed within five years of opening. According to Trenberth and Collins (1999) organisations that do not change will be unable to adapt to changes around them, and will cease to exist. The certainty of organisational evolution requires adaptation to change. The effectiveness of an organisation depends on its capability to continually develop, which involves responding to internal and external forces of change (Cummings and Worley, 1997).

It is not the intention of the researcher to elaborate on organisational development and change, other than providing a brief overview to outline its significance in the management of a fitness centre. According to Inkson and Kolb (1998) there is nothing more difficult, nor more doubtful of success, than to initiate change. An example of the fitness centre industry in New Zealand failing to orchestrate planned change was the price wars that occurred in the late 1980s to early 1990s. Clive Green (1998, cited in Shakespear, 1998) stated that during the price wars, the Les Mills marketing strategy kept his prices down. This, according to Clive Green (C. Green, personal communication, March 2, 2000) governed the hourly remuneration rate of employees, as the fitness centre could not charge enough for memberships. He further stated:

At the end of the day something does deteriorate, you end up cutting corners, maybe that will be the failure of fitness centres eventually.

During the price wars the fitness centre industry was sales driven rather than service driven, which required a greater number of members signing up to cover overheads. The failure of the fitness centre industry to change its pricing structure to focus on quality service appears to have caused many fitness centres to close. According to Plummer (1999) new fitness centre owners made the same catastrophic mistake of pricing the fitness centre too low for the market. The problem of pricing too low is that it affects the total operation of the fitness centre. Notably the multiple profit centres within the

overall fitness centre organisation may not work as there are too many price driven members (ibid.).

Mills (1994, cited in Horsburgh, 1994) noted that the New Zealand fitness centre industry had been driven too much by price warring and not enough by quality. He identified that the fitness centres were fixed on competition, with many of the fitness centres not prepared to differentiate themselves, and develop an operational philosophy that was quality focused. Fitness centres typically investigated the pricing of local competition, setting their prices a few dollars lower, and then claiming that their fitness centre was better than their rivals (Plummer, 1999).

An example of change within a fitness centre is illustrated by Tyler (1997). The Bradley Wellness Centre opened in 1986, targeting the corporate community. Its membership quickly built to 2,800, with members paying for a 12 month membership in a single payment immediately on joining. By 1992, membership had declined to 2,300. Although the annual membership fees were still being received by the fitness centre, it was noted that about half of those who had paid their fees were not using the fitness centre. Clearly, too many of the members who could afford the fitness centre were not using it, while those who might use it, could not afford it. The Bradley Wellness Centre developed a mission and philosophy that was marketed externally to build the centre's image. Kelly (1997, cited in Tyler, 1997) stated, "We needed to set a tone, marketing the centre as a nice, clean place and not just another fitness centre" (p.14). The Bradley Wellness Centre wanted the wider community population to use the centre and benefit from it. What eventuated was that the one time fee was eliminated and members were allowed to pay on a monthly basis. By 1995, membership had increased to 3,480 and the percentage of members not using the facility had reduced to less than 20%.

To deliver a service driven philosophy within the fitness centre industry during the price wars would have required change. Change in attitude, change in work practices and change in the way the staff were remunerated. A reasonable explanation as to why the fitness centre industry in New Zealand may have opposed providing quality service is fear of the unknown, which is a major cause of resistance to change in any organisation (Buchanan, Claydon and Doyle, 1999). A majority of people are resistant to change and

feel threatened when it occurs. According to Youell (1994), to adopt a positive customer service approach the fitness centre must be aware of obstacles that may hinder successful implementation of the strategy. Fitness centres need to be conscious of poor communication between staff, lack of staff co-operation, lack of commitment by staff and lack of knowledge.

In the last five years the number of new fitness centres to open has increased. During 1991 to 1995 there were 38 new fitness centres. This increased between 1996 and 2000 to 58. The number of fitness centres that closed during 1996 to 2000 reduced to 30, with six of these changing their names. The number of name changes that occurred during this five year period was dramatically higher than any other years. It is an assumption that these fitness centres were sold, which emphasises that the trend of setting up a new fitness centre with a huge capital outlay is not viable. Instead existing fitness centres were being purchased, reducing the risk of failure.

Another trend that occurred during 1996 to 2000 was the amalgamation of the YMCA fitness centres. It appeared that all the YMCA facilities were linked, and although operating as individual organisations, they were grouped collectively. The North Shore Leisure Centres also operated on the same basis, with the Club Physical chain functioning under a franchise arrangement.

As acknowledged by Grantham et al. (1998), the growth curve of the fitness centre industry was predictable. The industry started slowly, grew rapidly and before long will stabilise. The question that can be asked is, "What does the future hold?" What started as a possible fad, has become an integral part of society, growing due to increased participation, developing trends and a greater understanding of the benefits of increased health and fitness. The general public will influence the future of the fitness centre industry. The ongoing development of the industry will be determined by the fitness centres' adaptation to change and progressive improvement in servicing the requirements of the customer.

#### 4.4 THE RESEARCH SETTING

The fitness centre being studied was located in the central business district of Auckland City, and was opened in late 1997. The operational function of this fitness centre is stated in their Mission Statement:

To be an educational and motivational centre dedicated to improving the health and fitness of our members, staff and our community, through the highest quality fitness, rehabilitative and personal development programmes.

With utmost integrity, and through ethical, excellent and responsive actions [fitness centre] will provide a fulfilling work environment for our employees, "raving fan" service for our customers and a spirit of shared responsibility with our community (Subject organisation, 1998a).

This fitness centre has outlined that their primary objective is to be a leader in the marketplace by focussing all their assets, energies and attention on delivering an unsurpassed level of customer satisfaction (Subject organisation, 1998b). According to promotional material (Subject organisation, 2000) this is achieved by instructors who care. This fitness centre eliminates the cost and need of a personal trainer by setting aside a strength and conditioning programme using top of the line equipment, and ensuring it is fully supervised by highly qualified instructors at all times (ibid.).

The premises of the fitness centre are approximately 5524 square feet (Subject organisation, 1997). The five areas of the fitness centre comprise an aerobic machines activities area (375 sq. ft.), specialised strength training circuit area (480 sq. ft.), set systems training activities area (1202 sq. ft.), stretching area (245 sq. ft.) and miscellaneous space (3222 sq. ft.). The miscellaneous space consists of a male and female locker/changing room, an administrative office, reception area, staff room and a physiotherapy and massage room (ibid.).

This fitness centre conducted a maximum capacity assessment in 1997 to determine the optimum number of members that they were capable of servicing. The estimated number was 60 people at a time. Based on the size of the exercise areas and the total quantity of equipment supplied by the fitness centre the calculated minimum space per person was 38.4 sq. ft. The literature (Evans-Platt, 1992; Grantham et al., 1998) illustrates the minimum space per person ranges between 46 to 54 sq. ft.

Overall, the fitness centre aimed to provide caring staff who understood the value of meaningful and effective exercise through physical fitness, and provided an environment that made working out a truly enjoyable and positive experience.

#### **4.5 SUMMARY AND REVIEW**

The growth of the commercial fitness centre industry in New Zealand was difficult to substantiate due to paucity of the literature. Because of this lack of information the researcher decided to concentrate on the growth of the commercial fitness centre industry from 1960 onwards in the Auckland region. Utilising the Auckland Yellow Pages telephone directory, significant data was accumulated to illustrate the growth of the commercial fitness centre industry. Furthermore, semi-structured interviews were conducted with prominent fitness centre owners to provide a greater insight into the operation of fitness centres during this period. Combining this information with the relevant literature available, a comprehensive picture has emerged, illustrating the fundamental developments and changes of the commercial fitness centre industry.

The literature revealed that the Silhouette American Health Studio was a contributing factor to the establishment of the commercial fitness centre industry. The Silhouette American Health Studio inadvertently influenced the manner in which fitness centres operated and simultaneously changed the public's previously held conceptions about training in a fitness centre. Later, the jazzercise/aerobics movement had a considerable impact on the fitness centre industry. The number of fitness centres in the Auckland region increased from 25 in 1985 to 54 in 1990. Inherently, there was an oversupply of fitness centres, enabling the general population to be more selective as to which facility they joined. What resulted was a price war that involved aggressive marketing techniques that were sales driven rather than service driven.

As a consequence of the significant growth that occurred in the fitness centre industry, an adverse effect transpired. Due to increased competition, a struggling economy and inexperienced managers, a considerable number of fitness centres closed within five years of initial establishment.

As a result of the paucity of literature on the characteristics, developments and changes of fitness centres within the establishment phase of operation, the researcher has not satisfactorily answered the proposed research question. The research now turns to an examination of appropriate research methodology that may provide an understanding to the research question.

## CHAPTER FIVE

# RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### CHAPTER OUTLINE

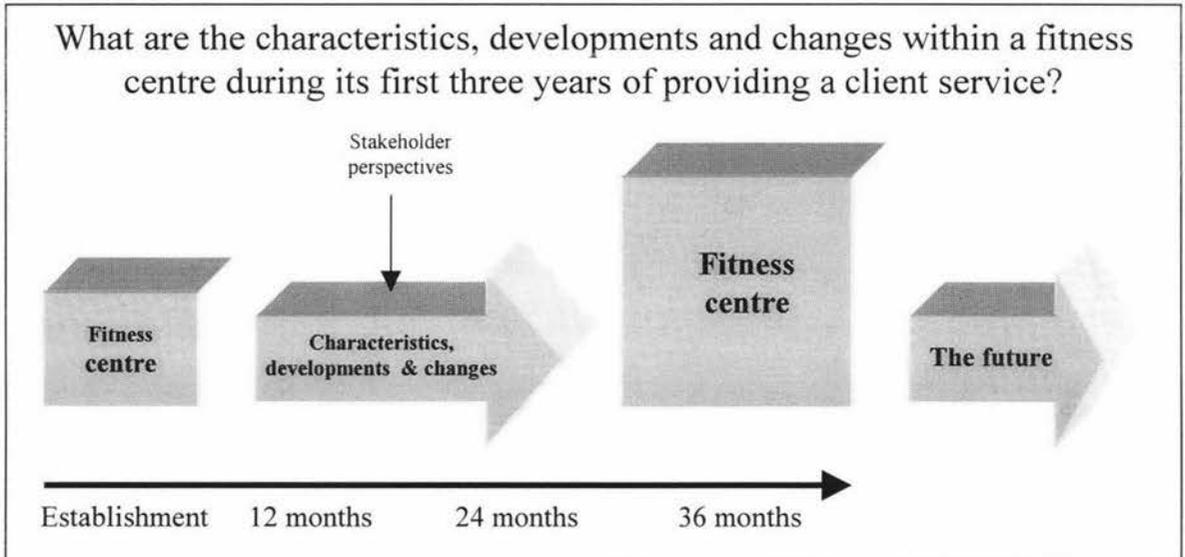
This chapter details the methods used by the researcher to explore the characteristics, developments and changes within a fitness centre. A mixed methodology approach incorporating qualitative and quantitative analysis was adopted to uncover a wide range of perspectives and perceived realities. The data generated for this research was subsequently exposed to the process of grounded theory.

- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Research question
- 5.3 Research design
- 5.4 Qualitative research
  - 5.4.1 The research setting
  - 5.4.2 Interviews
- 5.5 Quantitative research
  - 5.5.1 Questionnaires
- 5.6 Research considerations
  - 5.6.1 Mixed methodology
  - 5.6.2 Triangulation
  - 5.6.3 Validity
  - 5.6.4 Ethical considerations
- 5.7 Grounded theory
- 5.8 Summary and review

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

There appears to be insufficient research literature on the characteristics, developments and changes of fitness centres during the establishment phase of providing a client service. Available literature generally focuses on internal and external marketing aspects, with minimal information on the changing business lifecycle. Figure 5.1 illustrates a visual representation of the proposed research. Using a mixed methodology, the researcher intends to compile a body of information, with the data being progressively subjected to the process of grounded theory. This process will lead to the formation of significant categories of data, which will determine the domain of a fitness centre in the establishment phase of supplying a client service.

Figure 5.1  
Visual representation of the researcher's perspective



The success of a fitness centre is determined during the establishment phase of operation (see Grantham, Patton, York and Winick, 1997). The developments and changes that occur during this period will influence its overall effectiveness. In examining the fitness centre's characteristics, developments and changes, it is the researcher's intention that the theory generated will assist the fitness centre industry.

## 5.2 RESEARCH QUESTION

The research question derived from the literature, as the researcher was unable to answer the proposed question. Furthermore, the significant number of commercial fitness centres that closed within five years of establishing their operation framed a manageable research question that was designed to guide the study. As stated by Creswell (1994, p.24), "the literature review should indicate a suitable problem to research as well as give the researcher some idea of the research methods or approaches that have been traditionally used in the field". The research question is:

*What are the characteristics, developments and changes within a fitness centre during its first three years of providing a client service?*

### 5.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

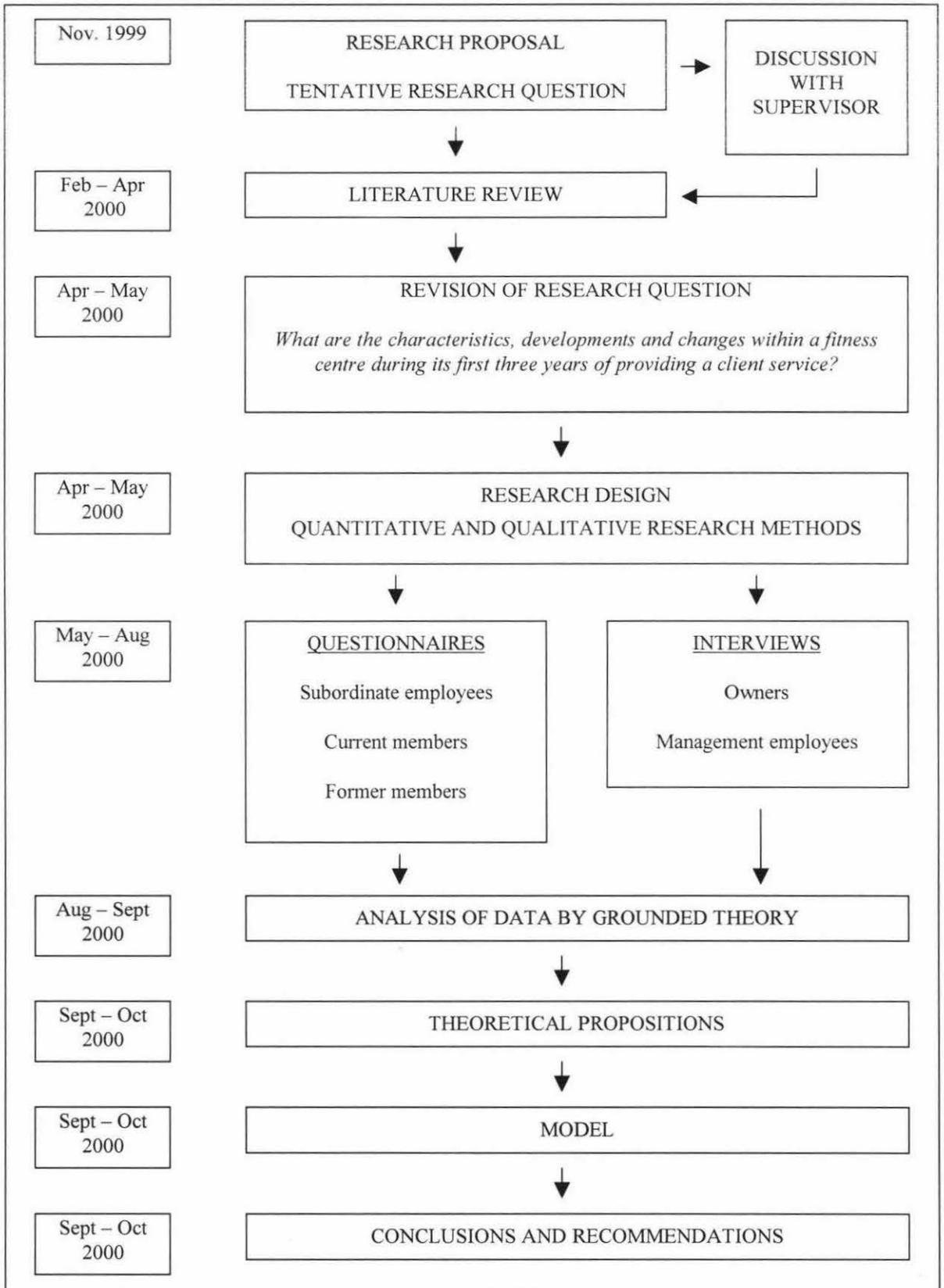
In critically considering the research question, the researcher intended to access the fullest range of relevant data using the appropriate field and research methodologies (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994, Goetz and Le Compte, 1984). It was essential that these research methodologies generated theory on the perceptions of the stakeholders who have been influenced by the organisational developments and changes in the fitness centre.

The methods to elicit stakeholder perceptions of the characteristics, developments and changes of the fitness centre are illustrated in the following research design map (Figure 5.2). The method of data generation included semi-structured interviews with the owners and management employees as well as independent questionnaires targeting the subordinate employees and the current and former members of the fitness centre.

The research was designed to incorporate a mixed methodology. While the primary method of data generation was qualitative, questions in the interviews and questionnaires were structured in parts to facilitate quantitative analysis. A mixed methodology approach ensured that with more than one stakeholder being researched a more comprehensive analysis regarding behaviours and/or events could be substantiated (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998).

As noted by Denzin and Lincoln (1994), the use of multiple methods to study a single problem is a form of triangulation, but the researcher also validated the data through triangulation and cross referencing. Grounded theory was used to analyse, categorise and generate theory on the rich qualitative data that was gathered. This process, according to Glaser and Strauss (1967, cited in Hammersley, 1989) is useful in stimulating theoretical ideas. It is also suggested that the ideas that are formulated and developed during the course of empirical research are likely to be more productive and provide a better fit with the empirical world than theory obtained in other ways (ibid.).

Figure 5.2  
**Research Design Map**



(After R.C. McConnell, 1996, p. 86).

## 5.4 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Qualitative methodology provides a powerful tool for research in management and business administration (Argyris, 1985 cited in Gummesson 1991). As noted by Holloway (1997) it is a form of social inquiry that focuses on the way people interpret and make sense of their experiences. As described by Denzin and Lincoln (1994), qualitative research is:

Multimethod in focus, involving interpretative, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings. Attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring them (p. 2).

There has been debate about qualitative research and its application to management studies, especially when this form of research has been traditionally linked to the fields of sociology, anthropology, psychology and education. As previously discussed, a qualitative approach to research can provide a powerful tool for research in management and business administration. Weick (1995), suggests that as organisational members actively engage, at least to some extent, in the social construction of reality and sense making, qualitative research is preferred. To produce the comprehensive data that is required for the present study, a mixed methodology of qualitative and quantitative research was conducted. This approach ensured that the benefits of both research methodologies provided validity. This is supported by Lee (1999, p. 10), who stated that this method seems, “to appeal to a vast majority of organisational researchers, as both traditions offer valuable and useful research designs and techniques that can help to understand organisations better”.

The qualitative research paradigm consists of numerous methodologies (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; Hussey and Hussey, 1997; R.C. McConnell, 1996), incorporating participant observation, narratives, life histories, interviews, case studies, formative evaluations, descriptive studies, hermeneutics, interpretive research and grounded theory. The methodology used to gather the qualitative component of this research involved semi-structured interviews.

#### 5.4.1 The research setting

Research that is conducted in a single setting, intends to understand the dynamics which are present (Eisenhardt, 1989 cited in Hussey and Hussey, 1997). Smith (1978, cited in Stake, 1995) refers to these as case study's and notes that they can be seen as a "bounded integrated system". Yin (1989) explains a single setting study as:

An empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context when the boundaries between phenomena and context are not clearly evident, and in which multiple sources of evidence are used (p. 23).

Studies of a single setting are becoming widespread in business research as this form of study provides a holistic view of a process (Holloway, 1997; Gummesson, 1991; and Stake, 1995). It has been recognised that the detailed observations entailed in such a study enables many different aspects to be studied, examining them in relation to each other, viewing the process within its total environment and also utilising the researcher's capacity for understanding (Capra, 1982, cited in Gummesson, 1991).

For this particular study the setting selected was an inner city commercial fitness centre which was in the establishment phase of its operation. The generation of data on the characteristics, developments and changes of this fitness centre in its first three years of providing a client service gave the researcher an opportunity to formulate theoretical propositions.

According to Sarantakos (1998) and Hammersley (1989), there is a belief that studying a single setting is inferior to other methods of research. One significant concern is that such studies are not based on random samples of a large number of observations (Gummesson, 1991). Rubenowitz (1980, cited in Gummesson, 1991) views this type of study as an emergency method, stating:

Irrespective of how well they are planned, they lack the scientific weight and general applicability of conventional research methods (p. 78).

The major issue of single setting research is that of generalisation. Holloway (1997), indicated that the generalisation (or external validity) in research exists when the findings of a study can be applied to other settings or to a whole population. It appears that generalisation in qualitative research is an issue if there is examination of a single

case. Hammersley (1992), noted that, “the case study involves buying greater detail and likely accuracy of information about particular cases at the cost of being less able to make effective generalisations to a larger population” (p. 186). The issue about studying one setting and the inability to generalise theory or findings to other settings can be debated. Payne and Cuff (1982, cited in Holloway, 1997), have stated that, “generalisations from a few cases are possible; just as a small group of statements can establish generalisations about an entire language, so individual cases can do the same for a subculture” (p. 79). This is reinforced by research conducted by Normann (1970) and Gummesson (1991) who expressed a belief that:

If you have a good descriptive or analytic language by means of which you can really grasp the interaction between various parts of the system and the important characteristics of the system, the possibilities to generalise also from very few cases, or even one single case, may be reasonably good (p. 79).

Although generalisation is a concern, the major issue that relates to this research is the relationship that the researcher has with the fitness centre. This consideration is based on the objectivity of the researcher, due to being employed by the fitness centre. However, the researcher has never disputed or tried to hide the fact that there was an association with the fitness centre. It is presumed that the notion of objectivity may not apply as it requires the researcher to “remain distant from and neutral to the research object, the respondents, the methods and techniques of data collection and analysis” (Sarantakos, 1998, p. 19). However, these are the fundamental principles of qualitative research. It is important that the researcher does not adopt a biased viewpoint or is influenced by past experiences. Consequently the researcher has emphasised the importance of validity, assuring the research is reliable as well as objective.

#### **5.4.2 Interviews**

The use of interviews as a process of data collection was intended to obtain the perspectives, feelings and perceptions of the participants(s) (Holloway, 1997). In the context of this study, semi-structured interviews were utilised as they provided particular groups within the research study the opportunity to voice their opinions and perspectives on the characteristics, developments and changes of the fitness centre.

Semi-structured interviews were used as they enabled the researcher to probe issues raised by the participants. The freedom to probe and elicit specific information from the participant enabled the researcher to gain data that was generally not considered or contemplated before the initial interaction. It is stated by Kvale (1996, p. 124), that semi-structured interviews “provide a sequence of themes to be covered, as well as suggested questions”, but these can change in order to follow-up the answers given and the stories told by the participant.

According to Goetz and Le Compte (1984), the eight participants involved in the semi-structured interviews can be categorised as key informants. The eight participants either had a managerial position within the fitness centre or had a significant interest in the business operations. It was the researcher’s preference to interview the business owners and management employees, as they could provide insights otherwise not obtained by questionnaire or other methodologies. C.D. McConnell (1996, p. 119), asserts that, “through the utilisation of the experiences of others, the semi-structured interview can assist the researcher to gain access to situations that through time, place or situation may be otherwise closed”.

Subsequently, the eight participants (Fitness centre owners and management employees) had a greater control over the direction of the interview, and each individual participant seemed to revert to the perspectives related to their expertise and knowledge. As indicated by Fetterman (1989), this form of interviewing can be more beneficial than formal or structured interviews, as it provides clarification and the development of topic expansion that fall within broad parameters.

Most of the interviews were conducted at the participants’ home, with two interviews conducted in a room at the fitness centre on a day that the participant was not scheduled to work. The time frame of the interviews ranged from three-quarters of an hour to one and half-hours. The researcher provided the participant with an information sheet that clarified the nature of the research and the study’s aims and objectives (see Appendix B). After the participant had understood the intention of the research, and was assured of their anonymity and confidentiality a consent form was completed and signed (see

Appendix C). The participant's permission was obtained so that the interview could be tape recorded.

The semi-structured interview format (see Appendix D), was based on the researcher's knowledge, previous observation, experience from working in the fitness centre industry, and information gathered from the literature review chapters. A pilot interview was conducted with a former employee of the fitness centre who had held a supervisory position. The pilot interview revealed some unanticipated problems. As the interviewee was a close acquaintance of the researcher this may have influenced (positively or negatively) the degree of disclosure. Another factor that appeared to influence the reliability and validity of the interview data was distorted recall. The researcher conducted the transcription of the interviews personally, ensuring their accuracy before transcripts were provided to each participant. Several participants paid very careful and detailed attention to the transcripts before returning them with amendments and/or comments.

## **5.5 QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH**

Although the methodology predominately focussed on data being derived from a qualitative perspective, a proportion of the research emphasised a quantitative component. There were questions in the interviews and questionnaires that were intended to facilitate quantitative analysis. The concept of mixed methodology provided flexibility, as it emphasised both discovery and exploration of qualitative analysis and the structured techniques of data collection. This allowed quantification and measurement of quantitative procedures. As perceived by Sarantakos (1998, p. 53), the "concrete cases are those that researchers employ a methodology that, although predominately quantitative or qualitative, in essence contains some aspects of the other methods".

Sarantakos (1998) mentions that quantitative elements are thought to complement and supplement qualitative work, a notion supported by many qualitative researchers, critical theorists and feminists.

### 5.5.1 Questionnaires

The use of questionnaires is essential when data is to be collected from a large population. This method is also appropriate when time is limited or when it is necessary to be cost effective. This is supported by Mason and Paul (1988), who stated:

The advantage of the questionnaire is that it permits wide coverage for a minimum expenditure of both money and effort; it affords wider geographic coverage than any other technique; it reaches people who are difficult to contact. Greater coverage results in greater validity of the results, by promoting the selection of a larger and more representative sample (p. 84).

This method provided the researcher with the capability to generate data from a large sample group. The use of questionnaires meant three distinct groups provided valuable data, which could supplement and be cross referenced with the interview transcripts. This method provided a way to generate data which would otherwise not have been collected.

As noted by Hussey and Hussey (1997, p. 161), “a questionnaire is a list of carefully structured questions, chosen after considerable testing, with the view to eliciting reliable responses from a chosen sample. The aim is to find out what a selected group of participants do, think or feel”. In the present study there were three identifiable groups that were subjected to self-administrated questionnaires. These groups comprised of 25 subordinate employees, 760 current members and 245 former members. Each group’s questionnaire (see Appendix E) varied in content, which depended on the involvement and influence of each group in the fitness centre.

It is indicated by Foddy (1993), that there are considerable complexities associated with the question – answer communication cycle between the researcher and the participant of the questionnaire. Although the researcher may have a clear idea of the information that should be collected, it is doubtful that respondents always understood what information the researcher wanted (ibid.).

With such considerations in mind, the questionnaires were subjected to a rigorous drafting process, which involved reconstructing the questionnaire numerous times following checking by two academic staff and a pilot study that revealed certain

weaknesses in the questionnaire content. Janesick (1994), believes that pilot studies can allow the researcher to focus on particular areas that may have been unclear previously, provide tentative testing of questions and be valuable and enriching for later phases in the study.

The weaknesses that emerged from the pilot study included the identification of some ambiguous questions. Additionally, a combined method of ticking and circling specific answers proved to be confusing, while a limited number of categories for the participant to signify their response caused problems.

In order to increase the response rate, the questionnaires were designed for ease of completion and time management. Furthermore, an incentive was provided. To increase the response rate there was the chance for respondents who returned their questionnaires to enter a draw for a three month fitness centre membership or extension. A covering letter (see Appendix F) accompanied all questionnaires, which informed the participant of the objectives and social significance of the research. It also identified the researcher, sponsor and the reasons why the participant was requested to complete the questionnaire. The covering letter also assured participants that all questionnaires would remain confidential.

The questionnaires were designed in two parts. These involved closed ended questions, which focussed on background information that could be completed with ease, and open ended questions which allowed a greater degree of latitude.

The main focus of the subordinate questionnaire was to substantiate management issues that influenced employee experiences within the fitness centre and subsequent developments and changes that had been observed. Areas of significant interest included the characteristics, developments and changes in the work environment, remuneration structure, employee training and management supervision.

Twenty-five subordinate employees were provided with a questionnaire, which was placed in each employee's locker. To reduce costs, employees were requested to return the questionnaires in sealed envelopes that accompanied the questionnaire, to a locker

assigned to the researcher. All questionnaires were coded, so that the researcher could identify which individuals had not completed or returned them. Additionally it provided the researcher with the opportunity to discuss the responses if a greater understanding was required.

The main objective of the current member questionnaire was to rank significant aspects of the fitness centre's services and facilities as well as provide feedback on specific developments and/or changes. Current members comprised of individuals who were registered as holding a membership at the fitness centre as of June 1, 2000. The fitness centre's computer terminal was used to obtain relevant information on the contact address of current members. Coding the questionnaire assisted the researcher in monitoring which participants had returned their questionnaires and if required a follow-up letter could be sent to those participants who had not returned them. The inclusion of an addressed reply paid envelope was intended to facilitate an increased response and ensured confidentiality, as the returned questionnaire was directed to a Post Office box not associated with the fitness centre.

In order to generate data that represented the widest range of perspectives on the characteristics, developments and changes that have occurred at the fitness centre, it was deemed relevant to include former members in the research. Former members were individuals who had not renewed their membership with the fitness centre for some particular reason. The primary focus for generating data from former members was to elicit what they liked most and least about the fitness centre, the developments and/or changes that had occurred while they were a member, and the reason for discontinuing their membership.

The questionnaires were mailed to the former members after compiling their contact details from the membership agreements that the fitness centre kept on file. A total of 245 former members were sent a questionnaire. The researcher predicted that some of the former members may have shifted residence, so the postal address listed on the membership agreement was possibly incorrect. A self-addressed envelope accompanied the questionnaire but a stamp was not included. This may have reduced the return response rate, however it was too costly to include return postage if the respondent was

possibly not residing at the last known address. The questionnaire was coded so that the researcher could identify who had responded. However no follow-up letter was sent if a former member had not responded due to the potential complications identified above.

## 5.6 RESEARCH CONSIDERATIONS

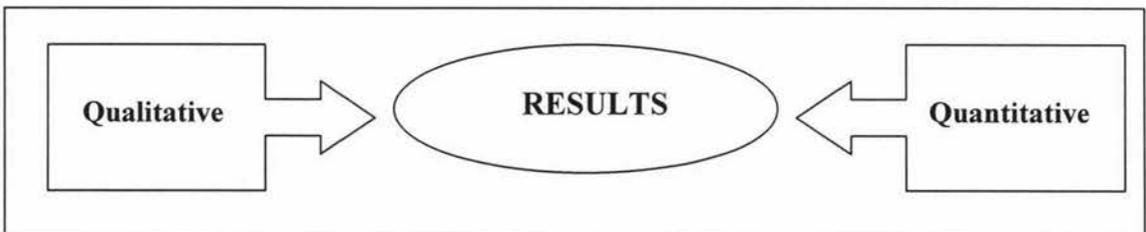
### 5.6.1 Mixed methodology

Combining both quantitative and qualitative research paradigms potentially ensured descriptively rich data. As noted by Lee (1999, p. 14), “by selecting multiple techniques, the researcher creates a set of complementary data gathering activities that compensate for the weaknesses of individual tactics”. This method was used within “different phases of the research process” (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998, p. 19), to obtain data that best suited the research question.

Glaser and Strauss (1967, cited in Remenyi, Williams, Money, Swartz, 1998) indicated that researchers used multiple methodologies in a single setting to establish a grounded theory. They expressed that a “survey may be used to confirm a theoretical conjecture and a longitudinal study may be employed to see if the effect of some action research is sustained” (ibid, p. 66). In the present study a parallel/simultaneous mixed method design was used. This process was described by Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998), as the combination of collecting and analysing qualitative and quantitative data in a complementary manner with neither results necessarily relating to or confirming the other method (Figure 5.3).

Figure 5.3

### Quantitative and qualitative methods equal and parallel



Source: Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998, p. 44).

This method has been used to produce numerical and narrative data that assists the answering of similar questions.

This process also provided grounds for triangulation. According to Creswell (1994), mixed methodology now serves a purpose beyond triangulation. It has been identified that mixed method studies provides for: (a) *triangulation*, or seeking convergence of results; (b) *complementarity*, or examining overlapping and different facets of a phenomenon; (c) *initiation*, or discovering paradoxes, contradictions, fresh perspectives; (d) *development*, or using the methods sequentially, such as results from the first method to inform the use of the second method; and (e) *expansion*, or mixed methods adding breadth and scope to a project (Greene, Caracelli, and Graham, 1989 cited in Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998).

Using this method provided the advantages of both qualitative and quantitative research allowing for a broader perspective of the research question.

### **5.6.2 Triangulation**

The process of triangulation was applied to this research to examine a particular phenomenon using different methodologies. According to Sarantakos (1998), this process is thought to allow the researcher to obtain a variety of information on the same issue, and uses the strengths of each method to overcome deficiencies of the other. It also achieves a higher degree of validity and reliability and overcomes the deficiencies of a single method study.

It has been noted (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; Hussey and Hussey, 1997; Goetz and Le Compte 1984), that triangulation can improve validity and reliability. Fetterman (1989), stated that triangulation is the heart of ethnographic validity. However, this is contrary to some researchers' opinion. There is a belief that "generalisations of this kind are unfounded and point to the fact that expanding the spectrum of methods employed to collect the data does not necessarily guarantee better results" (Sarantakos, 1998, p. 169). Furthermore, Miller and Dingwall (1997), stated that there are difficulties when triangulation is used as a validation exercise. They argued that there is sufficient ambiguity in Denzin's analysis of triangulation as a method of validation. With this in

mind, the researcher supports the assertion made by Denzin and Lincoln (1994) that triangulation should not be used as a tool for validation, but rather as an alternative.

Taking into account the concerns about triangulation, the researcher applied this method in conjunction with a thorough validation process. This involved testing all methods used within the study separately. Triangulation was used only as a means of cross-checking the data generated from various sources.

### 5.6.3 Validity

The strength of qualitative research is based on the validity, credibility, trustworthiness and authenticity of the research findings. Depending on the literature, these terms are used intermittently and generally refer to the “extent to which the research findings accurately represent what is really happening in the situation” (Hussey and Hussey, 1997, p. 57). With validity being the aim of qualitative research, there are certain measures that can guarantee the overall accuracy of the research findings. Goetz and Le Compte (1984), suggest that to increase validity, researchers need to free the data from interference and contamination, control or variable manipulation. In order to do this Patton (1990) believes there are three considerations. Firstly, the techniques and methods that were put in place to ensure integrity, validity and accuracy need to be explained. Secondly, the researcher must acknowledge their own experience and qualifications and identify how these could influence the study (see p. 4). Thirdly, the researcher should notify the reader of any assumptions that could have reduced the validity of the study.

Sarantakos (1998), notes that there are other techniques that have been applied to qualitative research to ensure validity. The measures include *cumulative validation* where a study is validated if its findings are supported by other studies. *Communicative validation* ensures the validity of the findings through additional questioning of the respondents. *Argumentative validation* involves presenting the conclusions in such a way that they can be followed and tested, while *ecological validation* is based on a study that is carried out in the natural environment of the subjects, using suitable methods and taking into consideration the life and conditions of the researched.

Other measures adopted by researchers to judge the design of the research setting are mentioned by Remenyi, Williams, Money, Swartz (1998). These comprise of construct, internal and external validity and reliability.

Firstly, *construct validity* refers to establishing correct operational measures for the concepts, ideas and relationships being studied.

Secondly, *internal validity* as perceived by Remenyi et al. (1998), is when the problem is generalised to the broader situation, whereby the researcher may be inferring that a particular result was caused by a particular phenomenon, without necessarily having all the evidence. Merriam (1988, cited in Thomas and Nelson, 1990), listed six strategies to ensure internal validity: triangulation, plausibility checks of taking data and interpretations back to subjects, long-term data collection and repeated observations, peer examination and examination of findings, involving the participants in all phases of the research, and the clarification of the researcher's own bias and theoretical orientation at the outset of the study.

Thirdly, *external validity* is based upon "knowing whether the researchers' findings can be generalised to a wider universe beyond the immediate research environment" (Remenyi et al. 1998, p. 180).

Finally *Reliability* refers to "the extent to which a technique or procedure will generate the same results regardless of how, when and where the research is carried out or the extent to which the instrument is consistent" (Holloway, 1997, p. 136).

During this study, certain actions were taken to ensure the overall validity of the research. As previously advised, the researcher was employed at the fitness centre. However to avoid any prejudices, the researcher voluntarily reduced the hours worked at the fitness centre six months before the actual research and for its duration. A further check on the study's validity included an experienced colleague listening to random transcripts to ensure that the participant was quoted in context. Key participants were also given full access to group questionnaire summary results and interview transcripts. Similarly, colleagues examined the subordinate, current and former member

questionnaires to identify potential question bias. This process ensured that the characteristics and theoretical propositions derived from the research were typical of a wider population. Thus the generalisation of the findings from this research can be reasonably related to that of any commercial fitness centre in the establishment phase of operation.

#### **5.6.4 Ethical considerations**

There were numerous ethical considerations the researcher had to contemplate in this research setting. Although there is no written code in business research on ethical considerations, Hussey and Hussey (1997), indicated that it is usually up to the researcher and their supervisor to determine what is ethically correct. In the present study, there were three parties involved: the researcher, the sponsoring client, and the stakeholders. With the assistance of the researcher's supervisor and another academic colleague, by following the guidelines of the Massey University Ethics Committee, an ethical framework was developed to protect all participants and the researcher.

Negotiating access and requesting permission to conduct the research on the fitness centre involved presented no problems, as the researcher had been a paid employee of the fitness centre for the past two and a half years. A research proposal identifying the key components of the study including the ethical issues was provided to the general manager of the fitness centre and a meeting was conducted to discuss the planned research. The researcher gained full support and trust from the sponsoring client, with the fitness centre providing partial funding for the research. It was explained to the general manager of the fitness centre that in the event of the research being published the researcher would obtain prior permission.

It was of paramount importance that all those who participated in the study were guaranteed privacy. The researcher was the only person who had access to the tape-recorded, transcribed interviews and returned questionnaires. The researcher was aware of the commercially sensitive data generated by this research; accordingly the participants and the fitness centre were guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality. As discussed by Hussey and Hussey (1997), confidentiality is of immense importance to organisations. They stated that, "all data and information collected will be treated in the

strictest confidence; although you will collate the data provided and use it in your research, you will ensure that no sensitive information is disclosed” (ibid., p. 36).

All participants involved in the interviewing process were informed of the objectives of the research as well as the type of questions that would be asked and the degree of question sensitivity. The researcher obtained consent from all participants involved in the interviews. Signed consent forms were completed at which time the researcher guaranteed their confidentiality and anonymity. The researcher transcribed all tape-recorded interviews, so that these could be verified by the participants. The participant then signed and dated the transcript, acknowledging the accuracy of the document. This was then coded and stored at the researcher’s home.

Although the researcher made every effort to prompt informative dialogue during the course of the interview, all participants had the opportunity not to comment on questions they were not comfortable with, and could terminate the interview at any stage. The interviews were conducted with an emphasis on respecting the participants’ comments. Every effort was made not to ridicule or embarrass the participants.

The current and former member questionnaires were accompanied by a covering letter which introduced the participant to the research topic, encouraged them to participate and assured them of anonymity and confidentiality (Sarantakos, 1998). All questionnaires were encoded so that the researcher could identify who had returned them as well as enter them into the draw for the three month fitness centre membership or extension. The participant was advised that the questionnaires were encoded so they had the security of being completely anonymous by completing and sending the questionnaire back in an unmarked envelope. However by doing so, they would not be eligible for the membership incentive. The researcher was aware that coding the questionnaires may have influenced the participants based on the relationship between the researcher and the sponsoring client. However, it was emphasised to the participant that their confidentiality and anonymity would be protected.

Every precaution was taken to protect the anonymity of all participants in the research. The name and contact phone number of the researcher’s supervisor was included in the

covering letter of the questionnaire and information sheet provided to the interviewees. This allowed the participants to contact the researcher's supervisor for additional information or confirmation of the research procedures if required.

## 5.7 GROUNDED THEORY

Grounded theory was applied to this study to continually classify data to build a framework for generating theory. This method is based on generating theory or conceptual propositions and its purpose is to "build theory that is faithful to and illuminates the area under study" (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p. 24). This method was deemed practical for this type of research as it provided a process of generating data inductively, without making any prior assumptions, and producing conclusions and theory based on deductive reasoning.

Strauss and Corbin (1990) state that grounded theory is:

Inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents. That is, it is discovered, developed, and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to that phenomenon. Therefore, data collection, analysis, and theory stand in reciprocal relationship with each other. One does not begin with a theory, then prove it. Rather, one begins with an area of study and what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge (p. 23).

According to Holloway (1997), Glaser (1992), Larsson and Lowendahl (1996, cited in Lee, 1999) and Strauss and Corbin (1990), grounded theory is becoming more dominant in organisational and management research. Grounded theory is used to investigate the interactions, behaviours, experiences and perceptions of a business nature. As indicated by Lee (1999), it has become important to management researchers because of its "broad applicability to many organisational issues and situations and sheer prevalence" (p. 45).

It is noted that research can be weakened through bias, faulty data accumulation, inaccuracy, incomplete data, time restraints, errors in data interpretation, or lack of validation (R.C. McConnell, 1996). Although all attempts were made by the researcher to eliminate the possibility of negative influences, the method of grounded theory

identified two concerns. Firstly, the issue of generalising the findings and secondly, the predetermined opinions of the researcher.

As noted by Hussey and Hussey (1997, p. 68), “any views held by the researcher prior to the study may restrict his or her perceptions of the phenomenon under investigation”. With the researcher being an employee of the fitness centre, there was some concern that this involvement may have influenced the results. In order to minimise any bias the researcher reduced the number of hours of paid employment from 40 hours a week to eight hours before and during the research period. From the outset of the study the researcher held some predetermined ideas, but the reduction in hours reduced his perception or application of these.

The features of grounded theory have been summarised by Silverman (1993, p. 46), into three stages. These are: (a) an initial attempt to develop categories which illuminate the data; (b) an attempt to saturate these categories with many appropriate cases in order to demonstrate their importance; and (c) developing these categories into more general analytic frameworks with relevance outside the setting.

The systematic coding and interpretation of interview transcripts and questionnaires reduced the initial data into categories, which the researcher then developed and integrated into theory. According to Glaser (1978), categories and their characteristics (properties) are conceptual codes depicting the essential relationship between data and theory. The typed data of the interview transcripts and open-ended answers of the questionnaires were firstly coded by underscoring relevant data line by line, then recording names of the concepts in the margin. Each code or single unit of information was then written on a card so that the concepts were constantly compared, grouped and regrouped throughout the research process. Following this, the codes were grouped into clusters by similarities or differences, and categorised accordingly. Gradually as the theoretical coding continued recurring, themes began to emerge and the identity of core categories developed. The use of diagrams provided visual representations of the links between categories, and assisted the further development of theory. Once all the categories and properties were defined the theoretical development commenced.

It was stated by Glaser (1978, p. 93) “the goal of grounded theory is to generate a theory that accounts for a pattern of behaviour which is relevant and problematic for those involved”. The theory needs to be explained by a core category - one that solves or processes the problem, explains the variation in behaviour and uses the fewest number of concepts possible (Chenitz and Swanson, 1986). The master list of properties and categories generated by the interviews and questionnaires are presented in Chapter Ten.

## **5.8 SUMMARY AND REVIEW**

The research methodology was constructed to generate theory on the specific characteristics, developments and changes within a fitness centre in the establishment phase of providing a client service. In critically considering the research question the researcher intends to access the fullest range of relevant data using the appropriate methodologies. To elicit stakeholder perceptions a mixed methodology approach was employed consisting of interviews and questionnaires.

The primary focus of the research was qualitative and the interviews conducted took the form of a semi-structured format. There were eight participants including the business owners, head supervisors and shift supervisors. While the interviews did not provide the majority of data, they did complement and provide data triangulation with the questionnaires.

The questionnaires were distributed to 25 subordinate employees, 760 current members and 245 former members. Although quantitative in nature the questionnaires were structured in parts to facilitate qualitative analysis. The researcher approached the particular study with the intention of compiling a body of information, so that the data could be progressively subjected to the process of grounded theory. The process accumulated significant categories of data that determined the domain of a fitness centre in its establishment phase of providing a client service.

Ethical considerations were discussed with the researcher’s supervisor and the guidelines of the Massey University Ethics Committee were followed to ensure a

positive and ethical framework. The confidentiality and anonymity of participants was observed with covering letters accompanying all questionnaires. The researcher obtained consent from all participants involved in the interviews. Furthermore, transcripts of all interviews were provided to participants to verify their accuracy.

## CHAPTER SIX

# CURRENT MEMBERS

### CHAPTER OUTLINE

This chapter examines the current member perspectives of the characteristics, developments and changes of the fitness centre. The data generated from the questionnaires produced specific categories, properties and theoretical propositions that emerged through the application of grounded theory.

- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 Background information
- 6.3 Current member perceptions
  - 6.3.1 Fitness instructor characteristics
  - 6.3.2 Fitness instructor developments and changes
  - 6.3.3 Receptionist characteristics
  - 6.3.4 Receptionist developments and changes
  - 6.3.5 Fitness programme characteristics
  - 6.3.6 Additional service characteristics
  - 6.3.7 Fitness programme and additional service developments and changes
  - 6.3.8 Fitness equipment characteristics
  - 6.3.9 Fitness centre layout characteristics
  - 6.3.10 Value for money characteristics
  - 6.3.11 The impact of developments and changes on the current members' experience
- 6.4 Current member preferences, objections and suggestions
  - 6.4.1 Current member preferences
  - 6.4.2 Current member objections
  - 6.4.3 Suggested changes
- 6.5 Current member categories and properties
- 6.6 Summary and review

## 6.1 INTRODUCTION

The researcher considered the current member as an essential component due to their perspectives of specific characteristics, developments and changes during the establishment phase of the fitness centre. The current member questionnaire was a critical part of this research as it sought to collect a large quantity of rich data that complemented and could be cross referenced and triangulated with the former member and staff member questionnaires and management interviews.

The main objective of the current member questionnaire was to elicit comments on specific characteristics and areas of development and change within the fitness centre. Although the main focus of the questionnaire was on the perceived characteristics, developments and changes of the fitness centre, additional background questions were asked in order to gain a wider understanding of the member population that attended the fitness centre.

There were 760 current members who were registered as holding an existing membership at the fitness centre as of June 1, 2000. A total of 305 current members completed and returned their questionnaires, a 40.1% response rate. Although a little disappointed with the response the researcher was satisfied that the response rate provided a sufficiently accurate portrayal and was representative of the general population attending the fitness centre.

This chapter presents the results of the current member questionnaire in three main sections. Firstly, the background information provides demographic details of gender, age, suburb of residence, occupation and personal annual income. Also presented in this section is information of how the current member learned about the fitness centre, the reasons for joining and how long they had been a member. Secondly, the current members' perception in regards to the fitness centre's instructors, receptionists, programmes, additional services, equipment, fitness centre layout, and value for money is presented. Also included in this section are the perceived developments or changes that the fitness centre carried out that influenced the current members' experience. The final section presents the current members' preferences and objections about the fitness centre as well as any suggested changes that should be considered. The chapter concludes with a summary, along with a section representing the categories generated from the data.

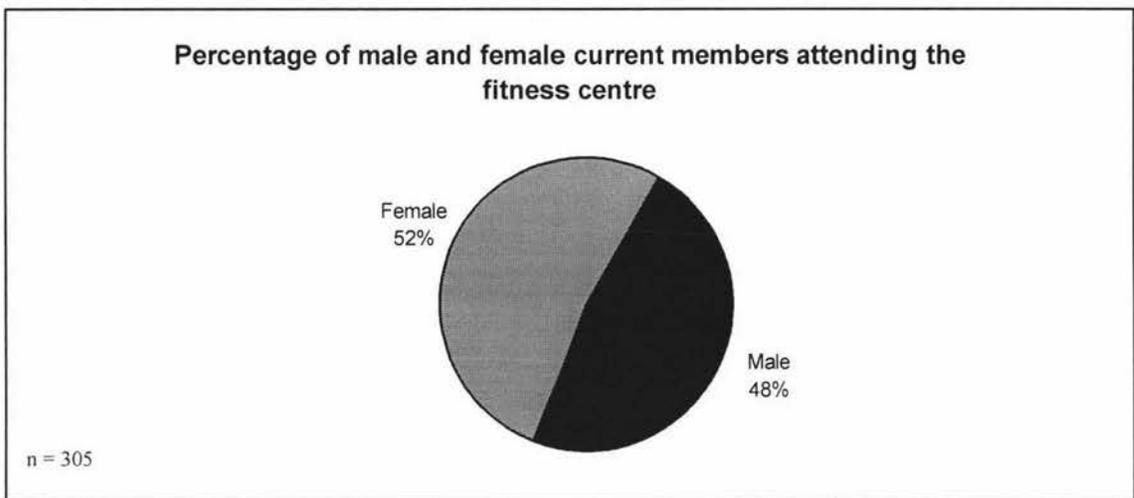
## 6.2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The demographic information was valuable to the researcher and the sponsor of the research study. The researcher gained a greater understanding of the general member population of the fitness centre, while the sponsor was able to utilise specific information to aid the process of target marketing.

### The gender and age of the current members

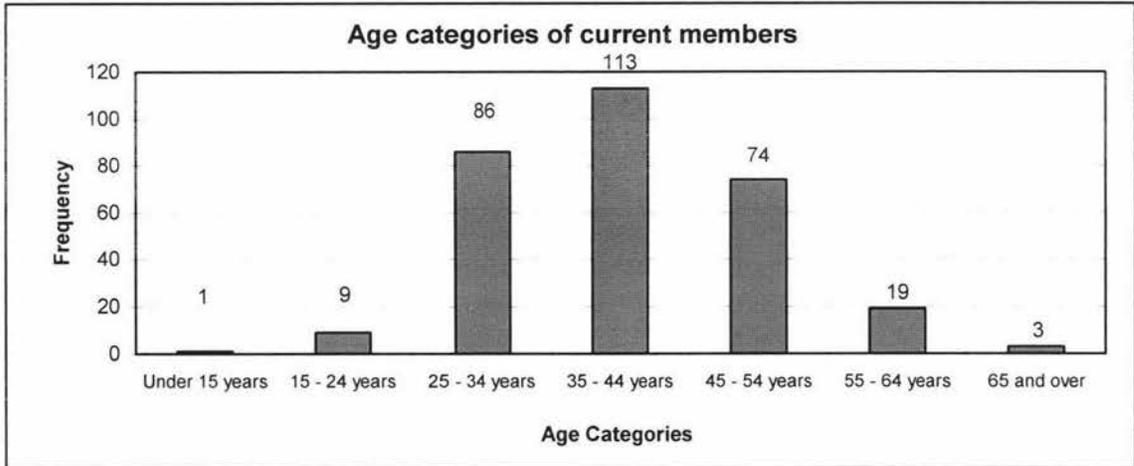
The gender profile of the current members was 48% male (145 respondents) and 52% female (160 respondents).

Figure 6.1



There were seven age categories. These included under 15 years, 15 to 24 years, 25 to 34 years, 35 to 44 years, 45 to 54 years, 55 to 64 years and 65 years and over. The age of the respondents ranged from one person being under the age of 15 years to three people being 65 years or older. The ages of the current members were normally distributed across the seven categories, as shown in Figure 6.2. The majority of current members (89.5%) were aged between 25 and 54 years, with the average age being 35 to 44 years (37.1%).

Figure 6.2



### Suburb of residence

Current members resided in a diverse number of Auckland suburbs. These ranged from as close as 2.5km to well over 20km away from the fitness centre. The information from where each participant resided was categorised into nine specific zones. The zones were evenly distanced in 2.49km radii and the residence of a current member depended on the distance from the fitness centre. Table 6.3 illustrates the frequency of where the respondents lived in relation to the fitness centre.

Table 6.3

### Residential location of current members

Distance from fitness centre (radius)	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
0 – 2.49km	103	33.8	33.9	33.9
2.5 – 4.99km	113	37.0	37.2	71.1
5 – 7.49km	32	10.5	10.5	81.6
7.5 – 9.99km	8	2.6	2.6	84.2
10 – 12.49km	20	6.6	6.6	90.8
12.5 – 14.99km	9	3.0	3.0	93.8
15 – 17.49km	14	4.6	4.6	98.4
17.5 – 19.99km	1	.3	.3	98.7
20km or more	4	1.3	1.3	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>304</b>	<b>99.7</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
Missing System	1	.3		
<b>Total</b>	<b>305</b>	<b>100.0</b>		

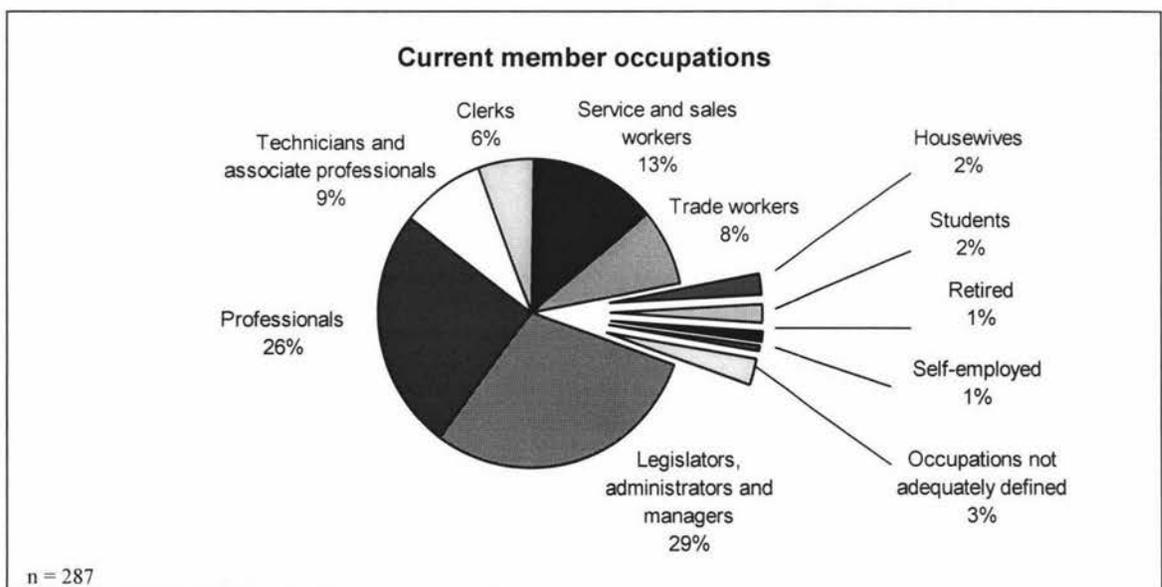
Of particular note is the high number of current members (33.9%) residing within a 2.49km radius of the fitness centre. These suburbs included: Arch Hill, the Central Business District, Eden Terrace, Grafton, Grey Lynn, Kingsland, Morningside, Mt Eden, Newmarket, Newton, Parnell, and Ponsonby.

There were another 37.2% of members who resided within a 2.5 to 4.99km radius of the fitness centre. This radius included the suburbs of Balmoral, Cox's Bay, Devonport, Epsom, Freeman's Bay, Greenlane, Herne Bay, Mt Albert, Orakei, Pt. Chevalier, Remuera, Sandringham, St. Mary's Bay, St. Lukes, Three Kings, and Westmere. The cumulative percentage of current members who resided within a 4.99km radius of the fitness centre was 71.1%. The remaining 28.9% lived within a 5 to 20km or more radius of the fitness centre.

### Occupations

The New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (Department of Statistics, 1990) was used as a model to classify occupations into groups. Although slightly modified for this study, the majority of the groups were similar. In this study there were 11 groups (Figure 6.4):

Figure 6.4



Two hundred and eighty-seven members responded (94%) to this particular question, with 29% being classified as a legislator, administrator and/or manager. The members' own classification of occupations within this group ranged from company directors and general managers to specific types of managers including account, bank, business development, customer services, finance, logistics, marketing, operations, production, programme, project, property and sales managers.

The professional category was selected by 26% of respondents. Individual occupations included health and medical specialists such as doctors, nurses, pharmacists and orthodontists as well as lawyers, solicitors, veterinary surgeons, accountants, teachers, lecturers, and specific business consultants. In total 55% of all current members were legislators, administrators, managers (29%) and/or professionals (26%).

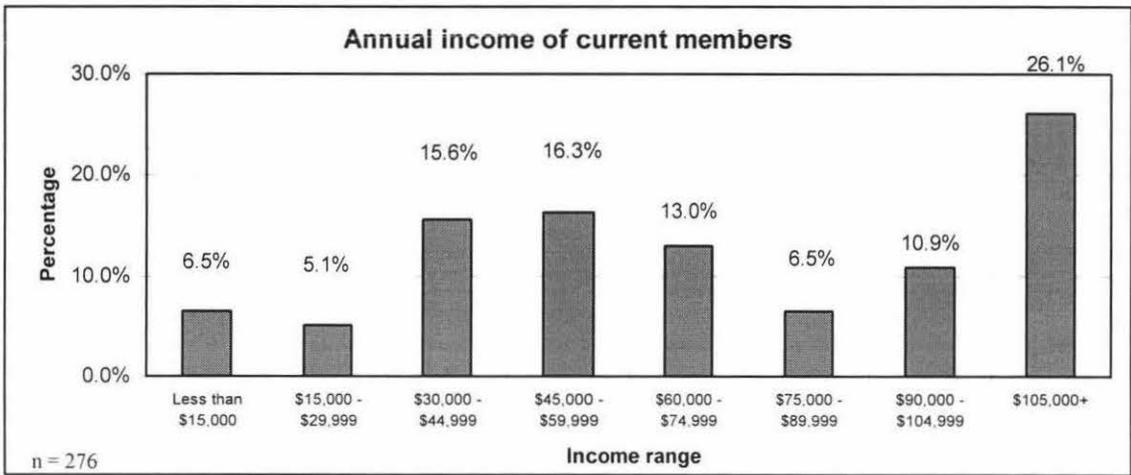
The category of service and sales workers (13%) was the third ranked occupation, followed by technicians and associate professionals (9%), trade workers (8%) and clerks (6%). The remaining 8% included students, housewives, retired persons, self-employed and occupations that could not be adequately defined. The results were further analysed by using the research software SPSS. The application of this program enabled cross tabulation of occupation with the respondents' gender and age. In administering this analysis, the researcher was able to measure the association between data.

Of the 85 current members who were categorised as a legislator, administrator and/or manager, 61.2 % were male and 38.8% were female. There were 74 respondents who had a professional occupation, with females (59.5%) significantly dominating this category. More males (61.5%) than females (38.5%) were either a technician or an associate professional, while there were slightly more female (53.8%) service and sale workers. There were no male clerks, and an even distribution of female and male trade workers and students. The average age for most of the major occupational categories was 35 to 44 years. The exception was for technicians, associate professionals and trade workers who had an average age of 25 to 34 years.

Annual income

The annual income of current members is shown in Figure 6.5. Of the 276 (90.5%) current members who responded to this question more respondents (26.1%) selected the \$105,000+ income range, than any other. Other income ranges varied from 5.1% to 16.3% for each income range respectively. The average annual income ranged between \$60,000 to \$74,999.

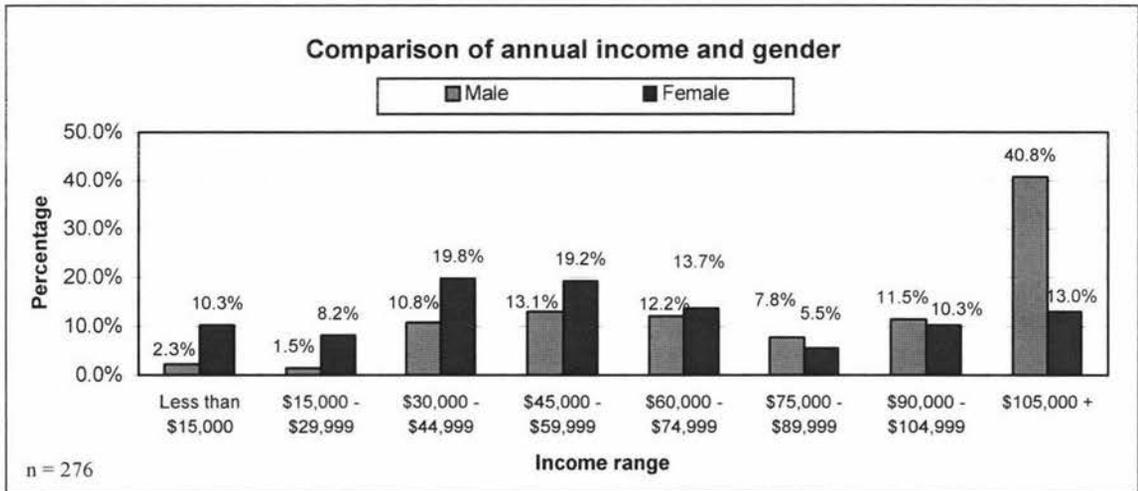
Figure 6.5



The additional categories of gender, age and occupation were cross tabulated with the annual income of current members. This analysis revealed valuable information that would not otherwise have been obtained from examining the data.

The analysis of gender and annual income was based on the response of 130 males and 146 females. The information that was generated (Figure 6.6) revealed a higher percentage of females earned an income below \$74,999 a year. The percentage of females who earned under \$74,999 was 71.2% compared to 39.9% of males. Of the males who responded to this question, 40.8% earned over \$105,000 a year. The average annual income for both genders varied dramatically. The female average income was \$45,000 to \$59,999 in comparison to the male average income of \$90,000 to \$104,999.

Figure 6.6



The average annual income for each age category was also tabulated. An analysis of age in comparison to annual income was conducted to provide additional information. The respondent who was aged under 15 years was disregarded as they acknowledged they had no current occupation and were not earning an income. The two respondents who were 65 years and over were also excluded, as there was a substantial difference in their income. The nine current members who were aged between 15 and 24 years had an average annual income of \$15,000 to \$29,999. The average annual income increased with age; 25 to 34 year olds averaged \$45,000 to \$59,999 a year, while 35 to 44 year olds earned an average of \$90,000 to \$104,999 a year. There was a decrease in the annual income to \$60,000 to \$74,999 for respondents aged between 45 and 64 years.

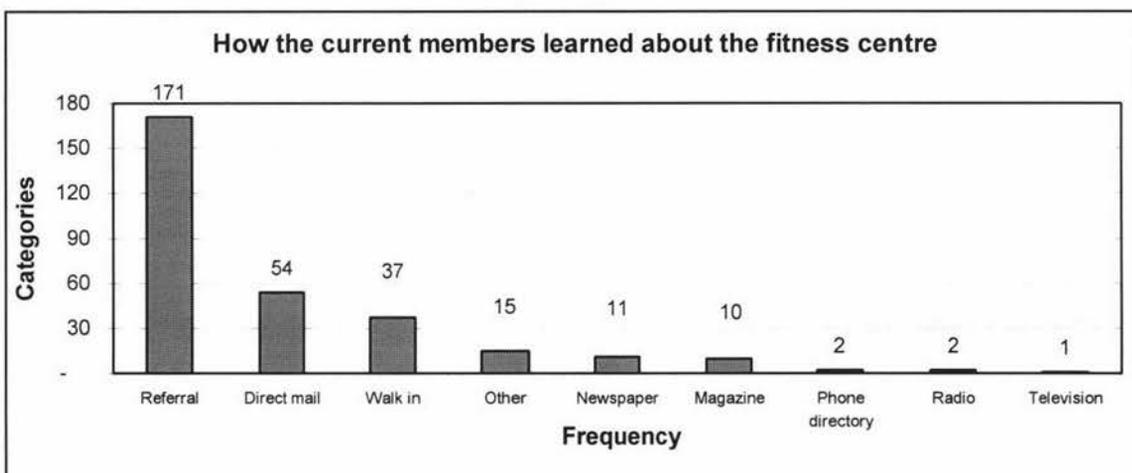
Of the 11 occupations, it was not appropriate to conduct the comparison for the categories of self employed, retired, and housewife, due to the limited number of responses received. Legislators, administrators and managers had the highest average annual income with \$90,000 to \$104,999. Professionals earned on average \$60,000 to \$74,999 a year. Technicians and associate professionals, service and sale workers, trade workers and occupations that could not be adequately defined earned an average annual income of \$45,000 to \$59,999. The average annual income for clerks was \$30,000 to \$44,999, while students averaged less than \$15,000 a year.

How the current member learnt about the fitness centre?

The sponsor of the study insisted on the inclusion of a question requesting the respondent to note in the questionnaire how they first learnt about the fitness centre. This was to assist the sponsor in evaluating past marketing strategies. As shown in Figure 6.7 the respondents could choose from nine categories. The three most selected were referrals (56.1%), direct mail (17.7%), and by the current member walking in off the street (12.1%).

The remaining predetermined questionnaire categories of newspaper (3.6%), magazine (3.3%), telephone directory (0.7%), radio (0.7%), and television (0.3%) had significantly less influence. The opportunity was also provided to specify another manner of learning about the fitness centre if not otherwise listed. Five percent of current members selected this option. Those responses ranged from billboard advertising, seminars conducted by the fitness centre, sponsorship deals, work packages, organisations that the fitness centre utilises e.g. suppliers and consultants, and employees wearing their uniform outside the fitness centre.

Figure 6.7



What were the reasons for the current member to join the fitness centre?

The questionnaire requested the respondent to list the three major reasons that influenced them to join the fitness centre. The respondent was advised that these should be listed in order of importance of 1, 2 and 3, with 1 being the most important. Table 6.8 summaries the reasons why the current members joined the fitness centre. It also

combines the reasons to provide a cumulative frequency and percentage for each category. This table illustrates that all 305 current members noted their first reason for joining the fitness centre. The response rate decreased slightly from 99% to 96.1% when current members provided their second and third reasons.

Table 6.8  
Reasons why the current member joined the fitness centre

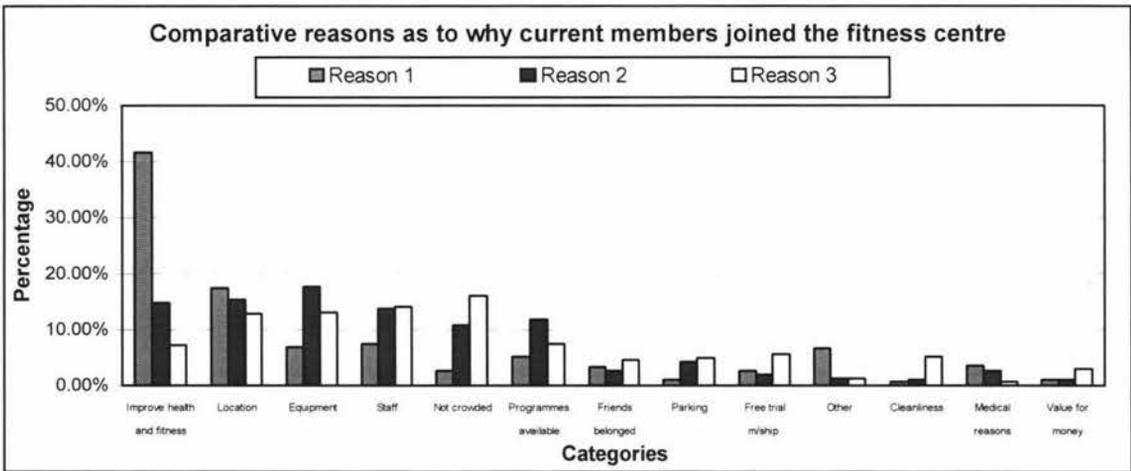
Categories	1 <sup>st</sup> Reason		2 <sup>nd</sup> Reason		3 <sup>rd</sup> Reason		Cumulative Results	
	Freq.	Percent	Freq.	Percent	Freq.	Percent	Freq.	Percent
Improve health and fitness	127	41.6%	45	14.8%	22	7.2%	194	21.2%
Location	53	17.4%	47	15.4%	39	12.8%	139	15.2%
Equipment	21	6.9%	54	17.7%	40	13.1%	115	12.6%
Staff	23	7.5%	42	13.8%	43	14.1%	108	11.8%
Not crowded	8	2.6%	33	10.8%	49	16.1%	90	9.8%
Programs available	16	5.2%	36	11.8%	23	7.5%	75	8.2%
Friends belonged	10	3.3%	8	2.6%	14	4.6%	32	3.5%
Parking	3	1.0%	13	4.3%	15	4.9%	31	3.4%
Free trial m/ship	8	2.6%	6	2.0%	17	5.6%	31	3.4%
Other	20	6.6%	4	1.3%	4	1.3%	28	3.1%
Cleanliness	2	0.7%	3	1.0%	16	5.2%	21	2.3%
Medical reasons	11	3.6%	8	2.6%	2	0.7%	21	2.3%
Value for money	3	1.0%	3	1.0%	9	3.0%	15	1.6%
<b>Sub Total</b>	305	100%	302	99.1%	293	96.1%	900	98.4%
Missing	-	-	3	0.9%	12	3.9%	15	1.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>305</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>305</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>305</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>915</b>	<b>100%</b>

Figure 6.9 illustrates the comparison of each category. As illustrated, improving health and fitness (41.6%) is significantly higher than any other category, but declines markedly as the second and third reasons for joining. Location is consistent with 17.4% signifying this factor as their first reason, followed by 13.4% as their second reason and then 12.8% as a third reason for joining. Additional categories of staff availability, the fitness centre not being crowded, the availability of fitness programmes and equipment all rate highly.

The categories of parking, fitness centre cleanliness, value for money, friends belonging and free trial memberships appear to be less significant, but tended to increase and be slightly more important as a second or third reason for joining. The “other” category was composed of issues concerning the business approach of the fitness centre. Some of the respondents’ comments included the “scientific basis to the fitness centre and the way it is operated”, “the philosophy of the fitness centre programmes” and the “overall professional attitude and services provided by the staff”.

Also mentioned was the relatively effective and efficient workouts, with one respondent noting the “time factor – it is optimum fitness in a very short period”. Further reasons included the results achieved by others, follow-up phone calls, staff focus towards customer goals, relaxed and non-pretentious atmosphere, the safe equipment, recommendations from medical practitioners, and the availability of staff on the floor.

Figure 6.9

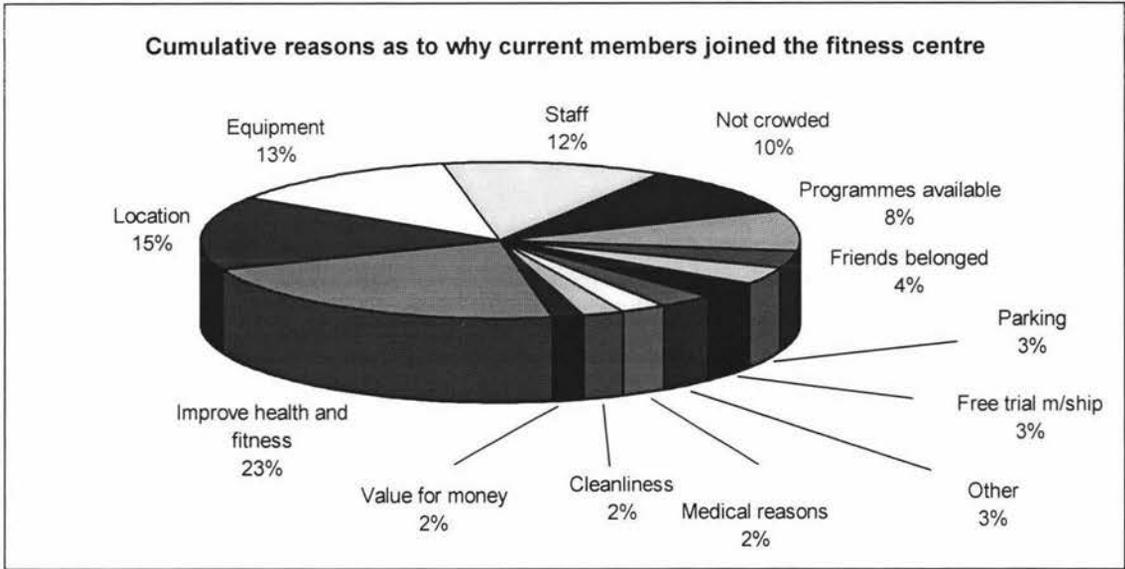


To provide greater accuracy, the results of all categories were combined in a cumulative format applying an evenly weighted percentage. Figure 6.10 represents those cumulative results.

By analysing the cumulative results, the three most important reasons for joining the fitness centre were, to improve health and fitness (21.2%), the location of the fitness centre (15.2%) and the equipment available (12.6%). Staff (11.8%), the fitness centre

not being crowded (9.8%) and programmes available (8.2%) rated significantly higher than the remaining categories.

Figure 6.10



All figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number

Membership length

All 305 current members responded to this question. Respondents were asked to record the length of time they had been members of the fitness centre. The researcher could then cross tabulate the length of membership with current member perceptions of developments and changes. Results of membership length have been tabulated and illustrated in Figure 6.11.

Figure 6.11



There was a relatively even spread of current members who had been attending the fitness centre for less than six months (24%); six to eleven months (26%); twelve to seventeen months (18%) and eighteen to twenty four months (23%). Current members who had been attending the facility for 25 months or more decreased dramatically to 9%.

### **6.3 CURRENT MEMBER PERCEPTIONS**

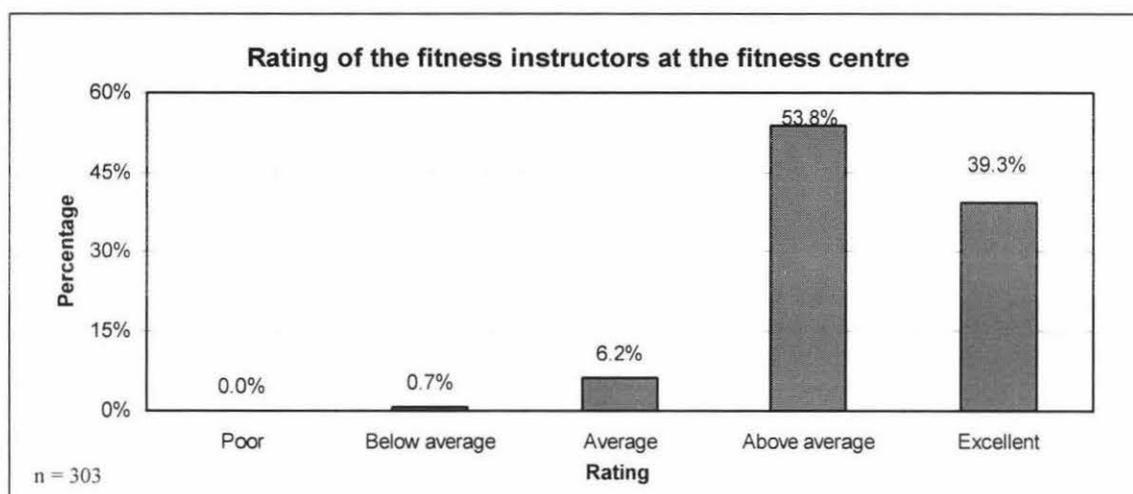
The perceptions of current members were considered an important component in this study. Current members were asked to rate on a five-point scale from poor to excellent their opinions of the instructors, receptionists, programmes, additional services, equipment, facility layout and value for money of the fitness centre. Current members also had the discretion to provide feedback, and were asked whether they had noticed any developments or changes in relation to specific areas. Also included in the current member questionnaire was a request for the respondent to provide information of any developments or changes the fitness centre had carried out that influenced their experience.

#### **6.3.1 Fitness instructor characteristics**

Only two current members did not respond to this question, one identifying that the fitness instructors “vary from day to day”, while the other stated she, “had not been a member long enough to warrant a response”. Only 6.9% (Figure 6.12) of the current members perceived the fitness instructors to be average or below. The remaining 93.1% rated the fitness instructors as being above average (53.8%) or excellent (39.3).

While the process of crosstabulating was unsuccessful in yielding conclusive information, it did generate an association between gender and the rating of the fitness instructors. More females (45.3%) than males (32.6%) rated the fitness instructors as being excellent. A greater proportion of males (58.4%) than females (49.6%) rated the fitness instructors as above average. There was only a slight difference between the genders for those rating the fitness instructors as average, while two males rated them below average.

Figure 6.12



All current members were provided with the opportunity to explain their rating of the fitness instructors. Of the 303 current members who responded to this question, 67% qualified their rating with a comment. These comments added richness to the quantitative rating by providing a collection of characteristics of the fitness instructors. Current members perceived the fitness centre instructors as possessing specific characteristics. The analysis of these comments revealed that 78.3% were positive and 21.7% were negative. In total there were 56 different employee characteristics, ranging from their supportiveness and enthusiasm to negative issues of not being attentive and lacking commitment.

### Positive Perceptions

The analysis of the positive perceptions revealed nine distinctive characteristics (Figure 6.13). These included being professional, knowledgeable, friendly, helpful and well trained, as well as having great presentation and possessing certain personal skills and job related attributes.

The comments provided by the current members appear to focus more on the fitness instructor's manners, than their capabilities. It was noted by one current member that "attitudes really make the staff", while another respondent identified:

The staff have kept me extremely motivated and are the key to the success of the gym. Other gyms have failed to do this because of staff attitudes.

The most frequent comment was the fitness instructor's friendliness (22%). A majority of respondents noted this characteristic in conjunction with additional perceptions:

They are all super friendly, uniforms always tidy and when I do the circuit, they are always attentive to my concerns.

There appears to be a commendably high level of staff friendliness, and as stated by one current member, "the instructors never seem to be having a bad day, always smiling and happy which inspires me to try harder". Another respondent mentioned how friendly the instructors were, explaining, "it is not only the receptionists who need to be friendly and approachable".

The personal skills that the fitness instructors possessed were closely associated with their friendliness. This characteristic consisted of qualities ranging from the courteousness, politeness and enthusiasm of the fitness instructors to their positive attitude, cheerfulness, energetic and caring nature. This characteristic comprised 8.7% of the total positive comments, with current members asserting that the fitness instructors "appear sincere and concerned" and are "really helpful, caring and encouraging". Additional examples included "staff providing polite encouragement" and "always seem friendly and extremely approachable".

The second most common positive comment was how helpful (18%) the instructors were. This perception was somewhat predominant and is illustrated by the following comments:

All the staff are excellent when you need help. Many are proactive with suggestions, and this is a major factor for me.

They are always willing to help with any questions that I have and they seem genuinely interested in assisting members achieve their goals.

They professionally want to help you achieve your goals. They make the smaller steps seem easy, so when you reflect how well you have developed it seems like you really have achieved something.

Very friendly and they always greet you by your name. Always willing to help, not standing around doing nothing.

Job related attributes of the fitness instructors included remembering member names, being supportive, confident, competent, and available to members. Also mentioned was how encouraging, motivating, attentive, consistent, proactive, and approachable they were. Of the total responses, 16.3% were categorised into this group, with the most common qualities listed being the supportiveness and encouragement of the fitness instructors. Some of the responses regarding the job related attributes of the fitness instructors were:

Each instructor knows my name. They greet me and encourage me. They offer advice when asked and never seem disinterested.

They appear to have a genuine interest in the members development and fitness objectives. A lot of individual attention to technique, which is a major factor for helping me with my motivation.

I find the instructors to be supportive, helpful, and good fun. I want to come back each time.

The professionalism and knowledge of the fitness instructors was perceived by current members as being two significant characteristics. The knowledge of the fitness instructors (13%) rated slightly higher than their professionalism (9.3%), with a considerable number of responses reporting a combination of both:

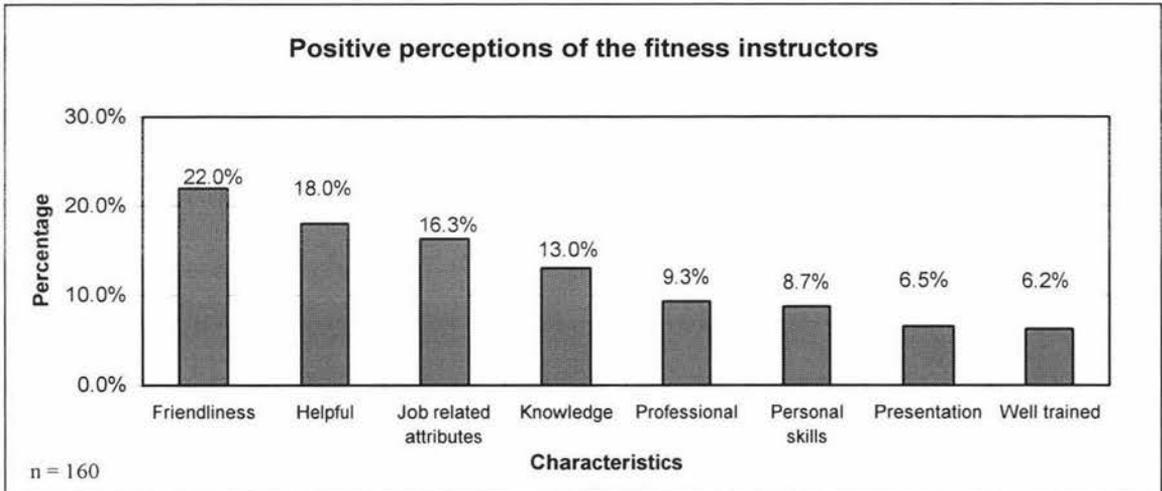
All the instructors are very professional and show good knowledge of all the equipment.

Their friendliness, knowledge, professionalism and willingness to educate make the [fitness centre] instructors the best I have come across in any gym.

Instructors are friendly, professional and have a good all round knowledge of the clients' needs.

The remaining characteristics of presentation (6.5%) and being well trained (6.2%) were mentioned less frequently. Comments such as “presentation is consistent and good” and “the training everyone has received is noticeable and there is a consistency of approach, recording and encouragement” typified many of the current members' perceptions.

Figure 6.13



### Negative Perceptions

As mentioned 21.7%, of current members' perceptions concerning the fitness instructors were negative. The most distinct characteristics were the variation in performance (27.6%), and the inconsistency (22.4%) of the fitness instructors. The remaining negative perceptions comprised of poor job related attributes (17.1%) and personal skills (13.2%), reduction in standards (10.8%) and a lack of knowledge (8.9%). These characteristics are graphically displayed in Figure 6.14.

Feedback on the variation in performance of the fitness instructors tended to focus on their capabilities with a majority of responses not specifically identifying their negative comments. Remarks such as, "they vary from day-to-day", "they range from average to excellent", and "some are poor while the others are great" were frequent. A few current members explained the variation in performance in more detail. For instance, one respondent felt the fitness instructors "ranged from average to excellent with the full-time staff being mostly excellent". This perception was supported by another, who noted, "there is a difference in full and part-time staff". However, this respondent failed to identify which staff members were superior, whereas another respondent identified that the full-time fitness instructors varied in performance and stated, "they are extremely knowledgeable and really do seem to give a damn, but sometimes the regular instructors can get a little sloppy".

Some miscellaneous comments reflecting the variation in performance of the fitness instructors were:

Some are excellent, give individual attention and support while others do not.

Most are excellent, a couple are lazier and don't really keep an eye on you as you complete the circuit.

There are some excellent instructors, and these are the ones that are friendly, watch your form and progress, offering tips and modifications.

The perception that the fitness instructors were inconsistent was a relatively common occurrence. The inconsistency appeared to relate to the fitness instructors' inability in demonstrating correct technique and form to the members. A few current members also mentioned there were some instances where fitness instructors contradicted each other. One respondent noted, "they are all enthusiastic and seem confident, but I have noticed that advice from one instructor is sometimes contradicted by another". Some current members were specific about the inconsistencies. For example:

On some equipment, the instructors are inconsistent in showing proper technique. If you go at a regular time and then change your time on the odd occasion, this inconsistency becomes more prevalent.

The staff are friendly and helpful, but there are some inconsistencies evident. Obviously, it depends on the length of the instructors' employment. In one instance, my technique was corrected only after I had been doing the exercise a certain way for some time. Nobody had picked it up that I was doing it wrong.

There are inconsistencies between the knowledge of the instructors. Not all instructors emphasise all aspects of perfect form for each machine.

Consistency and attention can fall off, very noticeable in the weekends

Job related attributes (17.1%) included current member perceptions of fitness instructors not being attentive, exhibiting a lack of commitment, concentration and desire to help. This characteristic rated exceptionally high, with a majority of respondents identifying the lack of help displayed by the fitness instructors as their main issue. Examples include:

Staff at times lack concentration and usually aren't available all of the time.

Overall, I find them very good, however their level of interest and time taken to assist and encourage you while you are working out fluctuates.

Many on the circuit appear to have no interest.

Some of the current members thought that the fitness instructors were too young, with one noting, "I would personally love to see one or two instructors who were in the older age bracket (35 to 45 years)". The age of the fitness instructors was an issue with another respondent. They perceived the "younger instructors as less concerned with advice or talking about programmes". Additional job related issues included poor communication skills between instructors and administration and the fitness centre being under staffed, which led to a reduced number of instructors being available to provide assistance.

The poor personal skills of the fitness instructors equated to 13.2% of all negative comments. The issues raised generally focussed on the fitness instructors' manners and attitudes. Comments included:

I have only struck one very rude instructor and she is still working there, but I try to avoid her.

Some display an immaturity as well as a lack of commitment to watching members correct techniques.

A reduction in standards and a lack of knowledge attracted the lowest response rate. A number of current members expressed their concerns about the reduction in standards at the fitness centre, with a few specifically identifying certain events that contributed to this occurrence. One respondent mentioned, "the high cost of [the fitness centre] was meant to reflect good staff to client ratio as well as competent staff. This has clearly diminished over the last 12 months". Another person identified that in their first 12 months the staff were excellent but had become less friendly and consistent. The perception that there were fewer supervisory staff was mentioned by one current member, while another stated:

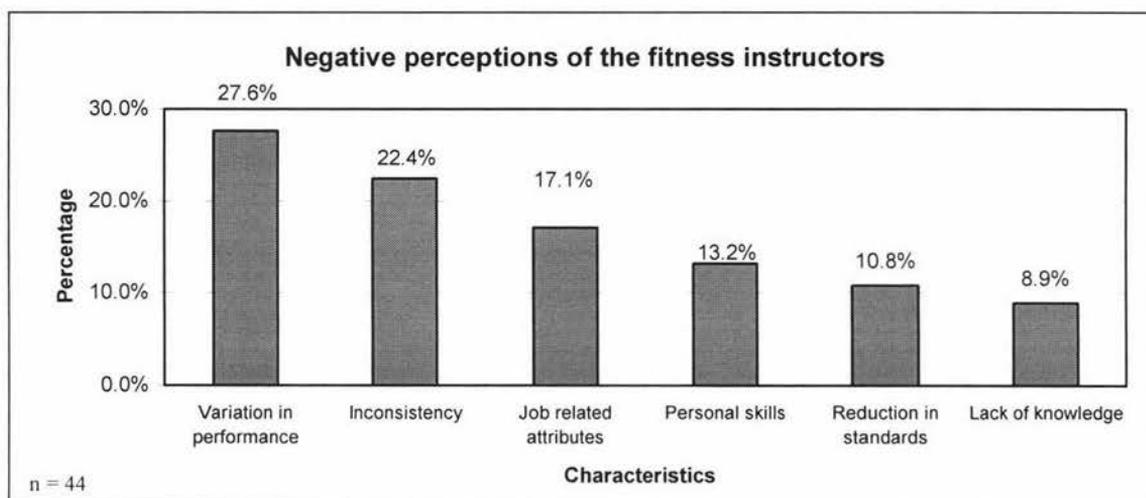
The standard has dropped in the last six months as new staff have come on board and longer serving staff have taken supervisory roles.

The opening of the fitness centre's second centre in September 1999 was stated as one reason for the reduction in standards. There was concern about the lack of knowledge of some fitness instructors, and one female member stated:

I was pregnant last year and I had to stop coming earlier than I would have liked. This was because I did not feel the staff knew enough about exercise and pregnancy. Some of the exercises provided were not suitable.

Other comments included a lack of knowledge and advice about programmes incorporating a reduced calorie diet. One current member stated, "none of the instructors really understand the basic biomechanics of weight training with longevity in mind".

Figure 6.14



### 6.3.2 Fitness instructor developments and changes

Current members were asked if they had noticed any developments or changes in the fitness instructors during the time they had been a member. Of the 299 current members who responded, 48.2% noticed there had been certain developments and/or changes while 51.8% failed to notice any developments and/or changes. As expected, the longer the respondent had been a member the greater number of developments and changes noted. A relatively few (15.2%) current members who had been with the fitness centre for 6 months or less had noticed any significant developments and/or changes. This is compared to 38% for current members who had been with the fitness centre for 6 to 11 months, 68% for 12 to 17 months, 64% for 18 to 24 months and 88.4% for current members 25 months or more.

The analysis of the results provided 10 significant developments and/or changes that current members had noticed in the fitness instructors (Figure 6.15). These were a reduction in job related attributes (23.6%), an improvement in job related attributes (19.7%), staff turnover (14.6%) and improvements in staff training (8.9%). There were also improvements in personal skills (5.7%), a decline in personal skills (5.7%), an increase in staff numbers (4.5%), staff promotions (4.5%) and younger staff being employed (4.5%). Furthermore, 8.3% of respondents' comments were classified as "other", which consisted of perceptions that totalled less than 2% of non categorised responses.

#### Reduction in job related attributes

The reduction in job related attributes of the fitness instructors rated significantly higher than any other characteristic. Current members who perceived a reduction in the job related attributes responded that there was a reduced desire by the fitness instructors to help the member. Also identified was an apparent decline in the fitness instructors' enthusiasm and professional attitude, with them being less attentive and knowledgeable. A number of respondents noted that the reduction in job related attributes had occurred over the past year. One current member stated, "they don't give quite the same confidence and professionalism as last year", while another indicated, "they don't appear as enthusiastic and professional as in late 1999". Current members identified that there had been considerable change in the fitness instructors from when they first joined the fitness centre. Examples included:

I feel there could be more education that is ongoing. When I first started, I got a lot of advice, but not anymore. Although I am not a new member, I still need encouragement and advice.

When I first joined, they used to be all very knowledgeable and keen to ensure you were exercising properly. Now many of them don't have the same passion.

The level of attentiveness from the instructors while I am on the circuit has decreased dramatically since I first joined. A year ago I felt like I was getting a personal trainer each time I visited – now it seems like I'm on my own but have someone there just to set the machines, no added help or motivation.

Instructors give less attention than when I first joined and are less likely to use my name. Some of the instructors get bored and inattentive around the quiet mid day period. The calibre of instructors seems less consistent than at first.

Another perceived change was the reduction in assistance that some current members had received. Some responses identified that fitness instructors did not correct technique and form as regularly as they previously did. One respondent explained, “they have become less vigilant in ensuring members are keeping good form while training”. Another believed, “the calibre of staff is lower than before and they don’t seem as interested or knowledgeable. There is no apparent desire to evaluate your programme or correct form and technique”.

The age and length of time that the fitness instructor had been employed with the fitness centre was closely associated with the members’ exercise technique and form not being corrected. One respondent mentioned, “some, not all of the new instructors are less committed to ensuring clients are well positioned on equipment and carrying out repetitions correctly”. Another asserted, “the younger instructors do not appear to supervise and motivate you as well as the older instructors”. However, this is contradicted by another current member who indicated, “as an older member who has been here for 18 months, the older instructors don’t put in much effort. Whereas the new instructors will encourage me and point out areas in which I can improve on”.

The attentiveness of the fitness instructors was also a concern to a few current members. It was perceived that the fitness instructors were talking more amongst themselves than concentrating on the member. As some members stated:

There is less desire to help you. If I owned the gym and I had people standing around chatting amongst themselves (i.e. instructors) when they could be helping customers enjoy the experience, I would be annoyed.

Less personal and not as interested or friendly, often talking to each other not clients.

They are more interested in having conversation with each other, rather than concentrating on the clients.

### Improvement in job related attributes

The analysis of the results highlighted a number of varying job related attributes that had improved. Numerous respondents noted the improved professionalism of the fitness instructors. One current member stated, “I have noticed a more professional approach. They seem to be more knowledgeable than when I first joined, with a few instructors in particular being very helpful”. Another respondent indicated that they had always been professional but now provide a “greater customer service in a professional manner, but to a very small number of instructors it is just a job”.

Improved knowledge was seen to be a development. The friendliness and personal support displayed by the fitness instructors was also mentioned. One current member indicated they had always “found them to be very helpful, caring and encouraging” while another explained that over time “they have become friendlier and want to help you achieve your goals”. A common perception among current members was a greater understanding that the fitness instructors showed towards them, with comments such as:

Less pushing of people while they work out, nevertheless still encouraging. I think most of us who have reached a certain age respond better to this than the macho stuff.

More aware of clients’ personal space. I want to be able to request information and advice, but not to be pushed as I find it an essential time to think.

Always have a number of instructors on the floor available and willing. They are very positive and supportive without being judgmental.

### Staff turnover

Staff turnover appeared to be considerably high to most current members. Statements such as, “there seems to be high staff turnover”, “there are only a few left from when I first started”, and “there are different faces due to staff turnover” were all common. Notably a few current members were concerned, with one stating, “it is a bit off putting at times”. Issues relating to staff turnover included a perception that the newer fitness instructors were not as experienced and lacked knowledge. Current member comments included:

There seems to be a higher staff turnover recently in the last 6 to 10 months. I feel that the newer instructors don’t have as much experience.

Overall, the standard of the instructors has dropped a little. They seem less experienced, enthusiastic and committed due to staff turnover.

More frequent turnover of staff, newer staff don't know as much about training and sometimes need to get one of the more experienced instructors to help.

One respondent noted, "the instructors used to know my name. Due to staff turnover I doubt if they do now". Another attributed it to the increase in membership numbers, stating, "I am less recognised and addressed personally now".

Some current members believed they knew the reasons for the staff turnover, stating that it was due to certain management issues:

Quite high turnover of staff and I sense some dissatisfaction. I have heard that management on occasions has told staff they are easily replaced. Your success in business is strongly related to staff. I am concerned that the well qualified staff are inadequately remunerated. They provide friendly service and a good atmosphere, which is essential.

#### Improvement in employee training

Current members noticed an improvement in employee training, with newer fitness instructors appearing to receive more intensive training than previous employees. There was a belief that new employees improved quickly and consistently applied the fitness centre's philosophy and principles. A few noticed the continued level of improvement in terms of employee shadowing. One respondent indicated, "supervisors are more noticeable and present when new instructors are on the floor" while another stated, "staff appear to work better when a senior instructor is present".

There was a perception of a team based work environment with new instructors becoming more confident and knowledgeable by working in a team with more experienced staff. One current member stated:

They obviously have ongoing training. They work as a team and are mindful of the big picture in terms of traffic flow and individual attention. They all appear to have good fitness knowledge that is constantly evolving.

Other current members noticed that regular training of fitness instructors had occurred. There was a belief that this led to greater understanding of equipment and increased knowledge. For example:

Seems to be regular training sessions from senior instructors to ensure all instructors are correctly supervising clients in regards to proper form and enhanced safety.

They're more familiar with the equipment and the way the gym operates. Also they become aware of the clients personal details and different types of programmes that suit.

Believe it is a plus that instructors who were there when I first started still seem enthusiastic and helpful. The new instructors appear to develop quickly and presume this is due to good training and encouragement from management.

They are obviously kept up to date with new fitness developments and are most helpful when questioned about new equipment or new supplementary exercises.

#### Fitness instructors personal skills

A number of current members provided comments on fitness instructors' personal skills. It was noted that fitness instructors had matured, and had a confident and competent attitude. One respondent suggested, "the more experienced instructors seem to have a much better rapport with members, while the newer instructors seem to be less sure of themselves". There was frequent contradiction regarding the personal interest shown by the fitness instructors. One current member noted, "over time as they get to know the members, they become more personal and take more interest in what's going on in the rest of your life". Contrary to this was the comment, "an increase in membership numbers has reduced the personal service".

#### Additional developments and/or changes

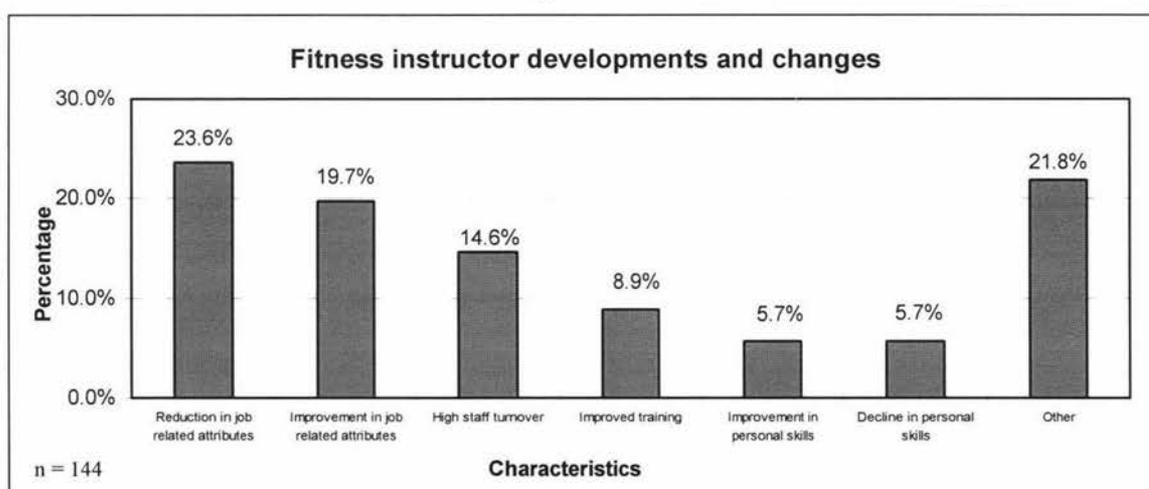
The other category comprised responses that had occurred less frequently. A number of current members indicated that there had been a vast increase in the number of fitness instructors employed at the fitness centre. Surprisingly, a few current members had noticed a decline in the standards even though more fitness instructors had been employed. One respondent noted, "as the number of instructors has increased, the overall commitment and standard of them has started to vary". This was supported by another current member who stated:

There seems to be more recruits that are new now. The empathy and interest of the instructors has decreased. There is no genuine concern about how your programme is going. This has been replaced with lip service.

There was a perception that the new fitness instructors were a lot younger, with one respondent stating, “it could be me ageing”. Internal staff promotions were mentioned occasionally, with a few respondents noting that there was a continual progression of fitness instructors becoming personal trainers as they became more experienced. There was an assumption that more specialised positions had developed in the fitness centre with fitness instructors taking on these roles. An example was several receptionists had progressed from reception to fitness instructor while another had developed into the role of the fitness centre’s massage therapist.

Additional comments included a greater number of male Maori and/or Polynesians being employed, a reduction in assistance in the free weight area by the fitness instructors, the incorporation of a standard uniform with name tags and more part-time employees being employed.

Figure 6.15

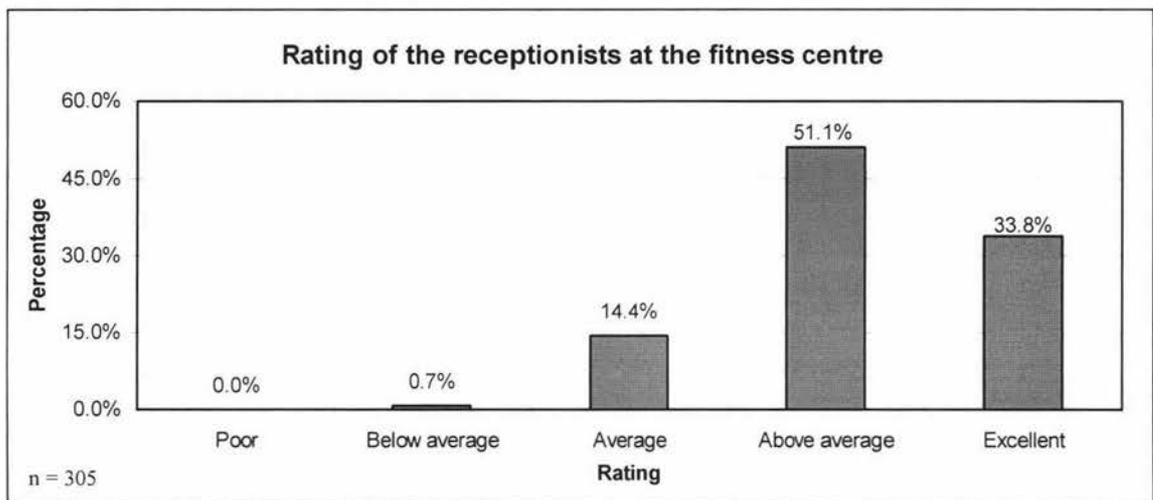


### 6.3.3 Receptionist characteristics

As depicted in Figure 6.16, 33.8% of current members perceived the receptionists to be excellent, while 51.1% rated them above average. Only 14.4% rated them average and 0.7% believed they were below average. One of the two respondents who classified them as below average noted that, “they seemed very mechanical, shy, short of

vocabulary and interaction”. The other stated, “the calibre of staff is lower than before, and they don’t seem interested any more”. Both were male, aged between 35 and 54 years of age, earning \$105,000+ and employed in the legislator, administrator or manager category. Their length of membership at the fitness centre ranged from 6 to 11 months and 12 to 17 months. One had rated the fitness instructors as average while the other perceived them to be below average.

Figure 6.16



The comparison of the receptionist and fitness instructor ratings revealed that current members perceived the fitness instructors to be of a higher quality. Of the total responses 39.3% of current members rated the fitness instructors as excellent compared to a 33.8% rating for the receptionists. Furthermore, 53.8% rated the fitness instructors as above average in contrast to the receptionist rating of 51.1%. The process of cross tabulating gender and the rating of the receptionists revealed that a greater percentage of males (40.7%) rated them as excellent compared to females (27.5%). Slightly more females (53.75%) rated them above average than males (48.7%), while twice as many females (18.75%) than males (9.2%) thought they were average.

Of the 305 current members who responded to this question, 176 provided comments for their rating. Over 90% of the feedback was positive, with a total of 44 different characteristics being identified. These ranged from the personal characteristics of the receptionists to job related issues.

### Positive perceptions

The analysis of the positive perceptions revealed seven prominent characteristics (Figure 6.17). These were being friendly, possessing specific personal qualities, greeting people by name, being helpful, welcoming, having good presentation, and being professional.

The most common characteristic was the friendliness of the receptionists. This equated to 27.9% of all positive comments, with current members identifying that the receptionists were very friendly and personable. In general, most of the comments reflecting the friendliness of the receptionists included additional comments. Statements such as “impressed at their friendliness and down to earth manner”, “friendly greeting and farewell” and “friendly, helpful, smiling, and happy” typified many the comments.

One respondent stated:

They are always friendly and helpful. The receptionists fit in well with the team atmosphere with the instructors at the gym

The personal qualities displayed by the receptionists (23.7%), was the second highest characteristic. Most respondents identified that their smile, pleasant nature, and cheerfulness were very apparent. Other distinguishing attributes of the receptionists included being bubbly, warm, personable, smart, enthusiastic, happy, polite, courteous and efficient. A considerable number of respondents were impressed with the personalities of the receptionists. One current member expressed that they, “are helpful and bubbly. Everyone seems to be happy all the time, it is a lovely atmosphere”. Other comments included, “they are always cheerful and efficient and very pleasant to talk to” and, “they are always cheerful and ready to have a chat which is good public relations”.

Many current members (20.2%) were impressed by the receptionists’ ability to remember names and membership numbers. For example, two current members commented, “I like being greeted with a smile and feel very special when they know my name” and, “very pleasant and call you by your name. The name recall at [the fitness centre] is amazing”. A number of current members believed that being acknowledged by name was important. One respondent noted, “I do enjoy being recognised as a person rather than a number”. Another comment was, “the personal touches such as greeting

you by your first name and with a smile is important and it is something [the fitness centre] does very well”.

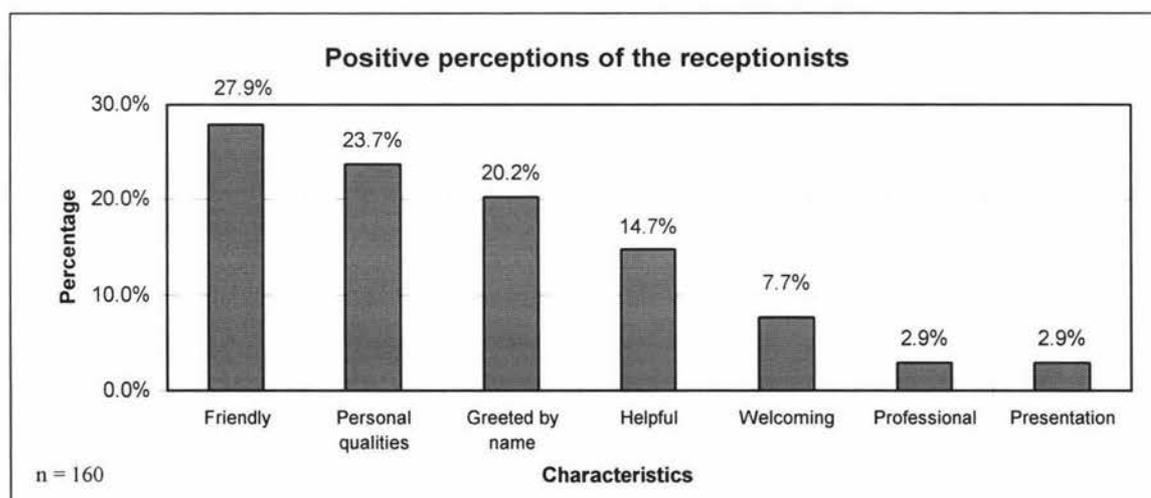
The personal touches that the respondent mentioned above, also included the acknowledgement of current members’ birthdays:

On my birthday the receptionists wished me a happy day and let the trainers know. They acknowledged my birthday as well, it was great.

First person of the day to acknowledge my birthday – I felt good.

The helpfulness of the receptionists (14.7%) was seen as an important attribute and was generally combined with additional comments. The welcome (7.7%) that current members received was closely associated with the personal qualities that the receptionists possessed. One member stated, “they are friendly, efficient and make you feel welcome in a personal way”, while another noted, “they are always welcoming and mostly always on the desk. They are the ambassadors of first impressions which is very important”. Having good presentation (2.9%), and being professional (2.9%) were the two characteristics that current members recognised least.

Figure 6.17



### Negative Perceptions

There was a variety of negative comments put forward by current members, however only a few occurred more than once. The comment made more often than any other was that the front desk was not always staffed. One respondent mentioned, “they could be

better, these are the people new or potential customers meet and sometimes when you arrive no one is there". Another current member noted, "sometimes there seems to be no one present at the desk, but eventually someone will greet you".

Another negative comment included a lack of knowledge of promotional activities, the perception that the receptionists are always on the telephone, high staff turnover, poor grooming and the assumption that they need to be more professional. A respondent indicated that the receptionists handled the appointments poorly and generally the information on the computer was not up to date. One current member stated they had not been "addressed by name, and they are sometimes busy as I arrive, just given a key with no acknowledgement". Another respondent identified that they were always unsure who the receptionist was as there were usually several employees there at all times. A few current members commented on the monotony of the job, with one stating, "they seem almost superfluous really. Apart from the log in and towel hire. To the average punter they are just part of the background".

#### **6.3.4 Receptionist developments and changes**

When asked if current members had noticed any developments or changes in the receptionists, only 16.4% responded that they had. As anticipated, the longer the current member had been with the fitness centre the greater probability that they had noticed significant developments or changes. Current members who had been with the fitness centre for less than 6 months noticed no development and/or change. There was an exponential increase from 10% for 6 to 11 months to 42.3% for current members who had been with the fitness centre for 25 months or more who had noticed any changes.

Five areas that were perceived to have developed and/or changed (Figure 6.18) included greater staff turnover (35.3%), a decline in service (27.5%) and an improvement in the receptionists' personal qualities (17.6%). There was also an increase in the service provided (11.8%) and a variation in the receptionists' rosters (7.8%).

Current members shared similar perspectives on staff turnover. Some thought it was not normal for an organisation to have such a high turnover, with one respondent suggesting, "it does not seem like a stable position". The majority of the respondents'

comments were very similar as to whether the high staff turnover had resulted in a decline in service. The following comments reflect some of their opinions:

Not as friendly as before. Often don't welcome you and just ask for your membership number.

Some new receptionists are not as professional as the previous staff were.

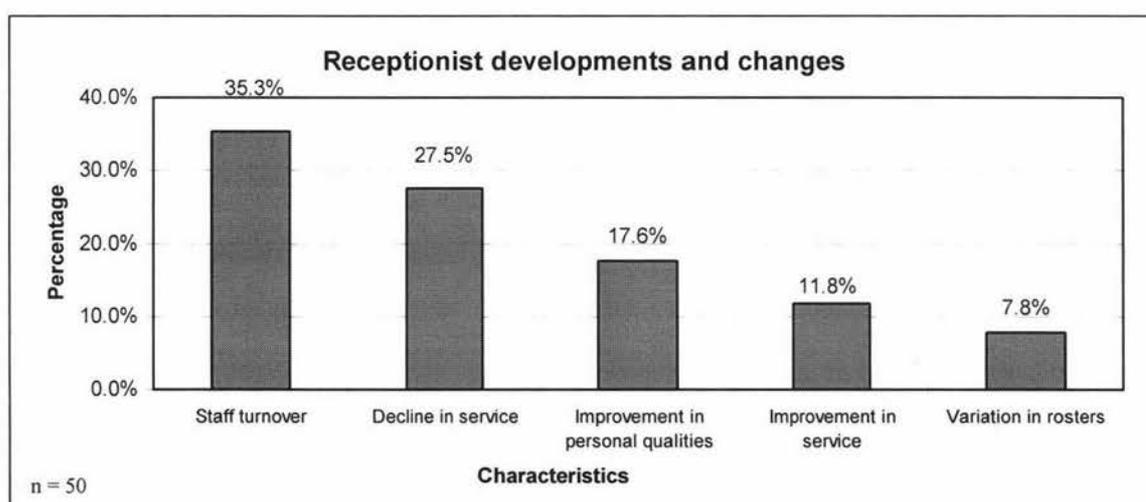
There is always someone different at reception. When you ask for a locker, nine times out of ten you will get a locker next to the one that is already taken. No idea of the layout in the changing room.

I have noticed a reduction in personal attention and level of interest in customers since I joined in October 1999.

They have gradually got worse, lacking in knowledge and professionalism.

Some respondents had noticed an improvement in the personal qualities of the receptionists. Common attributes included being positive, very friendly, pleasant, and the ability of the receptionists to greet people by their first name. A few people noticed the receptionists had improved in this regard, and one respondent thought, "in the last 25 months the emphasis on knowing clients' names has improved. Of all the gyms I've been to [this fitness centre] does this the best".

Figure 6.18



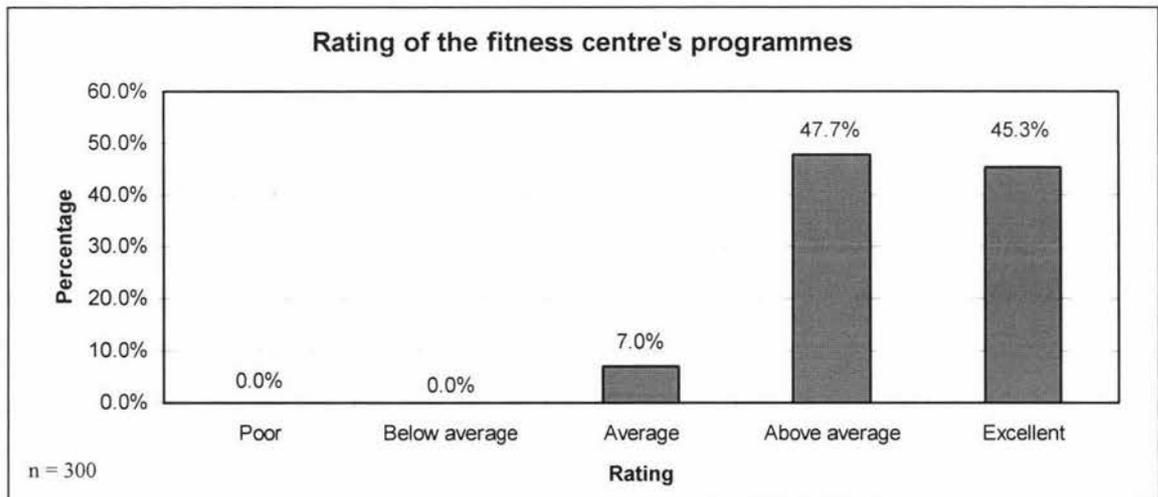
A few current members indicated there had been an improvement in the service provided by the receptionists. Responses included a more consistent standard that had

gradually improved. The change in rosters was also observed, with one respondent stating, “they seem to have moved to more dedicated receptionists” while another believed, “there was more rotation of the receptionists over the week”. This was supported by another current member who acknowledged, “there are a lot more receptionists, with their hours being mixed. The same person is not always on at the same time”.

### 6.3.5 Fitness programme characteristics

The fitness centre programmes rated very favourably as illustrated in Figure 6.19. There was a relatively small difference between those who perceived the programmes as above average (47.7%), and those rating them as excellent (45.3%). Surprisingly, no respondents believed the programmes to be below average or poor.

Figure 6.19



Of the 300 respondents, 54.3% provided an explanation for their rating. There was a greater positive perception (76.3%), than negative (23.7%) regarding the fitness centre programmes.

#### Positive perceptions

The analysis of the positive comments produced seven distinct characteristics (Figure 6.20). These included programmes tailored to suit individual needs, greater variety, support and monitoring, systematic progression, design of coloured card programmes, equipment and training techniques and the programmes being effective and efficient.

The most regular comment was that the programmes were designed to suit individual needs. Just over one quarter of current members (25.6%) emphasised this aspect, with a few identifying how impressed they were with the different programmes. Comments such as, “tailored to suit me personally”, “I enjoy the programmes they set up for me especially” and, “the programmes are great, especially when personally customised on request” were frequent. The fitness instructors’ ability to accommodate changes and listen to specific requests were identified by numerous current members:

I require special needs with my programme. This is due to re-constructive surgery. My programme is designed to assist me and it is always under scrutiny.

Yes, staff listen and are happy to change programmes to accommodate individual needs.

Variety in programmes (16.8%), was another category that appeared regularly in the current member comments. One respondent mentioned, “I really like the fact that I am not stuck with the same routine and I am not left to my own devices. I can really see progress from each visit”. The importance of variety was considered to ease the monotony and keep members motivated. One respondent identified, “the variety is introduced regularly to maintain interest”.

The support fitness instructors provided and the monitoring of programmes (15%) was seen as invaluable to many current members. The availability of staff was considered essential, with one current member stating:

It is great there’s always support and advice. That is one thing that makes it so good. You are not just left to get on with it. There are always instructors checking your form.

The point was raised that many fitness centres didn’t provide constant monitoring and regular upgrading of programmes. The recording of results by the fitness instructors was motivating and rewarding, as members could see their progress and with their exercise weights increasing it became a challenge.

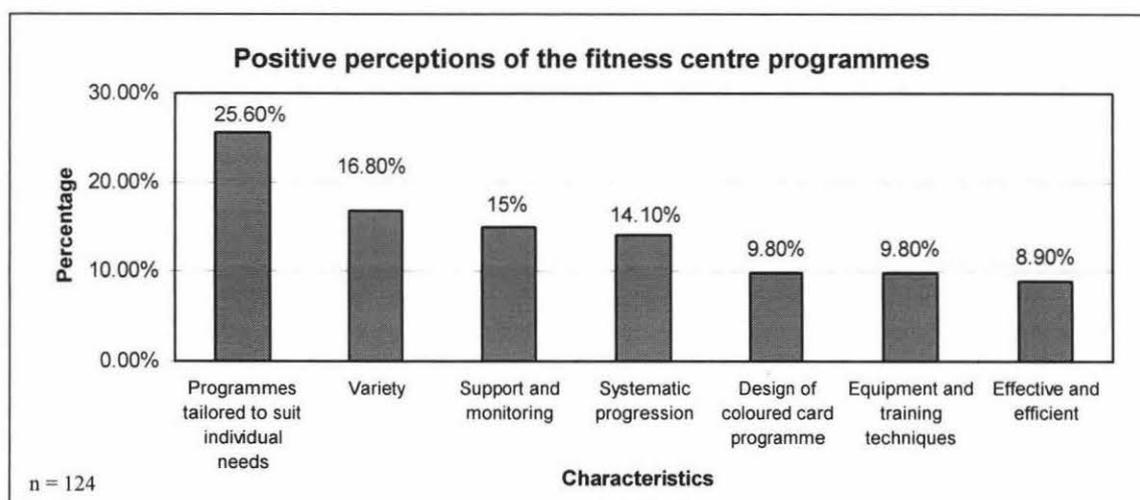
Respondents (14.1%) perceived the programmes to be systematic and progressive. There was an emphasis that the programmes were designed for gradual improvement with individual requirements in mind. Some current members indicated that the system was very thorough and had clear objectives, with one respondent noting, “there is a logic and

a reason in the programmes with measurable results”. The coloured card system was seen to add value, with rotation times being managed well. Programmes were easy to understand, with fitness instructors providing instruction on the use of machines and proper technique.

The design of the coloured card programmes (9.8%), the equipment and training techniques utilised (9.8%), and the programmes being effective and efficient (8.9%) were the least common perceptions. It was perceived that the coloured card programme enhanced motivation, reduced monotony and provided a monitoring process for individual results. A few respondents emphasised that the coloured card system reinforced a feeling of accomplishment when a card was completed. One respondent noted, “they are fantastic because you think only five more sessions and I can move on to a new programme”.

Both the training techniques and the equipment appeared to be advanced, according to a few responses. One current member mentioned “the programmes seem to be based upon the latest research findings”. Equipment was perceived to be “state of the art”, with only a small number of current members commenting on the effectiveness and efficiency of the programmes. One individual indicated, “it suits my needs as time is of the essence. Only programme I know that I can be in an out in an hour and still get results”.

Figure 6.20



### Negative perceptions

The need for regular follow-up and discussion (58.6%) and greater variety (38.6%) were two significant characteristics to become manifest. The remaining 17.8% included a variety of perceptions that occurred less frequently. The weighting of the two characteristics should not be taken out of context, because the negative perceptions equated to 23.7% of all comments provided. Hence the high percentage of these two categories reflects only the percentage of negative comments.

As identified there is a greater requirement for programmes to be changed more regularly and new programmes discussed in more detail with the instructors. There was a perception that the fitness instructors needed to be more proactive in changing programmes, with a member expressing, “the member must take ownership of the direction they want to go in, with there being an involvement from both sides”. It was evident that there was a lack of regular assessments and a perception that a room was needed where fitness instructors could discuss programme changes. One respondent suggested, “it would be great if we could sit down and discuss one-on-one, rather than on the go in the gym”. Others stated:

I would really like to see my progress on a graph. How do I know that I am progressing? I think time could be spent with members who have belonged for a while to show them how they are doing.

I thought more time could have gone into asking me specifically what I wanted to achieve before it was written up.

When a programme is completed, there needs to be more consultation. More thought needs to go into the next programme, it is all a bit on the spot.

Don't really know what is on offer, no one has really explained or suggested different options.

A few respondents expressed that a greater variety is needed in the programmes. Some mentioned a greater emphasis on aerobic activity is required while others indicated variety was needed to increase the enjoyment of working out. There was a strong indication that the programmes did not emphasise stretching, while one respondent perceived that the fitness centre had reduced variety due to their training philosophy:

The only reason for the average rating is a denial of split body and multi set exercises. Although not for all, many people would benefit. Faster, single set, complete body workout isn't for all and instructors should realise this.

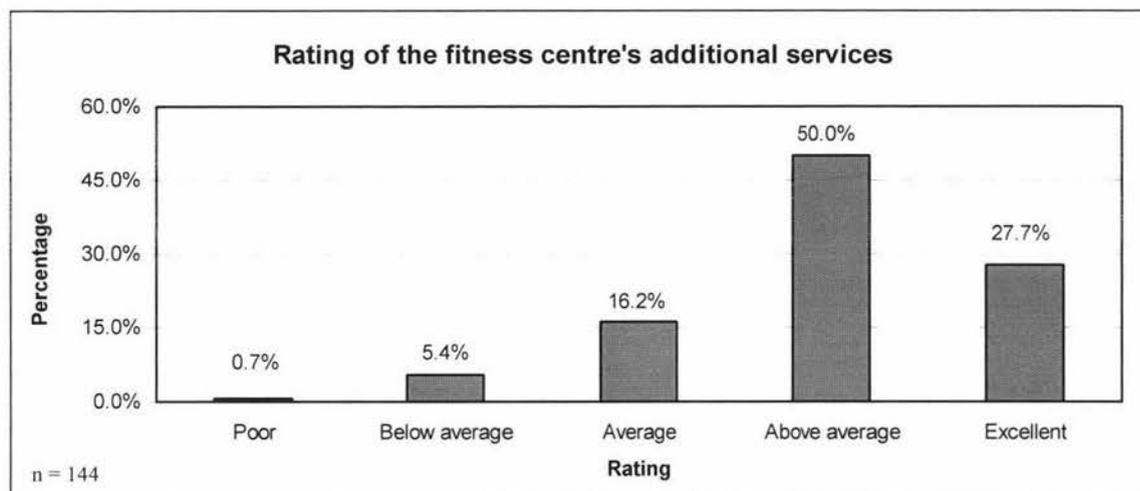
Current members commented on other negative perceptions, but these occurred less frequently. Comments included the free weight area not being supervised, there was no encouragement to use additional equipment, limited results, the coloured card system being boring and the programmes on offer were no different to any other fitness centre.

### **6.3.6 Additional service characteristics**

The additional services that the fitness centre offered included specific programmes for golf, weight loss, personal training, body analysis testing, physiotherapy, massage and a programme designed to rehabilitate back injuries. Current members were asked if they had used any of these services, of which 47.4% acknowledged that they had. The process of crosstabulation revealed that an even distribution of males and females had used the fitness centre's additional services. There was no direct association between the age of the respondent or their annual income with the use of these services. The length of time the current member had been with the fitness centre also provided no conclusive results. Most membership categories had an even percentage of current members utilising the services. Only the respondents who had been with the fitness centre for 25 months or more had a higher level of usage.

The current members who acknowledged they had used the fitness centre's additional services were asked to rank their experience. The results (Figure 6.21) illustrate a diverse distribution ranging from poor to excellent. The largest group of respondents (50%), ranked the additional services as above average with 27.7% perceiving them to be excellent. A combined total of 22.3% of respondents deemed the services to be either poor, below average or average.

Figure 6.21



When requested to provide an explanation for their ranking, 67.1% of respondents who had used the additional services did so. The comments provided an even distribution of positive and negative perceptions. Of current members who had used the additional services, 55% had a favourable experience while the remaining 45% indicated specific concerns.

#### Positive perceptions

The perceptions current members provided about their experience were generally complimentary, with no specific characteristics existing. The services mentioned frequently were the body analysis testing, massage, weight loss programme and physiotherapy, while personal training, golf and the back programme received minimal feedback.

Numerous current members thought that the body analysis testing was excellent, identifying that it provided an accurate indication of progress. One respondent noted, “compared to other gyms I have attended, I found this testing to be very good”, while another stated that the results were professionally explained:

I was taken through this service and the person conducting it was excellent. It seems she really enjoys what she does and is interested in the results as much as the clients.

A few respondents liked the scientific approach, indicating that it was very technical and provided results in an easily understood format.

Current members who had undertaken the weight loss programme commented particularly favourably on the results achieved. One respondent identified they had lost 8kgs, while another noted they achieved above average results:

Very happy with continual support from staff members while on the weight loss programme.  
Great programme and follow-up results.

The physiotherapist was perceived as being competent, with a current member explaining, “she is very skilled with a warm personality”. A suggestion for the physiotherapist was, “she needs to be more proactive, overseeing members while they are training”. The massage also received favourable feedback, with comments reflecting the effective treatment provided and the masseuse’s friendly manner.

#### Negative perceptions

Unlike the positive perceptions, certain characteristics (Figure 6.22) became apparent based on the comments that were provided. These included current members not being aware of the availability of additional services (38.6%), no follow-up for the weight loss programme and body analysis testing (23.4%), additional services being expensive (19%), and body analysis testing not being personal (19%).

A majority of respondents who had used an additional service were not aware of any other services that were available. Comments such as, “didn’t know they had a speciality golf programme”, “none of these have been offered to me” and, “I haven’t used them as I was unaware of them”, were frequent. There was a suggestion that no one at the fitness centre really promoted the additional services or in fact advised members to use them. One current member explained that more education about additional programmes and services was required.

The rate of follow-up after a current member had completed a programme or used a service was perceived to be poor. The following comments reflect the inadequacy of the follow-up:

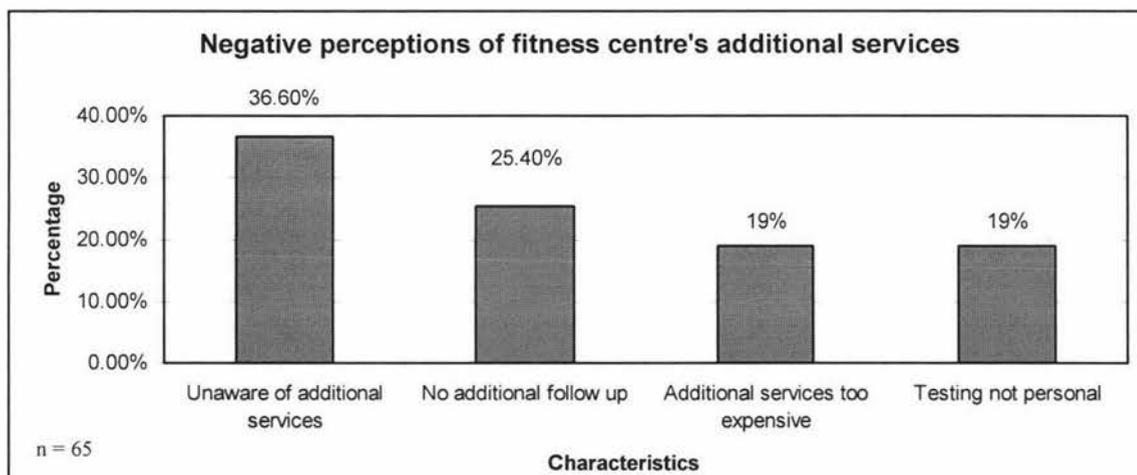
I have done the weight loss programme and it seemed too short. No one has followed up asking me how things are going.

I suggest that the nutritionist should check weekly the progress of clients who are doing the weight loss programme.

The body analysis testing was also regarded as having an insufficient follow-up procedure, with respondents expressing that usually there was no further testing suggested or any explanation on how to measure progress.

There was a perception that the weight loss programme was too expensive. A few respondents indicated that they had looked into it, but could not afford it, especially in addition to their membership fee. One respondent noted, “I inquired about the weight loss and back programme but there was an additional cost. That always rubs me the wrong way”. The body analysis testing was seen to lack professionalism compared to the rest of the centre, but the respondent explained that this was due to the machine not working. Another current member stated, “the assessment was very clinical and generic and was not personal”.

Figure 6.22



### 6.3.7 Fitness programme and additional service developments and changes

Of the current members surveyed 36.8% of respondents acknowledged they had noticed a development and/or change in the fitness programmes and services provided by the fitness centre. The respondents who had been with the fitness centre for 18 months or more had noticed the most developments and/or changes. The most common developments and/or changes in the fitness programmes or additional services were the introduction of more equipment, specialised programmes and services. A number of

current members indicated that the services and programmes on offer now had increased as well as their price, since they first joined.

A greater number of respondents indicated that massage was a new service being provided by the fitness centre. Other services introduced were weight loss, lower back, golf and a swimming programme. One member mentioned, “the changes have been discreet and evolving”. A suggestion by one respondent was to include a new mother’s programme or a “specific exercise programme suitable for pregnant women”.

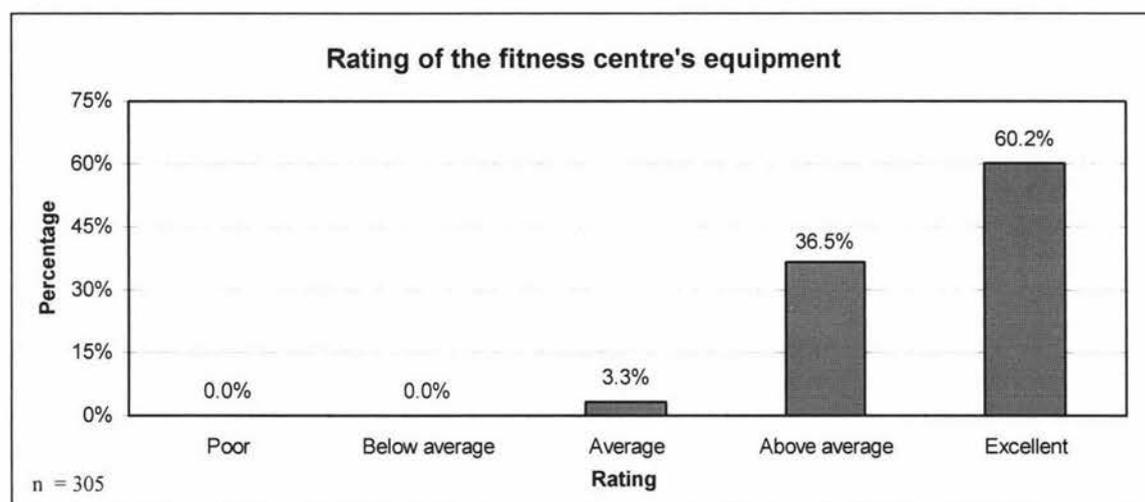
Physiotherapy was identified as an additional service now being offered, with one respondent stating, “a specific change has been the reduced availability of the physiotherapist, due to less hours”.

Numerous respondents acknowledged that the fitness centre regularly purchased additional equipment, although there was a perception that when the equipment was introduced, no instruction was provided on how to use it.

### 6.3.8 Fitness equipment characteristics

The fitness centre’s equipment was perceived to be of a high quality. As shown in Figure 6.23, 60.2% of respondents rated it as excellent, while 36.5% rated it above average, with 3.3% believing it to be average.

Figure 6.23



Of the respondents, 49.8% provided an explanation for their rating. Although the response rate was slightly lower than for previous questions, the comments did provide valuable information. The responses consisted of 83.4% positive perceptions and 16.6% negative perceptions.

### Positive perceptions

The characteristics that formed (Figure 6.24) were based on the perception that the equipment was well maintained (33.5%), of excellent quality (27.9%), and was very clean (23%). Additionally it was believed that there was new equipment introduced regularly (6.2%), the equipment was laid out well (6.2%), and was easy to use (2.5%).

The perception that the equipment was kept in excellent working order was a very common statement. Some respondents expressed their gratitude for the equipment being well maintained and always available. A few current members stated that the equipment still looked brand new, with others mentioning that it appeared to be well maintained. One respondent stated, “the equipment is superior and kept in great order. Have not yet come across an unusable machine”. When any equipment was not in working order it was mentioned that it was usually fixed quickly and any ripped upholstery was repaired promptly.

The quality of the equipment was apparent to a significant number of current members. “High quality”, “state of the art” and “high tech” were comments used frequently to describe the fitness centre’s equipment. One respondent mentioned, “the equipment was designed by physiotherapists and doctors”, while another indicated, “it is the best equipment in the world according to research”. The equipment used at this fitness centre was believed to be of greater quality in comparison to other fitness centre. Comments from current members included:

Top quality, better than any other gym I have been to in Auckland. The equipment is great.

After using [fitness centre] equipment, I now find the equipment in gyms overseas, when I travel for work is badly designed and frustrating to use.

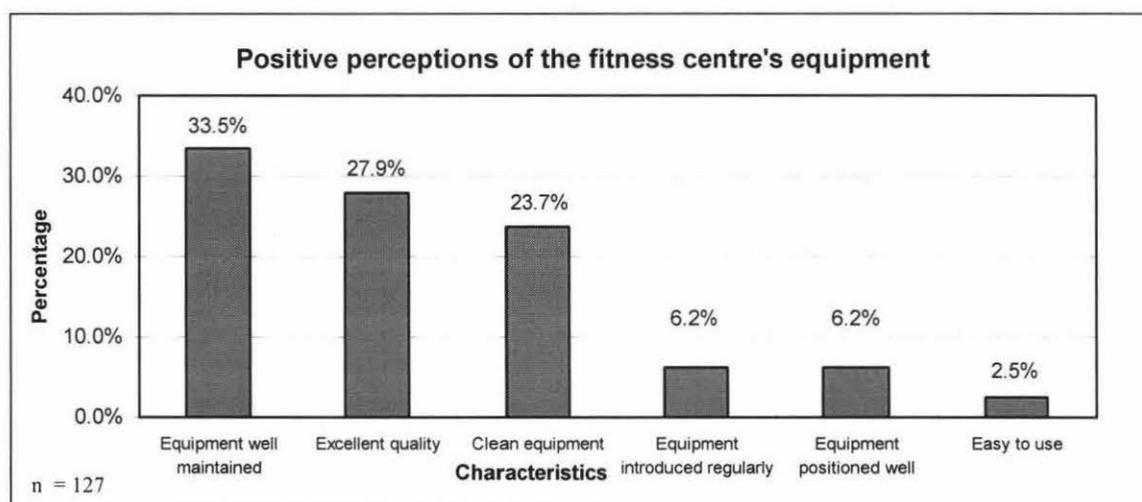
The safety aspect and the efficiency of the equipment were also mentioned. One respondent stated that, “their naturopath had explained that the equipment isolates the muscle groups and makes injuries less likely”, while another respondent indicated:

I like the fact that everything is adjustable and I feel confident that I can not injure myself, unlike conventional equipment.

The equipment also provided time efficient workouts. One current member explained, “I’m no expert but upon talking to others they are impressed that the equipment allows you to achieve the same results in a quicker time”. Another mentioned, “it is great how I can use the equipment and get the benefits in such a short time, as my workouts are limited to my lunch break”.

The cleanliness of the equipment was also important to current members. A few mentioned that they often see staff regularly cleaning the equipment. There was the perception that “management was aware of their responsibilities regarding hygiene”. There was an observation that the fitness centre regularly introduced new equipment and the layout of the equipment was satisfactory. One respondent emphasised, “the equipment is positioned well, perception is reality”. The equipment was also perceived to be easy to use with a respondent identifying, “full range of movement can be achieved and you don’t have to be a bodybuilder to use it”.

Figure 6.24



### Negative perceptions

There was a limited number of negative perceptions (16.6%), concerning the fitness centre's equipment (Figure 6.25). These included the equipment being too close together (40.6%), not enough equipment based on the size of the membership (28.1%), additional maintenance and cleaning required (15.6%), and the cardiovascular machines were perceived to be outdated (15.7%).

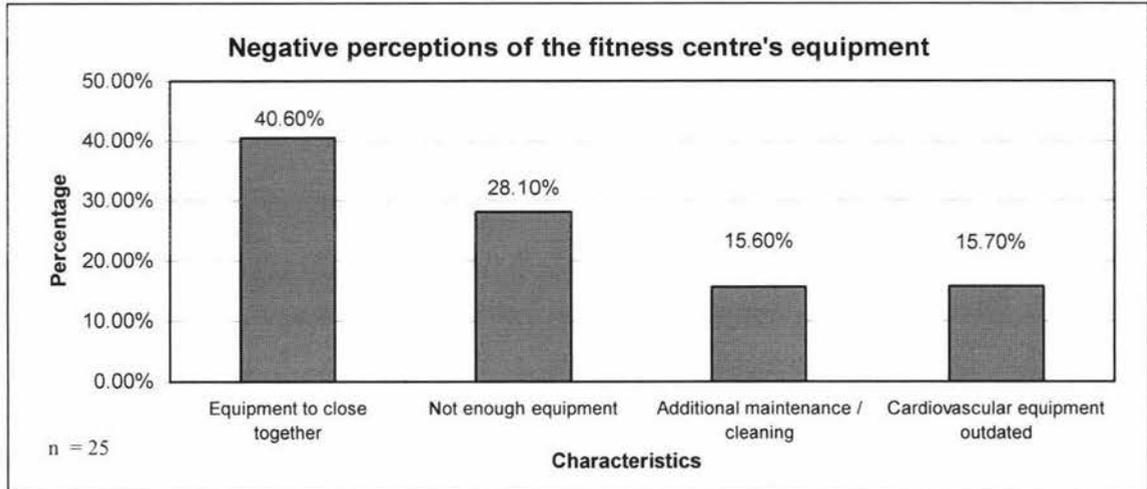
There was a perception that the equipment was positioned too close together. Some respondents were of the opinion that there were an excessive number of machines for the size of the building. As more equipment was introduced and the membership increased there was a belief the fitness centre was becoming cramped. Overcrowding was also seen as a problem. One member stated, "there are not enough machines, when busy you have to wait for over 30 minutes to get started on the circuit". A few respondents indicated that there was not enough cardiovascular equipment. While one current member acknowledged, "there is a limited range of equipment and you are unable to complete a comprehensive exercise programme due to the lack of certain pieces of equipment".

There were a few comments expressing concerns about the cardiovascular machines being outdated and that they were the least impressive of all the equipment at the fitness centre. The cycles were perceived to be very old and needed to be more functional and have interactive features to make them more interesting.

Some believed additional maintenance and cleaning was required. One respondent noted, "the floor machinery was in need of change as it looks worn and tired especially the floor mats". Another stated:

I think it could be cleaned a bit more, over in the free weight area, while people are working out in peak times.

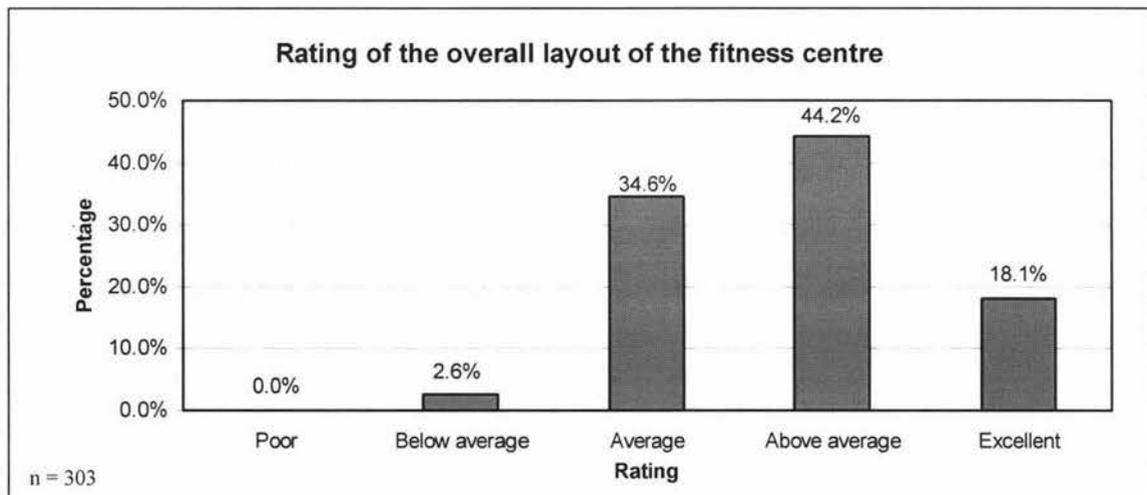
Figure 6.25



### 6.3.9 Fitness centre's layout characteristics

The structural layout of the fitness centre is in the design and functionality of the facilities specific areas. These include the cardiovascular, circuit, free weight and stretch areas of the fitness centre as well as the locker/changing rooms. The respondents were asked to rate the overall layout of the fitness centre (Figure 6.26) and as an option, to explain their rating.

Figure 6.26



A majority of respondents perceived the overall layout of the fitness centre to be either average (34.6%) or above average (44.2%). A small number believed the layout was excellent (18.1%), while 2.6% rated it as below average.

Of the 303 current members who responded to this question, 62.4% provided an explanation for their rating. The analysis of these comments revealed that 15.9% were positive while significantly, the remaining 84.1% were negative.

#### Positive perceptions

Although there were a small number of current members who perceived the fitness centre layout to be satisfactory, two distinct characteristics emerged. These were the overall design and functionality of the fitness centre (57.2%) and its tidiness and cleanliness (42.8%). The majority of comments concerning the design and functionality of the fitness centre emphasised the organised layout of the areas based on the space available. One respondent who was a spatial designer mentioned, “the interior space layout works well”. A few mentioned there was good organisational placement of the equipment, while numerous comments reflected the separation of the weight areas. One respondent noted, “the circuit feels intimate and user friendly”, while another stated, “the separate training areas allow more focus and less distraction. All areas are conducive to a pleasant environment”.

The current members generally perceived the locker/changing rooms to be very clean, with one respondent stating:

Probably the cleanest, tidiest and least overcrowded fitness centre I've ever attended.

#### Negative perceptions

From the negative perspectives, four characteristics formed (Figure 6.27). These consisted of cramped and crowded areas (51.4%), the stretch area being too small (19.6%), the locker/changing rooms being inadequate (15.5%) and a belief that more space was required (13.5%). A major concern for numerous respondents was how the facility was very cramped and crowded. Although a few respondents expressed their concerns about how the fitness centre was becoming crowded, there was a greater majority emphasising that the closeness of the equipment was their biggest concern.

Some mentioned that the fitness centre was becoming crowded which made it harder to move around the equipment. The following comments illustrate this perception:

There could be more room between treadmills and bikes as it is hard to move around when someone is on the next machine.

Too crowded in the cardiovascular area with treadmills and bikes, there is not enough room. I always knock my leg or arm trying to get onto the equipment.

Layout is good but all areas now becoming rather overcrowded with equipment that I consider too closely spaced.

Two issues were raised about the stretching area. Firstly some respondents did not know that a stretch area existed, illustrating that it was ill defined. One respondent stated:

Where is the stretch area? Apart from the machines in the free weight area, I am not sure where you would stretch. It would be good if more emphasis was put on this.

Secondly, current members believed the area was too small. Some respondents believed the fitness centre did not sufficiently emphasis stretching. A few indicated that there was a need for a stretching guide on the wall to remind members of certain exercises. The stretching area was said by some to be cluttered and the mats needed cleaning. There was a perception that the stretching area needed to be more private and located closer to the cardiovascular area.

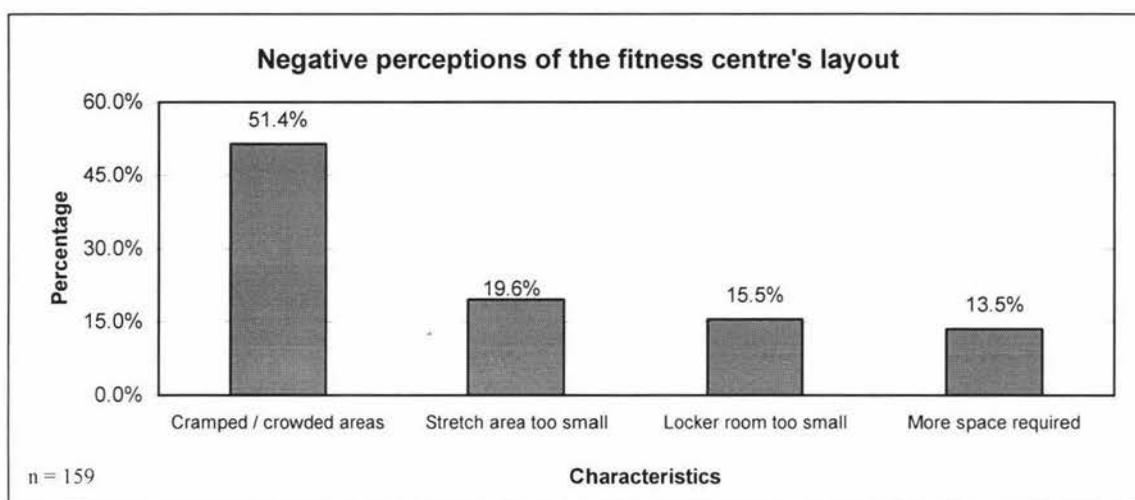
The locker/changing rooms were regarded by some as very small and poorly designed. A notable comment was the general layout of the lockers. At times the changing rooms became crowded and there was restricted access due to the benches being in front of the lockers. There was a belief that the layout lacked flow, causing congestion and was dangerous as a result. One respondent mentioned, “with the benches being below the lockers it is easy to knock your head on an open locker door”. Another stated:

Locker rooms seem to have “Murphy’s law” syndrome, always on top of someone else even if only two people in there.

One female respondent felt the locker/changing rooms were very exposed, as there was no door providing privacy. Another respondent identified, “they seem impersonal and cold and would prefer a changing space near the shower”. The showers were deemed inadequate with water pressure and temperature a major problem.

A common perception was the belief that the fitness centre needed more space. It was seen as compact and claustrophobic with one respondent stating, “the ceiling was too low in the circuit area making it stuffy and humid”. Some mentioned that the facility was restricted due to its size, but iterated that more space was needed, especially during busy times.

Figure 6.27

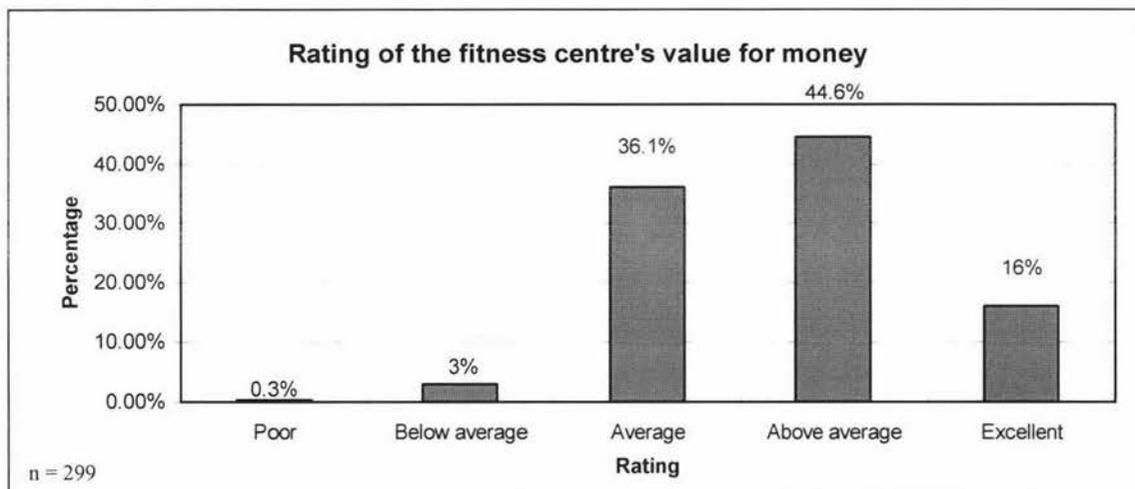


### 6.3.10 Value for money characteristics

There was a variety of feedback whether the fitness centre was providing value for money. Figure 6.28 illustrates that 80.7% of respondents thought value for money was above average or average. A majority of respondents perceived the fitness centre to be expensive, but felt that the service provided compensated for this in most cases.

The respondent who rated the fitness centre's value for money as poor indicated that the low rating was due to their limited use of the facility over the past six months. Those who rated it as below average identified that personal attention was not provided. One respondent mentioned, “I was prepared to pay a 50% premium for closer attention, but it has not happened”. A few stated that the average wage earner could not afford it, while one current member rated it below average as he could not use the showers and changing rooms because of the cold temperature of the room.

Figure 6.28



The result of crosstabulation revealed that a higher percentage of respondents earning less than \$44,999 annually rated the fitness centre's value for money as excellent, while a greater percentage of respondents who earned between \$60,000 and \$104,999 rated it as above average.

One hundred and ninety respondents (62.3%) provided an explanation for their rating, with 58.1% being positive comments and 41.9% as negative comments. It is important to note that a large majority of the negative comments remarked that the fitness centre was expensive, but current members commented that generally it was worth the extra cost, providing examples to support their responses.

#### Positive perceptions

The respondents perceived the fitness centre was value for money because of the quality of the service and equipment (76%), the value of the lifetime membership (11.3%), the results achieved (6.6%) and the new facility that was being developed (6.1%). Results are graphically presented in Figure 6.29.

As indicated, a large majority of current members considered the amount they paid for their membership as providing value for money due to the service and equipment that the fitness centre provided. Some of the respondents mentioned the personalised service that was provided compensated for the extra amount paid for membership. One current

member stated, “the cost is not that important. What is more important is having the staff available to watch and monitor you as you do the various exercises”.

One respondent noted that the service that the staff provided adequately reflected the membership cost. The fitness centre employees’ “professional attitude, motivation and encouragement” was seen as beneficial. There was a perception that the fitness centre provided a superior service than most other fitness centres, which justified the price.

Respondents stated:

The personal attention and regular motivation offered by the staff makes the cost over other gyms more than justified.

Basically you get one on one training so when comparing it to other gyms. This is huge value for money.

Supervision and the enthusiasm of the staff encourage regular attendance, therefore it is better value than most other gyms.

Some respondents were willing to pay more due to their perception that the equipment was of higher quality than most other fitness centres and was less crowded. Current members stated:

Although reasonably expensive, the efficiency, equipment, and staff mean frequent visits, better results and value for money.

The attraction for me is to be able to get a fairly rapid workout without waiting for equipment and have instructors who are friendly and interested, looking after me even at my age. For me this is value for money.

You pay for what you get. It is a more expensive gym but it is less crowded and more personalised.

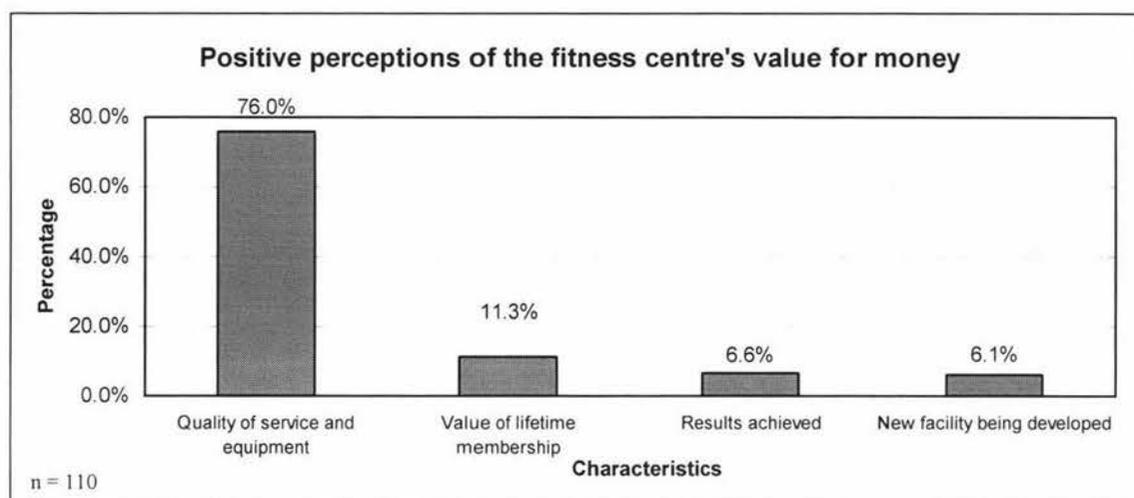
The respondents appreciated the optional lifetime and 10 year memberships that were available, identifying that they were very competitive. One respondent noted, “at virtually \$10 a week I am being shown how to keep healthy and positive”. A few explained that they were getting great results and were prepared to pay extra for this:

It is very expensive and I struggle to afford it, but I am getting excellent results and now I think it is worth it.

For the results I am getting, I am happy to pay the price.

The new fitness centre that was being constructed was also seen as value for money. A few respondents noted the membership price would be justified when the new fitness centre opened.

Figure 6.29



### Negative perceptions

The negative perceptions produced four significant characteristics (Figure 6.30). These included current members perceiving the fitness centre as expensive (76%), the value was not justified as other fitness centres provided more in the way of services and/or amenities (11.4%), the quality of service had declined (6.3%) and the respondents believed that monthly payments should be available (6.3%).

As indicated previously, a majority of respondents who noted that the fitness centre was expensive at the same time believed they were getting value for money. The following comments were indicative:

Expensive, but worth the money for the improvement it offers over other gyms.

It is expensive than other gyms, but I get what I pay for. I appreciate the attention.

It is expensive but the equipment is excellent and the instructors are superb. It is like having a personal training every time you visit.

More expensive than other gyms, but considering you get individual attention from the instructors when you need it, the quality of the machines, I feel you get value for money.

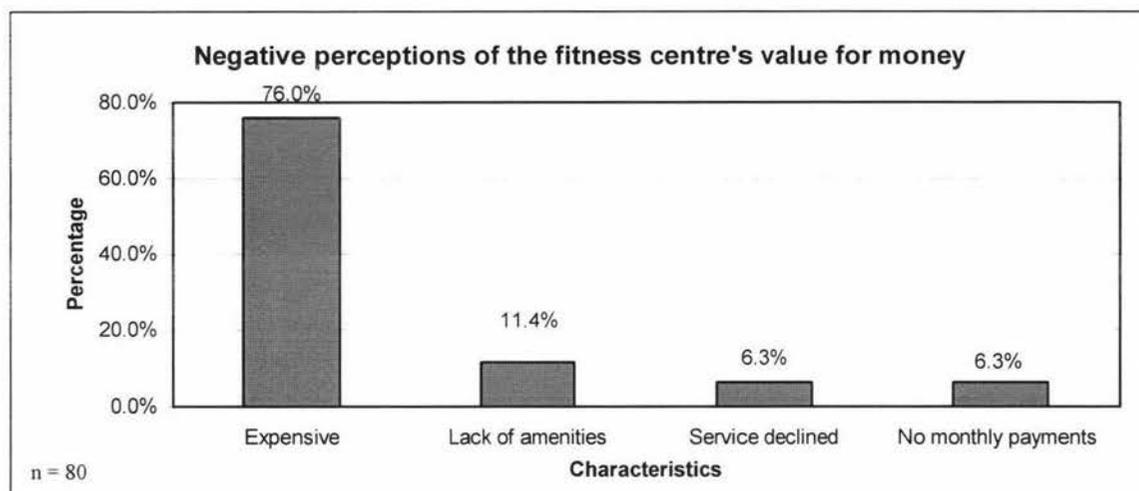
Contrary to those who perceived it as expensive but worthwhile, there were current members who thought the membership price was extravagant. Some noted it was expensive compared to the alternative of attending other fitness centres. One respondent indicated, “if I did not have a partner with a big income I probably could not afford it”. Another stated, “would like more of my friends to join but the cost is expensive for the average New Zealander”. There was a belief that the fitness centre was selling on the basis of providing greater quality.

A current member mentioned, “for all the state of the art equipment, programmes, trainers and non crowding, the end result that you get is no different from other fitness centres. So it is overpriced, they are selling on perceived quality”.

Some respondents believed other fitness centres provided more services and/or amenities, and with the limited services and amenities available this fitness centre’s membership cost was not justified. One respondent noted, “it is a little overpriced compared to other fitness centres which offer various aerobic classes”, while another explained, “for the amount paid, I expected a few more facilities and machines and a bit more space”. The general assumption was that it was extremely expensive for what was provided especially when there were no aerobic classes, pools, saunas or a café.

There were a few respondents who mentioned that the fitness centre was not value for money due to a reduction in service. It was noted that the follow-up phone calls were not made and the assessment was not probing or personalised. Others mentioned the supervision had become less personal with one current member explaining, “I am disappointed in the varying skill level and attention of staff, at peak times”. Another alleged that staff were previously excellent but “recently I have become despondent with them”, while another cited, “poor staff attitudes and lack of attentiveness on the circuit” has reduced that member’s impression of the overall value. Some respondents suggested that if there was a monthly payment option available this would make it more affordable and add greater value to what they were experiencing.

Figure 6.30



### 6.3.11 The impact of developments and changes on the current members' experience

Current members were asked if they were aware of any developments or changes that the fitness centre had carried out that had influenced their experience. The majority of the respondents answered, "No", with only 18.5% indicating they had noted any specific developments and/or changes. As expected, current members who had been with the fitness centre for a greater length of time had noticed more developments and changes than those who had joined more recently. On average 12.7% of current members who had been with the fitness centre for 17 months or less were aware of specific developments and/or changes. This compares to 25.7% for current members 18 to 24 months, and 46.2% for current members who had been with the fitness centre 25 months or longer.

The major developments and/or changes (Figure 6.31) that current members were aware of included the introduction of new equipment (23.6%), the proposed new fitness centre development (22.2%), member referral promotions (16.6%), and the development of new programmes and inclusion of additional services (13.8%). Current members were also aware of the increase in membership numbers (6.9%) the lifetime membership option (5.5%), increase in employee numbers (4.2%) and the extension of the fitness centre's hours (2.7%).

More respondents noticed the increase in additional equipment than any other development that occurred at the fitness centre. Some current members indicated that

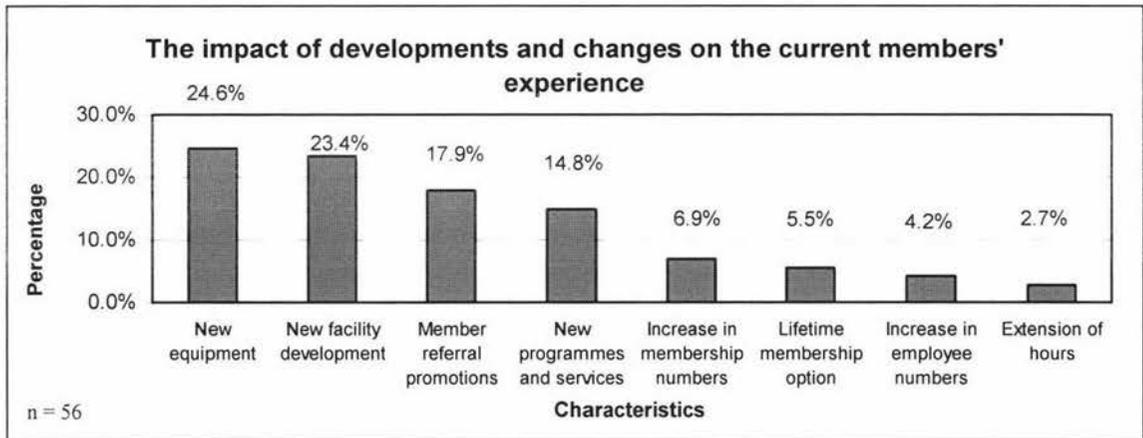
the introduction of additional cardiovascular equipment reduced the waiting times and increased variety. One respondent noted, “the new equipment has enhanced the overall experience of visiting the gym”.

The proposed new fitness centre to be constructed was also perceived to be a beneficial development. Those who were aware of the new fitness centre also stated that, “they would like to be kept informed about the progress and the expected completion date”. Internal membership promotions enticing current members to refer friends or work colleagues to join the fitness centre was understood to have increased, while respondents had noticed a significant increase in the fitness centre’s external marketing campaigns.

A few current members observed that when membership drives were being conducted, there was a noticeable decrease in staff availability. One respondent stated that, “short term trial deals were being offered to the public with the effect of overcrowding during the summer period”. Another insisted that, “a special trial held earlier this year resulted in many more new clients using the gym. There were quite a few complaints about overcrowding and warm-ups taking too long”. In response to the increase in membership drives, one respondent indicated that, “I was continually bombarded by mail requesting referrals. I never experienced the same interest in my physical well being”.

The additional services and programmes offered at the fitness centre were believed to be new developments. A few current members’ remarks were specific noting the availability of physiotherapy and massage, while others perceived that there was greater variety in the programmes which included a weight loss, golf and swimming programme. The increase in the overall membership numbers, the development of a lifetime membership option, the increase in the number of staff and the extension of the fitness centres hours were also deemed new developments and changes. Finally, a member feedback process to evaluate the performance of fitness centre employees, as well as a complaints and suggestion process were also mentioned as new developments.

Figure 6.31



## 6.4 CURRENT MEMBER PREFERENCES, OBJECTIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

This section presents the results of what current members liked most and least about the fitness centre as well as suggested changes the fitness centre should consider.

### 6.4.1 Current member preferences

The intention of this question was to gather information on specific aspects of the fitness centre that current members most preferred. This provided the researcher with categorical perspectives that could be cross referenced with previous results.

Ten characteristics (Figure 6.32) emerged from the 298 responses, with the friendliness and professionalism (41.9%) of employees rating significantly higher than any other characteristic. Additional characteristics included the equipment (11.8%), the efficiency of the workouts (9.8%), location of the fitness centre (8.4%) non-pretentious atmosphere (7.3%). Furthermore, the current members liked the cleanliness of the fitness centre (6.5%), the programmes available (4.6%), ease of parking (4%), the uncrowded fitness centre (3.2%) and the personal results achieved (2.5%).

The supervision provided by the fitness instructors was perceived to be the most important aspect of the fitness centre. A few noted that the enthusiastic and encouragement they received was beneficial to their progress, while others mentioned that the friendliness and the personal attention was appreciated. The current members

were grateful for the availability of fitness instructors to assist with programmes and inform them of correct form and technique. One respondent noted, “the ability to get to know the staff well and to feel comfortable to ask them questions is great”. Another expressed the atmosphere that the instructors’ permeated was wonderful. There was a belief that members were treated as an individual, as one current member noted:

Someone is always keeping a friendly helpful eye on you. You are guided to achieve your goals. You are treated as a person not a number and it is the first place I didn’t feel conscious about my body. That is the best thing.

One current member encapsulated the overall customer focus of the fitness centre by stating:

This fitness centre places great emphasis on customer service and when compared with other New Zealand organisations their performance is superior. The discerning New Zealand consumer is however demanding exceptional service these days.

The quality of equipment and its systemised layout was not commented on in any great detail, while the efficiency of the workouts produced rewarding results. The current members perceived the workouts to be quick, and there was a general belief of being able to complete a workout in under one hour. One respondent mentioned, “he could slip away from work and return slightly under an hour, using the less busy times”. Another stated, “it is the only gym that I have joined for a period greater than 12 months because I like the atmosphere and I can get along and complete my programme quickly and leave”.

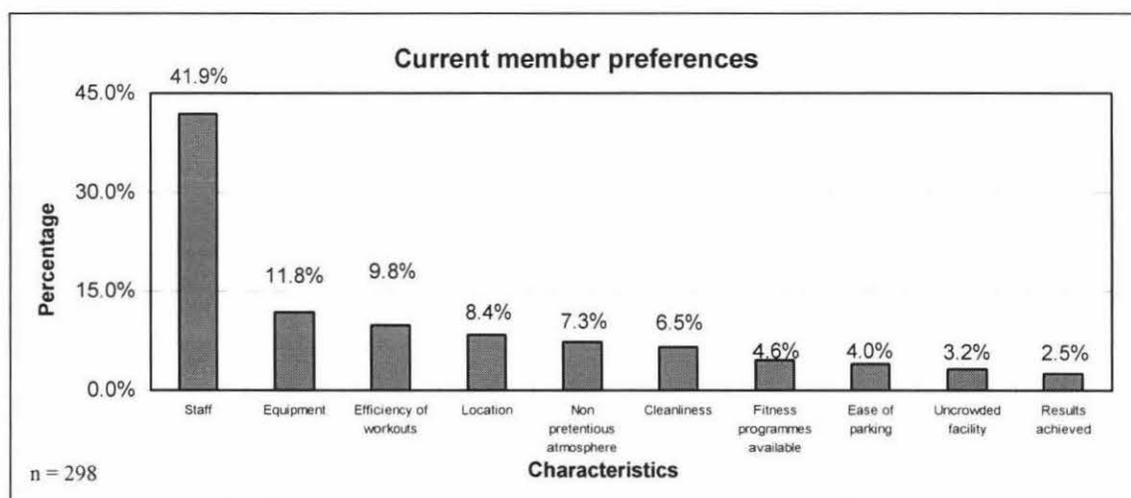
The location of the fitness centre was another important aspect why current members liked the fitness centre. Some noted it was close to work or home. The non-pretentious atmosphere was a surprising perception, with respondents identifying that it was non-competitive, professional, intimate, and had a corporate image. One respondent noted, “most of the people are middle aged, a bit overweight and don’t dress in lycra, so I feel at home, even though I am not at all sporty”. Another indicated that, “it is unpretentious, I feel comfortable in this environment, I don’t feel like I have to wear full make up when I work out at six in the morning”.

The cleanliness of the fitness centre was important to a few respondents, who described the fitness centre as tidy and modern, with some suggesting that it did not smell. The respondents liked the customised programmes that were reviewed regularly as well as the parking that was available.

Some mentioned the fitness centre was not overcrowded. One current member explained, “due to the limited number of members, you can generally move through a workout without excessive queuing for equipment”.

Finally, the results that some people had achieved were perceived to be the best aspect of joining the fitness centre. One current member’s feedback stated that they had been a member for only six weeks and in that time they felt better and could see results. Another stated, “the concept is fantastic and I’m getting results”.

Figure 6.32



#### 6.4.2 Current member objections

There were 15 characteristics that emerged, regarding what current members disliked about the fitness centre (Figure 6.33). The dominant fault that respondents found was the waiting time to use equipment and overcrowding (18.2%). Problems with the locker/changing rooms (14.6%) the limited space available (12.1%), the cost of joining (8.4%) and the lack of additional amenities (8.4%) were also considered to be a concern. Some current members also disliked certain staff habits (6.4%), the location of the facility (5.5%), the availability of equipment (4.1%), and the music that was played

(3.1%). There were also concerns with the hours of operation (3.1%), the car parking availability (3.1%), lack of additional services (2.6%), inconsiderate members (1.7 %) and that there was no supervision in the free weight area (1.7%). There was also another category which consisted of comments that occurred less often but needed to be included as they revealed additional issues concerning the fitness centre (7.0%).

A majority of current members expressed that there was a long wait before they could get onto the circuit, especially at busy times. Others identified that there was a wait to use the cardiovascular equipment, as there was not enough equipment, and on some occasions members stood around waiting for a vacant treadmill or bike. One respondent stated:

Since I have joined last year the numbers have increased. It can be off putting to arrive and not be able to warm up because all the cardiovascular equipment is being used. I have waited up to 30 minutes on some occasions.

The locker/changing rooms were also an area that some respondents perceived as an issue. A few raised the point that they were too small, with the layout being poor:

Almost always you are allocated a key next door to someone else who has just arrived and you have to wait to get at your locker.

Numerous respondents identified the locker room facilities were crowded and on the odd occasion the room smelt. There was also a concern with fluctuating shower water temperature, and the locker/changing room being very draughty. One current member mentioned that due to “the freezing temperature of the locker rooms” they wouldn’t be rejoining next year. The unfinished repair work in the male locker room also drew comment. One respondent requested separate cubicles in the locker room to change in, which was supported by other respondents who stated, “there is a lack of individual shower cabinets”. Another expressed their concern that, “there were no private changing areas”.

The limited space for floor exercises and stretching was a concern. A majority of people commented on how close the equipment was to each other, making it especially difficult to access the cardiovascular equipment. A few respondents mentioned the cost of joining was high, but were aware they were paying for the supervision and equipment.

There were a few current members who believed the additional services should be covered by the price they paid. The lack of additional amenities was also an issue, with one respondent noting “there are no added features, like a sauna, spa or crèche? I pay a lot to be a member, I expect some added services”.

There were also certain issues about the employees that a few current members disliked. There was a belief that some of the instructors’ personalities appeared to be artificial, and that only one or two really cared. This was expressed by a few respondents who stated:

I injured my knee at the gym and the attitude was very much “not our fault”. I was instructed to change the way I did an exercise and the injury was directly related to the position change. At the time I needed support and encouragement, not a feeling of “pass the buck, it couldn’t be our fault”.

Instructors who don’t really care but parrot phrase ‘squeeze it out’ or ‘great form’ when another instructor corrects your form moments later.

Varying commitment and level of sensitivity from the staff, sloppy and careless.

The inconsistency of the fitness instructors was raised. Additionally there were concerns about the instructors’ concentration:

Noisy instructors can be a pain when I am trying to focus and concentrate. Two in particular could tone it down and not be distracting. Great people but louder than the others.

Unenthusiastic instructors who don’t focus on the member and talk amongst themselves too much.

The music was described as neither inspirational nor motivating, sometimes not appropriate due to rap music being played. Some believed the fitness centre’s hours were too short, identifying that the fitness centre was not open late enough on weekends or early enough during the week. One respondent noted, “it would be great to have earlier opening hours on Sundays for mothers, before the rest of the family wakes up, plus half an hour later during the weekday evenings”.

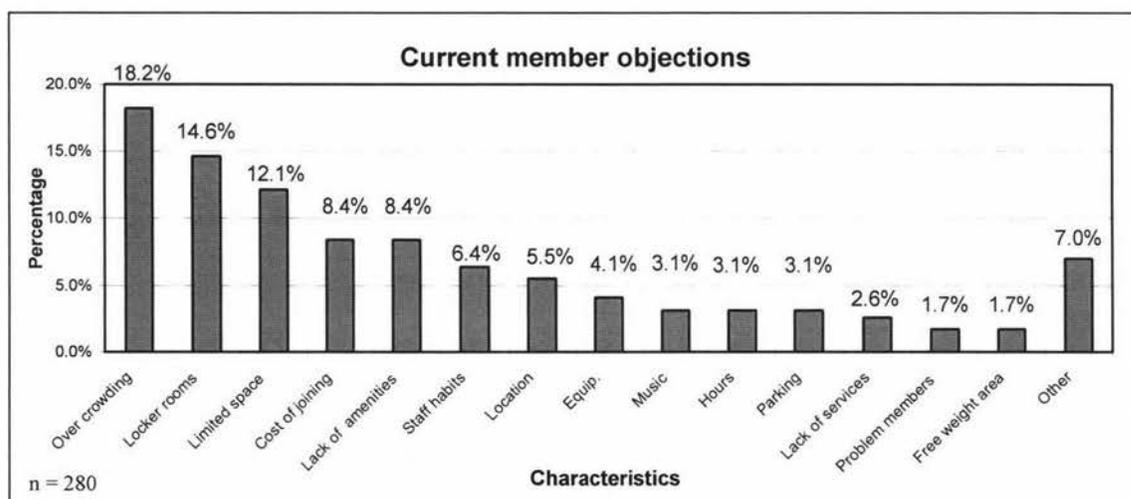
Parking was seen as a problem. One respondent stated, “they travelled home after not finding a carpark”. Another stated:

Sometimes I can't find a park in the middle of the day. One day I drove around the streets for 15 minutes looking for a park.

The lack of additional services such as aerobics classes as well as inconsiderate members was an issue for some. They asserted that there were a few members who perspire all over the bikes and didn't clean it up. It was a perception of one current member that “towels were not enforced on the circuit”. One female respondent mentioned that they, “avoid the fitness centre between 5 and 7pm when the free weight area is full of men who show little consideration for other members by leaving huge weights on machines and don't wipe down their machines”.

A few current members mentioned there was not enough supervision in the free weight area, explaining that there was greater possibility for incorrect form. Other characteristics consisted of issues relating to inadequate hairdryers in the women's locker room, the ventilation during the summer being poor, the need for air-conditioning, and the drink system constantly breaking down. Other respondents indicated that promises were not kept, body analysis testing was not followed up and the 20 minute workout that was advertised was not realistic. Also mentioned was staff turnover, increase in membership drives, inadequate consultation, dull interior and that there were no nutritional supplements for sale.

Figure 6.33



### 6.4.3 Suggested changes

There was a multitude of changes (Figure 6.34) that the respondents would like to occur at the fitness centre. These changes ranged from relatively small modifications such as the inclusion of regular assessments, to major structural developments including a crèche, swimming pool, sauna and café. A majority of respondents were aware of the proposed new fitness centre being constructed, but some of the comments noting the development of additional amenities implied that not all current members were aware of the development of the new fitness centre.

The suggestion that most current members wanted the fitness centre to consider was the inclusion of regular assessments and programme follow-ups (18.3%). One respondent indicated, “it is too easy just to do the coloured card system with no follow-up on short term goals and regular monitoring”. There were some who suggested regular three or six month fitness assessments, while others believed life members should receive extra benefits such as complimentary assessments.

There was a definite perception that a structured assessment was necessary. One respondent noted, “if we were given short term goals that were attainable we may have continued with our membership”. Another respondent mentioned, “sometimes your commitment lapses and if goals were defined with additional follow-up, it may assist”. Regular feedback was seen as essential. Current members believed it would keep them on track and provide information as to whether they were improving their fitness or not.

There was also a suggestion that there should be a consultation after a member had completed a programme:

I would like to be able to spend ten minutes with a senior instructor before going on to a new card. Find this part of the service a bit haphazard.

Introduce a service, where someone who is starting a new coloured card, can book in a time when there will definitely be an instructor to show new exercises.

Consultation at the end of each card to discuss next programme. It is not always appropriate whilst instructors are managing the circuit to ask personal questions regarding your programme if they are busy.

A number of respondents (15.8%) mentioned that it would be beneficial if the fitness centre could develop additional amenities such as a pool, spa, sauna, plunge pool, a crèche, café, rest zone, a dog sitting area, supplement store, television room for older children, and tanning beds. Someone suggested, “the fees are at the higher end of the market, so if that’s the clients they are wanting, then they need to offer a lot more, if they want that exclusive image”.

Current members commented that extra space was needed to reduce overcrowding (14%). Some suggested they wanted the membership numbers to be kept at a manageable level so service did not decline. Other respondents indicated their concern about the new fitness centre and overcrowding, stating:

Just a note of caution. I am very aware that once the new fitness centre opens it would be prudent to market a lot so an increase in members will occur. I am concerned that the bigger [the fitness centre] gets, the harder it will be to maintain the personal touch.

While increasing membership is obviously necessary to keep the centre going, the price to be paid for this is overcrowding and long waiting periods. I spent forty minutes in total on the warm up equipment once and still didn’t get on to the circuit. It never happened again and instructors were very apologetic but I find too many people at once is rather irritating and distracting.

The music, an increase in cardiovascular equipment, and suggestions about the locker/changing rooms each accounted for 7% of respondents’ comments. Some respondents indicated that the music played was repeated too often, while another suggested:

Some of the old music could do with a revamp. It only caters for the very young and there is quite an age range in the members attending. I like music with a beat, not the same music three times a week.

It was acknowledged by some current members that the music was not motivating and needed to be more inspiring, with some suggesting that the fitness centre needed to reduce the amount of rap music. One respondent stated:

I think it would be good to put a bit more thought into the choice of the music. It should be stimulating, active and reflect the image of the gym.

There were numerous comments suggesting the need for more cardiovascular equipment, especially treadmills. This was brought about by the long waiting periods occurring during busy periods. There were also a variety of comments regarding the locker/changing rooms. One suggestion was to increase the overall size of the locker/changing facilities. Others implied that toiletries should be made available, a system that allocated locker keys more effectively, showers to have moveable hand pieces and that the mixer to turn the shower on should be located closer to the entrance of the cubicle. There was a suggestion that there needed to be doors to the locker rooms as well as more privacy, due to “the less perfect body types”. One current member stated:

Increase the size of locker rooms. Use an island for lockers as opposed to existing layout which is dreadful when there are more than two or three people in there. Separate urinal, toilet and wash basin from changing room, as well as regular cleaning of ablution areas.

A few current members identified the need for a larger area and a greater emphasis on stretching (5.6%), while some believed it would be beneficial to members if there were additional services (4.7%), such as aerobics classes, yoga, kick boxing and self defence courses.

There were a few comments regarding employees (4.2%). There was a belief that fitness instructors should constantly check technique and encourage members, with one respondent indicating that more personal advice was needed:

Don't want a personal trainer, but would like to know that what I am doing is appropriate and monitored. I am out of town frequently, my visits are spasmodic, I have to make sure the weights aren't too high, but I am no expert, I feel there needs to be more guidance for people like me.

Some implied that there were not enough employees on duty during the busy times, while others indicated the employees needed to be trained in customer service:

If there are only a few clients using the centre, the fitness instructors should conduct a free personal training session, don't just stand around whilst members change the weights themselves.

More performance management and supervision of the staff. Are they actually doing their job and fulfilling their job description and Mission Statement?

Staff attitude: I want somebody to be at the machine with me, pushing me harder, not talking to a

colleague about his or her golf swing.

Four respondents mentioned the high staff turnover, suggesting that employees needed to be retained longer. Others queried the working conditions, with one respondent noting:

Just make sure the lower level staff are paid well enough. The fitness centre may be doing this, but one gets the feeling that fitness instructors are probably paid poorly, not just at this gym. In fact this fitness centre seems better, but I still wonder if the fitness centre is getting more than their pound of flesh.

There was a perception that the additional services were not well enough advertised (3.7%), with one current member complaining they did not know about the additional services that the fitness centre provided until receiving the researcher's questionnaire. There was one suggestion that the fitness centre needed to be proactive in offering additional services, while another noted new members should be encouraged to use the "complimentary services" more readily. One current member suggested offering members a free trial use of additional services, in the expectation that this would result in repeat usage, generating more revenue for the fitness centre.

It was felt that the free weight area needed more supervision (3%). A few current members mentioned that some fitness instructors needed to have a higher profile in correcting form and technique and providing advice:

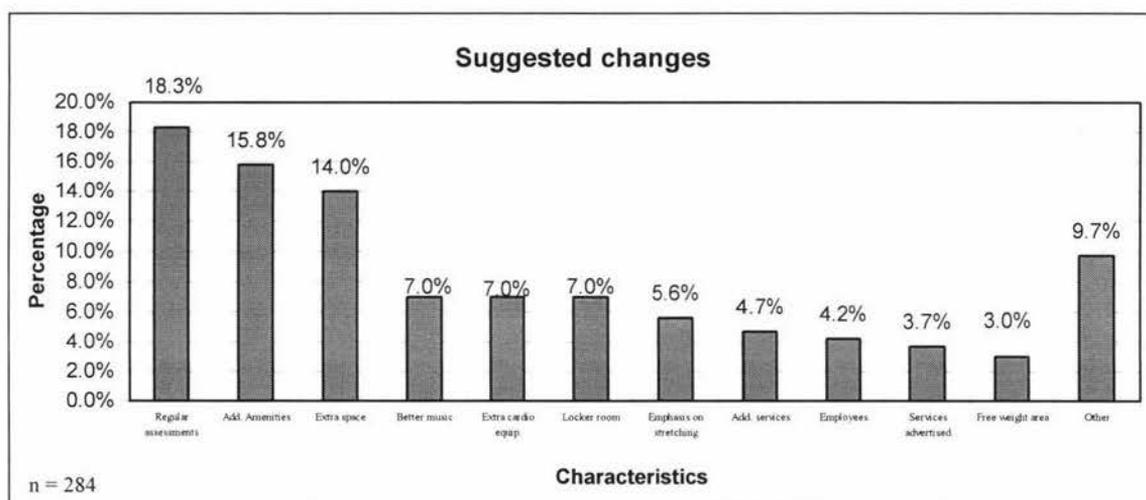
More instructors available in the free weight area. Instructors always helpful but often have several people they have to show how to use the weights or equipment.

Personally I made the decision to join based on more one-on-one attention given than in most other gyms and was willing to pay extra for that. I have noticed that since leaving the circuit and doing the free weights the service has dropped off substantially. I believe for me this needs to be addressed.

The remaining characteristics (9.7%) were suggestions that did not occur as frequently as the other propositions. The suggestions included the hours of operation, arranging a few social functions, better hair dryers, the selling of fitness centre branded clothes, a newsletter, a review of the freeze privilege so additional freezes can be taken during the year (The freeze privilege provides fitness centre members with the opportunity to stop

their membership for a limited period). There was also a suggestion for extra nutritional information, seminars on health and fitness, a website, and an evaluation of the employee awards as there was a belief that these were not being followed through. Furthermore, some respondents stated that they wanted complimentary towel hire, monthly payment options, an improvement in the weight loss programme, fewer membership drives, a ban on mobile phones, and more senior instructors being present on a shift.

Figure 6.34



## 6.5 CURRENT MEMBER CATEGORIES AND PROPERTIES

The data generated from the current member questionnaires was analysed and the categories and properties that appear in Figure 6.35 were developed as outlined in Chapter Five of this study. The data was progressively coded and recoded as concepts were constantly compared, grouped and regrouped throughout the research process. During this process some categories were refined and/or discarded. For example, earlier in the research process a separate category existed for the fitness centre's *layout*. However, as constant comparative analysis continued, the *layout* category was discarded and eventually was categorised as a property of the fitness centre's *physical setting*, under the category of *internal/external environment*.

Figure 6.35

**Current Member categories and properties**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Property</b>
1. Internal/external environment	1.1 Location 1.2 Physical setting 1.3 Ambience
2. Operational management	2.1 Communication
3. Employees	3.1 Personal qualities 3.2 Job attributes
4. Members	4.1 Member population 4.2 Insufficient value 4.3 Perceptible value
5. Equipment	5.1 Maintenance 5.2 Design
6. Programmes	6.1 Structure 6.2 Design 6.3 Benefits 6.4 Considerations
7. Additional services and/or amenities	7.1 Structure 7.2 Design 7.3 Considerations
8. Organisation development	8.1 Growth 8.2 Operational management 8.3 Employment
9. Organisation change	9.1 Growth 9.2 Operational management 9.3 Employment

**6.6 SUMMARY AND REVIEW**

The data generated from the questionnaire created a population profile of the current members. A majority of current members were mainly aged between 35 and 44 years, employed in a managerial or professionally oriented occupation, earning an average

annual income of \$60,000 to \$74,999. The current members resided within a 4.99km radius of the fitness centre. The most common methods of learning about the fitness centre were by referral, direct mail or walking in off the street. The three significant reasons as to why the current members joined the fitness centre was to improve their health and fitness, the general location of the fitness centre and the equipment that was supplied. A majority of current members had been at the fitness centre for 0 to 24 months, while there was a small percentage of current members who had been members for 25 months or more.

The results pertaining to the fitness instructors and receptionists provided meaningful information. A considerable number of current members rated the fitness instructors and receptionists as above average or excellent. The fitness instructors and receptionists were noted for their friendliness and helpfulness. Their job related attributes, knowledge, professionalism, personal skills and presentation were commented on less frequently. The ability of the receptionists to greet members by name was another positive attribute that was rated highly. Variation in performance, job inconsistencies, and job related attributes were the most common negative perceptions of the fitness instructors, however there was no significant negative perception of the receptionists. The major developments and changes of the fitness instructors included a reduction and/or improvement in job related attributes, high staff turnover and improved training. There was also a perception that there was high turnover of the receptionists, a reduction in service and an improvement in personal qualities.

A significant number of current members rated the fitness programmes as either above average or excellent. There was a perception that the fitness programmes were tailored to suit individual needs and were changed regularly. Additional positive aspects of the fitness programmes included the support and monitoring provided by the fitness instructors and the systematic progression of the programmes. The only notable negative perception of the fitness programmes was the lack of follow-up and the variety of programmes that were available. The only developments and changes noted by the current members involved the development of specialised programmes.

There was a diverse rating for the fitness centre's additional services, with current members providing minimal feedback on the positive aspects. A majority of current members who provided negative comment noted that the additional services were not promoted well. Other negative comments included the additional services being too expensive, receiving inadequate follow-up and the body analysis testing not being personal. The developments and changes that have occurred included a greater number of services being provided, such as massage and physiotherapy.

A majority of current members (60.2%) perceived the fitness equipment to be excellent, while 36.5% rated it above average. There was a general belief that the equipment was well maintained, of excellent quality and was cleaned regularly. Additional positive comments included the regular introduction of new equipment. Also the equipment was perceived as being well positioned and easy to use. The negative comments regarding the equipment included its close proximity and the limited amount of equipment provided.

The rating of the overall layout of the fitness centre ranged from below average to excellent, with the majority of responses being average or above average. The only significant positive comment was the cleanliness of the fitness centre, while negative comments included the cramped and crowded areas, the stretching and locker areas being too small and that more space was required.

A large number of current members (82.7%) rated the fitness centre's value for money as average or above average, with only 16% indicating that it was excellent. The majority of respondents who provided a positive comment reflected on the quality of service and equipment. The value of the lifetime membership, the results achieved and the new fitness centre being developed received minimal response. There was a significant perception that the fitness centre's membership was expensive, with some current members suggesting that there was a lack of amenities, the service had reduced and that there was no monthly payment option available.

There were a multitude of developments and changes that the fitness centre had implemented that had influenced current members' experience. The major influences

included the fitness centre purchasing additional equipment, the new fitness centre development, member referral promotions, new programmes and services and increased membership numbers.

The preferences of the current member pertaining to their experience at the fitness centre were due to the fitness centre's employees, the equipment supplied, efficiency of the workouts and the location of the fitness centre. Additional preferences included the non pretentious atmosphere, the clean and uncrowded facility, ease of parking, and the results achieved. There were 15 current member objections concerning the fitness centre, with the five most prominent objections being overcrowding, insufficient locker/changing rooms, limited space, cost of joining and a lack of amenities.

The suggested changes that the fitness centre should consider appear to be in response to a majority of negative comments raised during this chapter. The major changes suggested include regular assessments, inclusion of additional services, extra space and better music.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

# FORMER MEMBERS

### CHAPTER OUTLINE

This chapter examines returned questionnaires from former members of the fitness centre. The background data of former members is analysed to gain a wider understanding of the population, as well as their perceptions on specific issues and on the developments and changes that have occurred at the fitness centre.

- 7.1 Introduction
- 7.2 Background information
- 7.3 Former member perceptions
  - 7.3.1 Former member preferences
  - 7.3.2 Former member objections
  - 7.3.3 The impact of developments and changes on the former members' experience
  - 7.3.4 Renewal issues
  - 7.3.5 Former members additional comments
- 7.4 Former member categories and properties
- 7.5 Summary and review

## 7.1 INTRODUCTION

The objective of this research was to examine the characteristics, developments and changes within a fitness centre in its first three years of providing a client service. The former members were a valuable part of the data collection process, as their perspectives added richness to the data generated from the current member and employee questionnaires and management interviews.

To gain a wider understanding of the former member population, specific background information was requested. The remainder of the questionnaire was structured to elicit perspectives on specific developments and/or changes. This was achieved by providing the former member with the opportunity to comment on what they liked most, and disliked about the fitness centre, and if they were influenced by any developments or changes that the fitness centre had implemented. Additionally, they were asked their reasons for not renewing their membership, and whether or not they had subsequently joined another fitness centre.

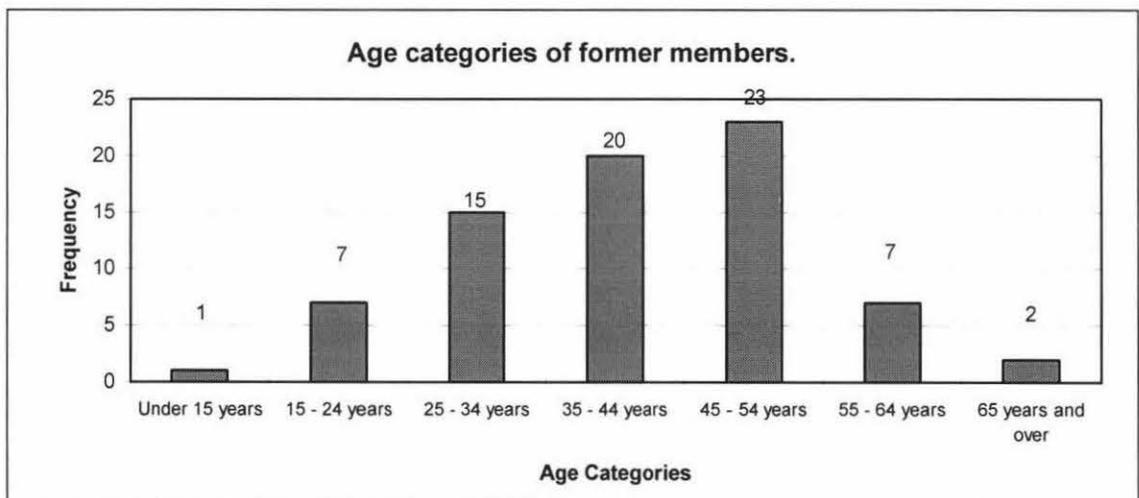
As mentioned previously, there was a concern that former members may not have resided at the contact address listed on their membership agreement. Only 24 unanswered former member questionnaires were returned to the researcher because the intended respondent did not reside at the last known address. As there was no return address on the envelope it is difficult to speculate how many of the former members had received their questionnaire. However, of the 245 former member questionnaires sent out, 75 were returned, a 30.6% response rate. Although significantly lower than the current member response rate, on the basis of the difficulties indicated in Chapter Five, the researcher was satisfied that the response rate provided an accurate representation of the former member population.

## 7.2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### The gender and age of the former members

There was a relatively even distribution of male (49.3%) and female (50.7%) respondents, with the majority (77.4%) aged between 25 and 54 years (Figure 7.1). The average age of the respondents was 35 to 44 years.

Figure 7.1



### Suburb of residence

The former members were categorised into identical radius zones as used in Chapter Six. Based on the respondents' residence, they were categorised into zones ranging from

0 to 2.49km to over 20km away from the fitness centre. Table 7.2 illustrates the locality of where respondents resided in relation to the fitness centre.

Table 7.2

**Residential location of former members**

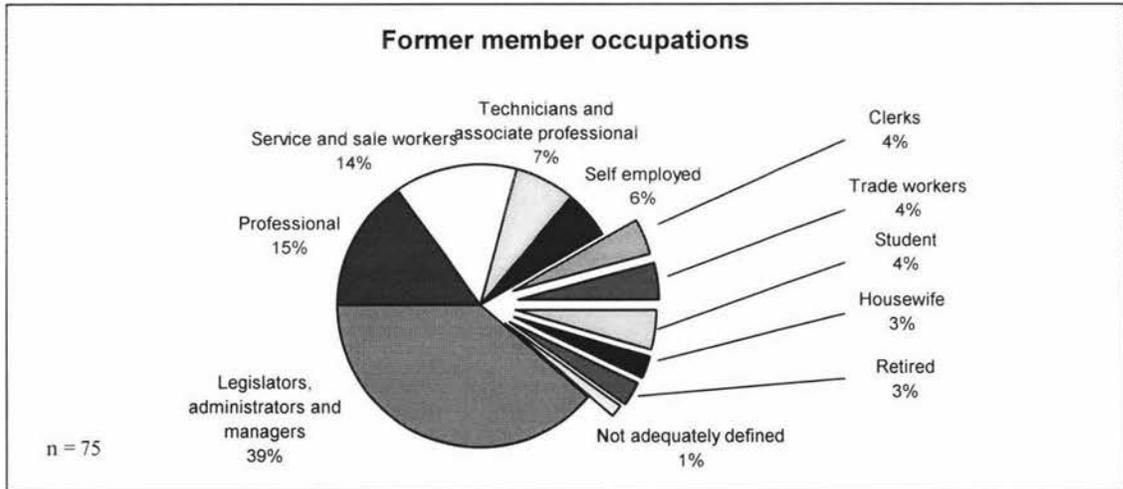
<b>Distance from fitness centre (radii)</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Cumulative Percentage</b>
0 – 2.49km	20	26.7	26.7
2.5 – 4.99km	30	40.0	66.7
5 – 7.49km	8	10.7	77.3
7.5 – 9.99km	6	8.0	85.3
10 – 12.49km	3	4.0	89.3
12.5 – 14.99km	1	1.3	90.7
15 – 17.49km	2	2.7	93.3
17.5 – 19.99km	2	2.7	96.0
20km or more	3	4.0	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

As depicted in Table 7.2, 26.7% of respondents resided within 2.49km of the fitness centre, while another 40% resided within a 2.5 to 4.99km radius. In total, 66.7% of all former members resided within 4.99km of the fitness centre. The remaining 33.3% lived in a 5 to 20km or more radius.

### Occupations

There was a diverse spread of occupations. Legislators, administrators and/or managers rated the highest with 39%, followed by professionals (15%) then service and sale workers (14%). The remaining occupational categories ranged between 1% to 7%, as shown in Figure 7.3. The former members' age and gender was crosstabulated with the occupational categories. Of the 28 former members who were categorised as legislator, administrator and/or manager, 67.6% were male and 32.4% were female. There were 72.7% male and 27.3% female professionals, while there was an even distribution of male and female technicians and associate professionals, trade workers, self-employed people and students. Furthermore, females dominated the occupational category of service and sale workers (80%).

Figure 7.3

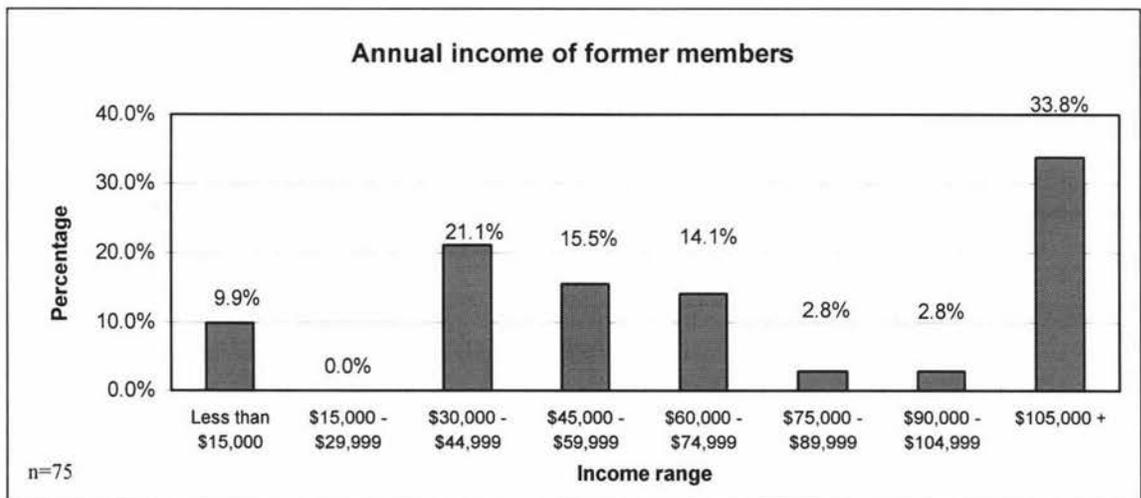


The average age for legislators, administrators and/or managers, and professionals was 45 to 54 years. Service and sale workers averaged 35 to 44 years, while technicians and associate professionals averaged 25 to 34 years. It was not feasible to calculate the average age for the remaining occupational categories because of the limited number of responses returned.

Annual income

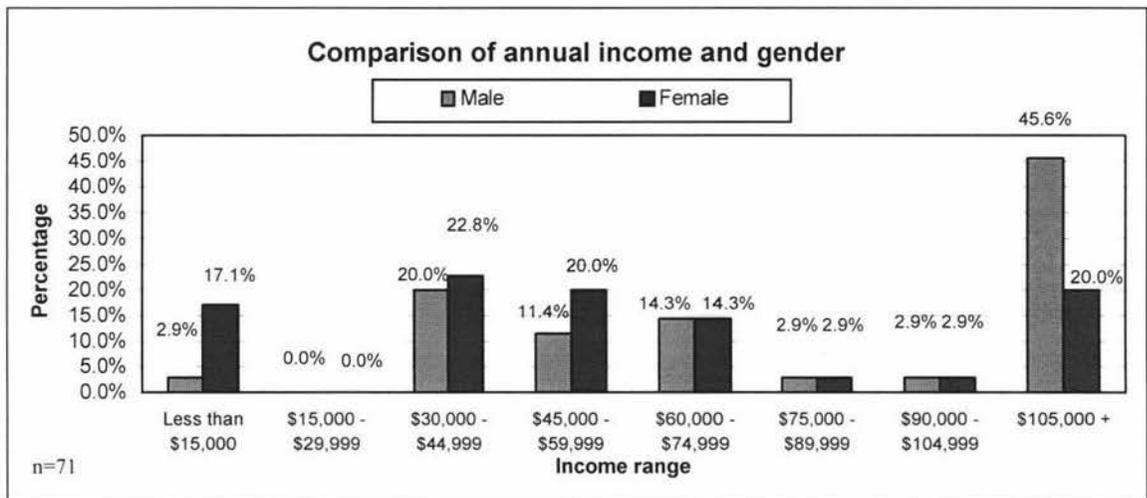
There was a 94.6% response to this question. As illustrated in Figure 7.4, the former members' average annual income ranged between \$60,000 and \$74,999.

Figure 7.4



The data was further analysed by crosstabulating the former members’ annual income with their gender, age and occupation. As illustrated in Figure 7.5, a greater number of males (45.6%), than females (20%), had an average annual income of \$105,000 or more. This graph also revealed an even distribution of males and females earning between \$60,000 and \$104,999, while a higher percentage of females earned an average income below \$59,999 a year. The average annual income for each gender was diverse, with females earning an average annual income between \$45,000 and \$59,999 compared to males, who earned \$75,000 to \$89,999.

Figure 7.5



The process of crosstabulation revealed an association between age and annual income. As the respondents’ age increased so did their average annual income. The former members who were aged between 15 and 24 years earned on average \$30,000 to \$44,999, while 25 to 34 year olds earned on average \$45,000 to \$59,999 annually. Those aged 35 to 44 earned \$60,000 to \$74,999 while former members aged between 45 to 54 and 55 to 64 earned \$75,000 to \$89,999 and \$105,000 + respectively. Respondents aged below 15 years or 65 and over were excluded from the analysis due to their limited number.

The occupational categories were also crosstabulated with annual incomes. It was only relevant to conduct this analysis within the following categories: legislators, administrators and/or managers, professionals and service/sale workers, as the remaining groups comprised inadequate data. The average annual income for these three categories was \$75,000 to \$89,999 for legislators, administrators and/or managers,

while professionals and service and sale workers earned an average annual income of \$45,000 to \$59,999.

What were the reasons for the former member to join the fitness centre?

The former member had the opportunity to list in order of importance of 1, 2 and 3 with 1 being the most important, the reason why they joined the fitness centre in the first instance. Table 7.6 summaries the reasons for former members joining the fitness centre, providing a cumulative frequency and percentage for each category.

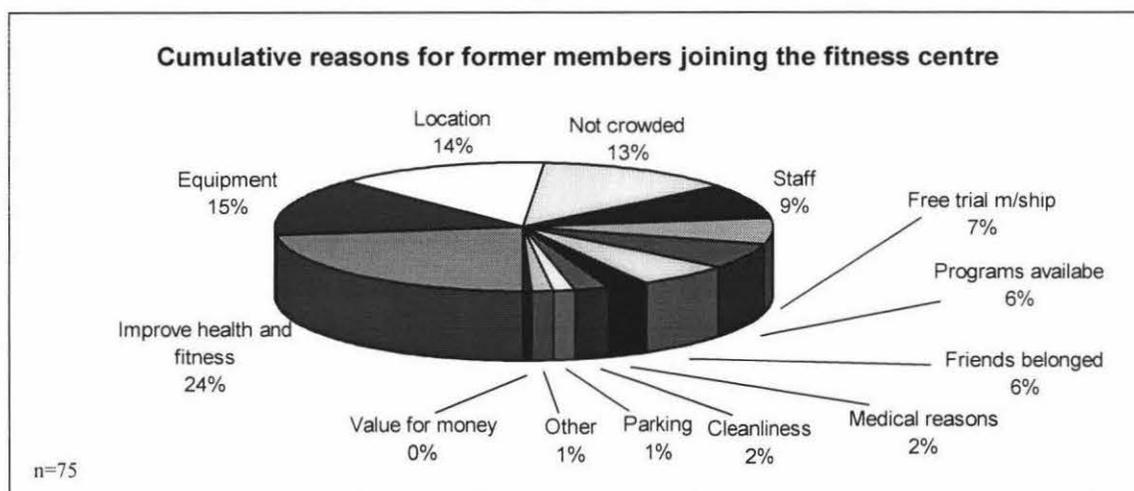
Table 7.6

**Reasons why the former member joined the fitness centre**

Categories	1 <sup>st</sup> Reason		2 <sup>nd</sup> Reason		3 <sup>rd</sup> Reason		Cumulative Results	
	Freq.	Percent	Freq.	Percent	Freq.	Percent	Freq.	Percent
Improve health and fitness	33	44.0%	12	16.0%	3	4.0%	<b>48</b>	<b>21.3%</b>
Equipment	4	5.3%	13	17.3%	13	17.3%	<b>30</b>	<b>13.4%</b>
Location	10	13.3%	9	12.0%	10	13.3%	<b>29</b>	<b>12.9%</b>
Not crowded	4	5.3%	15	20.0%	7	9.3%	<b>26</b>	<b>11.6%</b>
Staff	4	5.3%	7	9.3%	7	9.3%	<b>18</b>	<b>8.0%</b>
Free trial m/ship	4	5.3%	1	1.4%	9	12.0%	<b>14</b>	<b>6.2%</b>
Programs available	6	8.0%	4	5.3%	3	4.0%	<b>13</b>	<b>5.8%</b>
Friends belonged	4	5.3%	4	5.3%	5	6.6%	<b>13</b>	<b>5.8%</b>
Medical reasons	3	4.0%	2	2.7%	-	-	<b>5</b>	<b>2.2%</b>
Cleanliness	0	-	-	-	5	6.7%	<b>5</b>	<b>2.2%</b>
Parking	1	1.4%	-	-	2	2.8%	<b>3</b>	<b>1.3%</b>
Other	2	2.8%	1	1.4%	0	-	<b>3</b>	<b>1.3%</b>
Value for money	0	-	-	-	1	1.4%	<b>1</b>	<b>0.4%</b>
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>90.7%</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>86.7%</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>92.4%</b>
Missing	-	-	7	9.3%	10	13.3%	<b>17</b>	<b>7.6%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>100%</b>

Utilising the cumulative results, it is apparent that former members originally joined the fitness centre to improve their health and fitness (21.3%). The second and third most important reasons for joining were the equipment (13.4%), and the location of the fitness centre (12.9%). The perception that the fitness centre was not crowded (11.6%), and the availability of the staff (8.0%) also rated significantly high, with the remaining categories ranging from 0.4% to 5.8%. Figure 7.7 graphically summarises the reasons why former members originally joined the fitness centre.

Figure 7.7



All figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

#### The type(s) of membership purchased

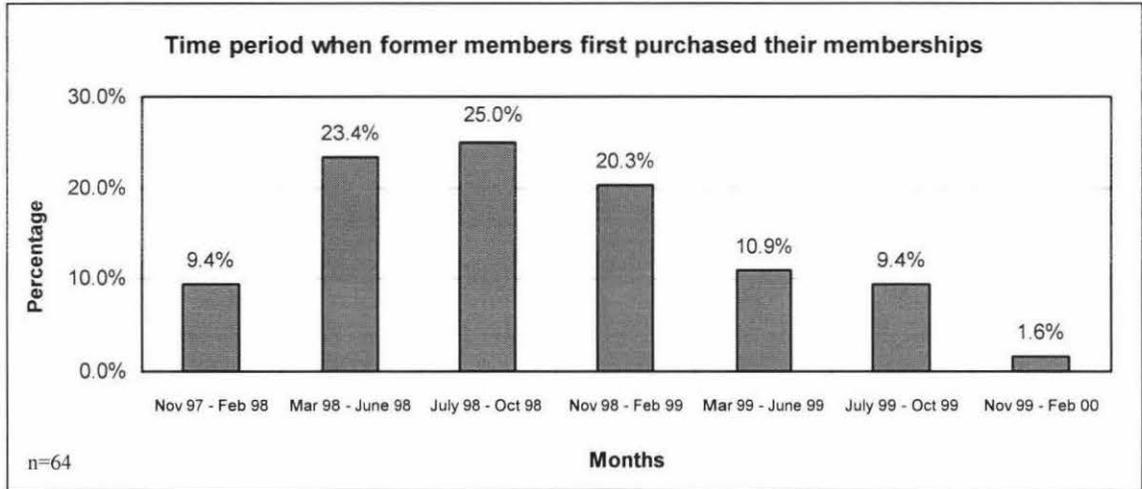
There were significantly more 12 month memberships purchased (70.7%), than any other membership option, with three month memberships (8.0%) being the second highest, followed by six month and corporate memberships (6.7%). The respondents who indicated that they had purchased a membership not listed in the questionnaire equated to 6.7%. These types of memberships included a membership transfer, one 18 month, one 30 day and a family membership. Only one respondent (1.3%) had purchased a two year membership.

More females had purchased either a six month (80%) or corporate membership (80%) while there was an even distribution of both genders purchasing a three month membership. The 12 month membership was purchased by a greater number of males (57%) than females (43%), whereas the "other" category was dominated by females.

#### When did the former member purchase their first membership?

As the main objective of this research was to ascertain the characteristics, developments and changes of the fitness centre in its first three years of providing a client service, the researcher perceived that it was important to collate when the former member first purchased their membership (Figure 7.8). This was considered to be important in case it was possible to distinguish when any distinct developments and/or changes had occurred that may have influenced former members to terminate or discontinue their membership.

Figure 7.8



A large number of respondents (85%) replied to this question. Of these 9.4% purchased their membership in the first four months that the fitness centre was operating (est. November 1997), while a greater number of respondents (68.7%), purchased their first membership between March 1998 and February 1999. As 70.7% of former members purchased a twelve month membership it could be reasonably assumed that a greater percentage of the respondents' perceptions were for the period between March 1998 and February 1999.

How many times per month did the former member use the fitness centre?

It was anticipated that the greater the usage by the respondent the increased likelihood of any perceived developments and/or changes being noticed. Analysis of the questionnaire revealed that 4.1% of former members used the fitness centre once a month, 14.9% used it two to five times per month, while 27% used the fitness centre six to nine times a month. The remaining 41.9% indicated they attended between 10 and 13 times per month, while 12.1% acknowledged that they used the fitness centre 14 times or more per month.

The examination of the results identified that on average the former members used the fitness centre was 10 to 13 times per month. This figure was representative of the number of times females used the fitness centre, while this figure dropped to six to nine times per month for males. Furthermore, the younger the member the greater number of times they used the fitness centre each month. Those aged under 15 years and 15 to 34 years utilised the fitness centre on average 10 to 13 times per month, while the average

monthly attendance decreased to six to nine times for those aged 35 years and older. It is also interesting to note that 66% of those who replied that they had used the fitness centre 14 times or more a month were aged below 34 years.

## 7.3 FORMER MEMBER PERCEPTIONS

### 7.3.1 Former member preferences

The former members provided a variety of responses regarding what they liked most about the fitness centre. There was a 100% response to this question, resulting in 10 distinct categories (Figure 7.9). The personal attention and supervision provided by the staff (39.3%), were factors that respondents liked most about the fitness centre. The respondents mentioned that they liked the staff providing advice, as well as monitoring their programmes, setting their weights and adjusting the equipment. A few expressed that the staff were friendly and very polite, while others stated:

The friendly and likeable staff create a great atmosphere. They are very personable and seem to enjoy their job and it made going to the gym, something to look forward to.

Well supervised, always able to change your programme constantly challenged, supportive and friendly staff.

It was great that the staff helped set you up for each machine, it made you feel that you had your own personal trainer.

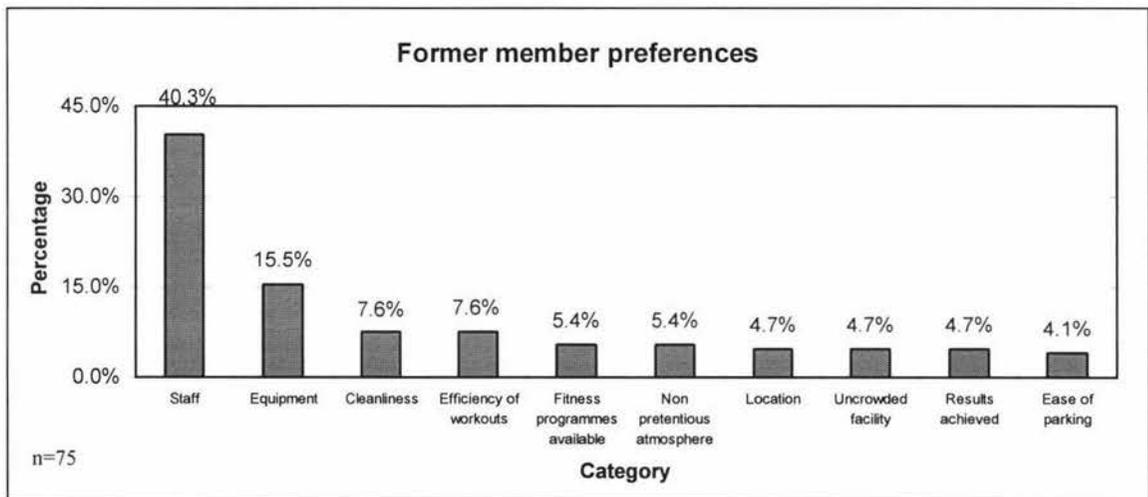
Fantastic level of service from staff, expertise, commitment and a genuine interest in the client.

The equipment (14.5%), was referred to as being different to most other fitness centres, and was of a high quality. Respondents perceived the fitness centre to be very clean and tidy (7.6%), with the equipment kept relatively clean compared to other fitness centres. One respondent mentioned that the showers were cleaned on a regular basis. The perceived quickness of the workouts (7.6%) was another justification of why former members liked the fitness centre. One respondent stated that it was “very time effective”, while another indicated that they could “complete a workout in 40 minutes, which was essential with a limited amount of spare time”.

A small number of respondents (5.4%) liked the fitness centre as it had a non-pretentious atmosphere and the programmes were individually tailored. There was a perception that it was not an intimidating environment, was not full of “smelly, sweaty body builders”, appeared to be exclusive, comprised a mixed age group and that the people utilising the fitness centre - both employees and clients, were “real people”. Respondents indicated that the programmes were personalised, structured and effective. Some remarked that the programmes were changed regularly, while one respondent noted that, “the programmes enabled the member to be in and out in a short period of time”.

The remaining categories of location, the fitness centre not being crowded and the results achieved each accumulated 4.7%, while a few respondents mentioned the ease of parking (3.9%).

Figure 7.9



### 7.3.2 Former member objections

The comments provided by 69% of the respondents were arranged into eight categories (Figure 7.10). The most common perception among former members of their dislikes about the fitness centre was its overcrowding (21.4%). This concern was caused by the increased wait for cardiovascular equipment, and general overcrowding. A few respondents noted the whole fitness centre became quite overcrowded at peak times, resulting in an unpleasant environment.

It was indicated by one respondent that the membership increase was “a commercial reality”, while another stated:

The marketing drive resulted in increased waiting times. Promises of an 8 – 12 minute maximum wait rapidly became a distant memory.

The limited services (14.9%) provided was another reason why former members disliked the fitness centre. There were suggestions that the fitness centre had a lack of additional services such as aerobic classes, crèche facilities, pool, sauna, spa and café. Employee habits were a concern to 13.3% of respondents and comments were made about the fitness instructors’ inability to comprehend the members’ requirements.

One respondent identified that employees were despondent in front of customers, stating, “there was a lack of interest as time went on and a definite attitude change”.

Another former member supported this, stating:

When I first started I loved it because the staff were extremely helpful and nice and the workout was quick. After a couple of months I became disappointed. I would arrive at 6pm waiting to get on with my workout and get it done quickly and the staff were like they were on a Sunday holiday.

Two respondents perceived the fitness instructors as not showing any interest in assisting them in rehabilitating an injury, with one stating “I was expecting special help with a medical problem, but it did not eventuate”. The other identified:

If you struck a problem with an injury or weakness, staff were unable to assist in improving or rebuilding an area. They just avoided the issue and moved you on to another machine.

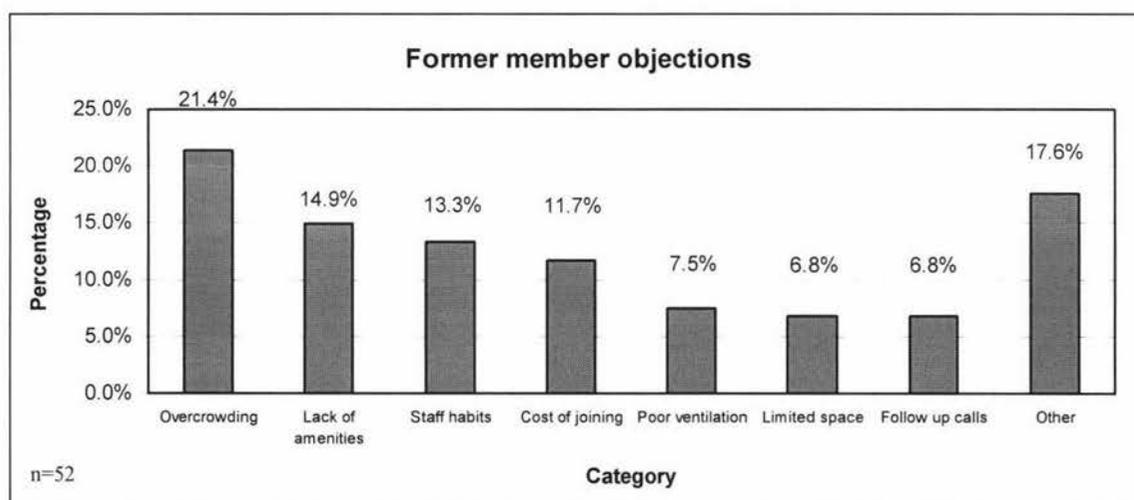
The cost of membership (11.7%), was seen as expensive. A few former members disliked the ventilation (7.5%), identifying that it became very hot and humid in the summer. There were concerns about the limited amount of space available (6.8%) to conduct floor exercises, and the closeness of cardiovascular machines. Furthermore, the follow-up telephone calls (6.8%) by the fitness centre to encourage attendance was a frustration to a few respondents. For example, one respondent explained they were, “annoyed that they would be called if they were away, after telling the fitness centre that they were going to be away”. Nevertheless, a few former members mentioned that there was not enough follow-up, with one respondent noting, “there was no follow-up or

communication outside of the gym My membership expired and there was no follow-up from [the fitness centre] or offers to rejoin”.

The remaining 17.6% or responses consisted of perceptions mentioned less frequently. These included not enough cardiovascular equipment, poor music, location of the fitness centre, limited opening hours, no fitness assessments, and issues concerning the locker rooms. A limited number of respondents stated that they needed a change after a year, with one explaining, “although the fitness centre changed my programme regularly and I became very toned, it all became monotonous”. Another mentioned that indoor exercise was not really for them, explaining that they preferred exercising outdoors. There were also a few former members who did not like the limited support offered in the free weight area, with one stating:

There was no supervision in the free weight area. Weights are left on the machines and there are no staff to help lift them off. New equipment is not demonstrated or explained thoroughly.

Figure 7.10



### 7.3.3 The impact of developments and changes on the former members' experience

Former members had the opportunity to state whether the fitness centre had implemented any developments and/or changes that may have influenced their experience. Nearly 20% noticed some sort of developments or changes. The more times per month the former member had used the fitness centre, the greater probability that they noticed these occurrences. Based on crosstabulation, 78.6% of these perceived developments and/or changes occurred between July 1998 and June 2000.

There were two major developments and/or changes that the former members became aware of during their membership period. The first was the introduction of new equipment (36.8%), and the second was an increase in membership numbers (31.6%). A greater number of respondents explained that the fitness centre regularly purchased new equipment, with one respondent stating they were, “impressed with the equipment they kept bringing in”. Another stated “they brought in new machinery that you had to pay extra to use. The fee was not cheap”.

The increase in membership numbers was another noticeable development. It was perceived that an increase in membership made the fitness centre busy at peak times, with this having an influence on overall service. Some respondents considered the fitness centre had become busier and there was less personal attention. One respondent mentioned that they were no longer a member because they enjoyed the small, intimate atmosphere before the membership numbers increased. Another stated:

Things became less personalised, what started as a great concept had not been followed through to the details in the customer service area. The gym seemed to catch the Auckland flu, if you didn't act like you were God you were not treated accordingly.

Numerous former members (17.8%) were aware of the plans to move to new premises with increased facilities and services, while 13.8% indicated that there had been significant staff turnover, development of specific programmes, selling of nutritional drinks and the introduction of additional services, including massage and physiotherapy.

#### **7.3.4 Renewal issues**

There were 10 distinct categories (Figure 7.11), as to why former members did not renew their membership. These comprised the cost of rejoining (21.6%), the location of the fitness centre (13.9%) medical/injury reasons preventing the use of the fitness centre (11.4%), and the former members concerns with the fitness centre's programmes (11.4%). As further reasons, former members did not renew their membership because: the exercise programme was too time consuming (10.1%), former members wanted additional services (7.6%), the fitness centre failed to meet expectations (6.3%), former members were conducting other exercise activities elsewhere (5.1%), work commitments (3.8%), concerns about the increase in membership numbers (2.5%) and other (6.3%).

Cost was the major reason for respondents not renewing. Some noted that they had not utilised the fitness centre sufficiently and felt that they could not justify the cost, when they were out of town regularly. It was stated by one respondent:

It is difficult to justify \$1000 on a gym membership no matter how good the facilities are. I also had to work long hours and I don't have time to travel to [the fitness centre]. I have since joined a gym in town. However, I really did feel that I wasn't getting value for money at [this fitness centre].

Others acknowledged that they had joined on the premise that they could utilise additional services without any added expense. One former member stated, "they first attended to have access to the lower back equipment. When it arrived I found my membership did not cover it".

The fitness centre's location was another reason why some respondents did not renew their membership, identifying that they had changed employment or moved residence and due to the distance and traffic congestion, were unable to attend. Some of the respondents recognised that location in relation to time was an issue, and they joined a fitness centre closer to their employment.

Some of the respondents (11.4%) did not renew their membership because of medical reasons: cancer, liver complaint, arthritis, work related injury, and spinal surgery. Two former members attributed their injury to the fitness centre:

From using the equipment I ended up with tendonitis in my right shoulder. It has never come right and I am still getting treatment.

I was injured at the gym and there was no attempt to refund any of my expensive membership. I have been on ACC treatment for six months from my last visit. My one year membership turned out to be only six months due to being hurt under supervision at the fitness centre.

Programme concerns, comprising loss of motivation and enthusiasm to attend were cited by a few as a reason for not renewing. One respondent mentioned, "they lost interest and therefore the cost outweighed the attendance". While some perceived the exercise programme as too time consuming, others wanted to join a facility that had additional services such as aerobics classes and a crèche.

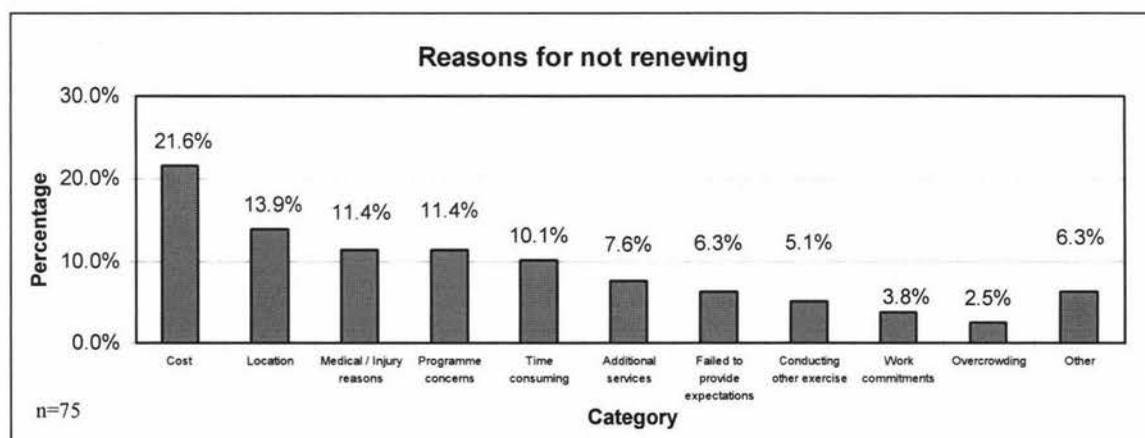
There was a perception that the fitness centre had failed to meet expectations, with a few respondents identifying the decline in the quality of service and employee work ethics as the main contributor. There were numerous respondents who wanted to exercise outside rather than workout in a fitness centre. Work commitments prevented some respondents from rejoining. Some were concerned about the overcrowding, the increased waiting time to use the cardiovascular equipment and to complete a workout. One respondent stated:

I felt the gym had expanded beyond its current capabilities. The reasons I joined were no longer valid. Membership was larger, waiting times were longer, staff turnover seemed up in the last three months and I never received any of the promised phone calls or follow-up.

The other categories consisted of issues relating to the fitness centre's operating hours, respondents already being members at other fitness centres and the membership not being cost effective as the fitness centre was not being utilised sufficiently.

There was a large percentage (31.5%) of former members who joined another fitness centre. Surprisingly, this figure consisted of more females (61%). Of those former members who joined another fitness centre, 65% resided within a 4.99km radius of the current fitness centre. All students, clerks and 50% of the technicians and associate professionals, 39.3% of the legislators, administrators, and/or managers decided to join another fitness centre. A relatively small number of professionals (18%), and service and sale workers (11%) joined another fitness centre, while none of the trade workers, housewives or retired people did. Of those who joined another fitness centre, 65.2% earned on average less than \$59,999 per year.

Figure 7.11



### 7.3.5 Former members additional comments

The additional comments provided by former members were generally positive. A number of respondents identified that the concept was great and they had enjoyed their experience. Several noted that the fitness centre staff were very friendly and caring, with one respondent stating:

I have looked at several gyms in South Auckland but I am having difficulties in finding anything like [this fitness centre]. You have spoilt me rotten and I don't think there is another gym out there that compares to [this fitness centre] for equipment and staff. Once you have joined other gyms the staff don't care whether you are happy with your programme. As with [this fitness centre] they encourage you and make your programme and happiness their Number One priority.

Others mentioned that they enjoyed their experience due to the supervision aspect of the fitness centre, the encouragement that the fitness instructors provided and the results achieved. There were a few who suggested they would be rejoining when time permitted and when additional services were provided. These statements are from three former members:

I would like to rejoin in the future, probably when the new premises are completed, providing the membership fee doesn't increase too much. Perhaps past members could be offered a month trial membership, I am sure that would lure some of us back.

I enjoyed [the fitness centre] especially during the first six months and would join again if and when a crèche was made available.

I have competed at high levels of sport and belonged to other gyms but I found [this fitness centre] to be the best and thoroughly enjoyed the results. However, it is obvious that they are targeting a specific market, which does not include women with young children.

There were also numerous negative perceptions. These included issues concerning employees, no regular follow-up and an additional fee for the design of specific programmes. The comments concerning employees were based on members' perceptions of employee competency and their belief that there was a decline in service. One respondent stated, "I thought the owners of [the fitness centre] had captured a winning idea and technique. They forgot to incorporate this in their staff. They needed more seniority. Such a shame it was such a good place". Others mentioned that a phone call from an employee might have prompted them to return, with one former member expressing they were, "surprised that no one had asked them why they hadn't rejoined".

## 7.4 FORMER MEMBER CATEGORIES AND PROPERTIES

Former member preferences, objections, the fitness centre's organisational developments and/or changes and the former member renewal considerations were the main focus of this chapter. Through the grounded theory process a range of categories and properties emerged. These categories and properties were analysed with those generated from the current member questionnaire. This chapter outlines the categories and properties that became apparent through the analysis of the former member questionnaire. The properties that are noted in Figure 7.12 in *bold italics* represent existing properties that have been expanded upon. Those that are not represent categories and properties that did not emerge from the former member questionnaire.

Figure 7.12

### Former member categories and properties

Category	Property
1. Internal/external environment	<i>1.1 Location</i> <i>1.2 Physical setting</i> <i>1.3 Ambience</i>
2. Operational management	Communication
3. Employees	<i>3.1 Personal qualities</i> <i>3.2 Job attributes</i>
4. Members	<i>4.1 Member population</i> <i>4.2 Insufficient value</i> <i>4.3 Perceptible value</i> <i>4.4 Renewal factors</i>
5. Equipment	<i>5.1 Maintenance</i> <i>5.2 Design</i>
6. Programmes	<i>6.1 Structure</i> <i>6.2 Design</i> <i>6.3 Benefits</i> <i>5.4 Considerations</i>
7. Additional services and/or amenities	7.1 Structure 7.2 Design 7.3 Considerations

8. Organisation development	<i>8.1 Growth</i> <i>8.2 Operational management</i> 8.3 Employment
9. Organisation change	<b>9.1 Growth</b> 9.2 Operational management 9.3 Employment

## 7.5 SUMMARY AND REVIEW

This chapter sought to construct a profile of former members of the fitness centre. The research focussed on background information and former member perceptions of specific developments and/or changes that had occurred at the fitness centre.

The data generated from the questionnaires generated a population profile of former members. A majority of former members were aged between 35 and 44 years, employed in a managerial or professional occupation, earning an average annual income of \$60,000 to \$74,999 and residing within a 4.99km radius of the fitness centre. The three most significant reasons as to why the former member joined the fitness centre was to improve their health and fitness, the equipment provided and the general location of the facility in relation to work or home. There was a 70.7% probability that a 12 month membership had been purchased, with the former member utilising the fitness centre on average 10 to 13 times per month.

The preferences and/or objections of the former members pertaining to their experience at the fitness centre was due to the fitness centre's internal/external environment, operational management, the fitness centre's employees, equipment and programmes. There were a limited number of developments and changes that had occurred to influence the former member. These related to the management operation of the fitness centre and the apparent growth of the organisation. There were numerous reasons why former members did not renew their membership. These included the growth and expansion of the fitness centre, particular management operations, developments and changes in former members' personal lives, irregular attendance and specific concerns relating to the design of the fitness centre's programmes.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

# SUBORDINATE EMPLOYEES

### CHAPTER OUTLINE

Chapter Eight presents the results from the employee questionnaire, summarising perceived characteristics, developments and changes within the fitness centre. Given the importance of employees as key figures in the process of organisational development and change, employee perceptions were regarded as an essential component in this study.

- 8.1 Introduction
- 8.2 Background information
- 8.3 Employee perceptions
  - 8.3.1 Fitness centre's work environment
  - 8.3.2 Fitness centre's remuneration structure
  - 8.3.3 Employee training
  - 8.3.4 Management supervision
  - 8.3.5 The impact of developments and changes on the subordinate employees' experience
- 8.4 Subordinate employee categories and properties
- 8.5 Summary and review

### 8.1 INTRODUCTION

The main focus of the employee questionnaire was to generate data on organisational development and change. However, the questionnaire was also structured so the researcher could gain a wider understanding of the population of individuals employed at the fitness centre. Twenty five subordinate employee questionnaires were sent out, with 16 employees completing and returning their questionnaires, a 64% response rate. The results are presented in two sections. Firstly the background information provides details on employee gender, age, length of employment, their job position and whether they were employed on a part or full-time basis. Also presented in this section is the number of hours the employee works per week, their hourly remuneration rate and qualifications.

Secondly, employees were asked to comment on their job role, the major skills required for their position, skills they would like to acquire and what they preferred and objected

to about working at the fitness centre. Furthermore, employee ratings on specific work related issues are presented, as well as notable developments and changes.

## 8.2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

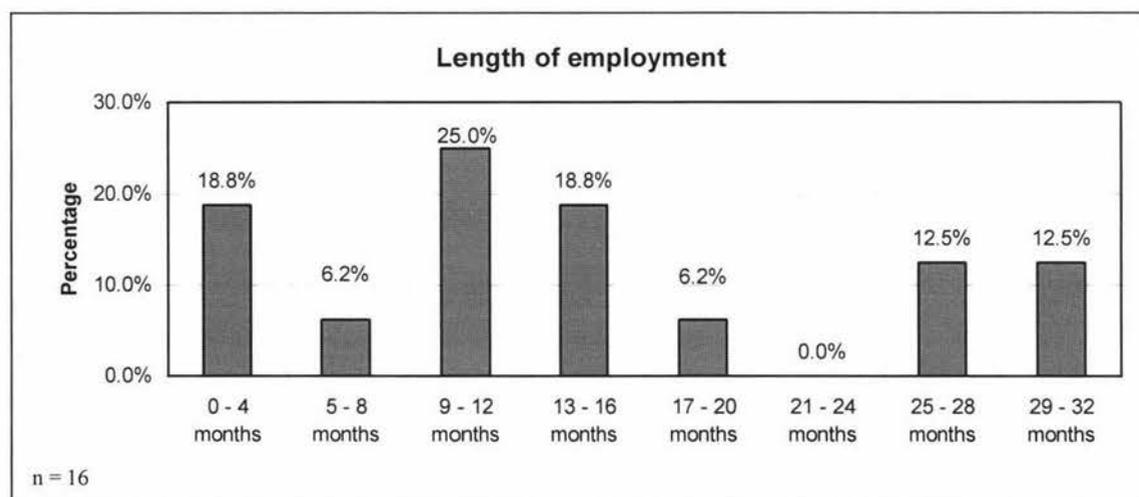
### Gender and age

The gender split of the respondents was 43.8% male and 56.3% female, with the respondents' ages ranging from 20 to 28 years. The average age of respondents was 23, increasing to 24 for males and reducing to 22 years for females.

### Employment

The length of employment varied from 3 weeks to 32 months, with the majority (68.8%) of respondents being employed at the fitness centre for 16 months or less (Figure 8.1). The average length of employment was 9 to 12 months.

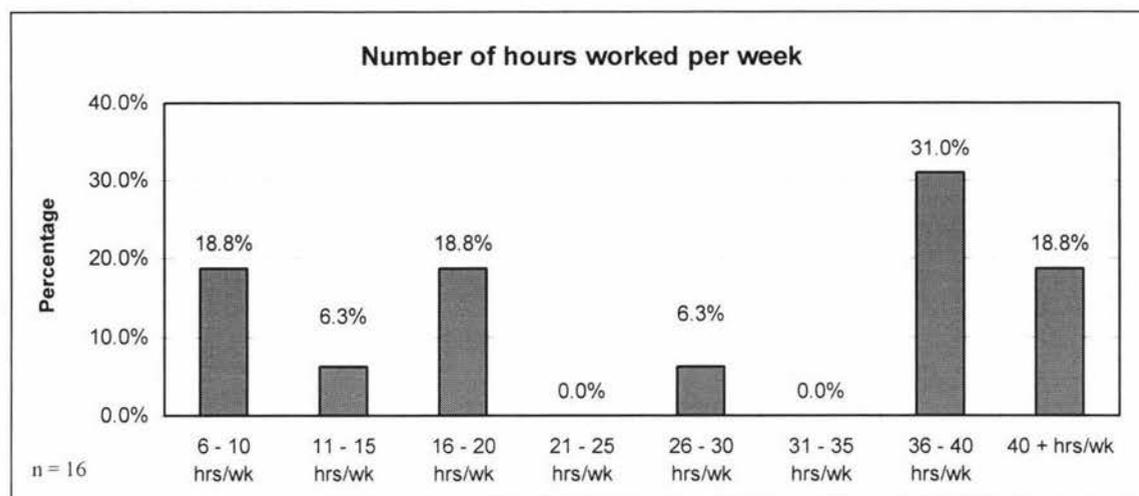
Figure 8.1



Of the 16 employees who returned their questionnaire, four distinct employment categories emerged. These included the positions of fitness instructor, receptionist, fitness counsellor and personal trainer. Eleven respondents were fitness instructors (68.7%), while there were two receptionists (12.5%), two fitness counsellors (12.5%) and one personal trainer (6.3%).

Analysis of the results revealed an even distribution of full (8) and part-time (8) employees, with the average hours worked per week ranging from six to well over 40. Figure 8.2 illustrates the range of the number of hours worked per week, with the overall average equating to 26 to 30 hours per week.

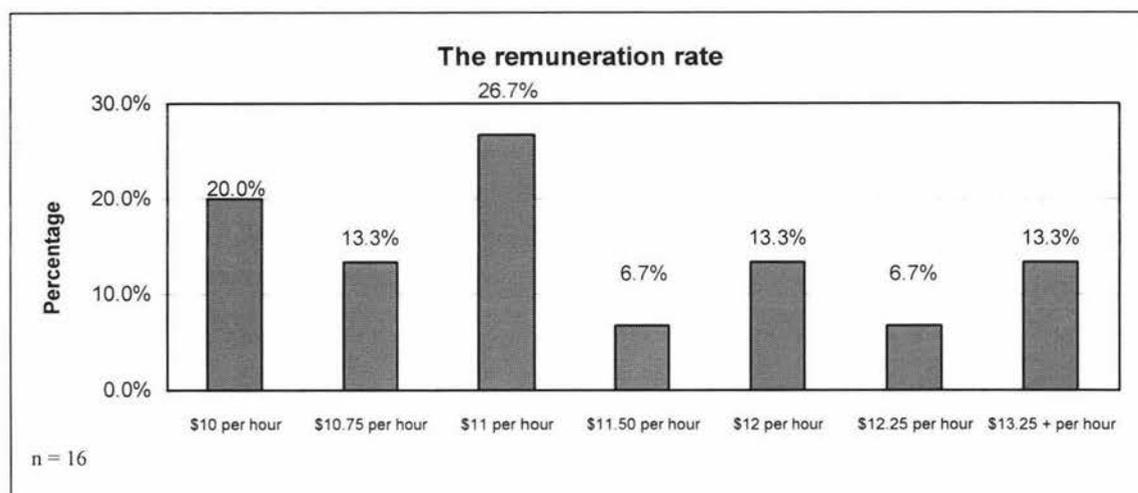
Figure 8.2



There were slightly more female (5) full-time employees than male (3), with the average age of a full-time employee being 23 years. Part-time employees had an average age of 22 years. An even number of fitness instructors were either employed full or part-time. The two receptionists were full-time, and the personal trainer and the two fitness counsellors were part-time employees. The length of employment of full-time employees ranged from 0 to 16 months, while the length of employment of part-time employees ranged from 0 to 28 months. The average length of employment was slightly higher for part-time employees at 13 to 16 months compared to full-time employees at 9 to 12 months.

The hourly remuneration rate for employees varied from \$10.00 to \$13.25+ per hour, with the average hourly rate being \$11.00. Further analysis revealed that the average hourly rate for a full-time employee was \$10.75, with this rate increasing to \$11.00 for part-time employees. Figure 8.3 shows that 80% of employees earned \$12.00 or less an hour. The length of time an employee had been with the fitness centre did not reflect the amount they were paid per hour. The only exception to this was those who had been with the fitness centre for less than four months were paid \$10.00 per hour.

Figure 8.3



### Qualifications

The highest level of qualification, obtained by 81.3% of respondents, was a tertiary qualification. The three respondents who did not possess a tertiary qualification had completed secondary school Bursary, with two of them being in the process of completing tertiary studies. There were also a further five respondents who had obtained a tertiary qualification and were actively studying for an additional qualification. Their courses included a Master's Degree in Business Studies, a Bachelor Degree in Sport and Exercise Science, Applied Science and Commercial Law as well as a Certificate in Personal Training and Nutrition.

Of the 13 respondents who had gained a tertiary qualification, nine had a Bachelor's Degree. These ranged from a Degree in Physical Education, Sports Science, Sports Management and Coaching, Sport and Recreation, and Psychology. Five of these respondents had obtained additional tertiary qualifications, which included a Diploma in Therapeutic Massage, Holistic Sports Massage and Exercise Science, and Certificates in Sport and Recreation, Personal Training and Anthropology. The remaining four respondents who had not qualified for a Bachelor's Degree, had obtained either a Diploma in Fitness Centre Training, Exercise Science or a Certificate in Business Computing.

Five of the eight employees currently studying were part-time, working on average 16 to 20 hours per week, while the remaining three employees worked full-time. There were two employees who were not studying but were classified as part-time, working on

average eight hours per week. There appeared to be no association between the qualification gained and the amount an employee was paid.

### **8.3 EMPLOYEE PERCEPTIONS**

The employee perceptions concerning specific work related issues are presented in this section. Firstly, there is a brief description of the employee's job role, the major skills required for their job and the skills the employee would like to acquire. The employee was also asked to illustrate their preferences and objections regarding employment at the fitness centre.

Secondly, the employee was asked to rate on a five-point scale from poor to excellent their perceptions of the work environment, remuneration structure, employee training, and management supervision. The employee had the opportunity to provide feedback in relation to any developments and/or changes within these areas as well as providing any information of specific developments and/or changes that have influenced their experience. It is important to note that the perceptions of the employees are grouped collectively, to ensure the anonymity of respondents.

#### Employee job role

As expected, the job role of the employees varied according to their positions at the fitness centre. However, a common perspective among respondents was a requirement by management for them to provide a warm and friendly atmosphere. The fitness instructors identified collectively that their job role included assisting, motivating and educating clients and ensuring a safe environment. Receptionists viewed their job as providing exceptional customer service in a professional and helpful manner. It was noted by one receptionist that this was conducted by having a "cheerful personality and by greeting the customer with a smile". Finally, the fitness counsellors expressed their major priorities as following up members and prospects, and providing assistance with enquiries and concerns.

### Skills required and skills that need to be obtained

Although the major skills varied slightly for each position, there were seven distinct skills that occurred more frequently and were seen as a requirement for working at the fitness centre. The most important skill as perceived by employees was job knowledge, with specific aspects including knowledge of exercise prescription, equipment and physiology. Friendliness, having exceptional customer service, being a good communicator, having a confident and professional manner, and being receptive to customer needs were seen as important and necessary requirements.

There were five skills that employees perceived as important which would facilitate their role at the fitness centre. These were management skills, specific job knowledge, increase in confidence, communication and leadership skills. It is important to note that the specific job knowledge included a greater understanding of nutrition, training techniques, injury prevention and rehabilitation.

### What are the employee's preferences of working at the fitness centre?

A majority of employees preferred the personal interaction of their job, emphasising that they liked working with the fitness centre staff and members. One respondent mentioned, "the staff are great, and most of the members are fabulous as well", while other employees stated:

I really enjoy interacting with people. In every other job that I have had, I haven't been able to do that. I really cherish that. Also the other employees are really easy to get on with.

Most employees are around the same age group, therefore we have a lot in common with each other socially.

Another preference of respondents was the organisation's culture. A few employees indicated that the culture was directly related to the fitness centre's values and principles, the supportive nature of the employees and the friendly work environment. The positive team morale, the overall quality approach of the fitness centre and the ongoing training were additional job related aspects that the employees also appreciated.

The most common objection to working at the fitness centre was the hourly remuneration rate and bonuses. A greater number of full-time employees compared to

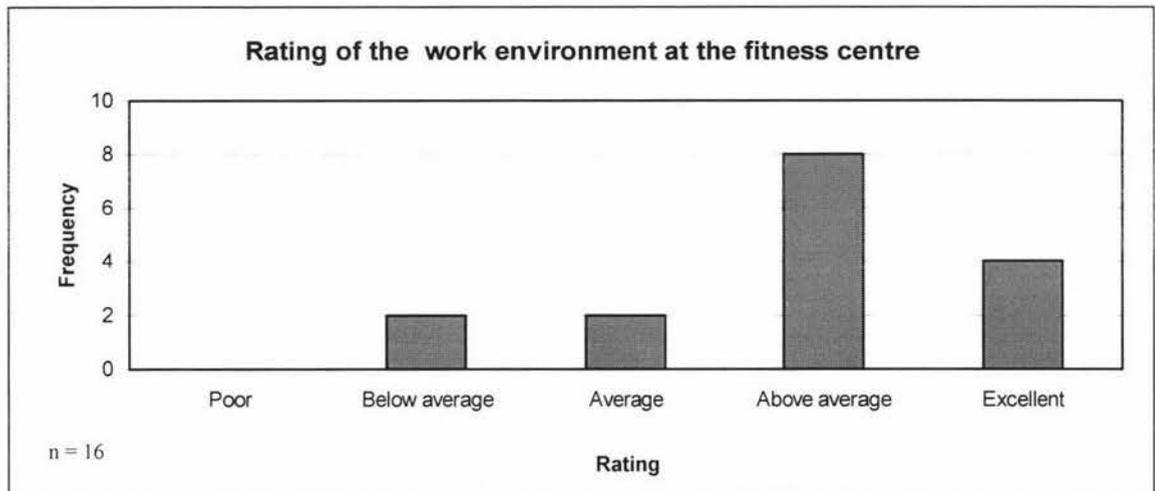
part-time employees were disappointed with their hourly rate. Five of the eight full-time employees believed the remuneration rate was inadequate by comparison to only two of the part-time employees. One full-time employee stated, “the hourly rate of the employees was low, especially those with a tertiary qualification”, while another indicated that they worked reduced hours due to the low hourly rate. One part-time employee mentioned that if it wasn’t for a secondary income to supplement their fitness centre wage, there was a greater possibility they wouldn’t be working at the fitness centre.

Issues relating to the operation of the fitness centre were a concern to employees. It was perceived that problems were associated with the competence of supervisory employees, communication breakdowns and, as felt by one employee, a lack of internal structure and guidance. One employee noted that there was “an inability of senior staff to manage the facility and their actions appropriately”. Some employees objected to the hours they had to work, the lack of promotions of employees, the limited amount of additional training once employees had completed the initial requirements, the inability to cope with the increase in membership numbers, the monotony of the job and the music that was played.

### **8.3.1 Fitness centre’s work environment**

One quarter of the respondents (Figure 8.4) perceived the work environment to be either below average (2) or average (2). Their concerns were based on the lack of support from management, with one identifying there was no “clear direction or assistance”, and in their opinion the fitness centre did not value its employees. However, two employees did state that morale was high most of the time, but there were occasions when the work environment did not promote enough energy and happiness. The employees who rated the work environment below average or average had been employed at the fitness centre between 13 and 32 months, and were all employed part-time.

Figure 8.4



The remaining 12 respondents rated the work environment as above average (8) or excellent (4). A few respondents commented on the friendly supportive culture, with one employee stating, “staff members interact well together. If you are doing something wrong or right you are told immediately, which is great”. However, there was a belief that the work environment could be better, with an employee indicating, “too much responsibility rests with a few people, stretching the resources and the ability of those in charge”.

There were 12 employees who had noticed a specific development and/or change in the fitness centre’s work environment. A significant number reported high staff turnover as well as an increase in the number of employees. One respondent mentioned, “there are lots of new enthusiastic faces, I hope they stay that way”, while another indicated that, “top management needed to contemplate why employees were leaving”.

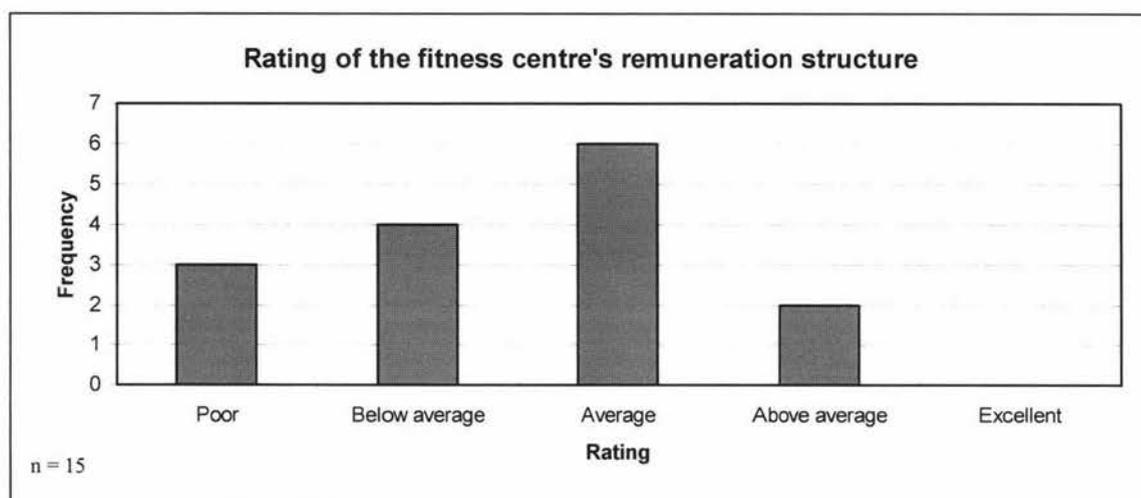
Another significant change was the reduction in service. A few employees were concerned about this, with one explaining that employees appeared to be a lot more casual in comparison to when they were first employed. They explained that some instructors chatted too much among themselves and failed to provide enough feedback to the member about correct form and technique. Another employee stated, “the level of service provided at peak times is quite low and staff always look stressed”. Additional developments and/or changes included an increase in employee enthusiasm, more supervision being provided to new employees and the application of management principles.

### 8.3.2 Fitness centre's remuneration structure

As illustrated in Figure 8.5, three employees perceived the fitness centre's remuneration structure to be poor, while another four rated it below average. The three employees who rated the remuneration structure as poor indicated that there were no monetary rewards or incentives, and that the remuneration rate was too low for the work performed. One employee stated, "rewards are good, but there should be loyalty pay". Those who rated it as below average commented that the remuneration did not reflect the amount of work done and what was expected of them. It was stated by another employee, "the pay needs to be improved due to the fact most of the staff are qualified and provide a high level of service". Another mentioned, "the amount of responsibility and work done by some doesn't reflect the pay". Others noted that there was no pay structure, with different rules for different people. There was a belief that there were very few incentives and employees should be paid for attending meetings and training sessions.

The other eight employees rated the remuneration structure as either average (6) or above average (2), with a majority acknowledging that it was improving. One respondent mentioned that some competitors paid significantly more, but there was a perception that not all of those fitness centres provided the same team atmosphere as this organisation. Although the "pay for performance" scheme was strongly supported, there was a belief that full-time employees should have a different pay structure or be rewarded more than part-time employees.

Figure 8.5



The employees who rated the remuneration structure below average or poor had been with the organisation between nine and 32 months. Five of the seven were full-time employees and were earning between \$10.75 and \$13.25 or more an hour. By comparison, those who rated it above average or average had been employed at the fitness centre between 0 and 16 months. Six of the eight were employed part-time, earning between \$10.00 and \$12.25 per hour.

The respondents were asked if they had noticed any developments or changes in the remuneration structure since they had been employed at the fitness centre. Seven respondents were aware of some significant developments and/or changes. A majority of these staff members had been employed at the fitness centre for a period greater than 13 months. Six fitness instructors and one fitness counsellor had noticed a change in the remuneration structure. There were a greater number of part-time employees (6), compared to full-time employees (1) who had noticed these changes. Those who had noticed a change were earning on average \$11.50 per hour, compared to \$10.75 for those who had not perceived any change.

Those employees who did perceive a change in the remuneration structure identified that performance and excellence was now being recognised. They noted that the “pay for performance” scheme had changed, incorporating spot raises and rewards for passing exams. One employee understood, “people were now being recognised for their performance, rather than being rewarded for longevity reasons”, while another indicated that the system had become fairer. However, this was contradicted by another employee who believed the fitness centre had not been successful in implementing the “pay for performance” scheme, as it did not involve all employees.

### **8.3.3 Employee training**

The fitness centre’s employee training rated significantly highly (Figure 8.6), with 12 of the 16 respondents rating it either above average or excellent. The most frequent perception was that the training programme ensured a continual increase in job knowledge. There was a belief that the training programme had become more structured and effective with the introduction of manuals and lesson plans. Management was perceived to be showing an interest in increasing staff knowledge, with one employee stating, “the senior and head trainers always give you tips and instructions on how to

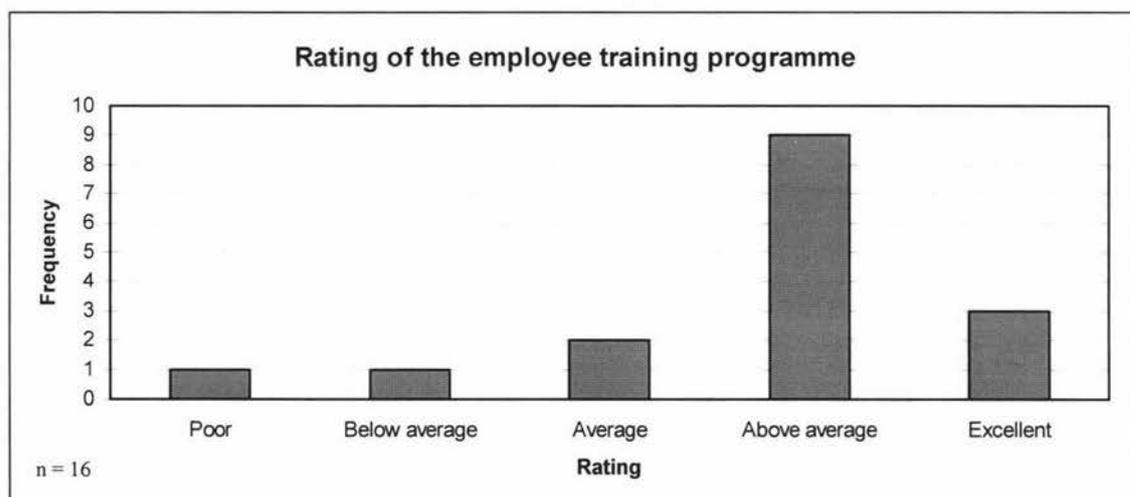
instruct and interact with members”. The training was viewed as very comprehensive with quality based training procedures and protocols. One employee indicated that it was like a practical tertiary institution and stated, “they had personally learnt a lot and acquired many new skills”.

Those who rated the employee training as either poor, below average or average identified that training was not provided in their department, or that further learning and development after the initial training had not been forthcoming:

At the start it is fine, but after you have been there for a while, there is no encouragement to continue learning. The training is all about finding your place and individual development is not supported.

In analysing the results, 10 of the 12 employees who rated the training as above average or excellent had been employed with the organisation between nine and 32 months. Those who perceived it to be average or below average had been with the fitness centre for 12 months or less.

Figure 8.6



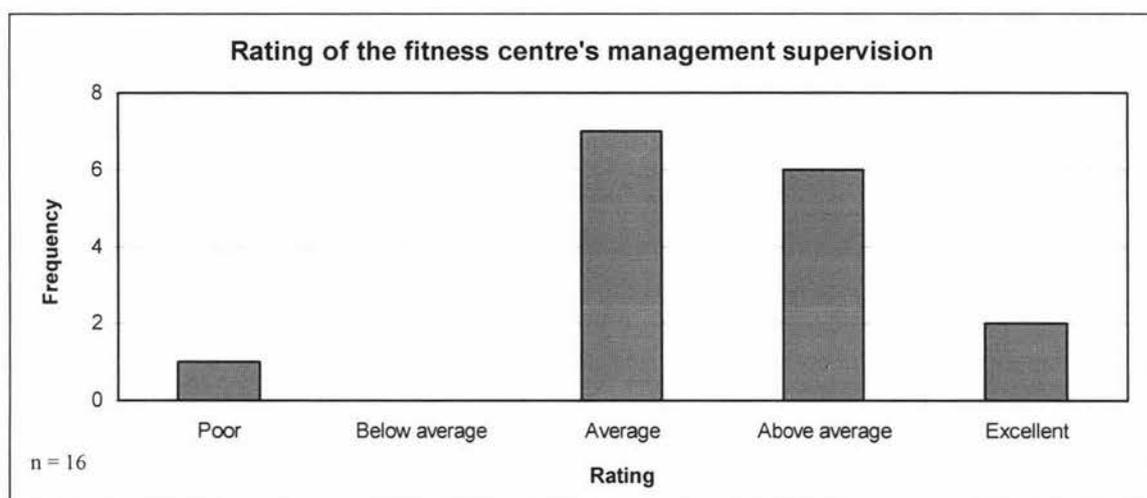
Surprisingly, only six employees acknowledged any development and/or change in the fitness centres employee training. There was no association between the length of time that the employee had been with the fitness centre and whether or not they had noticed any developments or changes.

Significantly, only the fitness instructors had noticed any developments and/or changes. Those who perceived that a development had occurred indicated that the training programme was a lot more structured and new recruits were provided with more training and supervision.

### 8.3.4 Management supervision

The majority of employees perceived the management supervision at the fitness centre to be average or above average (Figure 8.7), with only one respondent believing it to be poor. A distinguishing feature was that a greater number of part-time employees perceived the management supervision to be average, whereas a higher percentage of full-time employees rated it as above average.

Figure 8.7



A few significant assumptions emerged from the comments provided by employees. For example, there was the perception that there were too few supervisors, with one employee stating:

Everyone makes sure everything is going smoothly, but sometimes I feel there is a lack of supervisors and fitness counsellors throughout the day.

Another employee identified that there needed to be more shift supervisors so responsibilities could be shared.

Additionally, there was the perception that many shift supervisors were placed in to the position at little or short notice with insufficient training. Those who commented upon the inability of the supervisors stated:

Some supervisors are quite abrupt and some instructors feel they are never doing anything right.

Initially, one supervisor would constantly watch me sometimes interrupting, which made me come across as incompetent.

Sometimes the action of the supervisors was not tactful. They need a greater understanding of their staff.

However, a few employees commented on the positive aspects of the fitness centre's management supervision. They mentioned that some of the supervisors were helpful and gave lots of praise and support, listened to employee concerns and provided constructive criticism when needed.

Only six employees had noticed any developments and/or changes in management supervision, with one employee being aware that responsibilities were now shared between management supervisors. They stated, "it has taken a lot of stress away from those who had been in command before". Another employee indicated that there was a greater emphasis by supervisors on shift planning and goal setting, while there was a belief that there were always new supervisors coming through the ranks. One employee concluded that the reason for the training of new supervisors was because there was a greater number leaving. They stated, "there was no reason for them to stay. They become a supervisor in eight to 10 months and then what?"

### **8.3.5 The impact of developments and changes on the subordinate employees' experience**

There was only one employee who indicated that a specific development and/or change had occurred, influencing their experience. They noted that there were previously two supervisors conducting the fitness instructor training, but this role had subsequently become the main focus of only one supervisor. They identified that the additional person who had been involved in the training did not relate well to the employees.

The suggested changes that the fitness centre needed to consider focussed strongly on the treatment of their employees. A significant number of employees believed that the fitness centre could do a better job in this area, with one employee suggesting that management should consider employing a Human Resource Manager. There was a perception that the individual needs of employees were overlooked, and not all employees should be dealt with in the same way or manner. Some considered that there needed to be more focus on keeping staff happy, with one employee stating:

I feel the centre could invest in the intellectual development of staff, providing them with greater responsibilities.

Others thought that management needed to investigate staff turnover, indicating that this problem could be related to the remuneration structure and the non-subsidised uniforms. As quoted by an employee, “we are a team, so we need to work like one, but the incentives need to be there”.

## 8.4 SUBORDINATE EMPLOYEE CATEGORIES AND PROPERTIES

The employee questionnaire data created additional properties. It also reaffirmed and enlarged on previous properties generated by the current and former member questionnaires. The categories and properties that are noted in Figure 8.8 in *bold italics* represent new or existing properties that have been expanded or generated. Those that are not represent categories and properties that did not emerge in the employee questionnaire.

Figure 8.8

### Subordinate employee categories and properties

Category	Property
1. Internal/external environment	1.1 Location 1.2 Physical setting <b>1.3 Ambience</b>
2. Operational management	<b>2.1 Management supervision</b> <b>2.2 Employee training</b> <b>2.3 Communication</b>

3. Employees	<b>3.1 Employee demographics</b> 3.2 Personal qualities <b>3.3 Job attributes</b> <b>3.4 Skill improvement</b> <b>3.5 Considerations</b>
4. Members	4.1 Member population 4.2 Insufficient value 4.3 Perceptible value 4.4 Renewal factors
5. Equipment	5.1 Maintenance 5.2 Design
6. Programmes	6.1 Structure 6.2 Design 6.3 Benefits 5.4 Considerations
7. Additional services and/or amenities	7.1 Structure 7.2 Design 7.3 Considerations
8. Organisation development	8.1 Growth <b>8.2 Operational management</b> 8.3 Employment
9. Organisation change	9.1 Growth 9.2 Operational management 9.3 Employment

## 8.5 SUMMARY AND REVIEW

The fitness centre employees were most likely to be an average of 23 years of age, with an average length of employment of 9 to 12 months. The average length of employment was slightly higher for part-time employees at 13 to 16 months compared to full-time employees at 9 to 12 months. There was an even distribution of full and part-time employees, with the average hours worked per week equating to 26 to 30 hours. The average hourly remuneration rate of employees was \$11.00, with part-time employees earning on average 0.25 cents per hour more than full-time employees. The length of time an employee had been with the fitness centre did not reflect the amount they were paid.

Over 80% of employees had obtained tertiary qualifications either in Physical Education, Sports Science, Sports Management and Coaching, Sport and Recreation or Psychology. Those who had yet not obtained a tertiary qualification were either in the process of completing their studies, or had completed secondary school Bursary.

The job role of employees at the fitness centre varied accordingly with the employment position. However a common perspective among respondents was a requirement by management for them to promote a warm and friendly atmosphere. The major skills required for working at the fitness centre included specific job knowledge of exercise prescription, equipment and physiology. Additional personal skills included being friendly, having exceptional customer service, being a good communicator, confident, professional and being receptive to customer needs. The skills that employees perceived would facilitate their role at the fitness centre included management skills, specific job knowledge, an increase in confidence, communication and leadership skills. The specific job knowledge included greater understanding of nutrition, training techniques, injury prevention and rehabilitation.

The interaction of the job, the fitness centre's culture, the overall quality approach of the fitness centre and ongoing training were preferences of employees. The most common objection to the fitness centre by employees was the hourly remuneration rate and bonuses. There were also concerns relating to the operation of the fitness centre and the competency of some supervisory employees.

The majority of fitness centre employees rated the work environment as above average or excellent, with the friendly supportive culture emerging as a major factor. However there was a belief that it could have been better. The developments and changes of the work environment noticed by employees included high staff turnover, increase in the number of employees, reduction in service, increase in employee enthusiasm, increased employee supervision and the application of management principles.

The remuneration rate was a concern to most employees, with the majority of employees rating the fitness centre's remuneration structure below average or average. The developments and/or changes perceived by employees regarding the remuneration

structure included the fitness centre's recognition of performance and excellence and that the remuneration structure had become fairer.

The fitness centre's employee training programme rated significantly highly. The most common perception of the employee training programme was that it promoted a continual increase in job knowledge. There was a perception that the training programme had become more structured and effective, with the introduction of manuals and lesson plans. The training was viewed as comprehensive with quality based procedures and protocols. The developments and changes that were perceived to have occurred with the employee training programme were that new recruits were provided with more training and supervision.

The majority of employees rated the fitness centre's management supervision as either average or above average. Concerns regarding management supervision included a lack of supervisors and the overall ability of some of the supervisors. However, a majority of supervisors were also seen to be helpful, providing praise and support, listening to employee concerns and providing constructive criticism.

The suggested changes that the fitness centre should consider focussed strongly on the treatment of their employees. There was a perception that the fitness centre needed to employ a Human Resource Manager. Employees were concerned that individual needs were overlooked and that management needed to investigate the possible reasons for high staff turnover.

## CHAPTER NINE

# MANAGEMENT EMPLOYEES

### CHAPTER OUTLINE

This chapter presents the results derived from semi-structured interviews with management employees at the fitness centre. Eight management employees were interviewed for this phase of the research study in an attempt to elicit perspectives on the developments and changes that have occurred within the fitness centre.

- 9.1 Introduction
- 9.2 Background information
- 9.3 Organisational culture
- 9.4 Organisation's systems and structure
- 9.5 Management positions and employee training
- 9.6 Employee issues
- 9.7 The fitness centre's marketing
- 9.8 Management employee categories and properties
- 9.9 Summary and review

### 9.1 INTRODUCTION

The semi-structured interview questions were formulated from results collated from the subordinate employee questionnaire. The freedom to probe enabled the researcher to gather data that was not considered or contemplated prior to the initial interview. The interview questions focussed on perceived characteristics, developments and changes of the organisation's culture, structure, systems, employee training, management positions, employee issues and fitness centre marketing.

### 9.2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The eight interviewees consisted of two company directors, two head supervisors and four shift supervisors. Five of the management employees were female, three were male. The average age of the management employees was 25 years, with a range between 21 and 38 years.

None of the eight management employees had previous fitness centre management experience. However, three interviewees' did have previous management experience in alternative organisations. The average length of employment with the fitness centre was one year and nine months, with a range between nine and 36 months. There was an even distribution of full and part-time management employees, with hours ranging from 16 to well over 40 per week. Five of the management employees had obtained a tertiary qualification. Of this five, three had completed a Bachelor's Degree, two in Sport Science and one in Physical Education. The other two management employees had Diplomas in Fitness Centre Training. The remaining three management staff were part-time employees and were in the process of obtaining a tertiary qualification, majoring in Sports Science or Applied Science.

### **9.3 ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE**

All interviewees indicated that organisational culture was very important, with a few stating that it makes or breaks an organisation. One interviewee noted, "it will affect any business in reaching its potential", while another stated, "you need every employee thinking, breathing and seeing the pathway, otherwise the business will falter". The organisation's culture as considered by management employees had developed and changed since the fitness centre first opened. It was perceived that the fitness centre had steered slightly off course:

The company has had its ups and downs but we always tended to correct them. Staff changes and primarily growth has caused such problems. Every time something is improved, it creates a brand new set of challenges, which presents different stresses and pressures on people. Anytime when you are going to improve or grow, you pass your boundaries, and it puts a lot of stress on the individuals and systems, once you have overcome these and kept them in perspective, all of a sudden there are tremendous benefits.

#### Fitness centre's Mission Statement and philosophy

There was a collective perspective that the philosophy and mission of the fitness centre had changed. When the fitness centre first opened, it was to be a sports training centre, targeting elite athletes and being a leader in sports rehabilitation. There was a suggestion that the mission of the fitness centre had been created before the fitness centre had commenced operating:

We have changed our focus from a sports training centre to a fitness centre, as there was not a market for elite athletes. I don't think it failed, but evolved. It grabbed out of the market what it could. The new focus I believe is the rebirth of the organisation.

This new mission incorporated highly serviced fitness programmes that endeavoured to excel in customer satisfaction. Two interviewees felt that the Mission Statement of the fitness centre was not adhered to, with one management employee noting, "I don't think it is put to good use and it is never referred to". There was also the perception that a majority of employees did not understand or know the Mission Statement, with one interviewee stating, "if we inform the employees what our mission is, then the organisation would run more smoothly".

#### Provision of a client service

Three interviewees perceived that the subordinate employees of the fitness centre created the atmosphere that led to the clients' overall satisfaction. These interviewees believed that people joined the fitness centre not just for the equipment, but also the staff supervision. One management employee mentioned, "you could have excellent machinery, but if your staff are not performing their job responsibilities then the service suffers". The most common recollection was a change in the service provided. There was a belief that in the beginning the fitness centre's ideology was about providing good consistent service, but due to a lack of resources this had declined. Three interviewees explained:

I think it is a little different now as we have expanded. I feel we don't have the true resources to be at the potential we could be at, or were at. When I first started, the company was small and you could keep close observation on everyone and have greater control. With more people working here now, the aim is to keep a track of everybody.

I believe customer satisfaction is a key point for [the fitness centre] and it has varied throughout the time that I have been here. It has probably been because the expectation of the client was at a very high level at the early stages of the organisation. This has come away, although still providing a good service, the standard has dropped based on what was originally set.

I believe customer service has changed, it is not as much of a strong focus, we still encourage it and we still do the basic training. Customer service is something you can't just learn from a textbook, it is something you do day to day. It is about emphasising and caring about people and giving them what they want plus 1% more.

There was a perception that the decline in customer service was because the fitness centre was understaffed. Two interviewees indicated that this situation was directly related to employees not fulfilling their job responsibilities. It was stated, “the level of customer service that the members want and management wants provided is very hard. It is even more difficult when you are understaffed”. Another interviewee mentioned, “if you are totally understaffed it is quite hard to be as positive and energetic as if there was sufficient staff on”.

Another reason for the decline in customer service was perceived to have been employees “letting the team down”. There was an opinion that some employees didn’t pay enough attention to members. They were seen talking among themselves instead of focussing on the member. An interviewee mentioned, “there are employees who are willing to do more than others. The new instructors are excellent, while a couple of older instructors don’t do much. It is their work ethic, how they perform in any job, not so much this job”.

One interviewee considered the decline in customer service was directly related to the inconsistency of employees, and lack of leadership. They acknowledged that the systems that have been developed are more functional and are subsequently better. However, they expressed that due to a lack of resources there had been a reduction in the quality of training provided to employees. They stated, “there is a lot of change happening that is going to be beneficial to [the fitness centre] but at this point it is not providing the highest quality service possible”.

#### Fitness centre’s work environment

There was an opinion that the fitness centre provided a positive working environment. Three of the six management employees who supported this allegation, believed that it was due to the subordinate employees working at the fitness centre. Two of the three interviewees suggested that the positive work environment was based on the warm and friendly atmosphere that had been created, with one noting, “the cultural environment that [the fitness centre] provides ensures an educational and relaxing environment, and you can tell the employees that have stayed, do enjoy it”. One interviewee suggested that the organisation provided a positive work environment based on the “high

feedback” system that had been developed. They believed that the “feedback system” was highly valued within the organisation and was constantly improving:

The hierarchy of authority is to give feedback that is positive and constructive and empowers people to take on tasks that are normally done by someone in a higher position. The “high feedback” system is a combination of management and leadership skills. It is a system that we value. We are more strongly committed to it, than we were in the past. We value it so much that it can make or break the organisation.

Although the majority of interviewees perceived that the fitness centre provided a positive work environment, some concerns were raised about the degree of negativity within the environment that had been created. Three interviewees asserted that the atmosphere perpetuated was very uncomfortable. They identified that some subordinate employees and supervisors felt they were under scrutiny every time they worked at the fitness centre:

Personally, I get really stressed when there are certain people around. I feel like I am being watched all the time. I feel like I am being examined or tested when I work a shift. That is why I changed to evening shifts. It feels like I am under a lot of pressure.

I think there are times during the day, when the environment is not so positive and that’s generally because there are certain people here. These people are changing for the better. It feels you are being looked over and doing things wrong all the time. Employees have told me they don’t like working certain times during the day because of this.

I think how [the supervisor] is feeling at any one time can affect the work environment dramatically, and it is as simple or as shallow as that. This could be true about several different people.

An additional issue was how some employees believed that the fitness centre was not looking after them. One interviewee had heard comments that the treatment of employees had not changed. This respondent considered that the employees had been unhappy for a while, identifying:

I think they may be unhappy with the pay they get, while some just think they are not getting looked after. Some employees think they never do anything right. They feel they are being lectured all the time by supervisors.

## 9.4 ORGANISATION'S SYSTEMS AND STRUCTURE

The interviewees were asked to comment on how the management systems and structure of the fitness centre had developed and/or changed over the last three years. Responses were varied, and as anticipated those who had been employed for a greater length of time were capable of providing greater depth and insight as to the reason behind specific developments and/or changes.

### Fitness centre systems

When the fitness centre opened, the organisation's systems were based on an approach developed by an American fitness centre. There was a suggestion that the systems that were finally developed were a lot different from what was originally planned. It was stated, "we developed our systems a lot differently. There are certain similarities but these systems are unique to us". One interviewee believed that the systems change all the time, acknowledging that, "they have changed for the better because some problem arises and a policy or system is put in place to rectify it".

There was a unanimous perception among the interviewees that the systems had become more structured and the processes more systemised. There appeared to be significant developments in the employee training programme and the organisation's policies and procedures. Additionally, a feedback system had been initiated and a greater emphasis was being placed on "one-minute-management". As explained to the researcher, "one-minute-management" was the process of setting and accomplishing set goals.

The structure of employee training had improved, with manuals designed to facilitate gradual learning having been introduced. One interviewee explained that when they were employed, there was limited training, and it was based on a system of "learn as you go". They expressed that training was more intense, with examinations every three months. Lesson plans had been developed for instructors and supervisors, and as stated, "basically anyone can come in to the fitness centre and know what to do". The development of a structured training programme has been beneficial:

There is a lot more training now. When I first started, I had a first workout and then spent three days on the floor and shadowed a few of the instructors, and learnt as I went along. They get a lot more training now; the supervisors spend more time with them. They also have more manuals to learn from, they have initial training and follow-up training.

A Policy and Procedures Manual had been developed, providing guidelines for employee integration and customer service. It was noted that policies were previously unspoken and there was no formal manual available for employees. It was identified that the manual had become part of employee orientation, with its intention to educate rather than punish:

I think the rules are not there to catch people out or to punish them, but to make staff aware of what is expected of them.

There was support as well as resistance towards the feedback system and the “one-minute-management”. As identified earlier, there was a perception among some employees that they felt like they were being scrutinised all the time. This may have been the case, as the feedback system was based on observation and providing constructive criticism and appraisals. One interviewee stated:

The feedback system is managed by walking around, giving the instructors achievable goals, and letting them know how they are doing.

A majority of respondents supported the “one-minute-management” programme. One interviewee stated, “it is being adopted a lot better now”, while another mentioned, “it all makes sense, setting goals and praising people. It is a matter of applying it and practising it”. There was a perception that the “one-minute-management” programme had created better management support for the supervisors, although one interviewee believed they were forced to apply a procedure that they were not comfortable with:

Basically I am not a person that writes down goals and I am not comfortable with doing it with other people if I do not do it myself. I set my goals in my head. So I find it uncomfortable telling a person before a shift, ok let's write down some goals. It feels like I am a hypocrite.

### Fitness centre structure

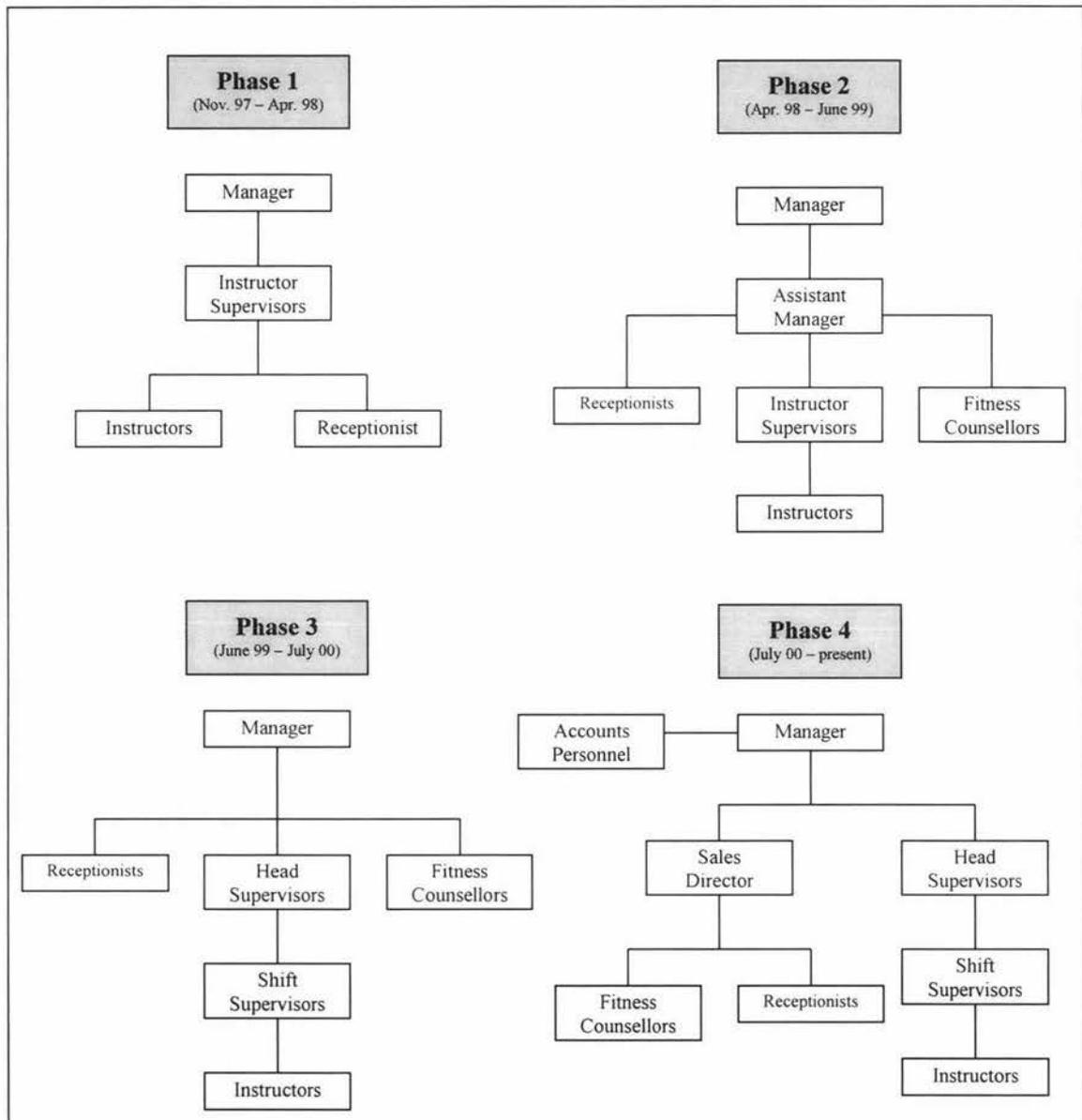
There was only one interviewee who remarked that the fitness centre's structure had not changed in the past three years. This is contrary to the remaining seven management employees who identified significant developments and changes in this area. Analysis of the interview transcripts revealed four distinct changes in the fitness centre's structure since the organisation had been operating. Figure 9.1 identifies these changes.

The respondents identified that there had been numerous problems with the fitness centre's structure over the last three years. These problems included the management

hierarchy being too top heavy, the fitness centre not replacing specific management employees, not having enough management employees, departmental problems, lack of communication and people with limited management capabilities.

Figure 9.1

**Changes in organisation structure  
November 1997 – November 2000**



According to one interviewee, Phase One of the fitness centre's structure involved some people with a lack of management experience. The interviewee noted that a few management people were "useless and provided no feedback". It was also mentioned that the management structure was wrong, with there being, "too many chiefs and not

enough indians". This caused problems, as there were insufficient employees to undertake the minor tasks.

The transition from Phase Two to Phase Three of the fitness centre's structure caused problems with the operation of the fitness centre. The assistant manager's position was not filled, and as identified by four of the interviewees this caused problems for the fitness centre for a considerable length of time. It was noted by one interviewee that when the assistant manager left, "it hurt the organisation", while another stated, "it left a huge gap between the general manager and the remaining employees". It was mentioned that the assistant manager's workload was spread between other supervisory staff, causing them increased stress. Two interviewees indicated that the assistant manager did a considerable amount of work, with one stating, "it was amazing how much work this person did". Another explained that the fitness centre had made the mistake of overloading this person and building the job around them. It was stated that when the person left the fitness centre didn't know how things worked, as they were not fully familiar with all aspects of this position.

The resignation of the assistant manager appeared to have dissolved the close relationship between management and subordinate employees. One interviewee believed that the assistant manager had great personal skills with all the employees at the fitness centre. Another stated:

When [the assistant manager] left it created a huge gap, this person had great personal skills, which is very important in a manager. This person worked well with the staff, and was always concerned about staff issues. I believe there is no path for that now.

Phase Three represented a lack of structure and authority in certain departments. Three respondents mentioned that during this phase there was a lack of structure in the fitness counsellor and receptionist departments, causing problems within the fitness centre. One interviewee believed there was a lack of depth in these departments. Another revealed that there was a lack of supervision:

I think the receptionists have been our weak link. However it is something we are coasting with right now, but we will need to commit to a highly trained supervisor to improve quality and consistency. There have always been problems in the reception area as it is very hard to keep motivated individuals for such a very simple but highly important job. It is a position in which an individual needs to be warm and friendly all the time. You can't teach that, at the same time

these types of individuals are usually high achievers, and this position is very limited in its challenges on a day to day basis. So the turnover is immense.

The structure of Phase Three presented many challenges. Interviewees revealed there had been ongoing problems with communication, a lack of trained supervisors, and managers/supervisors with limited management capabilities. Three management employees perceived that there was a lack of communication, with two of those interviewees explaining that it was more noticeable between departments. There was a belief that there needed to be greater consistency between all the departments. One interviewee stated, “there needs to be greater integration between the management team”. There was a concern that supervisory meetings were not being held as regularly as they should be, and that the current meetings were very visionary and did not concentrate on immediate matters. There was a perception that meetings had become meaningless and in some instances, vague in direction:

I think some of the meetings are a waste of time. Often some of the stuff is too detailed and there have been instances where we have been given material to read, and asked to discuss it straight away. I believe it would be more practical to take it away and learn about it first, so we become more knowledgeable rather than taking an hour to explain it during the meeting. I definitely believe sales, reception and instructors should have their own meetings, maybe monthly, with the head supervisors meeting weekly.

One interviewee expressed that when regular supervisor meetings were occurring, the communication process was working a lot more effectively. The same respondent also indicated that regular communication between employees and management was lacking:

A while ago we used to have regular staff meetings, but some people were not comfortable with them and didn't turn up. Meetings are very important and it is something that is not happening as much now as in the past. It's maybe because there is a lack of resources and commitment from employees, but once every two or three months is not good enough.

There were numerous management employees who thought there were insufficient shift supervisors. One interviewee explained, “they felt pressured to take on more shifts, even though they believed they were not ready for the extra workload”. Another interviewee attributed a lot of the problems to a lack of floor supervision and leadership.

The management capabilities of some supervisors/managers was of some concern. It was also identified that there was always a problem with filling the gap when people

left. This seemed to be a constant problem, with one interviewee explaining, “there was no depth in regards to supervisors and they were not receiving the feedback in order to assist them in directing and delegating staff”. Another respondent supported this comment, stating:

They have gone through a period of six to eight months with a lot of problems occurring due to a lack of supervisors. They had no one capable of stepping up to that position. There was no one who was sufficient to step into that role.

The current fitness centre structure (Phase Four) was only in its infancy when the research was being conducted, but there appeared to be a lot of support over the new changes. The creation of departmental supervisors and an increase in shift supervisors was perceived to have made a difference in the efficiency of the fitness centre. One interviewee mentioned that the situation had changed for the better as, “it took a lot of pressure and stress away from a limited number of people running the business”. There was a belief that the fitness centre was going to be more structured, with a greater number of full-time shift supervisors providing feedback to employees and monitoring the standard of service. It was also indicated that the key result areas were becoming defined, with leaders being appointed in each department.

## **9.5 MANAGEMENT POSITIONS AND EMPLOYEE TRAINING**

As a result of the interviews, the researcher gained a greater perspective of what the supervisors valued most about their position, the skills required for their job and the supervisors’ perceived strengths and weaknesses. Furthermore, information was gathered about the specific changes that have occurred in the supervisor department, the additional training that supervisors received and the developments that have occurred in the overall employee training.

### What supervisors value the most about their position?

Six of the eight management employees emphasised that assisting employees and members was the most valuable aspect of their job. One interviewee stated, “the most important aspect of the business was making a significant difference and being extremely valuable to the customer (employees and clients)”. Five of the eight interviewees were concerned about the employees and valued the time and effort that

they placed in them. One interviewee mentioned, “they have had a good day when they are able to help as many employees as possible to get ahead in their job” Another stated:

I value the way the instructors get taught, and the feedback that comes from them. I do take it personally when someone says that the instructors are doing this wrong, because it is my role to look after them. I am supposed to be there for them and give them guidance. The frustration is when people do not understand the full picture and only see part of it. They are quite quick to react. It is the same old scenario, people are always quick to respond to all the bad things. This is occurring more often, as there is a greater number of staff.

#### Skills required for a supervisor/manager

There were six distinct skills that the interviewees perceived as important for a supervisory position at the fitness centre. These skills consisted of people skills, management skills, job knowledge, leadership, communication skills and confidence. A majority of interviewees believed that people skills were the most important attribute for a supervisory position. It was common for interviewees to express that supervisors needed to be empathetic to members and employees. It was felt that management skills should include the ability to delegate tasks, provide direction and possess organisational and planning skills.

Job knowledge was based on the amount of training provided to employees, with an interviewee stating, “you need a great understanding of exercise prescription and physiology because you need to pass this knowledge on to other people”. The ability to communicate precisely and clearly was important, with an interviewee mentioning, “it is important that you can provide feedback and express yourself in meetings, to your peers and subordinates”. Leadership skills, and the ability to be confident among people were referred to by a limited number of interviewees, but were seen by these individuals as an important skill for supervisors to possess.

#### Strengths and weaknesses of the supervisors/managers

The most notable strength mentioned by four of the supervisors/managers was their willingness to excel. There was a belief by numerous interviewees that they worked well with members and employees alike. One interviewee stated, “I am becoming more tolerant in understanding people’s shortcomings, and I tend not to hold this against them anymore”. Another strength mentioned by three interviewees was their knowledge of exercise physiology. These respondents indicated, “they didn’t know all the answers”

and, “there is still a lot to work on”, but were confident that they had a reasonable grounded knowledge in exercise science.

The most common weakness noted by four management employees was their lack of proper management training and not having acquired the appropriate skills required to supervise employees. The ability to delegate tasks was an admitted weakness of all four respondents:

My weakness is delegating tasks to people. What really irritates me is when some people go on their breaks without telling me. But I leave it and don't address that, which is my own fault, just because I don't want to be a grouch. It gets on my nerves, it is obviously an issue because it irritates the hell out of me. I just don't address it. It is usually with new staff.

Because I started at the same time with most of the people I was working with, I found it very hard to delegate. I think it is there in the training, but you are either comfortable with it or not, it is just a matter of time. I was fine delegating to staff who came after me, I felt I had been there longer.

I find it hard to praise the people I have been working with, especially when they have the same level of knowledge and are good workers. There are certain people here I would not like to be a supervisor to, as they have their own philosophy. I just don't want to get on the wrong side of them. But at the moment I have not been in that position yet, so I cannot comment on that.

The remaining interviewee indicated that they could be a lot more straightforward with employees, telling them that they haven't done something right, other than in a roundabout way. This person stated, “they did this because they wanted to be nice, or just left the incident go unnoticed rather than making a big deal out of it”. The interviewee continued by stating:

The position has become more natural now. When I first started I felt awkward with everything, trying to delegate to instructors and training them. The training I received, and increasing my confidence helped this situation.

Four management employees perceived a problem pertaining to personality clashes between employees. Two interviewees stated that one of their weaknesses was their personality, which affected their position. One stated:

One of my weaknesses, is my personality. I am a serious person. Sometimes I come across differently and it is not what I really mean. I might say something, but the way I say it, someone

might not like it as much. I am trying to work on it. It is a problem when I have to delegate, praise and reprimand as I think it might offend them.

It was noted by one management employee that there seemed to be a clash of egos, with the belief that some employees were being taken for granted. It was mentioned that the only way to change this situation was for a supervisor to step in and talk to the subordinate employee. However the interviewee asserted, “it hasn’t worked, you can talk to some people but certain things will never change”. Conflict between supervisors and subordinate employees was also viewed as a weakness of the supervisors. An interviewee indicated:

There are certain supervisors who don’t get on well with certain staff members. It has been like that for a while. I think it is due to clashes of personalities and instructors not used to being told what to do. I also believe supervisors and management are not handling the situation that well.

#### Supervisory developments and changes

There were six specific developments and/or changes that had directly affected the supervisors as perceived by the interviewees. Three of the interviewees thought that one particular supervisor had changed their attitude and collectively stated, “they are not always jumping on employees backs, and blasting them and then leaving the situation”. Another interviewee believed that this person had changed for the better, and identified that they had put a lot of effort into doing so, but noted that incidents which had occurred in the past were lingering. Although the three respondents believed that this person had become better in their ways, one interviewee still felt intimidated by them, and stated, “it is a problem as it means I cannot talk to them about certain issues. Sometimes I don’t approach this person, as I can’t be bothered dealing with them”.

Two management employees noted the high turnover of supervisory staff as a major concern. Each interviewee had their own beliefs on why this was occurring, with one identifying that it was because management had not picked the right people for the job. They also thought that there was no overall management structure and that the designated pathways of employment advancement had not been communicated to everyone. The other interviewee attributed staff turnover to a lack of training and support:

There were high expectations and it is a hard job without training. It took a lot of time to learn what skills were needed for the position, to practice them and then master them.

A structured training format for the supervisors was a recent development and it was noted by an interviewee that some supervisors had not received sufficient training:

Having worked with them as a fitness instructor and now having gone through the new supervisor training, I now know what is expected. I don't think they really do what is expected of them as a supervisor. I think this is due to the lack of training in the past.

Other additional developments included a perceived barrier that had been created between supervisors and subordinate employees. Employees found certain supervisors intimidating with there being no one to talk to about employee work issues. There was also a belief that some supervisors tended to be more stressed.

One interviewee thought that the supervisors were more mature and confident in their role. They identified that the supervisors "now understand the philosophy of the product, they believe in it and this is seen as they defend it, support it and teach it".

#### Supervisor training

A lack of supervisory training was acknowledged by four management employees. One interviewee expressed that they had not received any feedback, or been "shadowed" when they had been supervising. Another interviewee noted that they had not received any formal supervisory training, stating, "the first couple of months were hard, as there was no one to talk to".

One interviewee identified the lack of a structured supervisory training programme as the reason why some individuals did not want to become a supervisor:

It takes a type of person, with leadership qualities, to be a supervisor, not that we lack leaders, we lack people who want to step into these shoes. I think it is because we don't have structured training. I think that puts people off, because they go from being an instructor to all of a sudden being dumped into this position. We are addressing this, and hopefully we will get well trained supervisors.

Furthermore, there was concern expressed by one interviewee about the process that occurs when an instructor becomes a supervisor. It was revealed that, "someone goes from being someone's peer to being a supervisor and often that doesn't work very well". This interviewee indicated that there appeared to be no respect for the

supervisors, and therefore it was more difficult for supervisors to reprimand or praise subordinate employees.

All the supervisors identified that a supervisory training programme had been recently implemented. One interviewee stated:

The training is really good. When I first started they didn't have anything, and I was thrown in at the deep end. But since then there has been a supervisors' manual developed. It involves continual testing and training, which is good.

It was recognised that the training had become more systemised with the introduction of manuals. Lesson plans had been developed, incorporating short and long term objectives with regular testing and shift evaluations:

We have broken what they need to learn into sections. Once they have mastered a skill they move on to the next. It might be over a 5 to 6 month period that they take to learn the necessary skills. But also, everyone learns at a different rate. Some people naturally pick it up and are confident to go off and give an instructor an evaluation of a task, while other people don't have the confidence to step out of their comfort zone.

One interviewee expressed having personal difficulty with the lesson plans, noting that they felt it challenging keeping up with the training, and stated, "when it was busy, I didn't always have the time to sit an instructor down and ask them questions, test them or quiz them".

There were three management employees who noticed significant developments as a result of applying the "one-minute-management" programme. However there were concerns from three other management employees that they had not received any external training in managing people, other than that provided by the fitness centre. It was acknowledged that they had participated in the Franklin Covey planning workshop, (Training in Organising your Day). However, it was stated that, "this course teaches you how to plan and organise your day, it is an important part of supervising, but more emphasis needs to be spent on teaching the skills of managing people".

Another change in employee training was the development of a fitness counsellor training programme. However it was perceived that a lot more work needed to be undertaken in developing and incorporating shift evaluations, testing and accountability.

## 9.6 EMPLOYEE ISSUES

All interviewees mentioned that employees were the most important facet of the fitness centre. It was acknowledged that the unique selling point of the fitness centre was its high quality customer service:

They are extremely valuable. If the service was poor the members would not come back, just for the equipment. If the equipment was poor and the service was great they might come back. It is the service that makes the difference. It is the people providing the service that counts, they are basically the tools we are using.

There was a perception that the organisation prided itself on excellent customer service and that their employees needed to be customer focused, friendly and caring. There was a general sentiment amongst the interviewees that the organisation was only as good as its staff and that if the fitness centre did not have well trained, friendly employees then it would not operate effectively. Five interviewees believed that management could treat the employees better, with one interviewee expressing, “they are not valued enough by the organisation. I don’t think [the fitness centre] adheres to their Mission Statement about treating employees well”.

The supervisors were asked to comment on the morale of the employees, whether there was high staff turnover and what aspects of the employees’ job ethic needed to be improved. Additionally, interviewees were asked if there had been any developments or changes to make employees more effective, whether they considered the employee remuneration to be competitive within the industry and if there were any reward and/or incentive programmes in place for employees.

### Employee morale and staff turnover

Overall, management employees rated employee morale as being high. Three interviewees indicated that there was a period in the middle of 1999, when employee morale was at an all time low. There was a belief that it was due to employee attitudes and inexperience:

I think it has to do with people’s attitudes, attitudes towards work, and not having a positive attitude to what they were doing. People thought, if I got paid more money I would be a lot happier, but actually it was a change in attitude.

I believe a lot of our morale problems have been through running a company with inexperienced staff, which comes down to new challenges. I don't think our morale problems are due to an unfriendly, hostile environment, I think it is to do with the individual and a constant need for challenges and direction from management.

Two interviewees identified that low morale was due to the employees not being happy with the work environment. Another mentioned that the amount of remuneration was an issue and stated, "The one thing that I wish would change in terms of the pay structure, is that they reward the hard working full-timers better than they do".

All management employees perceived that there had been high staff turnover, with five of them identifying a particular period at the end of 1999 when many employees resigned. The management employees identified nine reasons why employees were leaving the fitness centre. These comprised personal problems, not feeling valued, lack of guidance from supervisors, young age, low remuneration, boredom, outgrowing their positions, better opportunities elsewhere and a majority of employees being students. The most common reason was the lack of guidance. An interviewee perceived, "some employees can offer a lot more than just standing on the circuit", while another stipulated that there seemed to be a lack of guidance and stated, "people who didn't know what they wanted to do, fell to the wayside". This was a concern of another interviewee who mentioned that the fitness centre had lost three or four good people because, "they outgrew the organisation, or did not know the direction that the fitness centre was heading".

Contrary to this was an opinion that, "most employees had got what they wanted out of the company, and it was time to move on". There was an assumption by one interviewee that the employees who had resigned did not have the personal capability to make things happen.

#### Areas of employee improvement

The three most dominant issues to emerge from the interviews were that employees needed to improve their work ethic, customer service and achieve a greater consistency in job responsibilities. Six interviewees perceived that there needed to be an improvement in the overall work ethic of employees:

There is a different group of employees now. There was some depth there when I first started. I don't know if it was in regards to knowledge but if situations came up we learnt to deal with them. I find now that if a situation arises they tend to look for a supervisor to deal with it. I think it has occurred because of a lack of confidence in themselves and a change in attitude.

There was a belief that some employees were lazy, unproductive, failed to perform tasks effectively and were inattentive in assisting members. The most common issue concerning employees' work ethic was the lack of attention shown to members. One interviewee expressed that some employees had their favourite members, and spent too much time with them, resulting in other members becoming annoyed with a lack of service. There was also concern that male instructors spent too much time with attractive female members, which was becoming noticeable. The general assumption of interviewees was that instructors had been failing to administer a consistent level of attention to all members.

Another area requiring improvement was customer service. Three interviewees indicated that customer service often fluctuated, with it being acknowledged that a lack of supervisors, instructors and an increase in membership numbers had caused this problem. Two interviewees identified that the main issue was a lack of supervision, with one stating "the standard often slips when there is not a lot of supervision". The other stated:

To change the customer service element, you need to constantly be out on the floor, to evaluate and provide feedback on how employees are doing. The more you do this, the better they will become. If you are standing there watching them, you want them to do it to the point where they are going to do it when you are not there. When you are not there, or when you are gone behind a door, it changes and starts to drop off slightly. It is trying to get people to use their initiative and be responsible when a supervisor is not there.

Three interviewees perceived that there needed to be a greater consistency in employee job responsibilities. It was indicated by one interviewee that it came down to instructor training and that if it was adhered to, these problems should not be persisting.

#### Developments and changes to make the employee more effective

Performance based remuneration, introducing shift supervisors and effective training were seen as developments and changes to make employees more effective. Four

interviewees perceived that paying for performance and an upgraded training programme had an improved result on employee effectiveness. Employees were rewarded financially through measurable data and feedback. A bonus system was introduced which involved increasing the base wage rate, subject to staff members passing regular tests and spot increases for exceptional performance.

A change in the employee training programme included a structured systemised plan linked to remuneration. This was perceived to have increased employee effectiveness. It was indicated that the revised training procedure had a clearer path, however as stated by one interviewee, “there needs to be an improvement, as there are a lot of inconsistencies”.

Two interviewees noted that employee meetings and the incorporation of shift supervisors were developments that had improved employee effectiveness. It was mentioned that the implementation of shift supervisors in June 1999 had been beneficial as this resulted in greater observation of performance and constant feedback. Employee meetings were perceived to be important as they addressed problems and issues that had been occurring. However there was debate as to how effective the meetings had been, as they were not regular and only half of the employees attended although it was compulsory.

#### Employee remuneration and incentive programme

The hourly remuneration rate for employees varied, based on the position. It was acknowledged by all management employees that receptionists, fitness counsellors and fitness instructors were paid between \$10.00 and \$12.00, shift supervisors \$12.00 to \$14.00. The scale for head supervisors was \$15.00 to \$17.00 an hour.

Five of the eight interviewees believed that the average hourly wage was not competitive compared to what other fitness centres were paying. There was an understanding by these interviewees that employees at this fitness centre had greater responsibilities and were not being sufficiently remunerated for the service that was expected by management. However, it was indicated that not all employees provided the quality of service expected of them. One interviewee stated, “we are taken for granted, but there are certain people who do not deserve one cent more”.

An interviewee speculated that due to the high customer service provided, more employees were needed for this standard of fitness centre. They were aware that this would result in higher employment expenses. However, they perceived that the better performing employees should be paid more to retain them, suggesting:

Do you drop the number of instructors and make them better and pay them more, or do you increase the number of instructors and pay them less? I think either one of them would work. But, if you fine-tune the training, you will be able drop the number of staff, and still service the member in the same way and pay employees more.

Those interviewees, who believed the employees' remuneration was competitive within the industry, indicated that employees were being paid what they deserved. It was acknowledged that each employee was in control of their own remuneration, which could improve if they were doing their job effectively and performing well:

We had six instructors who started at the same time. Why would it be that one is on \$10.00, another two are on \$10.25 while the other three are on \$10.75? It is based on pay for performance. It splits the high performers, those who are willing to put in the extra effort, do the work, and pass the tests and put in 100% into each shift. If the employees use their initiative and work unsupervised to a high standard they will be paid more.

The reward or incentive based programmes mentioned by management employees included the "Eagle of the Moment", pay for performance, regular praising and feedback, ongoing training and opportunities for promotion. The "Eagle of the Moment" was a reward scheme where members rather than management provided feedback on employees who had provided exceptional service:

When a member gives a staff member an "Eagle", what we do is take a copy to the employee, shake their hand, and say great job, this person thought you did a really fantastic job, that in itself is enough. What we do, if someone has an exceptional "Eagle" is we make him or her, the "Eagle of the Month".

For outstanding employees we make them "Eagles of the Month". They are congratulated on the communication board so that everyone can see that they have been singled out as being a higher performer.

Six interviewees noted the "Eagle of the Moment" programme as a reward scheme, but three of them thought that the programme was not occurring regularly, or was not

accurate. One interviewee stated, “they were not sure whether or not it was still going”. Another indicated:

I don't think it is accurate. There are people that work very hard and never get an “Eagle”. It is fair, but I would not solely base everything around “Eagles”. I think some people are overlooked.

The “pay for performance” was an incentive programme designed to reward employees for increased performance. Only four interviewees mentioned this programme in the interviews. Two interviewees indicated that it had been a new initiative in recent months. One interviewee identified that, “it is more manageable, practical and durable now than what we had previously”. The other stated:

When I first started, my hourly rate didn't shift from \$10.00 unless you were promoted. There was nothing in place to progress from that base pay rate. We developed a system that works in direct alignment with the training system, so as you pass a test, and they have proven their value, or learnt some information or a skill, they can increase the amount they are paid by 25 cents. It also allows the high performers who are head and shoulders above the rest, to be given bonuses or spot raises. For example: Hey look I noticed the way you serviced these members, and received “Eagles” back from these people, I am going to increase your base pay rate by 25 cents.

There was some confusion regarding the “pay for performance” programme, with two management employees identifying that they knew an incentive plan was in place but were unaware how it was being conducted. An interviewee mentioned that there was a form of “pay for performance” but they believed it was not beneficial to all employees as it did not fully facilitate excellence and was not consistent between departments. It was acknowledged by an interviewee that the “pay for performance” scheme was not formalised, and many employees didn't know about it. However they did state that, “head supervisors try to talk to everyone once a month, to see how things are going, where they want to go and whether they were happy”.

Three interviewees believed that non-monetary rewards existed for employees. These consisted of management constantly praising and giving recognition. It was mentioned, “the very basic reward of praising has been around since Day One, and it is always communicated”. There were two interviewees who believed that the continual training the fitness centre offered was an incentive and/or reward as, “through the training,

employees exceed their skill levels and become more valuable to the company, and have more opportunities to be rewarded”.

There was only one interviewee who perceived that the opportunity to be promoted was an incentive. That interviewee indicated, “if the employees perform well, abide by our policies and follow procedures and are being warm and friendly they will be recognised for increased performance”. They continued:

We want to push and have people who will find an area they are really good at and really enjoy. Use the instructor as a stepping stone in the company to build a career. At the end of two years there are two avenues: they can leave the fitness centre, or they can develop something that will capture their interest. If the employee becomes an exceptional instructor we will get them personal training clients, which has a higher base pay rate. But also there is the incentive of supervisor promotions. I am aware of the trainers who are interested in it, and are questioning it, and those who want it and are driving for it.

## **9.7 THE FITNESS CENTRE’S MARKETING**

Numerous questions were asked regarding the marketing of the fitness centre. The responses generally reflected the amount of involvement the interviewee had with this aspect. The management employees were asked to comment on how additional services were marketed, why they thought people joined the fitness centre, how the fitness centre evaluated member satisfaction, what were the major frustrations of members and how the fitness centre was dealing with these issues.

The perception that additional services were marketed poorly was a concern for five of the interviewees. Two preferred not to comment, while one believed they were being marketed effectively. Three of the five interviewees who indicated that the internal marketing of the additional services was poor, acknowledged that it was limited and appeared to have been left up to the fitness instructors to conduct. One interviewee believed, “half of the staff were unaware of the programmes that the fitness centre had and were not hired for their marketing skills”. Another expressed that as a supervisor they needed to know more about the additional services and their costs. The interviewee who believed the additional services were marketed effectively mentioned that, “the fitness counsellors conducted this by establishing the needs of the client”.

The management employees mentioned three prominent reasons why they believed a person joined the fitness centre. These were the supervised training that was customer focussed, the efficiency of the workouts, and the warm, friendly and non-intimidating atmosphere.

Interviewees were asked how the fitness centre evaluated member satisfaction and whether there were regular surveys conducted to accumulate valuable data on their clients. Five revealed that there was no structured programme. Four of these interviewees mentioned that the evaluation of member satisfaction was conducted on the basis of asking the member if they had any concerns. This was deemed to be informal.

The remaining three interviewees noted that member satisfaction was evaluated by a compliment and complaint form, random surveys, and the fitness counsellor follow-up programme. These interviewees believed that there was more evaluation of member satisfaction now than previously, due to employees being more warm and friendly and fitness counsellors performing regular follow-up. However, one interviewee perceived that informal conversations with members by fitness counsellors and fitness instructors lacked a structured process, and regular climate surveys needed to be conducted to effectively evaluate member satisfaction.

The management employees perceived the major frustrations of the members as being employee inconsistencies, increased waiting times, overcrowding and inadequate or irregular fitness appraisals. It was revealed that the fitness centre was dealing with these issues by increasing the number of supervisors, improving organisational systems and employee training. Additionally, the fitness centre was implementing a better communication process and supervisors were being more attentive in recognising problem areas before they arose.

## 9.8 MANAGEMENT EMPLOYEE CATEGORIES AND PROPERTIES

The management interview data enlarged the existing categories and properties as identified in Figure 9.2. The properties that are in *bold italics* represent existing properties that have been expanded. Those that are not represent categories and properties that did not emerge in the management interviews. It is important to note that at this stage in the research process no new categories or properties emerged, the interview data reaffirming and expanding on the research categories and properties generated by the questionnaires.

Figure 9.2

**Management employee categories and properties**

Category	Property
1. Internal/external environment	1.1 Location 1.2 Physical setting <i>1.3 Ambience</i>
2. Operational management	<i>2.1 Management supervision</i> <i>2.2 Employee training</i> <i>2.3 Communication</i>
3. Employees	3.1 Employee demographics <i>3.2 Personal qualities</i> <i>3.3 Job attributes</i> <i>3.4 Skill improvement</i> <i>3.5 Considerations</i>
4. Members	4.1 Member population <i>4.2 Insufficient value</i> <i>4.3 Perceptible value</i> 4.4 Renewal factors
5. Equipment	5.1 Maintenance 5.2 Design
6. Programmes	6.1 Structure 6.2 Design 6.3 Benefits 5.4 Considerations
7. Additional services and/or amenities	7.1 Structure 7.2 Design

	7.3 Considerations
8. Organisation development	8.1 <i>Growth</i> 8.2 <i>Operational management</i> 8.3 <i>Employment</i>
9. Organisation change	9.1 <i>Growth</i> 9.2 <i>Operational management</i> 9.3 <i>Employment</i>

## 9.9 SUMMARY AND REVIEW

The management employee interviews revealed information that would not otherwise have been elicited through questionnaires. The freedom to probe assisted this process. The researcher was able to gain data that generally was not considered or contemplated before the initial interaction. The main focus of the interviews was to establish further fitness centre developments and changes. The interviews concentrated on the fitness centre's culture, structure, systems, employee training, management, employee issues and marketing.

The fitness centre's culture was perceived to be a fundamental principle to the organisation reaching its potential. There was a collective perspective that the fitness centre's philosophy and Mission Statement had changed. The fitness centre had changed from a sports training centre that targeted elite athletes, to a highly serviced fitness centre. Also, changes had occurred in the organisational philosophy and mission, which focussed on excelling in customer satisfaction. However, a few interviewees revealed that due to a lack of resources, the consistent service expected by members had reduced. There was a perception that a reduction in customer service was due to the fitness centre being understaffed, and management and subordinate employees not fulfilling their job responsibilities.

There was strong support for the fitness centre's work environment. Management employees expressed that this was due to the calibre of subordinate employees working at the fitness centre. The interviewees believed that the work environment was positive, warm and friendly. However, a few management employees were concerned that the

environment that had been created contributed to an uncomfortable atmosphere. This opinion was based on subordinate employees and supervisors feeling scrutinised every time they worked.

Overall the fitness centre's systems were perceived to have evolved and developed over the past three years. The systems were seen to have developed or changed when a problem occurred. The interviewees mentioned that the systems had become more structured and processes more efficient. The employee training programme, the fitness centre's policies and procedures, the feedback system and the "one-minute-management" programme was believed to have developed and/or changed.

Over the last three years the fitness centre's structure has significantly changed. The structure of the fitness centre has included four distinct phases. Each phase has presented different challenges and influenced the effectiveness of the fitness centre. Notable problems with the fitness centre's structure included the management hierarchy being too top heavy, the fitness centre not replacing specific management employees, not having enough management employees, departmental problems, lack of communication and employees with limited management capabilities.

All the interviewees mentioned that the most important facet of the fitness centre was its subordinate employees. There was a general opinion that the fitness centre was only as good as their employees. However, there was a perception that the fitness centre did not treat or value their employees well enough. There was an opinion that management expectations had to be achieved before any form of reward was provided to the employee. The areas that management believed subordinate employees needed to improve was their work ethic, customer service and greater consistency in job responsibilities. Developments and changes that have occurred to improve employee effectiveness have included paying for performance, introducing shift supervisors, and implementing an effective employee training programme.

The reviewed literature (Collow, 1993; Parrot, 1996) indicated the manager/supervisor as the most significant factor leading to the success or failure of a fitness centre. Within this chapter it was revealed that management employees have significantly influenced the operation of the fitness centre.

## CHAPTER TEN

# DISCUSSION: FROM DATA TO PROPOSITIONS

### CHAPTER OUTLINE

This chapter outlines the theoretical propositions that emerged from the research study, through the application of grounded theory. The master list of categories and properties derived from cumulative field data are critically reflected on and discussed with reference to key findings in the literature reviews from Chapters Two, Three and Four. Evolving from the research findings and consequential discussion is a proposed model elucidating the characteristics, developments and changes within a fitness centre providing a client service.

- 10.1 Research background
- 10.2 Master list: categories and properties
- 10.3 Theoretical propositions
- 10.4 Discussion
  - 10.4.1 Fitness centre characteristics
  - 10.4.2 Fitness centre developments and changes
- 10.5 A model for developing an effective fitness centre
- 10.6 Summary and review

## 10.1 RESEARCH BACKGROUND

This study was engendered by the researcher's involvement in the fitness centre industry, and an avid interest in facilitating a greater understanding of the characteristics, developments and changes within a fitness centre. Given the apparent operational inefficiency observed within the industry, and the alleged frustrations many individuals have experienced with commercially operated fitness centres (Crossley, 1991; Horsburgh, 1994; Matterson, 1993), this study was perceived as conducive to generating theory to assist the fitness centre industry.

The historical overview of the research identified the influences that developed and categorically led to the growth of the fitness centre industry. As physical exercise and leisure became an integral part of New Zealand society, social attitudes towards leisure and recreation changed. The impact of international trends, disposition and

developments significantly influenced leisure and fitness participation in New Zealand. Consequently the introduction of military drill and the development of a physical education syllabus increased public awareness of the benefits of sustained physical exercise.

A greater public participation in leisure and recreational activities influenced the establishment of fitness centres in New Zealand. The devotion of physical culturists, construction of school gymnasiums and influence of the YMCA and YWCA made physical and leisure activities readily accessible to the public. The progressive development of commercial and non profit fitness centres in New Zealand continued with the public support of the fitness and exercise movements of the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s and the subsequent constitutional advances of the pre and post World War Two governments.

As increased participation occurred and the benefits of physical exercise were publicised, the fitness centre industry became institutionalised as a demand arose for greater access and availability of leisure and fitness activities.

There was a dearth of literature on the historical development of the fitness centre industry in New Zealand after 1960, and the characteristics, organisational developments and changes facing commercial fitness centres. However, the Auckland Yellow Pages telephone directory provided information on the established growth of this industry, with relevant literature providing a greater understanding of specific industry occurrences. The substantial growth of the fitness centre industry and subsequent number of fitness centres that closed within five years of opening compelled the researcher to conduct this study.

The consideration of material from the literature reviews provided further impetus to conduct field research with the aim of answering the research question: *What are the characteristics, developments and changes within a fitness centre during its first three years of providing a client service?*

As presented in this chapter, the four phases of data gathering were subject to critical reflection and analysis to generate one cumulative master list of categories and properties.

## 10.2 MASTER LIST: CATEGORIES AND PROPERTIES

Presented below is the master list of categories generated by this study's field data.

Category	Properties	Potential propositions
<b>1. Internal/external environment</b>	1.1 Location	1.1.1 Accessibility
		1.1.2 Convenient
		1.1.3 Central
		1.1.4 Ease of parking
		1.1.5 Parking restrictions
	1.2 Physical setting	1.2.1 Interior colours
		1.2.2 Facility design
		1.2.3 Ventilation
		1.2.4 Clean and tidy
		1.2.5 Systemised layout
		1.2.6 Optimal use of space
		1.2.7 Confined layout
		1.2.8 Insufficient equipment
		1.2.9 Over equipped
		1.2.10 Inadequate stretch area
1.2.11 No free floor space		
1.2.12 Stretch area not situated near cardiovascular area		
1.2.13 Crowded changing area		
1.2.14 Limited changing space		
1.2.15 Not personal		
1.3 Ambience	1.3.1 Professional	
	1.3.2 Exclusive	
	1.3.3 Mixed age group	
	1.3.4 Relaxing and comfortable	
	1.3.5 Feeling of belonging	
	1.3.6 Friendly members	
	1.3.7 Unpretentious and non competitive	
	1.3.8 Non intimidating	
	1.3.9 Type of music	

<b>2. Operational management</b>	2.1 Management supervision	2.1.1 Limited employee supervision
		2.1.2 Critical and negative
		2.1.3 Guidance
		2.1.4 Shared responsibilities
		2.1.5 Individual learning capabilities
		2.1.6 Experience
		2.1.7 Leadership
		2.1.8 Scrutiny
		2.1.9 Praise and reprimand
	2.2 Employee training	2.2.1 Knowledge enrichment
		2.2.2 Training system
		2.2.3 Learning
		2.2.4 Regular
		2.2.5 Comprehensive
		2.2.6 Correlated with remuneration
2.2.7 Supervisor training		
2.2.8 Process of promotion		
2.2.9 Lesson plans		
2.2.10 External management training		
2.3 Communication	2.3.1 High feedback	
	2.3.2 Communication problems	
	2.3.3 Supervisors meetings	
	2.3.4 Customer feedback	
	2.3.5 Customer evaluations	
<b>3. Employees</b>	3.1 Employee population	3.1.1 Age
		3.1.2 Gender
		3.1.3 Employment length
		3.1.4 Employment status
		3.1.5 Hourly remuneration rate
		3.1.6 Qualifications
	3.2 Personal qualities	3.2.1 Empathy
		3.2.2 Personal qualities
		3.2.3 Confident
		3.2.4 Attitude problems
		3.2.5 Immature
		3.2.6 Work ethic
	3.3 Job attributes	3.3.1 Receptive
		3.3.2 Rapport
		3.3.3 Support
3.3.4 Values and principles		
3.3.5 Consistent		

- 3.3.6 Professional
- 3.3.7 People skills
- 3.3.8 Knowledge
- 3.3.9 Experience
- 3.3.10 Communication
- 3.3.11 Name recall
- 3.3.12 Management skills
- 3.3.13 Leadership skills
- 3.3.14 Job responsibilities
- 3.3.15 Variation in performance
- 3.3.16 Monotony
- 3.4 Skill improvement
  - 3.4.1 Job knowledge
  - 3.4.2 Health and medical expertise
  - 3.4.3 Management skills
  - 3.4.4 Leadership skills
  - 3.4.5 Communication skills
  - 3.4.6 Confidence
  - 3.4.7 People skills
  - 3.4.8 Delegation
- 3.5 Considerations
  - 3.5.1 Employee value
  - 3.5.2 Management actions
  - 3.5.3 Expectations
  - 3.5.4 Individual employee needs
  - 3.5.5 Remuneration rate
  - 3.5.6 Pay incentive programme
  - 3.5.7 Shared vision and philosophy
  - 3.5.8 Internal relations
  - 3.5.9 Promotional paths
  - 3.5.10 Feedback
  - 3.5.11 Personal growth
  - 3.5.12 Performance incentives
  - 3.5.13 Employee training
- 4. Members**
  - 4.1 Member population
    - 4.1.1 Age
    - 4.1.2 Gender
    - 4.1.3 Location of residence
    - 4.1.4 Occupation
    - 4.1.5 Annual income
    - 4.1.6 Awareness of the fitness centre
    - 4.1.7 Reasons for joining
  - 4.2 Insufficient value
    - 4.2.1 Overcrowding
    - 4.2.2 Over promising
    - 4.2.3 Amenities and/or services

- 4.2.4 Fitness assessments and follow-up
- 4.2.5 Quality of service
- 4.2.6 Monthly payment option
- 4.3 Perceptible value
  - 4.3.1 Expansion
  - 4.3.2 Equipment
  - 4.3.3 Customer service
  - 4.3.4 Supervision
  - 4.3.5 Employee qualities
  - 4.3.6 Off peak times
  - 4.3.7 Individual benefits
  - 4.3.8 Prices
  - 4.3.9 Monthly payment option
- 4.4 Renewal factors
  - 4.4.1 Growth
  - 4.4.2 Membership price
  - 4.4.3 Membership payment options
  - 4.4.4 Employee inconsistencies
  - 4.4.5 Employee turnover
  - 4.4.6 Hours of operation
  - 4.4.7 Services and/or amenities
  - 4.4.8 Other commitments
  - 4.4.9 Medical complications
  - 4.4.10 Additional expenses
  - 4.4.11 Location
  - 4.4.12 Occupation
  - 4.4.13 Time factor
  - 4.4.14 Additional fitness commitments
  - 4.4.15 Motivation
  - 4.4.16 Benefits
  - 4.4.17 Programme design
  - 4.4.18 Injury
- 5. Equipment**
  - 5.1 Maintenance
    - 5.1.1 Clean
    - 5.1.2 Well maintained
    - 5.1.3 Repaired promptly
    - 5.1.4 Additional maintenance
  - 5.2 Design
    - 5.2.1 Quality
    - 5.2.2 Easy to use
    - 5.2.3 Safe
    - 5.2.4 Accommodating
    - 5.2.5 Out of date

<b>6. Programme</b>	6.1 Structure	6.1.1 Progressive
		6.1.2 Supervised
		6.1.3 Monitoring
		6.1.4 Changed regularly
		6.1.5 Variety
	6.2 Design	6.2.1 Personalised
		6.2.2 Comprehensible
	6.3 Benefits	6.3.1 Efficient
		6.3.2 Effective
		6.3.3 Challenging
		6.3.4 Feeling of success
	6.4 Considerations	6.4.1 Monotonous
		6.4.2 Fitness assessments
		6.4.3 Consultation
		6.4.4 Follow-up
		6.4.5 Results
6.4.6 Support and explanation		
<b>7. Additional services and/or amenities</b>	7.1 Structure	7.1.1 Price
		7.1.2 Additional costs
		7.1.3 Marketing
	7.2 Design	7.2.1 Incorporated quality
		7.2.2 Effective
		7.2.3 Educational
	7.3 Considerations	7.3.1 Personal
		7.3.2 Clinical
		7.3.3 Follow-up
<b>8. Organisation development</b>	8.1 Growth	8.1.1 Membership promotions
		8.1.2 Target market
		8.1.3 Membership options
		8.1.4 Membership numbers
		8.1.5 Purchase of equipment
		8.1.6 Hours of operation
		8.1.7 Expansion
		8.1.8 Specific programmes
		8.1.9 Service variety
	8.2 Operational management	8.2.1 Organisations culture
		8.2.2 Organisations systems
		8.2.3 Training programme
		8.2.4 Management theory
		8.2.5 Conflict

	8.3 Employment	8.3.1 Staff turnover
		8.3.2 Numbers
		8.3.3 Attitude
		8.3.4 Qualities
		8.3.5 Presentation
		8.3.6 Team functioning
		8.3.7 Pay for performance
		8.3.8 Incentive reward programme
		8.3.9 Speed of improvement
		8.3.10 Knowledge
		8.3.11 Promotions
		8.3.12 Shift supervision
<b>9. Organisation change</b>	9.1 Growth	9.1.1 Member supervision
		9.1.2 Customer service
		9.1.3 Employee job attributes
		9.1.4 Name recall
		9.1.5 Waiting times
	9.2 Operational management	9.2.1 Mission statement and philosophy
		9.2.2 Management structure
		9.2.3 Equipment layout
		9.2.4 Service and/or amenity price
		9.2.5 Service and/or amenity availability
	9.3 Employment	9.3.1 Age
		9.3.2 Employment status
		9.3.3 Confidence
		9.3.4 Enthusiasm
		9.3.5 Experience and job knowledge
9.3.6 Consistency		
9.3.7 Attentiveness		

### 10.3 THEORETICAL PROPOSITIONS

Through the application of grounded theory, categories and properties were generated from the data. The categories for each phase of the research are presented at the conclusion of each result chapter. The above master set of categories led to the formulation of theoretical propositions that provide a theory of the characteristics, developments and changes within a fitness centre. The employee, current and former

member questionnaires and management interviews provided the basis for the following propositions.

## **1. Internal/external environment**

### **PROPERTIES**

### **PROPOSITIONS**

**The characteristics of the fitness centre's environment include...**

#### 1.1 Location

- 1.1.1 A locality situated near major roads and motorways.
- 1.1.2 A locality that is in an area of user convenience.
- 1.1.3 A locality that is central to either home or work.
- 1.1.4 Providing adequate car parking that is in close proximity to the fitness centre.
- 1.1.5 The restriction of car parking at certain times of the day.

#### 1.2 Physical setting

- 1.2.1 Interior colours that are perceived to be dull and cold.
- 1.2.2 An open plan design that fails to provide any personal privacy.
- 1.2.3 Inadequate ventilation that creates odours and increases humidity.
- 1.2.4 Clean and tidy surroundings.
- 1.2.5 The systemised layout of equipment.
- 1.2.6 The optimal use of space.
- 1.2.7 Equipment that is closely situated to each other which restricts access.
- 1.2.8 An insufficient amount of equipment for the number of members.
- 1.2.9 An oversupply of equipment for the limited space available.
- 1.2.10 An inadequate stretching area.
- 1.2.11 The limited amount of free floor space that is available.
- 1.2.12 The stretching area situated too far away from the cardiovascular area.

- 1.2.13 A changing area that is unable to accommodate large numbers of members.
- 1.2.14 A changing area that is restrictive and impractical.
- 1.2.15 Limited privacy and personal space in the locker/changing room.

### 1.3 Ambience

- 1.3.1 A professional business oriented organisation.
- 1.3.2 The perception that membership is exclusive.
- 1.3.3 A fitness centre catering for a mixed age group.
- 1.3.4 A relaxing and comfortable environment.
- 1.3.5 An atmosphere that perpetuates a sentiment of belonging.
- 1.3.6 Friendly members.
- 1.3.7 An unpretentious and non competitive atmosphere.
- 1.3.8 A non intimidating atmosphere.
- 1.3.9 Playing uninspiring and repetitive music.

## 2. Operational management

### PROPERTIES

### PROPOSITIONS

**The operational management characteristics of the fitness centre include...**

#### 2.1 Management supervision

- 2.1.1 An insufficient level of management supervision for employees.
- 2.1.2 Supervisors who are perceived by some staff as critical and negative.
- 2.1.3 Supervisors who are incapable of providing the necessary guidance.
- 2.1.4 The sharing of job responsibilities among supervisors to develop job enrichment.
- 2.1.5 The supervisors inability to recognise employee learning capabilities.
- 2.1.6 The limited management experience of supervisors.
- 2.1.7 The supervisors' inability to provide leadership.
- 2.1.8 Supervisors' ongoing scrutiny of employee job performance.

- 2.1.9 Supervisors' ongoing efforts to praise and reprimand employees.

## 2.2 Employee training

- 2.2.1 Creating an environment that is enhancing employees' knowledge.
- 2.2.2 Providing a structured subordinate employee training system.
- 2.2.3 A subordinate employee training system that promotes progressive learning.
- 2.2.4 Subordinate employee training that is conducted on a regular basis.
- 2.2.5 A subordinate employee training syllabus that is adequate for required job responsibilities.
- 2.2.6 Subordinate employee training examinations that are linked to remuneration
- 2.2.7 An inadequate supervisory training programme.
- 2.2.8 An uncoordinated supervisor promotion process.
- 2.2.9 The application of impractical lesson plans.
- 2.2.10 The insufficient use of external management training.

## 2.3 Communication

- 2.3.1 Supervisors providing regular feedback to employees.
- 2.3.2 Communication problems between departments.
- 2.3.3 Persistent communication problems due to irregular employee meetings.
- 2.3.4 Failing to provide regular communication to all members.
- 2.3.5 Not conducting regular customer evaluations.

## 3. Employees

### PROPERTIES

### PROPOSITIONS

**The characteristics of the fitness centre's employees include...**

#### 3.1 Employee population

- 3.1.1 Young university students and/or graduates.

- 3.1.2 An equal gender distribution.
- 3.1.3 An average employment length of 9 to 12 months.
- 3.1.4 An even distribution of part-time and full-time employees.
- 3.1.5 A low hourly remuneration rate.
- 3.1.6 An extremely high number who have gained a tertiary qualification.

### 3.2 Personal qualities

- 3.2.1 Possessing an empathetic attitude.
- 3.2.2 Exhibiting affirmative personal qualities such as friendliness, sincerity, helpfulness and politeness.
- 3.2.3 Displaying high levels of confidence.
- 3.2.4 Having specific attitude problems and annoying habits.
- 3.2.5 Being immature at times.
- 3.2.6 Being unable to change poor work ethics.

### 3.3 Job attributes

- 3.3.1 Being receptive to employee and member requirements.
- 3.3.2 Having an empathetic rapport with customers.
- 3.3.3 Providing ongoing support to employees and members.
- 3.3.4 Understanding and valuing the organisation's principles and philosophies.
- 3.3.5 Carrying out job responsibilities in a consistent manner.
- 3.3.6 Conducting job responsibilities in a professional manner.
- 3.3.7 Utilising high levels of people skills to facilitate interaction with employees and members.
- 3.3.8 Having an adequate level of knowledge.
- 3.3.9 Having an adequate level of experience.
- 3.3.10 Communicating effectively with individuals and in a group setting.
- 3.3.11 Addressing customers by name.
- 3.3.12 Utilising effective management skills.
- 3.3.13 Displaying leadership skills.

- 3.3.14 Being able to carry out their expected responsibilities.
- 3.3.15 Being consistent.
- 3.3.16 Conducting tasks that are monotonous.

#### 3.4 Skill improvement

- 3.4.1 Acquiring greater specific job knowledge.
- 3.4.2 Increasing their knowledge on health and medical issues.
- 3.4.3 Developing essential management skills.
- 3.4.4 Improving leadership skills.
- 3.4.5 Developing non verbal and verbal communication skills.
- 3.4.6 Demonstrating a higher level of confidence.
- 3.4.7 Exhibiting a wider range of people skills.
- 3.4.8 Learning to delegate.

#### 3.5 Considerations

Employee factors that management should take into consideration are...

- 3.5.1 Placing a greater emphasis on the value of employees.
- 3.5.2 Avoiding management actions that are inconsiderate to employees.
- 3.5.3 Avoiding setting expectations that are too high.
- 3.5.4 A greater comprehension of individual employee requirements.
- 3.5.5 Improving the hourly remuneration rate to be competitive with industry standards.
- 3.5.6 Educating employees about the benefits of the pay incentive programme.
- 3.5.7 Encouraging supervisors and management to comply with the organisation's vision and philosophy.
- 3.5.8 Creating and maintaining internal employee relations.
- 3.5.9 Presenting to employees the promotional paths within the organisation.
- 3.5.10 Developing a mechanism for feedback and regular communication.
- 3.5.11 Investing in employees to facilitate personal growth.

3.5.12 Creating beneficial performance incentives.

3.5.13 Developing an ongoing employee training programme.

#### 4. Members

##### PROPERTIES

##### PROPOSITIONS

**The characteristics of the fitness centre's current and former members include...**

##### 4.1 Member population

4.1.1 An average age of 35 to 44 years.

4.1.2 An equal gender distribution.

4.1.3 An extremely high percentage residing within a 4.99km radius of the fitness centre.

4.1.4 A greater number employed in managerial, professional, service and sales occupations.

4.1.5 An average annual income of \$60,000 to \$74,999.

4.1.6 A greater majority of current members learning about the fitness centre by referral, direct mail or walking in off the street.

4.1.7 Joining the fitness centre for the following three main reasons: Improving health and fitness, the location of the fitness centre and the quality of equipment supplied.

##### 4.2 Insufficient value

4.2.1 An awareness of increased over crowding and waiting times.

4.2.2 A belief that the fitness centre is failing to achieve customer expectations.

4.2.3 A belief that the fitness centre is providing a limited number of additional services and/or amenities.

4.2.4 A concern that the fitness centre is not providing regular fitness assessments and sufficient follow-up.

4.2.5 A perception that there has been a reduction in the quality of service.

4.2.6 The perception that the fitness centre is unable to provide monthly membership options.

### 4.3 Perceptible value

- 4.3.1 The perception that the planned fitness centre expansion incorporating additional services and/or amenities will increase value.
- 4.3.2 An awareness that the equipment is of a high quality
- 4.3.3 An awareness that the service is of a high quality.
- 4.3.4 A belief that the supervised fitness programme is designed to educate, motivate, achieve results and encourage regular attendance.
- 4.3.5 An appreciation of specific employee characteristics.
- 4.3.6 A belief that the less crowded times during the day results in limited waiting times.
- 4.3.7 The understanding of the individual benefits achieved from performing regular exercise.
- 4.3.8 A belief that the fitness centre's prices are competitive.
- 4.3.9 An awareness of the option to pay on a monthly basis.

### 4.4 Renewal factors

Factors that influence members to cancel or not renew their membership include...

- 4.4.1 An awareness of an increase in the number of members using the fitness centre.
- 4.4.2 A concern with the cost of re-joining the fitness centre.
- 4.4.3 The inability of the fitness centre to provide monthly membership options.
- 4.4.4 A perception that some employees perform inconsistently.
- 4.4.5 The increase in staff turnover.
- 4.4.6 The restriction of the fitness centre's operating hours.
- 4.4.7 The limited additional services and/or amenities offered.
- 4.4.8 Additional personal commitments restricting the use of the fitness centre.
- 4.4.9 The inability to use the fitness centre due to medical or injury complications.
- 4.4.10 Unanticipated personal expenses.

- 4.4.11 A change in residence which is outside the central location of the fitness centre.
- 4.4.12 A change in occupation limiting user convenience.
- 4.4.13 Limited time available for physical exercise.
- 4.4.14 Alternative fitness commitments.
- 4.4.15 Loss of motivation and interest due to monotony of programme.
- 4.4.16 The limited benefits and/or results achieved.
- 4.4.17 The inability to modify a programme to be appropriate for a medical condition.
- 4.4.18 The occurrence of an injury while utilising the fitness centre's equipment.

## **5. Equipment**

### **PROPERTIES**

### **PROPOSITIONS**

**The fitness centre's equipment include...**

#### 5.1 Maintenance

- 5.1.1 Being cleaned regularly by employees.
- 5.1.2 Having regular maintenance to prevent breakdowns.
- 5.1.3 Repairing inoperative equipment promptly.
- 5.1.4 Additional maintenance needed to prevent regular breakdowns.

#### 5.2 Design

- 5.2.1 Having quality equipment supplied.
- 5.2.2 Being easy to adjust and set up.
- 5.2.3 Being safe to use.
- 5.2.4 Being accommodating for all body shapes and sizes.
- 5.2.5 Having a range of cardiovascular equipment that is out of date.

## 6. Programme

### PROPERTIES

### PROPOSITIONS

#### The fitness centre's programmes...

##### 6.1 Structure

- 6.1.1 Incorporate a progressive and systematic approach.
- 6.1.2 Are supervised to ensure correct technique and form.
- 6.1.3 Are designed to provide ongoing monitoring and feedback.
- 6.1.4 Are changed on a regular basis to challenge the member.
- 6.1.5 Incorporate variety to prevent monotony.

##### 6.2 Design

- 6.2.1 Are personally designed for the requirements of the member.
- 6.2.2 Are designed to provide easy comprehension.

##### 6.3 Benefits

- 6.3.1 Can be performed in a relatively short time period.
- 6.3.2 Produce adequate measurable results.
- 6.3.3 Are designed to be stimulating and challenging.
- 6.3.4 Provide the customer with a feeling of accomplishment.

##### 6.4 Considerations

- 6.4.1 Can be perceived by members to be repetitive and monotonous.
- 6.4.2 Need to be co-ordinated with regular fitness assessments.
- 6.4.3 Require greater customer consultation for the design of programmes.
- 6.4.4 Require a regular follow-up programme to ensure customer requirements are being satisfied.
- 6.4.5 Doesn't provide the results that are expected in all cases.
- 6.4.6 May lack support in the free weight area.

## 7. Additional services and/or amenities

### PROPERTIES

### PROPOSITIONS

#### The fitness centre's additional services and/or amenities ...

##### 7.1 Structure

- 7.1.1 Are expensive over and above the initial membership cost.
- 7.1.2 Are perceived by members to have hidden costs.
- 7.1.3 May not be promoted enough for members to be aware of them.

##### 7.2 Design

- 7.2.1 Aim to provide a quality service that is associated with the whole fitness centre.
- 7.2.2 Produce adequate measurable results.
- 7.2.3 Are designed to educate the members.

##### 7.3 Considerations

- 7.3.1 Provide a service that is personalised.
- 7.3.2 Provide fitness assessments that are not clinical and generic.
- 7.3.3 Provide regular follow-up of customers who are conducting specialised programmes and/or services.

## 8. Organisation development

### PROPERTIES

### PROPOSITIONS

#### The developments that occurred during the first three years of providing a client service include...

##### 8.1 Growth

- 8.1.1 An increase in membership promotions.
- 8.1.2 Targeting a specific customer market.
- 8.1.3 Greater variety in membership options.
- 8.1.4 An increase in the number of members using the fitness centre.
- 8.1.5 The purchase of new equipment on a regular basis.

- 8.1.6 The increase in the fitness centre's hours of operation.
- 8.1.7 The plans for expansion.
- 8.1.8 The design of specific sports and health programmes.
- 8.1.9 The inclusion of a greater variety of services.

## 8.2 Operational management

- 8.2.1 The progressive development of the fitness centre's culture.
- 8.2.2 The continual evaluation and re-engineering of the fitness centre's systems.
- 8.2.3 The introduction of a structured subordinate employee training programme.
- 8.2.4 Utilisation and application of management theory.
- 8.2.5 The increase in the conflict between subordinates and management personnel.

## 8.3 Employment

- 8.3.1 High levels of staff turnover.
- 8.3.2 An increase in the number of fitness centre employees.
- 8.3.3 The improvement of the overall attitude of employees.
- 8.3.4 The improvement in the employees personal qualities.
- 8.3.5 The improvement in employee presentation.
- 8.3.6 Increased team functioning.
- 8.3.7 Linking remuneration with subordinate employee training examinations and performance.
- 8.3.8 The development of a subordinate employee incentive reward programme.
- 8.3.9 An increase in the relative speed with which new employees develop.
- 8.3.10 The improvement of the overall knowledge of employees.
- 8.3.11 The increase in the number of employee promotions.
- 8.3.12 The introduction of shift supervisors to provide leadership and support to employees.

## 9. Organisation change

### PROPERTIES

### PROPOSITIONS

**The changes that occurred during the first three years of providing a client service include...**

#### 9.1 Growth

- 9.1.1 A reduction in the provision of member supervision.
- 9.1.2 A reduction in the quality of customer service.
- 9.1.3 A reduction in the employees' job attributes.
- 9.1.4 The inability of some employees to personally address members due to staff turnover.
- 9.1.5 The increase in waiting times to use equipment.

#### 9.2 Operational management

- 9.2.1 The modification of the fitness centre's Mission Statement and philosophy.
- 9.2.2 The transformation of the fitness centre's structure.
- 9.2.3 The arrangement of equipment.
- 9.2.4 An increase in price for the additional services and/or amenities.
- 9.2.5 The reduction in the hours of availability of the additional services and/or amenities.

#### 9.3 Employment

- 9.3.1 Having a younger employee population.
- 9.3.2 An increase in the number of part-time employees.
- 9.3.3 A dramatic decline in the overall employees confidence.
- 9.3.4 An apparent decline in the approachability of employees.
- 9.3.5 A lack of experience and in-depth job knowledge of employees.
- 9.3.6 An apparent increase in the inconsistency of employees.
- 9.3.7 The inability of employees to be attentive to members' requirements.

## 10.4 DISCUSSION

The intention of this study was to research the characteristics of a fitness centre, and its developments and changes during the first three years of providing a client service. The categories of the fitness centre were generated from the perspectives of current and former members, fitness centre employees and management.

Specific categories included the fitness centre's internal and external environment, management operations, employees, members, equipment, programmes, amenities and services along with the fitness centre's developments and changes.

The generation of data drew upon qualitative and quantitative methodologies to establish the properties and theoretical propositions of these categories to answer the research question. This chapter discusses matters arising from those theoretical propositions and draws upon the research literature on fitness centre management to place the findings in a broader context.

### 10.4.1 Fitness centre characteristics

The characteristics that emerged from this study appear to have expanded considerably on the findings of currently available literature, contradicted previous suppositions and generated new theory. As this research was conducted in a single setting, some specific characteristics generated were not examined in the literature. It may be argued (Hammersley, 1992) that researching a singular setting prevents generalisation. If this is true, then the specific characteristics that emerged from this study may be unique to this fitness centre and are less applicable to the greater population. However, the issue of generalising theory or findings from one setting to other settings has been substantiated (Gummesson, 1991; Holloway, 1997; Normann, 1970). Therefore, the theory generated in this study is deemed to be relevant to the fitness centre industry.

#### Internal/external environment

The properties of the internal and external environment consisted of the location, physical setting and the ambience of the fitness centre. A majority of the theoretical propositions in this study emerged from the research literature.

It has been identified (Parrot 1996; Queensland Recreation Council and Department of Local Government, 1988) that the location of a fitness centre is an important feature of operational success as this aspect is an appealing attribute for prospective members. This research identified that while locality was important, its findings could not substantiate the claim by O'Malley (1991, cited in Weir, 1991) that 80% of fitness centre memberships were dependent on the fitness centre's location.

The research data did however, identify that it was beneficial for a fitness centre to be located near major roads and motorways. Furthermore, the fitness centre should be in an area of user convenience, either en route or in near proximity to a regularly travelled destination, or be in a central location to either its members' home or work. The suggestion by Baldmin, Coombs and Rayner (1988) that the rate of use usually falls progressively as the fitness centre locates further away from the population was substantiated in this study and provides evidence that location is a significant factor for a fitness centre (see Tables 6.3 and 7.2).

The findings of this study have provided evidence that location is an influential factor for people contemplating joining a fitness centre. The location of the fitness centre was the second most important reason influencing current members to join and the third reason for former members. The two characteristics that current and former members favoured above the location of the fitness centre were either improved health and fitness, and/or the equipment that was provided.

The importance of location was further reinforced by the current and former member perceptions as preferences and objections regarding the fitness centre. Comments such as, "it is located between home and work" and, "the location and proximity to home is a big factor" were typical reflections.

Additionally, the location of the fitness centre was an influential reason why former members cancelled or did not renew their membership. Former members acknowledged that due to a change in job and/or residence, the distance and traffic congestion made it less convenient to attend. Some former members recognised that location in comparison to time was an issue, and as a result joined a fitness centre closer to their job or residence. This confirms the importance of the fitness centre's location as highlighted in

the literature (Parrot 1996; Queensland Recreation Council and Department of Local Government, 1988).

An additional characteristic of the fitness centre's location was the availability of car parking in close proximity to the premises. However, several participants reported that finding a car park at certain times of the day was difficult:

Sometimes I can't find a park in the middle of the day. One day I drove around the streets for 15 minutes looking for a park.

The fitness centre involved in this study did conduct a traffic impact assessment before they leased the current premises. The 13 car parking spaces available failed to meet the 24 spaces required by the proposed District Plan for the theoretical maximum occupancy of the fitness centre. However, it did meet the daytime requirement of 12 spaces (Traffic Design Group, 1997).

The literature (Collow, 1993; New Zealand Hillary Commission, 1994; Grantham, Patton, York and Winick, 1998) provides little or no reference to the requirements of providing carparking accessibility for fitness centres. However, research conducted by Collow (1993) referred to the fact that car parking could have an impact on the viability of a fitness centre. There is no evidence in this study to substantiate this opinion, as car parking failed to rate highly as a reason for joining. Additionally, car parking was a minor preference and objection of current and former members and was not reported as a reason to cancel or not renew a membership.

The theoretical propositions of this study identified fundamental concerns about the physical setting of the fitness centre. The limited amount of space, confined layout of the equipment, insufficient equipment, limited privacy and interior design issues were reflections of many current members. Although the rating of the overall layout of the fitness centre was perceived by current members to be average or above average (see Figure 6.25) analysis of the current member comments revealed a statistically higher negative response (see also 6.26):

The cardiovascular area is too crowded with treadmills and bikes, there is not enough room. I always knock my leg or arm trying to get onto the equipment.

Where is the stretch area? Apart from the machines in the free weight area, I am not sure where you would stretch. It would be good if more emphasis was put on this.

As a result of purchasing additional equipment, the overall free floor space and stretching area had been reduced. Although there was a perception that the layout was systemised and the fitness centre had utilised its floor space adequately, the increase in member numbers had placed a greater demand on its operations. Due to increased numbers there appeared to have been insufficient equipment to accommodate the ongoing growth in membership:

There is not enough machines, when busy you have to wait for over 30 minutes to get started on the circuit.

Current and former members perceived the restrictive and impractical design of the locker/changing room as another issue arising from the increase in member numbers. There was a perception that the locker/changing room area became crowded, with the layout lacking flow. This regularly led to congestion. The failure of the locker/changing rooms to accommodate large numbers of members was not the only issue: the open plan design did not provide sufficient privacy. There were suggestions that more privacy was needed for the “less than perfect bodies”.

Issues relating to the fitness centre’s physical setting were also reflected in the objections of the current and former members (see section 6.4.2 and 7.3.2). The major concern in this regard for both groups was the overcrowding of the fitness centre, which was a direct link to the limited space available. The study’s research findings concur with concerns raised in the literature regarding the optimum space required for effective circulation of members (Evans-Plat, 1992; Grantham, Patton, York and Winick, 1998; Traffic Design Group, 1997). Although the fitness centre involved in this study had previously performed a maximum capacity assessment, the increase in membership numbers and the purchase of additional equipment had significantly reduced the equipment’s individual effective space requirements dramatically. The reduction of available space and the increased membership had a detrimental impact on the current members’ overall enjoyment (see Figure 6.32). As a result, overcrowding had adversely influenced the former members’ decision on rejoining.

Of the favourable perceptions of the fitness centre's physical setting, the cleanliness of the fitness centre emerged from this research as a positive characteristic. The importance of maintaining a clean fitness centre is reflected by Grantham et al. (1998), who identified that an unclean fitness centre which is not maintained is a controllable reason for members to leave a fitness centre.

The importance of ambience in a fitness centre was reflected in the literature (Brooks, 1994; Crossley, 1992; Evans-Platt, 1992; Green 2000). This aspect emerged from the research as a characteristic that substantially increased the enjoyment of attending the fitness centre.

There was a favourable ambience (see section 6.4.1 and 7.3.1) acknowledged in this study by both current and former members, with specific characteristics referring to the unpretentious, non competitive and non intimidating atmosphere. Further comments remarked on the relaxing and comfortable environment, professional business approach of the fitness centre, perceived exclusivity, mixed age group of the members and their friendliness. The only concern about the fitness centre's ambience was the type of music played:

I think it would be good to put more thought into the choice of the music. It should be stimulating, active and reflect the image of the gym.

### Operational management

As with the internal/external environment, the operational management characteristics that emerged from this study appear to concur with those outlined in previous literature (Balcombe, 1999; Collow, 1993; Crossley, 1991; Evans-Platt, 1992; Parrot, 1996; Grantham, Patton, York and Winick, 1998). The key properties to emerge from the researcher's data included management supervision, employee training and communication.

The supervisors' ability to perform their role properly emerged from the study as an area that required monitoring. The employee and current member questionnaires and management interviews identified concerns about certain aspects of leadership abilities, supervisory procedures and attitudes of some supervisors:

I thought the owners of [the fitness centre] had captured a winning idea and technique. They forgot to incorporate this in their staff. They needed more seniority. Such a shame it was such a good place.

The perceived inability of management supervisors demonstrated the necessity for these individuals to have had previous management experience or to have acquired proper management training. At the same time the fitness centre should have had a monitoring system in place to evaluate employee performance. There is evidence to suggest that a significant factor in the success of a fitness centre is the manager and/or supervisors (Collow, 1993; Parrot, 1996). It is therefore important that these individuals should possess specific qualities that will assist in the overall effectiveness of the organisation.

In contrast, many employees observed the positive aspect of the shared job responsibilities of the supervisors and the frequent praises and constructive criticism they offered. However, there were concerns relating to the supervisors' method of praising and reprimanding. Some employees perceived there were instances of improper feedback. The following were reflections of two supervisors:

One of my weaknesses, is my personality, I am a serious person. Sometimes I come across differently and it is not what I really mean. I might say something, but the way I say it, someone might not like it as much. I am trying to work on it. It is a problem when I have to delegate, praise and reprimand as I think it might offend them.

Some supervisors are quite abrupt and some instructors feel they are never doing anything right.

The inability of some supervisors appeared to be directly linked to insufficient or inappropriate training. The collective perspective of employees and supervisors identified an insufficient training programme that failed to constitute a co-ordinated promotional process, practical lesson plans and external management training. Concern over the lack of a supervisory training programme was typified by one supervisor, who stated:

It takes a type of person, with leadership qualities to be a supervisor, not that we lack leaders, we lack people that want to step into these shoes. I think it is because we don't have structured training. I think that puts people off, because they go from being an instructor to all of a sudden being dumped into this position. We are addressing this, and hopefully we will get well-trained supervisors.

Despite the seemingly ineffectual training programme for supervisors, the apparent subordinate employee training programme was perceived by supervisors, subordinate employees and current members as being comprehensive, quality based and job specific. The theoretical propositions derived from the grounded theory analysis provided evidence that employee training does impact on the efficiency and effectiveness of employees. The impact of employee training as theorised from data collation in this study (see Sections 6.3.1, 6.4.1 and 7.3.1) has had an influence on the experience of current and former members. This is evident in the perceptions of both members and employees:

Their friendliness, knowledge, professionalism and willingness to educate, make the [the fitness centre] instructors the best I have come across in any gym.

I have personally learnt a lot and acquired many new skills. The organisation replicates a practical tertiary institution due to its training programme.

Literature (Matterson, 1993) has indicated that a successful fitness centre is one that employs and trains excellent staff. However, the researcher's examination of the literature failed to identify the structure of a quality training programme. The findings of this study have provided evidence to suggest that the following requirements are necessary for a successful training programme: enhancing individual knowledge, being structured to promote progressive learning, conducted on a regular basis, adequate for the required job responsibilities, and linked to remuneration. Although a comprehensive analysis was not conducted on the fitness centre's subordinate employee training programme, it appears that the fitness centre has implemented a system that is functional. It is recommended that further research be conducted in this field to substantiate the applicable components necessary for employee development.

Through all phases of the research the communication channels were identified as an area requiring improving. The research data revealed numerous examples of communication shortcomings, especially between departments of the fitness centre, management and employees, the fitness centre and its members. Although research literature failed to illustrate the importance of communication channels in the fitness centre industry, this research clearly identified its necessity. There is evidence to suggest that communication problems had an impact on the efficiency of the fitness

centre. Employees not familiar with the “pay for performance” programme, promotional opportunities and the fitness centre’s mission are examples of communication problems that may have been limiting the overall success of the fitness centre.

There was also a perception that the fitness centre did not conduct regular evaluations to generate member feedback. The necessity of ensuring that member problems are monitored and responded to in a timely and appropriate manner is recognised in the literature (Howat, Milne and Crilley, 1996). Although this study did not establish the viability of regular member evaluations due to the questionnaires not being structured to elicit such information, management staff and employees were concerned that there was not a structured programme in place. It may be argued that the methods used to generate feedback from members were adequate, given the findings in this study. However, there appeared to be limited evaluation of member and employee satisfaction. The evaluation of employee satisfaction will be covered later in this discussion during the examination of employee considerations.

### Employees

The importance of employees in the operational success of a fitness centre has been recognised by leading experts in the New Zealand fitness centre industry (Clive Green, Kerry Lancaster, Sue Olason, Maureen Oliver, Kathy O’Malley). Similarly, Collow (1993) noted that employees are the most important resource of an organisation, as they set the fitness centre’s atmosphere, energy levels, motivate and serve the members.

There was a significant emphasis placed on quality customer service based on the operational nature of the fitness centre. The high ratio of employees to members and the supervised training that was provided perpetuated exceptional service. The supervision provided by the fitness instructors was perceived by current and former members to be the most important aspect of the fitness centre. Furthermore, management interviews revealed the high quality customer service that employees offered was the unique selling point of the fitness centre. This demonstrates that the employee is a key component in providing a quality service.

The findings of this study expands on previous literature (Grantham, Patton, York and Winick, 1998) and generates new perceptions on the demographics, requisite personal qualities, job attributes and skill improvement areas of fitness centre employees.

It is difficult to substantiate whether the employee demographics of this fitness centre represent the industry norm. This type of research doesn't appear to have been attempted before, and the ability to generalise these findings to the population at large is impeded. The findings of this study illustrate that employees working at the fitness centre are generally young university students and/or graduates. They are qualified, or in the process of attaining a tertiary education, presumably with a Bachelors Degree in the relevant field of Sports Science and/or Coaching. There is an equal distribution of gender, with the average period of employment being 9 to 12 months. The fitness centre's even distribution of full and part-time employees is not reflective of what had been outlined in earlier studies (IRSA, 1992; New Zealand Fitness, 1995). There are also contradictory conclusions (De Leede, 1998; Grantham et al. 1998) on the importance of part and full-time employees. Analysis of the results of this study reveal that the average period of employment for part-time employees is 13 to 16 months compared to 9 to 12 months for full-time employees.

It is difficult to substantiate within this study whether a full-time or part-time employee is more viable to a fitness centre. The conflicting data from the current members surveyed regarding the performance of part and full-time employees was unable to provide conclusive answers. It could be argued that the longevity of part-time employees is important to the retention of fitness centre members.

The low hourly remuneration rate of employees appears to be indicative of the fitness centre industry (Green, 2000; New Zealand Fitness, 1995). The fitness centre's average hourly remuneration rate is virtually equal to that of the New Zealand average hourly remuneration rate for fitness instructors. However, the data that is available (New Zealand Fitness, 1995; IRSA, 1992) is not current. Therefore it is difficult to assume how relative the fitness centre's average hourly remuneration rate is, compared to present industry standards. The findings of this research revealed that the amount paid to an employee had no bearing on length of service, although part-time employees appeared to be paid more on an average hourly basis than full-time employees.

The personal qualities of the employees are reflective of the intangible characteristics outlined by Grantham et al. (1998). The findings of this research (see sections 6.3.1 and 6.3.3) provide evidence that employees should possess a particular attitude, affirmative personal qualities and display high levels of confidence:

They are all super friendly, uniforms always tidy and when I do the circuit, they are always attentive to my concerns.

However, perceived unfavourable employee qualities also emerged from this research. There was a perceived level of immaturity amongst employees, almost certainly related to their young age. The analysis of the results revealed that employees' average age was 23, compared to 35 to 44 years for members. There was even a suggestion from a current member that they, "would love to see one or two instructors in the older age bracket (35 to 45 years)". It is difficult to substantiate whether the immaturity perceived by the current members was based on attitude or age:

The younger instructors are less concerned with providing advice or talking about programmes.

What was elucidated from this study is that the maturity of an employee needs to be taken into consideration during the hiring process, and should reflect the average age and requirements of the fitness centre's clientele.

Some employee's apparent attitude problems, bad habits and poor work ethics appeared to have occurred from an insufficient level of management supervision. Furthermore, there is an assumption that the content and/or application of the employee training programme had resulted in poor employee work ethic. However, there was evidence to suggest that if employee supervision had been increased, the issues raised above may not have been resolved. This conclusion is based on the reasonable assumption that some supervisors were incapable of providing necessary guidance, unable to recognise individual learning capabilities, had limited management experience and had an inability to provide leadership. This reinforced the conclusion that it was necessary to have had a reasonably high level of internal and external management training. The following example supports this claim:

I find it hard to praise the people I have been working with, especially when they have the same level of knowledge and are good workers. There are certain people here I would not like to be a supervisor to, as they have their own philosophy. I just don't want to get on the wrong side of them. But at the moment I have not been in that position yet, so I cannot comment on that.

There were a large number of job attribute requirements identified in this study and to prioritise these would require further research. To generalise the job attributes to the fitness centre industry is difficult. For example, it may be necessary for a particular fitness centre's front desk receptionist to display leadership qualities, whereas in another fitness centre it may be more appropriate for the receptionist to personally address members by name. There has been no adequate or specific research conducted previously on fitness centre employees, so there is no way of comparing the theoretical propositions drawn from the research, with the available literature.

Being receptive to employee and member requirements, having an empathetic rapport with members, providing continual support and personally addressing members by name are all important job attributes of all fitness centre employees. Furthermore, the utilisation of people skills to facilitate interaction with members assists with the employee to member relationship. These job attributes manifested themselves from the fitness centre due to the nature of the services offered, employee training provided and the individual characteristics of the employees. However, these attributes are only possible if the employee understands, accepts and values the organisation's principles and philosophy.

Communication, management and leadership skills and an adequate level of knowledge and experience emerged as crucial attributes that fitness centre employees need to possess. Fitness instructors and current members perceived that a high level of exercise prescription, equipment and physiology knowledge was essential for a fitness instructor. This study provides evidence that a relevant tertiary qualification is necessary for such a position. However a majority of fitness centre employees felt that they needed additional knowledge to perform their job adequately. This emphasises the necessity for the fitness centre to provide an appropriate employee training programme which includes relevant information to assist with required job responsibilities.

The experience of the employee was another attribute deemed to be relevant to the provision of a quality service. No matter how effective the fitness centre's employee training programme is, if it is not applied appropriately, the inexperience of the employee will become evident. Therefore, it is necessary for fitness centre management to provide adequate supervision for employees to demonstrate their confidence and

develop experience. There is also evidence from the results of this study to believe that a considerably high staff turnover had led to the perceived notion that employees lack experience. For example:

Overall, the standard of the instructors has dropped a little. They seem less experienced, enthusiastic and committed due to staff turnover.

The manner with which job responsibilities were conducted appeared to be very important to fitness centre members. The findings of this study illustrate that inconsistency and/or variation in performance of the employee was a factor directly influencing the experience of the fitness centre member. For example, two current members explained:

The staff are friendly and helpful, but there are some inconsistencies evident. Obviously it depends on the length of the instructor's employment. In one instance, my technique was corrected only after I had been doing the exercise a certain way for some time. Nobody had picked it up that I was doing it wrong.

Instructors give less attention than when I first joined and are less likely to use my name. Some of the instructors get bored and inattentive around the quiet mid day period. The calibre of instructors seems less consistent than at first.

The findings of this research provided evidence that the inconsistencies appear to relate to the fitness instructors' inability to demonstrate correct form and technique. Variation in fitness instructor performance also included the level of attentiveness, enthusiasm, professionalism and assistance. Management supervisors were aware of these issues, identifying insufficient employee supervision, increase in membership numbers, a deficiency in the employee training programme and employee attitudes as reasons for the existence of these conditions.

The skills employees and supervisors perceived would facilitate their role at the fitness centre replicated the job attributes noted above. These skills included acquiring greater specific job knowledge, developing essential management skills, improving leadership and communication skills, demonstrating a higher level of confidence, exhibiting a wider range of people skills and learning to delegate.

A majority of these skills that needed improving correlated with the documented weaknesses of the fitness centre employees/supervisors. For example, management supervisors identified further improvement was needed in the areas of managing, leading, and delegating. This supports the claim acknowledged by employees of the inability of some supervisors to provide leadership and guidance, supporting the conclusion that proper management training and/or experience is necessary. Additionally, employees wanted to acquire greater specific job knowledge. This accentuates their perceived weakness of failing to be consistent while conducting their job responsibilities. Furthermore, current members perceived a few employees to be immature. However, this presumed immaturity may in fact be due to the lack of confidence of some employees:

There is a different group of employees now. There was some depth there when I first started. I don't know if it was in regards to knowledge but if situations came up we learnt to deal with them. I find now if a situation arises they tend to look for a supervisor to deal with it. I think it has occurred because of a lack of confidence in themselves and a change in attitude.

Consideration should be given to improving these skills as it is possible that they would be successfully acquired through regular supervision and ongoing training.

The employment considerations that emerged from this study appear to have expanded on earlier literature on this subject. As noted, the key to job fulfilment is personal growth (Collow, 1993; Horsburgh, 1994). However an organisation needs to firstly comprehend the needs and wants of its employees.

Analysis of the results revealed that a majority of employees wanted to be more valued. Concerns included improved financial reward, and the understanding of individual employee needs:

I think they may be unhappy with the pay they get, while some just think they are not getting looked after. Some employees think they never do anything right.

The findings of this study indicate that the employment considerations requiring assessment should not be regarded as minor. The truth of the matter lies at the heart of the organisation and embraces supervisors and management not complying with the organisation's mission and philosophy.

There was a perception that the base remuneration rate did not reflect the qualifications employees had gained, and the job that was expected of them. The high expectations of management for employees to perform to a reasonably high level appeared to be a problem, taking into the consideration that many employees believe they were under paid. Evidence of this is that a greater number of full-time employees are despondent with their hourly remuneration rate compared to part-time employees. The results revealed that on average full-time employees were being paid \$0.25 cents less than part-time employees. Five of the eight supervisors expressed concern with the average hourly remuneration rate subordinate employees received, identifying that it was not competitive, considering the greater responsibilities of the employees and the quality of service expected of them.

Employees mentioned that they wanted a base remuneration rate that was competitive with the industry. However, there is evidence to believe that the “pay for performance” programme compensated for the low base remuneration rate:

If employees perform well, abide by our policies and follow procedures and are warm and friendly they will be recognised for increased performance.

We had six instructors who started at the same time, why would it be that one is on \$10.00, another two are on \$10.25 while the other three are on \$10.75? It is based on pay for performance. It splits the high performers, those who are willing to put in the extra effort, and do the work, and pass the tests and put in 100% into each shift. If they use their initiative and work unsupervised to a high standard they will be paid more.

The interviews and employee questionnaires illustrate that the “pay for performance” and the reward incentive scheme had improved. However, there was evidence to suggest that the structure and benefits of these programmes had not been communicated adequately to employees. The theoretical propositions that emerged from this research led the researcher to conclude that there should be greater emphasis on advising employees regarding the pay for performance programme, and creating beneficial performance incentives.

The research results illustrate that the three most prominent aspects that employees should improve on are their work ethic, customer service and greater consistency in job responsibilities. Constant supervision and ongoing training could improve these areas.

However the work ethic of employees, including laziness, being unproductive, failing to perform tasks adequately and being inattentive to members, reflects an attitude problem, which possibly may only be improved if the needs of employees are being fulfilled:

I think it has to do with people's attitudes, attitudes towards work, and not having a positive attitude to what they were doing. People thought, if I got paid more money I would be a lot happier, but actually it was a change in attitudes.

Collow (1993) suggested that an employee development programme could improve the attitude of employees, as it incorporates continual training, supervision and support, opportunities for growth and career development. There is evidence to suggest that the fitness centre is endeavouring to provide all these components. However their emphasis on continual training has neglected the adequate application of the other two. This has increased employee apathy and contributed to high staff turnover. Collow (1993) also indicated that a motivational management process which empowers staff with greater responsibilities is the most effective management approach, as it leads to higher motivation, greater job satisfaction, improved performance, along with a reduction in absenteeism and staff turnover.

The apparent reasons as to why employees were resigning from their positions appeared to be aligned with the conclusions identified by Collow (1993). These included not feeling valued, lack of guidance, boredom, outgrowing their positions, and better job prospects elsewhere. This study provides evidence of the need to incorporate all three of these components in an employee development programme. This premise is based on the theoretical propositions that emerged from this study concerning employee considerations. These included creating and maintaining internal employee relations, developing a mechanism for feedback and regular communication, development of a continual employee training programme, investing in employees to facilitate growth and demonstrating to employees the opportunities for promotion within the fitness centre.

### Members

The member demographics of this study are similar to the findings outlined in Grantham et al. (1998). However, there is a difference, as the fitness centre in this study targeted a specific clientele. This reflects the suggestion of previous research (Branch,

1991; Matterson, 1993) that small niche centres targeting specific clientele is the key to a successful fitness centre.

The findings of this study revealed that for both current and former members there was an even distribution of males and females, with their average age being 35 to 44 years. The majority of current and former members were employed in a managerial, professional, service and/or sales position, with average annual earnings of \$60,000 to \$74,999. An extremely high percentage of current members (71.1%) and former members (66.7%) resided within a 4.99km radius of the fitness centre. This emphasises the importance of locality when customers are deciding on which fitness centre they may join.

There was no substantial literature available that could corroborate the reasons why people joined fitness centres. Although the Hillary Commission (1991) and Grantham et al. (1998) noted the main reasons for people participating in physical activity, there appeared to be no conclusive evidence as to which characteristics of a fitness centre motivated a customer to join. The analysis of the results for both current and former members (see Table 6.8 and 7.6) summarised the top five reasons for joining the fitness centre. These were improving health and fitness, the location of the fitness centre, the equipment supplied, the staff availability and the fitness centre not being crowded. Once again, there is evidence to strongly indicate that location and the fitness centre employees are critical to the success of a fitness centre.

This study supports the literature (Parrot, 1996) that the previously recommended channels of marketing a fitness centre (direct mail, promotions and relationship marketing) are still viable. The notion that television, radio and newspaper advertising is relatively ineffective (Parrot, 1996) was not conclusively proven by this study as the data generated by this research could not establish the quantity of marketing for each medium. Therefore there is no evidence to suggest that if utilised correctly television, radio and newspaper advertising cannot be effective. This study concluded that the most effective method of marketing is member referrals (56.1%), direct mail (17.7%) and customers walking in off the street (12.1%).

Sustaining member value was a prominent characteristic that emerged from this study. The need to know and understand its members is a critical aspect of operating a fitness centre and has been shown to be very important in gaining and retaining members (Horsburgh, 1994; Matterson, 1993). Evans-Platt (1992) indicated that if member needs are not satisfied, the person simply stops attending, the fitness centre loses a member and never discovers what went wrong. This provides evidence that regular monitoring and evaluation is essential to ensure that the fitness centre is satisfying the members' needs.

The increased overcrowding and long waiting times were prominent reasons why the fitness centre's perceived value of membership had declined. This confirms the perceptions identified earlier in the discussion that issues relating to the physical setting influenced the experience of members:

Just a note of caution: I am very aware that once the new premises open it would be prudent to market a lot so an increase in members will occur. I am concerned that the bigger [the fitness centre] gets, the harder it will be to maintain the personal touch.

While increasing membership is obviously necessary to keep the centre going, the price to be paid for this is over crowding and long waiting periods. I spent forty minutes in total on the warm up equipment once and still didn't get on to the circuit. It never happened again and instructors were very apologetic but I find too many people at once is rather irritating and distracting.

The increase in membership numbers should be managed to avoid any detrimental effects. In this study the theoretical propositions confirmed that the members' perceived value of the fitness centre had reduced due to an increase in membership numbers. The findings of this study reveal that the increase in membership numbers has also caused a reduction in the quality of service (see section 6.3.10). An explanation for the reduction in the quality of service appears to have been the fitness centre's inability and/or unwillingness to provide an adequate number of employees to service the members:

I think it is a little different now as we have expanded. I feel we don't have the true resources to be at the potential we could be at, or were at.

A supervisor perceived that when the fitness centre first opened it was about providing a consistent service, but due to a lack of resources this had declined. Furthermore, an

employee mentioned that the higher expectation of management for employees to cope with the increases in membership numbers was unrealistic. Current and former members noted:

The level of attentiveness from the instructors while I am on the circuit has decreased dramatically since I first joined. A year ago I felt like I was getting a personal trainer each time I visited – now it seems like I'm on my own but have someone there just to set the machines, no added help or motivation.

I felt the gym had expanded beyond its current capabilities. The reasons I joined were no longer valid. Membership was larger, waiting times were longer, staff turnover seemed up in the last three months of my membership and I never received any of the promised phone calls or follow-up.

However, there is contradictory evidence that limited employee resources is the cause. One current member mentioned, “as the number of instructors has increased, the overall commitment and standard of them has started to vary”. This comment reflects previously held opinions identified earlier in the discussion, that the reduction in the quality of service was due to insufficient supervision and training rather than limited employee resources:

To change the customer service element, you need to constantly be out on the floor, to evaluate and provide feedback on how employees are doing. The more you do this, the better they will become. If you are standing there watching them, you want them to do it to the point where they are going to do it when you are not there. When you are not there, or when you are gone behind a door, it changes and starts to drop off slightly. It is trying to get people to use their initiative and be responsible when a supervisor is not there.

The literature (Consumer Magazine, 1998; Matterson, 1993; Plummer, 1999) identified that a poor pricing strategy that fails to cover overheads, can result in member servicing being reduced as the fitness centre is unable to provide the necessary resources. There is no conclusive evidence within this study to suggest that a poor pricing strategy has caused the overall reduction in the quality of service. Although a sufficient ratio of employees to members is required, the results provide evidence that the number of employees has increased. It appears that a significant reason for the reduction in service was due to insufficient staff supervision and training. However the increase in membership numbers may have resulted in a high ratio of members to employees,

placing greater demand on employee capabilities. Further research would be required to substantiate this claim.

The additional perceptions of providing limited additional services and/or amenities, the inability of the fitness centre to provide monthly membership options and not providing regular fitness assessments and/or sufficient follow-up were perceived to have reduced the value of the fitness centre's membership. The fitness centre's inability to sustain member value was a factor for some members cancelling or not renewing their subscription.

Conversely, current and former members did perceive tangible values in belonging to the fitness centre. Firstly, there was the quality component of the service provided. This specific aspect of a fitness centre's operation was noted in the literature (Coventry, 1992; Tawse and Keogh, 1998) and its importance was confirmed in this study. Another perceived value of the fitness centre was the quality of its equipment. The findings of this study revealed that the fitness centre's equipment was one of the main reasons for people to join. Current and former members rated the equipment as a significant preference of belonging to the fitness centre. The results accentuate the importance of providing a complete quality based service. Therefore it can be reasonably concluded that it is necessary for a fitness centre to provide a quality service that incorporates highly trained personable employees and quality equipment in a supervised environment.

Additional perceived values of belonging included times during the day that the fitness centre was less crowded, competitive industry prices, the individual benefits of performing regular exercise and the planned fitness centre expansion. A further value of affordable monthly payment options appears to contradict the theoretical proposition identified earlier. That is, the fitness centre's membership was not value for money, as members were not offered a monthly payment plan. Either this is a new development in the fitness centre's pricing options, or the fitness centre is failing to provide adequate communication to members, as identified earlier in the discussion.

Member retention and attrition is a critical aspect of a fitness centre's operation. This is emphasised within the literature (A'Court, 1997; Brown, 1998; Callow, 1993; De

Leede, 1998; Evans-Platt, 1992; Fitness New Zealand, 1995; Grantham et al. 1998; Horsburgh, 1994; IRSA, 1992; Matterson, 1993). The findings of this study align with previous research, and provide evidence that there are both uncontrollable and controllable reasons as to why members cancel or do not renew their membership.

This study expands on previous research and provides further reasons that influence members to cancel or not renew their membership. These additional renewal factors included the increase in staff turnover, the restriction of the fitness centre's opening hours, limited additional services and/or amenities, limited benefits and the occurrence of an injury while using the fitness centre's equipment. The renewal factors listed above are all reasons controllable by the fitness centre.

According to this study, 59.5% of renewal factors were controllable. This supports the research conducted by Collow (1993) and Grantham et al. (1998) that a high percentage of all renewal factors are controllable by the fitness centre. A minority of renewal factors that emerged from this study has already been discussed. These included an increase in membership numbers, an increase in membership price, the availability of a monthly payment option, inconsistent employee performance and an increase in staff turnover. A majority of the membership renewal factors generated from the data were expressed equally by both current and former members. This provided conclusive evidence that certain fitness centre characteristics, developments and/or changes impacted on the members' experience, influencing them to cancel or not renew their membership.

The literature revealed that price as a factor of gaining or losing a customer is less than 15%, and that price was an insignificant motivation behind the purchase of a fitness centre membership (Taylor, 1996). However, analysis of the results from this study illustrated that cost was the most significant reason why members cancelled or did not renew their membership. Cost influenced 21.6% of all renewal decisions. This contradicted the premise of Taylor (1996).

Location rated significantly highly as a renewal factor for cancelling or not renewing a membership. This illustrates that location is one of the most important aspects influencing the decision of an intending or existing member when deciding on joining

and/or renewing a membership. The remaining renewal factors that emerged from this study will be discussed later in this study, as they are closely associated with other categories.

### Equipment

Earlier in this discussion, the quality of the equipment was perceived to be of significant importance in satisfying perceived member value. This factor also emerged as a reason influencing people to join the fitness centre. The theoretical propositions of the fitness centre's equipment related to its design and maintenance. This study identified that the regular cleaning and maintaining of equipment by employees was a favourable perception of current members (see Figure 6.24). It also appears important that the cleanliness of the equipment is not taken for granted, as it can be a reason why members discontinue their patronage.

The findings of this study indicate the importance of providing "user friendly" equipment. The perceived quality of the equipment was reflected in the ease of adjustment, safety, and adaptability to all body shapes and sizes. The relevance of providing safe equipment is essential, as an injury caused by a piece of fitness centre equipment could influence the decision of a member to cancel or not renew their membership:

I was injured at the gym and there was no attempt to refund any of my expensive membership. I have been on ACC treatment for 6 months from my last visit. My one year membership turned out to be only 6 months due to being hurt under supervision at the fitness centre.

### Programmes

A programme's structure, design and benefits have been shown to be an influence on the overall experience of the member (Consumer, 1994; Evans-Platt, 1992; Rossman and Edginton, 1989). Discussion in the literature (see section 4.3.3) highlighted the importance of continual supervision and support, the ease of programme comprehension and regular follow-up to ensure results. This study supports and expands on these findings while developing new concepts to be considered when designing fitness centre programmes.

Although member supervision and support should be a minimum standard of any fitness centre, research conducted by Consumer Magazine (1994) established that there was a failure by many fitness centres to adequately provide such a standard. For example, McEvoy and Szeszeran-McEvoy (1998) admitted that they made the mistake of providing their clients with complicated programmes, on hard to use equipment and then failed to provide them with adequate supervision and follow-up.

The findings of this study revealed an overwhelming support for the structure and design of the fitness centre's programme(s) (see section 6.3.5). The emergence of the theoretical propositions identified that the programme(s) were structured to incorporate a progressive and systematic approach, were supervised to ensure correct technique and form, provided continual monitoring and feedback, were changed regularly to challenge the member and included variety to prevent monotony. Furthermore, the programme(s) included being personally designed for the requirements of the member and provided easy comprehension:

I require special needs with my programme. This is due to reconstructive surgery. My programme is designed to assist me and it is always under scrutiny.

It is great there's always support and advice. That is one thing that makes it so good: you are not just left to get on with it. There are always instructors checking your form.

Within this study the fitness centre's programme(s) were perceived to be efficient, in that they could be performed in a relatively short time, produced measurable physical results, were stimulating and challenging, and provided the member with a feeling of accomplishment.

The result from this study provided evidence that programme structure and design could influence members to cancel and/or not renew their membership. There were specific programme considerations that were linked to the renewal factors. These included the repetitiveness and monotony of the programme(s), the inability to provide results and the lack of support and explanation of programmes designed for the free weight area. Nearly a quarter of the renewal factors were due to concerns relating to programme structure, design and/or the time commitments of programme participation (see section 7.3.4).

Within the context of this study the additional programme considerations were perceived by the researcher as possible needs and/or wants of current members. They included the need to co-ordinate programmes with regular fitness assessments, a better consultation process with the member in the design of programmes, and regular follow-up to ensure customer needs and wants are being met. Consumer magazine (1994) noted that a fitness programme needs to be co-ordinated with a fitness assessment, as the design of the programme needs to be suitable for the participant's requirements, taking into account participant capabilities and medical details.

It seemed apparent that the fitness centre in this study was not providing regular fitness assessments or an equivalent substitute to meet the needs of its current members. The provision of regular fitness assessments emerged as the most important change suggested by current members (see section 6.4.3). Although the programme considerations did not transpire to be a renewal factor, further research could be conducted to ascertain whether these considerations may eventuate as possible reasons why members cancel or not renew their membership.

#### Additional services and/or amenities

The significant characteristic that emerged from this study pertaining to the fitness centre's additional services and/or amenities was a common concern that they were not promoted adequately. The current members were not the only group to perceive this - a majority of the supervisors held similar beliefs. Once again, this highlighted the apparent communication problems that existed between the fitness centre and current members.

The current and former members perceived the additional services and/or amenities to be of a relatively high quality, resulting in greater user education and adequate results. However, there was a presumption that these services and/or amenities were expensive in addition to the initial membership cost.

Analysis of the results conveyed that certain needs and/or wants were not being met by those who had participated in the additional services or used the fitness centre's amenities. It could be assumed that participants had a high expectation - whether accurate or not, the price paid needs to reflect value for money. As the additional

services and amenities are a potential profit earner for the fitness centre, a greater emphasis may need to be placed on their structure and design. The service and/or amenity considerations that emerged from this study related to the fitness centre underdelivering on member expectations. These included providing a service that was not personalised, fitness assessments that were clinical and generic, and not providing regular follow-up for members who were undertaking specialised programmes.

The limited number of services and/or amenities has impacted on the perceived value of the membership, and was a significant objection of both current and former members. This resulted in some former members not renewing their membership. As stated by two current members:

There are no added features, like a sauna, spa or crèche. I pay a lot to be a member, I expect some added services.

The fees are at the higher end of the market, so if that's the clients they are wanting, then they need to offer a lot more, if they want that exclusive image.

The importance of providing additional services and/or amenities was identified in this study. During the past three years the fitness centre had introduced new services, and based on the results, this made a positive influence on the members' experience. As the fitness centre expands, a greater variety of services and amenities will become available to members.

However, there is evidence to suggest that a majority of current and former members may not be aware of the planned expansion. This is based on a percentage of current and former members who suggested that it would be good if the fitness centre could develop additional amenities such as a pool, spa, sauna, plunge pool, a creche, snack bar or café. The planned expansion actually incorporates all the additional amenities noted above, and more. As the plans for expansion had been publicised for six months prior to the questionnaires being sent out, it appears that the fitness centre's communication of the planned expansion to its members was unsuccessful or non-existent. This reiterates the need for the fitness centre to improve communication with its members, as the limited additional services and amenities provided by the fitness centre was a factor influencing members to cancel or not renew their membership.

#### **10.4.2 Fitness centre developments and changes**

As noted in the literature, organisational development improves an organisation's effectiveness, while change is the response to external and internal forces (Cummings and Worley, 1997). The theoretical propositions derived from this study, provide evidence that certain changes have effected employees, current and former members' relationship with the fitness centre and have resulted in significant social consequences.

##### Organisational growth

The development that has occurred in this particular fitness centre has resulted in substantial growth. These growth factors consisted of operational indicators such as an increase in membership promotions, targeting a specific customer market, greater variety in membership options and an increase in member numbers. Additionally, the fitness centre continues to purchase more equipment, has designed specific sports and health programmes, included a greater variety of services, increased the operating hours and has plans to expand the fitness centre.

A new development of the fitness centre was to target a specific market. The findings of this study indicated that this market did not include the average wage earner:

If I did not have a partner with a big income I probably could not afford it.

I would like more of my friends to join but the cost is expensive for the average New Zealander.

This reflected the notion that targeting a certain clientele is the key to a successful fitness centre (Branch, 1991; Matterson, 1993; Tyler, 1997). The population of this market included high achievers employed in a managerial, professional, service and/or sales occupation, earning on average \$60,000 to \$74,999 per year. Furthermore, they resided within a 4.99km radius of the fitness centre, including the affluent suburbs of Devonport, Epsom, St. Mary's Bay, Orakei, and Remuera.

The high expectations of the people who were joining may be associated with the clientele that the fitness centre was targeting. In retrospect these people were willing to pay a premium for a quality service that satisfied their expectations. Therefore it is a priority of the fitness centre to fulfil those members' requirements:

The cost is not that important - what is more important is having the staff available to watch and monitor you as you do the various exercises.

The personal attention and regular motivation offered by the staff makes the cost over other gyms more than justified.

A number of the growth factors noted above were developments that current members perceived had influenced their experience at the fitness centre. Additionally, current and former members perceived some of these developments to be preferences as well as objections.

The increase in internal and external advertising had resulted in increased membership numbers. Although one former member indicated that increasing membership numbers was a “commercial reality”, another noted:

The marketing drive resulted in increased waiting times. Promises of an 8 to 12 minute maximum wait rapidly became a distant memory.

There is speculation by the researcher that the increase in membership numbers through increased advertising was associated with the development of different membership options and the planned fitness centre expansion. This is based on anecdotal communication with management and general observations of the membership promotions.

There was also the perception that the internal membership promotions were too regular. One current member stated, “I was continually bombarded by mail requesting referrals. I never experienced the same interest in my physical well being”. This illustrated that a balance was required for meeting member requirements combined with organisational objectives. If the fitness centre was constantly promoting internally for member referrals, the fitness centre needed to be conscious of the possibility that an adverse result may have occurred. The same amount of effort needed to be applied to satisfying the needs of the members and maintaining the service that was expected. According to Trenberth and Collins (1999) organisations that do not change will cease to exist.

The results of this research provides evidence that the increase in the number of members was derived from an increase in advertising. The increase in members resulted in a number of favourable occurrences. These included the purchase of additional equipment, the design of specific sports and health programmes, a greater variety of services and increased operating hours. A majority of current and former members perceived the purchase of additional equipment as a positive influence on their experience. It was noted that the increase in equipment reduced waiting times and increased variety. One respondent stated, "the new equipment has enhanced the overall experience of visiting the gym". The design of specific sports and health programmes and the inclusion of a variety of services were seen as "discreet but evolving".

However, the increase in members also had an adverse effect. Although the introduction of additional equipment was seen as a positive influence, there was a perception that the fitness centre was becoming too cramped, with a limited amount of space between equipment:

Too crowded in the cardiovascular area with treadmills and bikes, there is not enough room. I always knock my leg or arm trying to get onto the equipment.

Layout is good but all areas now becoming rather overcrowded with equipment that I consider too closely spaced.

It became apparent to both current and former members that the fitness centre was becoming overcrowded. The findings of this research suggested that there is not enough equipment during the busy periods, and the locker/changing rooms are inadequate for the number of members using the fitness centre. As identified earlier in the discussion, the increase in membership numbers needs to be managed appropriately to avoid any detrimental consequence. However, it is apparent that the increase in member numbers has consequently caused adverse changes.

These changes include an overall reduction in the provision of member supervision, quality of customer service and employee job attributes. This highlights the correlation between membership numbers and the ability to provide adequate service that satisfies the members' requirements. According to Youell (1994), for fitness centres to adopt a positive customer service approach the organisation must be aware of obstacles that may hinder the successful implementation of the strategy.

The supervisors of the fitness centre believed that the overall service had changed. It emerged from the management interviews that customer service was not such a strong focus of the employee training programme as it was when the fitness centre first opened. The results indicated that in the beginning the focus of the fitness centre was about providing a consistent, quality service that met members' expectations:

I believe customer satisfaction is a key point for [fitness centre] and it has varied throughout the time that I have been here. It has probably been because the expectation of the client was at a very high level in the early stages of the organisation. This has come away, although still providing a good service, the standard has dropped based on what was originally set.

Due to the service that members expected and the fitness centre provided, it seems unrealistic that there had been a reduction in the subordinate employee training programme in the area of customer service. This suggested that a lack of employee resources was not the prevailing reason for any reduction in the quality of service.

The reduction in member supervision and customer service had a notable effect on membership value. The results provided evidence that member supervision had become less personal:

Poor staff attitudes and lack of attentiveness on the circuit had reduced the overall value.

The high cost of [fitness centre] was meant to reflect good staff to client ratio as well as competent staff. The service has clearly diminished over the last twelve months.

It was a collective perspective of current members that there was an overall decline in employee job attributes. This provided further suggestion that the reduction in service was due to the performance of employees. The specific job attributes that current members perceived had reduced included professionalism, enthusiasm, knowledge and attentiveness of employees:

I have noticed a reduction in personal attention and level of interest in customers since I joined in October 1999.

As a result of the reduction in the overall quality of service, a few former members did not renew their membership. This illustrates again the importance of balancing organisational objectives with member requirements, emphasising the need for the fitness centre to re-evaluate their ability to provide a consistent, quality service.

According to Inkson and Kolb (1998), there is nothing more difficult, nor more doubtful to success, than to initiate change.

Additional theoretical propositions that emerged from the research concerning the growth of the fitness centre included the increase in waiting times to use the equipment and the inability of employees to personally address members. The increased staff turnover was perceived to be the reason for employees not personally addressing members. Combining this factor with the increase in membership numbers, the ability of employees to personally address members becomes dramatically exacerbated.

Increased membership numbers caused an increase in waiting times as did the failure of the fitness centre to provide sufficient equipment. It was a change that significantly influenced members' experience:

Since I joined last year the numbers have increased. It can be off-putting to arrive and not be able to warm up because all the cardiovascular equipment is being used. I have waited up to 30 minutes on some occasions.

As mentioned earlier in the discussion, the introduction of new equipment caused the layout of the fitness centre to be more confined, resulting in overcrowding. Purchasing additional equipment to solve the overcrowding problem could only be futile, because of the fitness centre's existing internal physical structure. There is a need for the fitness centre to monitor member numbers who regularly attend, maintaining a manageable level to ensure quality of service.

### Operational management

The ongoing development and consequential changes that related to the operational management of the fitness centre appear to be directed at improving the organisation's effectiveness. Operational management developments included the regular evaluation and re-engineering of systems, progressive improvement of the organisation's culture, implementing a structured subordinate employee training programme, and application of management concepts. A negative attribute of these developments was increased conflict between subordinates and management personnel.

The evaluation and re-engineering of organisational systems together with the implementation of a subordinate employee training programme appeared to have been the fitness centre adapting to a changing organisational environment:

The systems have changed for the better, because some problem arises and a policy or system is put in place to rectify it.

The systems and programmes were perceived to be more structured and systemised, resulting in greater functionality and comprehension. The findings of this study provides evidence that employee training impacted on the efficiency and effectiveness of the employees. However, with the perceived reduction in service, the content and application of this training programme could be re-evaluated in the future.

The fitness centre's culture was deemed to have developed over the past three years, with supervisors and employees noting that a warm and friendly supportive culture had emerged. The cultural and work environment of the fitness centre was perceived by supervisors and employees as critical to the operation of the organisation:

You need every employee thinking, breathing and seeing the pathway, otherwise the business will falter.

The high feedback system was recognised for assisting in developing this culture, but it appeared that an uncomfortable atmosphere had also transpired due to this system. The culture that had developed appeared to have increased conflict between employees and management. As mentioned earlier in the discussion, the undervaluing of and high expectations placed on employees, combined with the low hourly remuneration rate emerged as potential conflict areas. Furthermore the continual scrutiny of employees caused increased conflict and dissatisfaction:

Personally, I get really stressed when there are certain people around. I feel like I am being watched all the time. I feel like I am being examined or tested when I work a shift. That is why I changed to evening shifts. It feels like I am under a lot of pressure.

I think there are times during the day when the environment is not so positive, and that's generally because there are certain people here. These people are changing for the better. It feels like you are being looked over and doing things wrong all the time. Employees have told me they don't like working certain times during the day because of this.

The application of management concepts was closely linked with the high feedback system. This study revealed a particular resistance towards these two management initiatives by supervisors and employees. It became apparent from analysing the results that the resistance towards these programmes developed as a result of poor communication, and a lack of understanding by employees for the motives behind such management concepts.

Significant changes concerning the operational management of the fitness centre included amendments to the fitness centre's Mission Statement and philosophy, a transformation of the management structure, changing the layout of equipment, an increase in membership subscription and a reduction in the availability of additional services and/or amenities.

When the fitness centre first opened, its primary focus was to deliver unsurpassed value to the customer by meeting their underlying needs. There was also a strong emphasis on providing a "bridge" service between rehabilitation and extending the continuum of healthcare (see section 4.4). Although the current Mission Statement and philosophy emphasised the quality and value of services that the fitness centre endeavoured to deliver, there was a greater emphasis of the manner in which the requirements of the members and employees would be fulfilled. However, there was a belief that the fitness centre did not put their mission and philosophy into practice, with one supervisor stating, "if we inform the employees what our mission is, then the organisation would run a lot more smoothly". This provides anecdotal evidence that the customer service component of the subordinate training programme was inadequate. The fundamental requirement to learn and apply the fitness centre's Mission Statement would appear to be necessary in order to re-establish the quality service that members expect.

The transformation of the management structure was a significant change that has resulted in progressive improvements within the fitness centre. The restructuring of hierarchical authority, introduction of regular employee feedback, and improvement in the structure of authority in departments have resulted from these improvements. Conversely, a number of issues still remain. These include the insufficient number of supervisors with management experience and communication problems. As previously

mentioned in the discussion, these problems are impacting on the overall effectiveness of the fitness centre's operation.

### Employment

The improvement in employees' work ethic, personal qualities, job knowledge and presentation exemplifies the developments that have occurred to raise the quality of service offered. It appears from the results that the steps to improve employee effectiveness consisted of implementing a structured subordinate employee training programme, linking remuneration with subordinate examinations and performance, and the development of an incentive reward programme. Further developments included increasing the number of employee promotions and the introduction of shift supervisors to provide leadership and support.

However, employment considerations that emerged from the research indicate that employees requested further education about the benefits of the pay incentive programme, and the promotional paths within the fitness centre.

Furthermore, there was the perception that an ongoing employee training programme needed developing, and beneficial performance incentives created. This highlights the possibility that the planned developments to increase employee effectiveness have not been as successful as anticipated due to insufficient communication and/or inadequate implementation.

The findings of this study reveal that the introduction of shift supervisors to provide leadership and support is still in its early stages. However, current members provided feedback on the appointment of additional supervisors'. They identified that there was greater team functionality and an increase in the rate at which new employees developed. These developments illustrate the necessity of a quality based supervisor and subordinate employee training programme.

There was also a perception of an increase in the number of fitness centre employees. This provided evidence that the fitness centre attempted to increase the number of employees to improve the quality of service offered. However, as the results reveal, there was a reduction in the level of member supervision provided. It would appear that

to provide the level of service expected, the ratio of employees to members requires increasing. There is also insufficient employee supervision and customer service training.

The employee developments implemented by the fitness centre have endeavoured to rectify the problems associated with a reduction in the quality of service. Nevertheless, the subsequent changes that have occurred have resulted in a significant social consequence for the fitness centre's members.

The employment changes that occurred included having a younger employee base, an increase in the number of part-time employees, and a high level of staff turnover. Further changes that related to the qualities of the employees included a reduction in employees' confidence, lack of experience and in-depth job knowledge, inconsistent performance, and the inability of employees to be attentive to the members' requirements.

A majority of the characteristics noted above were raised earlier in the discussion as possible influences on the quality of service. This study has provided evidence to reasonably substantiate that certain employee characteristics have impacted on the service provided.

As previously discussed, there was some uncertainty whether the immaturity of employees was due to their age, or their attitude. The process of grounded theory generated theoretical propositions revealing that the immaturity of employees was related to their young age as well as their low level of confidence. There is still no evidence to substantiate the relative viability of either full or part-time employees at the fitness centre. However, with current members perceiving an increase in the number of part-time employees at the fitness centre, the reduction in service may possibly have been due to the instability part-time employees create in the fitness centre (De Leede, 1998). Further research needs to be conducted to corroborate whether part-time employees are viable. There remains a belief that due to their limited hours, part-time employees may not be as well trained and dedicated in providing the quality of service expected.

High staff turnover was a significant change that appears to have impacted on the quality of service provided. It was apparent that the reduction in confidence, lack of experience and in-depth job knowledge, and the inconsistent performance can be associated with new employees:

There seems to be a higher staff turnover recently in the last 6 to 10 months. I feel that the newer instructors don't have as much experience.

Overall, the standard of the instructors has dropped a little. They seem less experienced, enthusiastic and committed due to staff turnover.

The inability of employees to be attentive to member requirements was indicative of a personal quality lacking in an individual. This change was not directly related to staff turnover and the limited length of time an employee had been with the fitness centre. It was however, a job attribute linked to inadequate supervision and training. It seemed evident that the attentiveness of the employee was associated with an increase in membership numbers, however there was a possibility that it was a reaction of employee perception of being undervalued.

## **10.5 A MODEL FOR DEVELOPING AN EFFECTIVE FITNESS CENTRE**

The theoretical findings of this study were expressed in a model to illustrate the characteristics, planned developments and consequential changes of a fitness centre. The significant number of commercial fitness centres that closed in Auckland within five years of establishing their operation (see Chapter Four) reinforced the need to summarise the basis of an effective fitness centre.

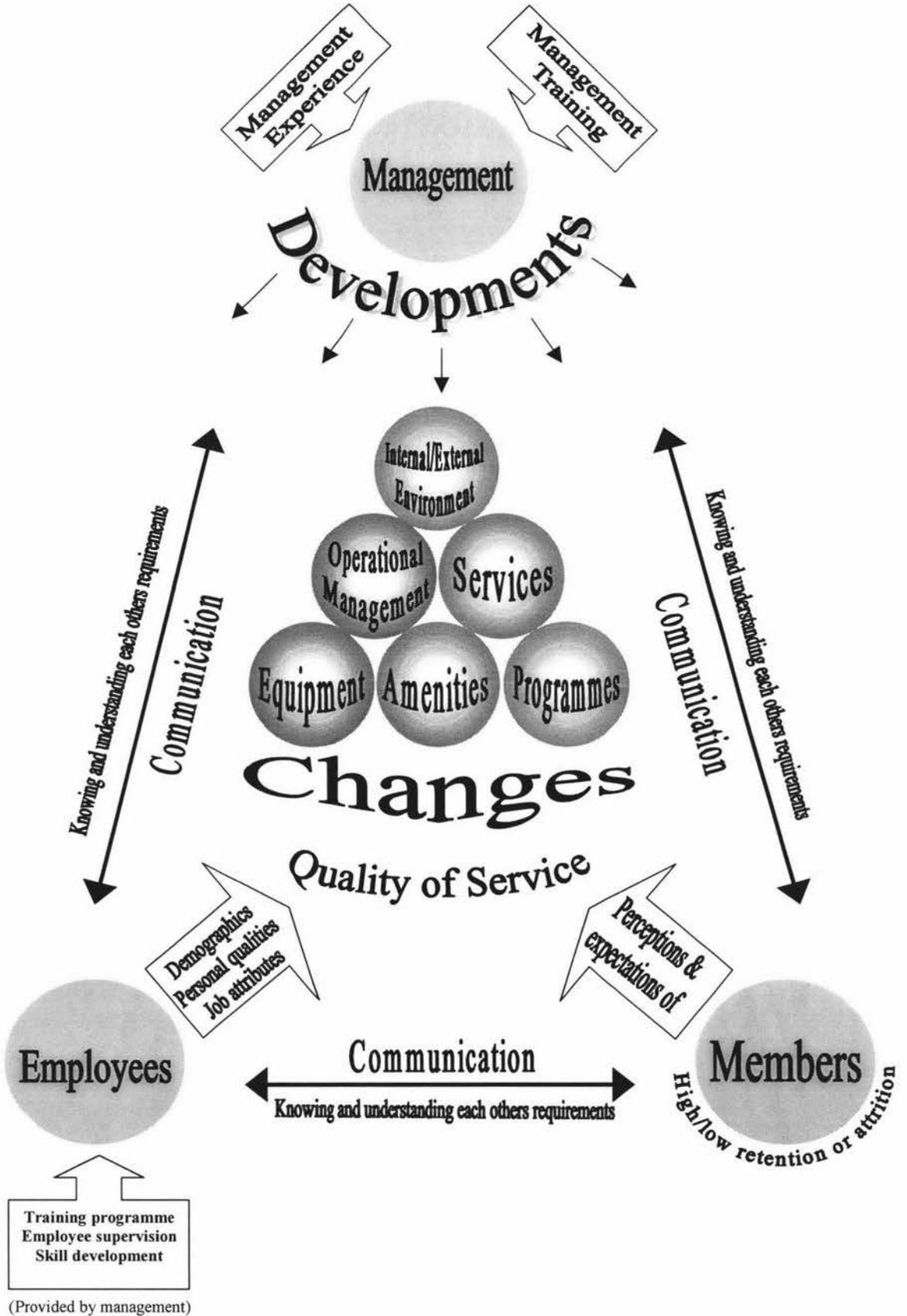
The model, which has been generated from the research data, incorporates the categories and theoretical propositions that emerged from this study. Clearly evident in the model is the relationship that exists between management, employees and members. The developments and changes that transpired impacted on the performance of the employee and influenced the experience of the member. Therefore, regular communication is essential to ensure member and employee expectations are being met.

The model illustrates that the members' perception of the fitness centre can result in low or high membership retention and/or attrition. Consequently, it is critical that management and employees understand the requirements of members. In addition to the developments of the organisation, the characteristics of employees can influence members. Employee characteristics can impact on the quality of service that is delivered. Therefore it is necessary for management to develop structured employee training, provide regular supervision and endorse skill development.

The operational effectiveness of the organisation is dependent on its management. It is therefore vital that any developments proposed by management have been thoroughly planned and the consequences of these changes have been examined.

Figure 10.1

Fitness centre model



## 10.6 SUMMARY AND REVIEW

The discussion chapter had one main objective: to present a summary of the supporting data on the characteristics, developments and changes within a fitness centre during its establishment phase of operation. In meeting this objective, this study of the fitness centre's characteristics, developments and changes appears to have expanded on the findings of currently available literature, contradicting previous ideas and generating new theory.

The findings of this study provide evidence that developments proposed by management need to have been researched and planned, as certain changes can effect the fitness centre's relationship with its employees and members. The impact of the fitness centre's developments and changes is diagrammatically represented in a model (see Figure 10.1) illustrating the close relationship that should exist between management, employees and members. Reflected in the discussion is the impact that organisational development and change has on employee performance and the consequential experience of the member.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

**CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS****CHAPTER OUTLINE**

This chapter summarises the research question and process, presenting conclusions and recommendations. Discussion for further research is outlined, with the researcher's critical reflections on the study being presented.

- 11.1 The research question
- 11.2 Reflections on the research
- 11.3 Conclusions
- 11.4 Recommendations
  - 11.4.1 Recommendations for fitness centre managers
  - 11.4.2 Recommendations for further research
- 11.5 Concluding statement

**11.1 THE RESEARCH QUESTION**

The impetus behind this study was the researcher's concern about the commercial sustainability of the fitness centre industry. The research literature highlighted the fact that there were some unprofessional operations that had existed in this industry. The lack of literature on the establishment phase of setting up a fitness centre illustrated the need to conduct research in this area. Furthermore, the significant number of commercial fitness centres in Auckland that closed within five years of establishing their operation (see Chapter Four) was also a motivating factor to conduct this research.

The objective of the research focused primarily on generating theory to assist the fitness centre industry in its establishment phase of operation. The dearth of literature on fitness centre operations generated the main research question: *What are the characteristics, developments and changes within a fitness centre during its first three years of providing a client service?* The answer to this question was sought through two main phases of research. This included subordinate employee, current and former member questionnaires as well as management interviews.

A mixture of quantitative and qualitative research methodology was used to access the fullest range of relevant data. The researcher approached this study with the intention of compiling a body of information, so that the data generated could be progressively subjected to the process of grounded theory. The process formulated significant categories and theoretical propositions that indicated the domain of a fitness centre in its establishment phase of providing a client service. It was envisaged that the proposed theory would provide practical recommendations for effective management of a fitness centre.

This study has illustrated the characteristics, developments and changes within a fitness centre during its first three years of providing a client service. The perspectives of the stakeholders indicated that changes in the characteristics of the fitness centre were determined by the developments implemented by the fitness centre management. This study revealed a close association between organisational development and any adverse and/or beneficial changes that can occur.

## **11.2 REFLECTIONS ON THE RESEARCH**

The researcher gained immense experience from undertaking this research. This study yielded a magnitude of educational learning, providing a greater insight into the constructs of academic research. In reflecting on the structure of this study there were numerous aspects, that if examined further would have been beneficial to the overall research.

For example, it may have been beneficial to include document analysis in the research process. Including document analysis in the study would have supported previously gathered data as well as providing data about situations that were unavailable through interviews and questionnaires. Although such analysis of organisational material against data generated from other avenues would have meant greater validity, the researcher realised that widening the scope was not within the time constraints of this study.

The researcher believes that further investigation into the perspectives of employees and current and former members by means of selective interviews would have elucidated

further data on the feelings and opinions of those participants. Numerous questionnaires were returned suggesting that additional information could be sought if required.

Another avenue not explored was researching the perspectives of former employees. It is believed that this data may have provided further insight into the operation of the fitness centre and could have ensured greater validity of the research findings.

### 11.3 CONCLUSIONS

In critically considering the research question, the researcher was aiming to access the fullest range of relevant data using appropriate methodologies. Chapters Six, Seven, Eight and Nine of this study revealed a range of results that reflected clear sets of categories and properties as the result of the grounded theory process. These in turn provided the foundation for the theoretical propositions that exemplified the characteristics, developments and changes within a fitness centre in its establishment phase of providing a client service.

The study drew the following conclusions for the *characteristics* of the fitness centre:

1. The location of the facility was an important determinant of the fitness centre's operation. The central locality to either its members' home or work, accessibility via major roads or motorways and being in an area of user convenience all influenced the members' decision to join the fitness centre. The locality of the fitness centre was an influential factor of membership retention and/or attrition. The members' experience of attending the fitness centre was also influenced by the availability of convenient car parking.
2. The fitness centre's physical environment was a primary influence on current members' overall enjoyment. The limited amount of space, confined layout of the equipment, insufficient equipment, limited privacy and poor interior design created an impression of overcrowding, which was viewed by members as being unfavourable. Alternatively, the clean and tidy surroundings and the fitness centre's ambience were favourable characteristics that positively influenced the

- current and former member experiences. For example, members' feedback referred to the fitness centre's ambience, unpretentious and non-intimidating atmosphere as well as its relaxing and comfortable environment.
3. The operational success of the fitness centre was determined by a number of factors. The negative factors included an insufficient number of supervisors, the lack of management experience of supervisors/managers along with an inadequate management training programme. Furthermore there were communication problems that existed between management, employees and members of the fitness centre. The insufficient level of employee and member evaluations to generate feedback and the inadequate communication channels that existed also impacted on the operational success of the fitness centre. By contrast, a positive factor that influenced the operational success of the fitness centre was the implementation of a comprehensive subordinate training programme. This training programme has increased the overall effectiveness and efficiency of subordinate employees.
  4. A majority of the fitness centre's employees were university students and/or graduates, with an average age of 23. A significant number possessed a tertiary qualification(s). Gender numbers were similar and there were an equal number of full and part-time employees. The average employment period was 9 to 12 months. The subordinate employees' hourly remuneration rate was considered to be low. A remuneration disparity existed as part-time employees were remunerated at a higher rate than full-time employees.
  5. An empathetic attitude, exceptional personal qualities, and a high level of confidence emerged as favourable personal qualities of employees. However, the personal qualities that negatively influenced the experience of current and former members included immaturity of employees, perceived attitude problems and poor work ethic.
  6. There were a large number of job attributes that were deemed necessary for particular positions at the fitness centre. These included being receptive, empathetic and supportive. However, clients experienced a wide variation in

employee performance, with increasing inconsistencies and an inability to carry out expected job responsibilities. This had a perceived negative impact on overall quality of service provided.

7. The necessary skills employees and supervisors perceived would improve their performance at the fitness centre included acquiring greater specific job knowledge, improving management skills, leadership, people and communication skills, increased confidence and delegation.
8. A range of employee considerations emerged regarding the work environment at the fitness centre. Among these considerations were management expectations that were set too high, increasing the hourly remuneration rate to be competitive with industry standards, and encouraging supervisors and management to comply with the organisation's vision and philosophy. Of particular concern was the apparent lack of understanding shown by management regarding the requirements of employees.
9. There was an even gender distribution for both current and former members, with their average age being 35 to 45 years. A majority of members resided within a 4.99 km radius of the fitness centre. The current and former members were predominately employed in a managerial, professional, service or sales occupation, earning an average annual income of \$60,000 to \$74,999. The three main advertising mediums that informed the current and former members about the fitness centre were referrals, direct mail and prospective members walking in off the street. The three major reasons for joining the fitness centre were to improve health and fitness, location of the fitness centre and the equipment provided.
10. The ability to sustain member value was a prominent characteristic that impacted on the fitness centre's ability to gain and retain members. The quality, design and maintenance of the equipment were decision factors when people considered joining the fitness centre. They were also important factors in sustaining member value and they influenced the experience of current members. Another characteristic that influenced the overall experience of

current members was the structure, design and benefits of the fitness centre's programmes.

11. The fitness centre's additional services and amenities were perceived to be of a high quality, educating the member about the benefits of improving health and fitness and providing quantifiable results. However, current members and supervisors perceived the promotion of these additional services and amenities to have been extremely poor. The limited number of services and amenities offered by the fitness centre was a significant objection of current and former members. This was also a reason for former members not renewing their membership. Furthermore, the fitness centre's additional services and amenities did not reflect value for money, as current member requirements were not being met. These included a lack of follow-up for specialised programmes and the perception that the body analysis testing was not personal.
12. The fitness centre's characteristics, developments and/or changes influenced a large percentage of members to cancel or not renew their membership.

The study drew the following conclusions for the *developments and changes* of the fitness centre.

1. The customer market that the fitness centre was targeting had resulted in a member population that had higher expectations. This member population was willing to pay a premium for a quality of service that satisfied their personal requirements. However, there appeared to be little balance between satisfying member needs and achieving organisational objectives. The constant internal marketing conducted by the fitness centre to increase member referrals negatively influenced the experience of the current and former members. The increase in membership promotions associated with the development of different membership options and the planned fitness centre expansion did increase the overall numbers of members using the fitness centre.
2. This increase in membership numbers had a two-fold effect. Firstly a favourable consequence occurred. The revenue generated by the additional members was used

to purchase more fitness equipment which reduced waiting times and increased the variety of exercise options. Specific sports and health programmes had been designed, and there had been an increase in the number of services offered, along with an overall increase in operating hours. Secondly, an adverse effect occurred due to the increase in membership numbers. The introduction of additional equipment caused the fitness centre to become confined, with a perception of overcrowding. There was not enough equipment during peak periods, which resulted in members waiting longer to use equipment. Furthermore, the locker/changing rooms were inadequate for the number of members using the fitness centre.

3. The impact of the fitness centre's increase in membership numbers consequently changed the quality of the service that was provided. There had been a reduction in the provision of member supervision, quality customer service and the job attributes of the employees. The reduction in the quality of service resulted in a decrease in perceived value, and influenced members' decisions on renewing their membership.
4. The developments in the operational management of the fitness centre included the continual evaluation and re-engineering of systems, progressive development of the organisation's culture, implementing a structured subordinate employee training programme, and the utilisation and application of management theory. These developments improved the organisation's effectiveness. However, resistance by employees towards the high feedback system and lack of management skills of some supervisors was found to be hindering the overall success of the fitness centre.
5. The operational management changes of the fitness centre included the modification of the organisation's Mission Statement and philosophy, a transformation of the management structure, changes in layout of fitness equipment, the increase in membership subscription and decrease in availability of additional services and/or amenities. The study provided evidence that the overall effectiveness of the fitness centre's operation was affected by a lack of commitment to their own Mission Statement, and problems respect of the management structure.

6. The implementation of a structured subordinate employee training programme, linking remuneration to examinations and performance, developing an incentive reward programme, increasing the number of promotions of employee, and the introduction of shift supervisors are developments that have increased employee effectiveness. These developments have improved employees' work ethic, personal qualities, job knowledge and presentation, which has resulted in an increase in the quality of service.
7. Conversely, there was a range of employee changes that have negatively influenced the quality of service offered. These changes included having a younger employee population, an increased number of part-time employees and high staff turnover. Furthermore, a decline in employee confidence, lack of experience and in-depth job knowledge, inconsistent performance and the inability of the employee to be attentive to member requirements had impacted on the experience of members.

## **11.4 RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **11.4.1 Recommendations for fitness centre managers**

The research has concluded that the developments that occurred within the fitness centre have resulted in both positive and negative changes. These changes have influenced the experience of current and former members along with the supervisors and subordinate employees of the fitness centre.

The conclusions of this study have identified that problems existed within this particular fitness centre. To provide the quality of service that is expected by its members, the fitness centre should address member and employee requirements and implement planned developments aimed at improving the effectiveness of the fitness centre's operation.

The resultant recommendations provide a focus for the managers/supervisors of the fitness centre to achieve operational effectiveness.

1. The marketing of the fitness centre should target residential households and commercial/industrial premises within a 4.99 km radius of the fitness centre. The marketing should be aligned to the fitness centre's target population. The central location and user convenience of the fitness centre needs to be demonstrated to prospective members.
2. To increase the overall value and experience of members, the fitness centre's physical environment should be regularly assessed. To ensure overcrowding is not occurring, the fitness centre should monitor member numbers and have an adequate balance of resources (equipment/employees/exercise area) to members. The fitness centre should consider having a greater ratio of employees to members to increase the quality of service. Equipment should be positioned so that easy access and member comfort is assured.
3. Previous management experience may need to become a prerequisite for supervisors at the fitness centre, or there should be a greater emphasis on a structured management training programme. This programme should consist of internal training workshops and/or independent management courses/seminars. Management should contemplate improving the performance of fitness centre employees by addressing the individual weaknesses of the supervisors/subordinate employees. Regular training and the provision of adequate personal development should assist with the overall performance of the supervisors/employees.
4. Effective communication channels between management, members and employees is vital. Management should ensure regular communication with members, informing them of fitness centre developments, additional services and/or amenities, and providing feedback on suggested changes that have received. There should be regular meetings between management and employees to advise of organisational developments and changes. Communication is required to educate supervisors/employees on the "pay for performance" programme, promotional opportunities, incentive benefits, the high feedback system and implementation of amended management practices.

5. Increased employee supervision and a review of the content and application of the employee training programme should assist with attitude problems and poor work ethics of employees. In addition, reducing staff turnover would improve job attributes of the employees, which had impacted on the quality of service that was delivered.
6. Management should acknowledge the requirements of employees and promulgate a reciprocal arrangement that satisfies both parties. Regular satisfaction surveys should be conducted to evaluate employee sentiments.
7. The renewal factors that are controllable by the fitness centre should be analysed and appropriate actions taken to reduce or eliminate if possible those influences on a decision to cancel or not renew a membership.
8. The fitness centre should make every effort to sustain member value. This could be accomplished by conducting regular surveys to understand personal requirements of its members.
9. To improve the experience of its members, the fitness centre should address the structure and design of its fitness programmes. This should include designing fitness programmes in conjunction with a personalised fitness assessment, an improved consultation process with the member in the design of such fitness programmes, and regular follow-up to ensure member personal requirements are being met.
10. The number of additional services and amenities that the fitness centre offers should be reviewed. The price and availability of these services and amenities requires re-considering so that member expectations are met. There appears to be a requirement for greater personalisation of fitness assessments and regular follow-up is needed for those members conducting specialised programmes.
11. The fitness centre should plan organisational developments, and research the changes that may positively or negatively influence the members and employees' perception of the fitness centre.

12. A greater emphasis should be placed on the quality of service that is delivered. This could be achieved by an increase in employee training in the area of customer service, and management/employees adhering to the organisation's Mission Statement and philosophy.

#### **11.4.2 Recommendations for further research**

This study of the characteristics, developments and changes within a fitness centre is among the first of its kind in New Zealand. This study attempted to provide an historical perspective on the industry's development in New Zealand, with the aim of conducting an explorative synopsis on a relatively unknown subject. This study also raises many unanswered questions due to the dearth of available literature.

It was the endeavour of the researcher to provide a complete historical overview of the industry. However, critical reflection of the literature revealed that further research could be conducted to build on such a study. Additional research could be conducted to examine the influence of overseas fitness and recreation movements, and New Zealand's physical education system on the development of the fitness centre industry. Furthermore, investigation of the establishment of the YMCA and YWCA in New Zealand, the physical culturists who conducted early gymnastic classes, and the Labour Government of pre and post World War Two years may well elucidate new aspects as well as adding to our understanding of the development of the fitness centre industry.

The scale of the fitness centre industry today and its continual growth warrants further research. There is insufficient research that provides informative dialogue on the establishment of the fitness centre industry during the 1960s to 1980s. This study only examined the Auckland region. The utilisation of data generated from the Auckland Yellow Pages telephone directory to depict the industry's development is inconclusive. Although not an accurate portrayal, it did provide a relatively detailed account of the growth of the Auckland fitness centre industry. There appeared to be an immediate need to correlate this data with historically based text. Additional interviews with people who had been involved in the industry or those who were members of these fitness centres may add support and build on this study.

The theoretical propositions and the model that emerged from this study highlight additional areas of research that would further assist the fitness centre industry.

The changes that occurred at this particular fitness centre and the impact they had on the organisation's stakeholders could be further analysed, or applied to other service organisations to substantiate the link between organisation development and change.

Finally, further research could be undertaken to establish management factors which may influence planned development, with additional research determining the appropriate development procedures that could influence favourable organisational changes.

## **11.5 CONCLUDING STATEMENT**

The rapid growth of the fitness centre industry since the 1960s has been influenced by an increase in public participation in physical exercise and leisure. What started precariously, has now become an integral part of society. The fitness centre industry has grown due to increased participation, developing trends and a greater understanding of the benefits of increased health and fitness.

It may be argued that with the increase in demand for fitness centres and the public's desire for them to be readily accessible, a greater opportunity exists for entrepreneurs to enter this growing industry. However, there is concern that an oversupplied market could lead to aggressive marketing techniques resulting in a decline in customer satisfaction.

There is nothing to suggest, according to data uncovered in the two phases of this study, that increased competition should result in the overall decline in industry standards. The research provides evidence that the ongoing development of the industry will be determined by the fitness centre's adaptation to change and progressive improvement in servicing the requirements of the customer.

## **APPENDICES**

APPENDIX A

**FITNESS CENTRES IN THE AUCKLAND  
REGION 1960 TO 2000**

**Auckland Yellow Pages Telephone Directory**

**1960**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Phone</b>
1	Alach Matthew	321 Victoria Arcade Shortland Street - City	43 297

**1965**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Phone</b>
1	Alach Matthew	321 Victoria Arcade Shortland Street - City	43 297
2	Auckland Health Studio	139 Broadway Newmarket	545 539
3	Gladiator Health Institute	359 Queen Street Auckland Central	378 294
4	North Shore Health Studio	453 Lake Road Takapuna	294 694
5	Sheri Lynne Figure Clinics	246 Queen Street City	43 841
6	Silhouette - American Health Studios	23 Victoria Street – West City	24 855

**1970**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Phone</b>
1	Bozena Health and Figure Clinic	10 Northcroft Street Takapuna	492 273
2	Broadway Health clinic	240 Broadway Newmarket	542 493
3	Cleopatra Health & Beauty Clinic	97 Karangahape Road Newton	75 935
4	Drew Joanne Figure Clinic 1996 Ltd.	50 Customs Street Auckland central	378 250
5	Figure Form Clinic	Great North Road Henderson	65 928
6	Fiquetone Clinic	94 -96 Hurstmere Road Takapuna	492 153

7	Gladiator Health Institute	359 Queen Street Auckland Central	378 294
8	Les Mills Ltd.	23 - 25 Victoria Street Ak Central	374 758
9	Otahuhu Health and Figure Centre	273 Great South Road Otahuhu	276 4914

## 1975

No.	Name	Location	Phone
1	Athena Figure Centre	7 Davies Cres Newmarket	500 521
2	Auckland Health Studio Gymnasium	139 Broadway Newmarket	545 539
3	Bozena Health and Figure Clinic	10 Northcroft Street Takapuna	492 273
4	Lea Corlett Figure Clinic	108 Manakau Road Epsom	502 221
5	Drew Joanne Figure Clinic 1996 Ltd.	50 Customs Street Auckland central	378 250
6	Freedom Health Studio	139 Broadway Newmarket	545 539
8	Gladiator Health Institute	599 Queen Street Auckland Central	796 154
9	Les Mills Ltd.	23 - 25 Victoria Street Ak Central	374 758
10	Otahuhu Health and Figure Centre	273 Great South road Otahuhu	276 4914
11	Western Spa Health Clinic	349 Great South Road Henderson	65 928
12	YMCA Auckland	Pitt Street Auckland Central	32 068

**1980**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Phone</b>
1	Academy One	Tyne House Newmarket	500 521
2	All Seasons Squash & Fitness Ctre	TeAtatu Road TeAtatu	834 5042
3	Apollo Fitness and Massage Centre	5 Turner Chbrs Mairangi Bay	478 3972
4	Auckland Health Centre Gymnasium	13 Waverley Street Auckland Central	773 933
5	Auckland Health Studio Gymnasium	139 Broadway Newmarket	545 539
6	Clive Green Health Centre	14 - 18 Federal Street Auckland	390 257
7	Don Oliver Family Fitness	95 Woodglen Road Glen Eden	818 4206
8	Gladiator Health Institute	599 Queen Street Auckland Central	796 154
9	Howick Fitness Centre	194 Moore Street Howick	535 6349
10	Jazzercise Fitness Centre	23 Victoria Street Auckland Central	775 899
11	Les Mills World of Fitness	186 Victoria Street Ak Central	799 432
12	Manuela Health Centre	256 Great South Road Otahuhu	
13	Otahuhu Health and Figure Centre	273 Great South Road Otahuhu	276 4914
14	South Auckland Health and Fitness	17 Shirley Road Papatoetoe	278 9825
15	Warehams Health Centre	10 Northcroft Street Takapuna	492 273
16	YMCA Auckland	Pitt Street Auckland Central	32 068

**1985**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Phone</b>
1	Apollo Fitness and Massage Centre	5 Turner Chbrs Mairangi Bay	478 3972
2	Bruce's Fitness Centre	66 Stoddard Street Mt Roskill	699 346
3	City Gym	13 Waverley Street Auckland Central	773 933
4	Clive Green Health Centre	14 - 18 Federal Street Auckland	390 257
	Clive Green Health Centre	203 Great South Road Manuwera	267 5559
5	Don Oliver Family Fitness	95 Woodglen Road Glen Eden	818 4206
6	East Coast Bays Sport & Recreation Ctr	East Coast Road Mairangi Bay	478 7305
7	Healthy Habits	190 Jervois Road Herne Bay	787 606
8	Hillside Fitness Centre	5/84 - 90 Hillside Road Glenfield	444 8090
9	Howick Fitness Centre	194 Moore Street Howick	535 6349
10	Inshape Fitness Studio	333 Remuera Road Remuera	543
11	Les Mills World of Fitness	186 Victoria Street Ak Central	799 432
12	Manuela Health Centre	256 Great South Road Otahuhu	
13	New Market Fitness Centre	238 Broadway Newmarket	502 418
14	Papakura Fitness Centre	18 Elliott Street Auckland	299 6659
15	Precious McKenzies Fitness & Body Building Centre	262 Great South Road Grey Lynn	763 440
16	Sir Dorr Health Studios	10 Kingdom Street Newmarket	541 677

17	South Auckland Health and Fitness	17 Shirley Road Papatoetoe	278 9825
18	Supershape Aerobics	10 Northcote Street Takapuna	496 788
19	The City Jazzercise Centre	23 Victoria Street Auckland Central	775 899
20	The West Auckland Jazzercise Centre	567 Great North Road Grey Lynn	763 440
21	Top Shape	14 Ashfield Street Glenfield	444 9876
22	Top Shape Health & Fitness Centre	12 Ratanui Street Henderson	837 0072
23	Vital Health Club	114 Kitchener Road Milford	463 977
24	Warehams Health Centre	10 Northcroft Street Takapuna	492 273
25	YMCA Auckland	Pitt Street Auckland Central	32 068

## 1990

No.	Name	Location	Phone
1	Apollo Fitness and Massage Centre	5 Turner Chbrs Mairangi Bay	478 3972
2	Auckland Tepid Baths	102 Customs Street Auckland Central	794 093
3	Auckland YMCA	Pitt Street	303 2068
4	Body Workshop	Leonard Street Pukekohe	235 - 7775
5	Chase Corporate Health Club	7th Floor Durham House Albert Street	771 940
6	Clive Green Health Centres	20 Melrose Street Newmarket	523 1171
7	Clive Green Health Centres	5 Ryan Place Manakau City	262 3686
8	Don Oliver Family Fitness	60 Morningside Drive St Lukes	892 742

9	Don Oliver Family Fitness	95 Woodglen Road Glen Eden	818 4206
10	East Coast Bays Stadium	East Coast Road Mairangi Bay	478 7305
11	Feminine Way International	21 Pinero Place Bucklands Beach	537 3238
12	Figure Firm	199 Lincoln Road Henderson	837 3435
13	Figure Firm	1 Rankin Ave New Lynn	870 068
14	Fit' n Firm	13b Clifton Road Panmure	527 2676
15	Fitness Unlimited	110 Lincoln Park Ave Massey	833 6809
16	Future Shapes	2a Inverness Road Browns Bay	479 2559
17	Gold's Gym	118 Nelson Street Auckland Central	394 446
18	Gold's Gym	898 Great South Road Manakau	267 0154
19	Gold's Gym	Link Road Glenfield	444 9328
20	Gym Manurewa	203 Great South Road Manurewa	267 5559
21	Harvest Natural Health Centre	403 Richmond Road Grey Lynn	789 274
22	Healthlands Fitness Centre	17 Karaka Street Newton	795 467
23	Healthy Habits	190 Jervois Road Herne Bay	787 606
24	Hillside Fitness Centre	5/84 - 90 Hillside Road Glenfield	444 8090
25	Howick Fitness Centre	194 Moore Street Howick	535 6349
26	Institute of Sport and Corporate Health	128 Kyhber Pass Road Auckland	303 3238

27	Les Mills World of Fitness	186 Victoria Street Ak Central	799 432
28	Les Mills World of Fitness	2 Rankin Ave New Lynn	875 440
29	Les Mills World of Fitness	Como Street Takapuna	494 376
30	Mainly Women Health and Fitness	8 - 12 Morrow Street Newmarket	522 0835
31	Metro YMCA	Cnr Pitt Street / Greys Ave Auckland	303 2068
32	Metro YMCA	Akoranga Drive Northcote	480 7099
33	Metro YMCA	Michaels Ave Ellerslie	594 716
34	Newmarket Gym	10 Kingdon Street Newmarket	524 5716
35	Perfect Health and Fitness Centre	80 Mokoia Road Birkenhead	480 7338
36	Physical	131 Lincoln Road Henderson	837 0072
37	Remuera Gymnasium	105 Remuera Road Remuera	524 4348
38	Roskill Aqua Centre	Cameron Pool Keith Hay Park Mt Roskill	625 8751
39	Ship Shape Fitness Centre	Subway Road Pukekohe	238 3318
40	South Auckland Health and Fitness	17 Shirley Road Papatoetoe	278 9825
41	The Feminine Way	10 - 14 Anzac St Takapuna	464 929
42	The Figure Firm	1/129 Onewa Road Northcote	480 0416
43	The Figure Firm	21 East Street Pakuranga	297 7332
44	Top Shape	14 Ashfield Street Glenfield	444 9876

45	Trim and Tone	12d Puhinui Road Manakau	277 7589
46	Vital Health Club	114 Kitchener Road Milford	463 977
47	Warehams Health Centre	Fred Thomas Drive Takapuna	462 273
48	Warehams Health Centre	Elliott Street Mid City	308 9973
49	Warehams Health Centre	27 Aviemore Drive Pakuranga	534 1812
50	World Gym	1 Portage Road New Lynn	876 548
51	World Gym	82 Elice Road Glenfield	444 3076
52	World Gym	181 - 189 Great South Road Takanini	298 2741
53	World Gym	24J Allright Park Mt Wellington	527 6859
54	World Gym	103 Church Street Onehunga	645 802

## 1995

No.	Name	Location	Phone
1	Aerobic City Ltd.	81 Birkenhead Ave Birkenhead	480 1222
2	All Season Squash & Fitness Centre	100 Whitford Road Howick	535 4183
3	Auckland YMCA	Pitt Street	303 2068
4	All Season Squash & Fitness Centre	278 Te Atatu Road Te Atatu	834 5042
5	Beachside Health club	30 Anzac Road Browns Bay	479 - 2924
6	Better Image	Elizabeth Street Workworth	425 8296

7	Body Workshop	Leonard Street Pukekohe	235 - 7775
8	Bizee Bodeez	Attic Studio 2a Victoria Mews Remuera	524 4402
9	Bodies by Design	27 Aviemore Drive Highland Park	535 7007
10	Body Language Fitness Studio	18 Lindin Street Mt Roskill	627 8902
11	Central Park Gym	PO Box 62557 Central Park	525 0304
12	Clive Green Health Centres	20 Melrose Street New Market	523 1171
13	Clive Green Health Centres	278 Te Atatu Road Te Atatu	834 5042
14	Clive Green Health Centres	5 Ryan Place Manakau City	262 3686
15	Clive Green Health Centres	5 Nandina Ave East Tamaki	274 4511
16	Club Physeke	41 Elliot Street Pkura	298 4981
17	Club Warehams Fitness Centre	4 Fred Thomas Drive Takapuna	489 4376
18	Contours Exclusive Womens Health	520 Great South Road Greenlane	525 7107
19	Contours Exclusive Womens Health	8 Leyton Way Manakau	262 0055
20	Contours Exclusive Womens Health	18 Northcroft Street Takapuna	262 0055
21	Counties Fitness	151 Manakau Road Pkohe	238 1888
22	Cuts n' Curves	106 Rockfield Road Ellerslie	579 5536
23	Devonport Health and Fitness Ctre	18 Clarence Street Devonport	445 4696
24	Don Oliver Family Fitness	66A Stoddard Street Mt Roskill	620 5328

25	Fighting Fit Ltd.	17 Wynard Street Devonport	445 1090
26	Fitness Plus	898 Great South Road Manuwera	267 0514
27	Flying Fit Health Club	PO Box 53 - 040 Auckland Airport	275 5747
28	Fitness Works	37 Dornwell Road Mt Roskill	625 7203
29	Fitness Works	38 Barry's Point Road Takapuna	486 2999
30	Glen Innes Aquatic Fitness Centre	122 Elstree Ave Glen Innes	527 1983
31	Gold's Gym	169 Symonds Street Auckland Central	309 4446
32	Gold's for Women	114 Kitchener Road Milford	489 7748
33	Green Arrow Fitness Centre	Papakura Army Camp	298 2778
34	Health Y's Sports Clinic	5 Akoranga Drive Northcote	480 9982
35	Hibiscus Coast Leisure Centre	Brightside Road Stm Bay	424 1914
36	Hillside Fitness Centre	5/84 - 90 Hillside Road Glenfield	444 8090
37	Les Mills World of Fitness	186 Victoria Street Ak Central	379 9550
38	Mainly Women Health and Fitness	8 - 12 Morrow Street Newmarket	522 0835
39	Glenfield Leisure Centres	Bently Ave Glenfield	444 6340
40	Olympic Pools and Fitness Centre	77 Broadway Newmarket	522 4414
41	One Five One Corporate Health Club	151 Queen Street Auck City	366 3664
42	Onehunga Fitness Centre	Jellicoe Park Onehunga	634 6737
43	Phoenix Gym	72 Mokoia Road Birkenhead	480 7338

44	Physical Health Club	22 Edmonton Road Henderson	837 0072
45	Physical Health Club	15 Clark Street New Lynn	827 5093
46	Pump 'N' Power Health Club	Cape Hill Road Pukekohe	238 0098
47	Remuera Gymnasium	349 Remuera Road Remuera	524 4348
48	Roskill Aqua Centre	Cameron Pool Keith Hay Park Mt Roskill	625 8751
49	Royal Oak Fitness Club	100 Pah Road Royal Oak	624 2056
50	Ship Shape Fitness Centre	Subway Road Pukekohe	238 3318
51	South City Gym	449 Roscommon Road Manuwera	267 8999
52	Tepid Baths	102 Custom Street	379 4093
53	The Atrium Club	190 - 194 Federal Street Auck. Central	303 4855
54	World Gym	28B Lambie Drive Manakau	262 1291
55	World Gym	82 Elice Road Glenfield	444 3076
56	World Gym	181 - 189 Great South Road Takanini	298 2741
57	World Gym	24J Allright Park Mt Wellington	527 6859
58	World Health And Fitness	1 Portage Road New Lynn	827 6548

## 2000

No.	Name	Location	Phone
1	Albany Fitness Centre	15E Douglas Alexander Pde Albany	415 2669

2	All Season Squash & Fitness Centre	100 Whitford Road Howick	535 4183
3	All Season Squash & Fitness Centre	278 Te Atatu Road Te Atatu	834 5042
4	Beachside Health club	30 Anzac Road Browns Bay	479 - 2924
5	Bellevue Health Centre	1/48 Bellevue Road Mt Eden	630 6331
6	Body Smart	493 New North Road Kingsland	815 1755
7	Body Tech	37 Normanby Road Mt Eden	623 3383
8	Body Workshop	Leonard Street Pukekohe	235 - 7775
9	Central Park Gym	PO Box 62557 Central Park	525 0304
10	Clive Green Health Centres	20 Melrose Street Newmarket	523 1171
11	Clive Green Health Centres	5 Ryan Place Manakau City	262 3686
12	Clive Green Health Centres	5 Nandina Ave East Tamaki	274 4511
13	Club Physical	1 Margan Ave New Lynn	827 5093
14	Club Physical	278 Te Atatu Road Te Atatu	834 5042
15	Club Physical	Highpoint Tower Birkenhead	419 2500
16	Club Physical	36 Target Ct Glenfield	444 9328
17	Club Physical	Royal Oak Mall Royal Oak	625 0235
18	Club Physical	9 Karaka Street City	379 5467
19	Club Physical	Westgate Shopping Centre Westgate	833 3306

20	Club Physeke	41 Elliot Street Pkura	298 4981
21	Club St Heliers	18 Turua Street St Heliers	575 7615
22	Contours Exclusive Womens Health	520 Great South Road Greenlane	525 7107
23	Contours Exclusive Womens Health	1st Floor Manakau Shopping Centre Manakau	262 0055
24	Contours Exclusive Womens Health	199b Lincoln Road Henderson	836 9099
25	Counties Fitness	151 Manakau Road Pkohe	238 1888
26	Cuts n' Curves	106 Rockfield Road Ellerslie	579 5536
27	Devonport Health and Fitness Ctre	18 Clarence Street Devonport	445 4696
28	Don Oliver Family Fitness	2 Rankin Ave New Lynn	826 0404
29	East Auckland Health and Fitness	166 A Harris Road Pakuranga	273 4470
30	Eastern Bays Fitness Centre	ASB Stadium	528 0937
31	Fitness Designs	27 Florence Ave Orewa	426 8492
32	Fitness Plus	898 Great South Road Manakau	267 0154
33	Flying Fit Health Club	PO Box 53 - 040 Auckland Airport	275 5747
34	Franklin Fitness Centre	Cape Hill Road Pkohe	238 0098
35	Gold's Gym	169 Symonds Street Auckland Central	309 4446
36	Golden Pool Health and Massage Centre	28 Airedale Street Auckland Central	303 3766
37	Green Arrow Fitness Centre	Papakura Army Camp	298 2778
38	Gymwise Health and Fitness Studio	218 Gt South Road Mrewa	268 0750

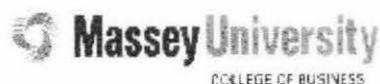
39	Hibiscus Coast Leisure Centre	Brightside Road Stm Bay	424 1914
40	Hillside Fitness Centre	5/84 - 90 Hillside Road Glenfield	444 8090
41	Howick Fitness Centre	194 Moore Street Howick	535 6349
42	Jazzercise Fitness Centres	186 Victoria Street Ak Central	379 3176
43	Jim Blair Corporate Wellness Centre	10 E Piermark Dve Albany	414 1912
44	Jordan Recreation	5 Pearce Street Onehunga	636 8825
45	Just Work out	Level 7 / 8 22 Durham Street Ak Central	379 5300
46	Just Work out	79 Barry's Point Road Takapuna	486 0900
47	Kevin Barry Boxing Fitness Gym	186 Victoria Street Ak Central	309 9218
48	Lagoon Leisure and Fitness	29 Lagoon Drive Panmure	570 9061
49	Lee Gar Fitness Centre	Unit 9 Tait Place Albany	415 9460
50	Les Mills World of Fitness	186 Victoria Street Ak Central	379 9550
51	Mainly Women Health and Fitness	8 - 12 Morrow Street New Market	522 0835
52	North Harbour Health and Fitness Ctre	82a Ellice Road Glenfield	444 3078
53	North Shore Leisure Centres	Birkenhead Leisure Centre Mahara Ave - Birkenhead	418 4109
54	North Shore Leisure Centres	Glenfield Leisure Centre Benntly Ave - Glenfield	444 6340
55	North Shore Leisure Centres	Takapuna Aquatic Centre Killarney Street - Takapuna	486 3286
56	Olympic Pools and Fitness Centre	77 Broadway Newmarket	522 4414

57	Onehunga Fitness Centre	Jellicoe Park Onehunga	634 6737
58	One Five One Corporate Health Club	151 Queens Street Auckland City	366 3664
59	Papakura Community Centre	294 Great South Road Papakura	298 6852
60	Parade - Ice Gymnasium	490 Ti Rakau Drive East Tamaki	274 0044
61	Perfect Performance	Floor 1 44 Khyber Pass Road Grafton	307 6446
62	Physical Lunacy	237 Manakau Road Epsom	630 5682
63	Planet Health Limited	118 Henderson Valley Road Henderson	838 7373
64	Platinum Ladies Health Club	114 Kitchner Road Milford	489 7748
65	Remuera Gymnasium	349 Remuera Road Remuera	524 4348
66	Results Fitness Centre	61B Mokoia Road Birkenhead	480 1222
67	Roskill Aqua Sport Centre	63 Arundel Street Mt Roskill	625 8751
68	Slimtone	Level 1 204 Broadway Newmarket	529 9390
69	Strand Studio	77 The Strand Parnell Auckland	377 7527
70	Takapuna Fitness Centre	17 Huron Street Takapuna	486 1510
71	Te Puea Marae Health Centre	16/34 Miro Road Mangere Bridge	636 5683
72	The Atrium Club	190 - 194 Federal Street Auck. Central	303 4855
73	The Ponsonby Private Health Club	93 College Hill Ponsonby	0800 587 836
74	Tony Martin's Sports Connection	8 Carr Road Mt Roskill Mt Roskill	624 3555

75	Trim Body	11 Trounson Ave Clendon Park	267 0677
76	Unitec Centre for sport and recreation	Unitec	815 2925
77	Workit out	41 Elliot Street Papakura	298 4981
78	World Gym	28B Lambie Drive Manakau	262 1291
79	Womens Sport Fighters Gym	24 Minnie Street Eden Terrace	379 5152
80	YMCA - Auckland	Recreation and Fitness Ctre Michaels Ave Ellerslie	579 4716
81	YMCA - Auckland	Aquatics and Fitness Centre 122 Elstree Ave Greenlane	527 3260
82	YMCA - Auckland	Recreation and fitness Centre 773 New North Road Mt Albert	846 0788
83	YMCA - Auckland	Cnr Don Buck Rd & Westgate Dve Massey	833 8100
84	YMCA - Auckland	Recreation and Fitness Centre Akoranga Drive Northcote	480 7099
85	YMCA - Auckland	Tepid Baths 100 Customs Street Auckland Central	379 4745
86	Youthtown	68 A Nelson Street Auckland Central	379 5430

APPENDIX B

**INFORMATION SHEET FOR  
INTERVIEW**



Department of Management  
and International Business  
Allison Campus  
Private Bag 102 904,  
North Shore Mail Centre,  
Auckland, New Zealand  
Telephone: 04 9 441 8116  
Facsimile: 04 9 441 8136

Dear Interviewee

My name is Sheridan Hunt and I am a Postgraduate student in the Department of Management and International Business, at Massey University. I am also an employee of [the fitness centre].

This study is part of a wider body of research for my Masters thesis, which investigates the primary establishment and change characteristics of a fitness centre in its first three years of providing a client service. I am interested in learning about your perceptions on changes and/or developments that have occurred while you have been involved with this organisation. Your input will provide me with information that is essential for the improvement of [the fitness centre] and the fitness centre industry.

Your responses will remain anonymous and completely confidential, and by no means will you be identified in any way. The interview transcripts will be stored for a period of three months after the data has been analysed at which time they will be destroyed. Results will be presented in aggregate form only – individual respondents will not be identifiable.

I thank you in advance for your participation in this interview. If you have any queries or wish to know more, please contact me on (09) XXX-XXXX. Queries may also be addressed to my supervisor, Margot Edwards, lecturer, Department of Management and International Business, Massey University, Private Bag 102 904, North Shore Mail Centre, Auckland. Phone (09) XXX-XXXX extn XXXX.

Sheridan Hunt  
Student - Massey University

Te Kōwhiri ki Pākehura

Inception to Industry: Massey University's commitment to learning as a lifelong journey

APPENDIX C

**INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM**



Department of Management  
and International Business  
Allison Campbell  
Private Bag 100 804,  
North Shore Mail Centre,  
Auckland, New Zealand  
Telephone: +64 9 441 8115  
Facsimile: +64 9 441 8135

## Consent Form

I have read the information sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

If I agree to participate, I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time and to decline to answer any particular questions.

I agree / do not agree to the interview being audio taped.

I also understand that I have the right to ask for the audio tape to be turned off at any time during the interview.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the information sheet.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX D

**INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

### **Background Questions**

1. Did you have any fitness centre management experience before this position?
2. Please outline the professional background you had before being employed at the current fitness centre?
3. What tertiary qualifications have you gained?

### **Culture**

1. How important is fitness centre culture to this business?
2. Have you noticed any significant developments/changes in the fitness centre culture in the last three years? (patterns of basic assumptions, values, norms shared by fitness centre members)
3. Has the employee work environment developed/changed in the last three years? (supervisors, staff functions etc)
4. Do you believe this fitness centre provides a positive work environment?
5. Has the fitness centre developed/changed any specific systems, rules or regulations or management style to enhance the effectiveness of the work environment? Please specify.

### **Management**

1. How has the management structure developed/changed in the last three years?
2. What are the current positive and negative characteristics of the current management structure?
3. What are the key skills required for a supervisor at this fitness centre?
4. What additional training do supervisors receive for their particular position?
5. How would you describe the job role of a supervisor at this fitness centre?
6. What specific changes have you noticed in the supervisors / managers at this fitness centre in the last three years?
7. How would you describe yourself as a supervisor? How has this developed/changed over the last three years?
8. What are your strengths as a supervisor? What are your weaknesses? In the last three years what have you improved on?

**Staff - floor instructors / receptionists**

1. How important is a tertiary qualification for staff employees?
2. Has the number of staff increased since you began working here? Have you hired people for particular duties that were not necessary when you first opened?
3. In the last three years what specific changes or developments have occurred in regards to training procedures?
4. How important are staff employees to the fitness centre based on the service that you are offering?
5. What changes or developments have occurred in the last three years to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the employees?
6. Have these changes and/or developments made a difference in employee performance?
7. What is the average hourly wage of an (1) instructor (2) receptionist (3) fitness counselor (4) supervisor? Do you believe these rates are competitive?
8. How do you reward employees? Is this a new initiative?
9. Is there a staff incentive system in place?
10. What specific areas do you believe staff members at this fitness centre need to improve?
11. What are you doing to improve the areas that staff members need to improve on?
12. Overall, how would you rate staff morale?
13. Do you believe there is a high staff turnover?

**Marketing**

1. When you first opened what was the fitness centres uniqueness?
2. Has this uniqueness developed/changed in the last three years?
3. Has the fitness centre positioned yourself differently?
4. What is your target market?
5. What additional services are you providing to the customer that you were not providing when you first opened?
6. How are these additional programmes marketed?
7. What additional equipment are you providing that you did not have when you first opened?

8. Do you believe you are offering more to the member now, than you were when you first opened?

**Customers / Clients**

1. What 3 major reasons do you believe people join your fitness centre?
2. How important is customer service? Has the customer service of the fitness centre developed/changed over the years?
3. How do you evaluate customer satisfaction?
4. Has the customer focus of the business developed/changed?
5. What do you believe are the major frustrations that customers have with your fitness centre?
6. How are you dealing with these issues?

APPENDIX E

**QUESTIONNAIRES**

**APPENDIX E1**

**CURRENT MEMBER  
QUESTIONNAIRE**

### Part A: Personal Questions

A1. Gender (please circle)

Male

Female

A2. Age (please circle)

Under 15 years

15 – 24

25 – 34

35 – 44

45 – 54

55 – 64

65 and over

A3. In what suburb of Auckland, or which outside district, do you live? \_\_\_\_\_

A4. If you have a current occupation please state this: \_\_\_\_\_

A5. Please indicate your personal annual income: (please circle)

Less than \$15,000

\$15,000 - \$29,999

\$30,000 - \$44,999

\$45,000 - \$59,999

\$60,000 - \$74,999

\$75,000 - \$89,999

\$90,000 - \$104,999

\$105,000 +

### Part B: Fitness centre experience

B1. How did you learn about [the fitness centre]? (Please tick)

Phone directory

Magazine

Walk in

Radio

Newspaper

Television

Direct mail

Referral

Other \_\_\_\_\_

**B2. What were the 3 major reasons that encouraged you to join this fitness centre?**

*(Please list in order of importance 1, 2, 3, with 1 being most important)*

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Location        | <input type="checkbox"/> Staff                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Parking         | <input type="checkbox"/> Medical reasons        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cleanliness     | <input type="checkbox"/> Improve health/fitness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not crowded     | <input type="checkbox"/> Programs available     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Value for money | <input type="checkbox"/> Friends belonged       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Equipment       | <input type="checkbox"/> Free trial membership  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____     |   |

**B3. How long have you been a member of the fitness centre? (Please tick)**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Under 6 months | <input type="checkbox"/> 12 – 17 months     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 6 – 11 months  | <input type="checkbox"/> 25 months and over |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 18– 24 months  |   |

**B4. Overall, how do you rate the instructors at the fitness centre?**

*(Professionalism, presentation, knowledge, consistency etc.)*

- |      |               |         |               |           |
|------|---------------|---------|---------------|-----------|
| 1    | 2             | 3       | 4             | 5         |
| Poor | Below average | Average | Above average | Excellent |

**B4a. Please comment**

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**B8a. Please comment**

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**B9. Have you used the fitness centre’s additional services?**

*(Golf programme / fat-2-muscle programme / personal training / body composition analysis / physiotherapy / massage / back machine programme)*

Yes No

**B9a. If you circled yes, how do you rate the fitness centre’s additional service(s)?**

1 2 3 4 5  
Poor Below average Average Above average Excellent

**B9a. Please comment**

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**B10. Since joining the facility, has the fitness centre changed any of the services and/or programmes it offers to the members? *(Please circle)***

Yes No

**B10a. If you circled yes, what changes have you noticed?**

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**B11. Overall, how do you rate the fitness centre’s equipment?**

*(Free weight machines / circuit machines / cardiovascular machines)*

1 2 3 4 5  
Poor Below average Average Above average Excellent

**B11a. Please comment**

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-----

**B12. How do you rate the overall layout of the fitness centre?***(Free weight area / circuit area / cardiovascular area / stretch area / locker rooms)*

1	2	3	4	5
Poor	Below average	Average	Above average	Excellent

**B12a. Please comment**


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**B13. How do you rate the fitness centre's value for money?**

1	2	3	4	5
Poor	Below average	Average	Above average	Excellent

**B13a. Please comment**


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**B14. Are you aware of any changes or developments that the fitness centre has carried out that have influenced the members' experience? *(Please circle)***

Yes	No
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**B14a. If you circled yes, what changes and/or developments have you noticed?**


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**B15. What do you like most about this fitness centre?**


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**B16. What do you like least about this fitness centre?**

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**B17. Could you suggest any changes that the fitness centre needs to consider?**

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**Please accept my sincere thanks for completing this questionnaire and assisting me in my research.**

**APPENDIX E2**

**FORMER MEMBER  
QUESTIONNAIRE**



**B2. What type(s) of membership did you purchase?**

<input type="checkbox"/> 3 month membership	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 year membership
<input type="checkbox"/> 6 month membership	<input type="checkbox"/> Corporate membership
<input type="checkbox"/> 12 month membership	<input type="checkbox"/> Student membership
<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____	

**B3. When did you purchase your first membership?**

<input style="width: 200px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	Month	<input style="width: 60px; height: 20px;" type="text" value="199__"/>	Year
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**B4. On average, how many times per month did you use the fitness centre?  
(please circle)**

Never	Once a month	2 – 5 times per month	6 – 9 times per month
10 – 13 times per month	14 – 17 times per month	18 times or more	

**B5. What did you like most about this fitness centre?**

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**B6. What did you like least about this fitness centre?**

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APPENDIX E3

**SUBORDINATE EMPLOYEE  
QUESTIONNAIRE**

## Part A: Personal Questions

- A1. Gender (*please circle*)                      Male                      Female
- A2. Age \_\_\_\_\_ years old
- A3. How long have you been employed at this fitness centre? \_\_\_\_\_
- A4. Please state your current position at this fitness centre: \_\_\_\_\_
- A5. Are you (*please circle*)                      Full-time                      Part-time
- A6. How many hours a week do you work at the fitness centre?  
\_\_\_\_\_ hours per week
- A7. How much are you paid an hour?    \$ \_\_\_\_\_ per hour
- A8. Highest level of qualification? (*Please tick*)
- |                          |   |       |
|--------------------------|---|-------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | No qualification  |       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | School Certificate  |       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 6 <sup>th</sup> Form Certificate                            |       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Bursary   |       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Tertiary qualification(s) ( <i>please specify in full</i> ) | _____ |
|                          |   | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Other qualification(s) ( <i>please specify in full</i> )    | _____ |
|                          |   | _____ |
- A9. If you are currently studying, please indicate the course you are doing?  
(*please specify in full*)
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Part B: Fitness centre work environment</b>
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**B1. Please describe your job role at this fitness centre?**

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**B2. What are the three major skills required for your present position? (please list in order, 1 being most important)**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**B3. Are there any skills you would like to acquire which would further facilitate your role at this fitness centre? (please list in order, 1 being most important)**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**B4. What do you like most about working at this fitness centre?**

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**B5. What do you like least about working at this fitness centre?**

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**B10. Overall, how do you rate the employee training?**  
(Initial training, ongoing training, job specific training, management training etc)

1                      2                      3                      4                      5  
Poor                  Below average      Average              Above average      Excellent

**B10a. Please comment**

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**B11. Have you noticed any changes or developments in the fitness centres employee training? (Please circle)**

Yes                                      No

**B11a. If you circled yes, what positive and/or negative changes have you noticed?**

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**B12. Overall, how do you rate the management supervision?**  
(Head supervisors, floor supervisors, department supervisors etc)

1                      2                      3                      4                      5  
Poor                  Below average      Average              Above average      Excellent

**B12a. Please comment**

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**B13. Have you noticed any changes or developments in the fitness centres management supervision? (Please circle)**

Yes                                      No

**B13a. If you circled yes, what positive and/or negative changes have you noticed?**

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**B14.** Are you aware of any changes or developments that the fitness centre has carried out that have influenced the employees' experience? (*Positive and/or negative - please circle*)

Yes

No

**B14a.** If you ticked yes, what were these positive and/or negative changes?

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**B15.** Any further comments you would like to make would be greatly appreciated?

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**Please accept my sincere thanks for completing this questionnaire and assisting me in my research.**

APPENDIX F

**COVERING LETTER**

APPENDIX F1

**CURRENT AND FORMER MEMBER  
COVER LETTER**



Department of Management  
and International Business  
Massey Campus  
Private Bag 102 904,  
North Shore Mail Centre,  
Auckland, New Zealand  
Telephone: 04 9 441 8115  
Facsimile: 04 9 441 8126

Dear Sir/Madam

My name is Sheridan Hunt and I am a Postgraduate student in the Department of Management and International Business, at Massey University. I am also an advisor to the management staff of [the fitness centre].

This study is part of a wider body of research for my Masters thesis, which investigates the primary establishment and development/change characteristics of a fitness centre in its first three years of providing a client service. I am interested in learning about your perceptions on developments and/or changes that have occurred while you have been a member at [the fitness centre]. Your input will provide me with information that is essential for the improvement of [the fitness centre] and the fitness centre industry.

I would appreciate the return of your survey by **Monday 17<sup>th</sup> July 2000**. A self addressed, postage paid envelope has been enclosed with the survey for your convenience.

I thank you in advance for your participation in this survey. If you have any queries or wish to know more, please contact me on (09) XXX-XXXX. Queries may also be addressed to my supervisor, Margot Edwards, lecturer, Department of Management and International Business, Massey University, Private Bag 102 904, North Shore Mail Centre, Auckland. Phone (09) XXX-XXXX extn XXXX.

Sheridan Hunt  
Student - Massey University

**NOTE:** You will notice that the postage paid envelope has an identification number in the top left hand corner. This number is solely for the purpose of identifying who has replied so that reminder notices may be sent to those that have not replied by the due date. This identification number will also be used to enter you into the draw for a three-month membership/extension. The envelopes will be discarded immediately after your reply has been recorded. Your responses will remain anonymous and completely confidential, and by no means will you be identified in any way.

The questionnaires will be stored for a period of three months after the data has been analysed at which time they will be destroyed. Results will be presented in aggregate form only – individual respondents will not be identifiable.

Te Kōwhiri ki Pūrehuroa

Inception to Infinity: Massey University's commitment to learning & a life-long journey

**APPENDIX F2**

**SUBORDINATE EMPLOYEE  
COVER LETTER**



Department of Management  
and International Business  
Massey Campus  
Private Bag 102 904,  
North Shore Mail Centre,  
Auckland, New Zealand  
Telephone: 04 9 441 8119  
Facsimile: 04 9 441 8125

Dear Employee

My name is Sheridan Hunt and I am a Postgraduate student in the Department of Management and International Business, at Massey University. I am also an employee of [the fitness centre].

This study is part of a wider body of research for my Masters thesis, which investigates the primary establishment and change characteristics of a fitness centre in its first three years of providing a client service. I am interested in learning about your perceptions on changes and/or developments that have occurred while you have been a member at [the fitness centre]. Your input will provide me with information that is essential for the improvement of [the fitness centre] and the fitness centre industry.

Your responses will remain anonymous and completely confidential, and by no means will you be identified in any way. The questionnaires will be stored for a period of three months after the data has been analysed at which time they will be destroyed. Results will be presented in aggregate form only – individual respondents will not be identifiable.

I would appreciate the return of your survey by **Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2000.**

I thank you in advance for your participation in this survey. If you have any queries or wish to know more, please contact me on (09) XXX - XXXX. Queries may also be addressed to my supervisor, Margot Edwards, lecturer, Department of Management and International Business, Massey University, Private Bag 102 904, North Shore Mail Centre, Auckland. Phone (09) XXX XXXX extn XXXX.

Sheridan Hunt  
Student - Massey University

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