



Member Retention in Coach-Led Fitness Programmes: A Conceptual Model of Service Quality and Structured Engagement

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Abstract

Member retention is a critical challenge in the fitness industry, particularly for organisations offering structured, goal-based training programmes. While previous studies have examined service quality and satisfaction as drivers of retention, limited research has explored the multidimensional nature of service quality and its influence on long-term behavioural commitment. This paper presents a conceptual framework for understanding member retention within coach-led, goal-oriented fitness programmes, where consistent participation and structured progress are essential for success.

Grounded in Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986), the framework investigates how three dimensions of service quality—value, process quality, and outcome quality—influence satisfaction, which in turn impacts loyalty and retention. The model introduces frequency of attendance as a moderating variable that reinforces structured behavioural engagement, highlighting its role in strengthening the satisfaction–loyalty–retention pathway. Loyalty is also proposed as a mediating mechanism, translating satisfaction into sustained participation and member commitment.

By focusing on coach-led, habit-forming fitness environments—such as gymnastics, martial arts, dance-based fitness, and athletics—this study contributes new conceptual insights into how structured service delivery supports retention. It also integrates emotional, environmental, and behavioural reinforcement mechanisms to explain how sustained participation develops over time. This framework lays the foundation for future empirical research and provides practical guidance for fitness managers aiming to improve retention through structured engagement strategies.

The proposed model is informed by pilot-phase insights and aims to guide both future validation and immediate industry application. As such, it offers a theoretical and operational contribution to the evolving discourse on retention, loyalty, and service quality in structured fitness environments.

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Introduction

Member retention is a critical challenge in the fitness industry, especially for organizations delivering structured, goal-based training programmes (e.g., specialized sports training, martial arts academies). These programmes face unique vulnerabilities, including revenue instability due to interrupted training cycles, diminished program quality from inconsistent participation, and

potential setbacks in athlete or member skill progression, all of which jeopardise long-term sustainability. Previous research correctly identifies service quality as a critical influence on member satisfaction, loyalty, and retention (Yeomans *et al.*, 2024) ^[51]. Retention remains a particularly pressing issue for fitness organisations in Malaysia, where, despite growing health awareness, gym membership penetration remains low at approximately 1.04% (RunRepeat [RR], 2023; Fit Tech Global [FTG], 2023) ^[33].

Furthermore, COVID-19 exacerbated these retention challenges, with attrition rates reaching 27% annually (Kumar, 2022) ^[26]. These statistics underscore the urgent need for effective retention strategies tailored to the unique challenges of the Malaysian market.

However, the prevailing tendency to conceptualize service quality as a unidimensional construct overlooks the nuanced contributions of its constituent dimensions – value, process quality, and outcome quality – in shaping member experiences and fostering enduring commitment. Therefore, this study addresses a critical gap in the literature by examining the specific relationships between value, process quality, outcome quality, satisfaction, loyalty, retention, and attendance frequency within the context of Malaysian structured, coach-led fitness programmes. The overarching aim is to develop a comprehensive model that identifies the key drivers of sustained member commitment within this unique and under-researched context.

This research contributes to the fitness management literature by providing a granular understanding of how service quality dimensions shape member experiences in structured training environments. Through the lens of multidimensional service quality (value, process quality, and outcome quality), this study offers actionable insights for fitness organizations on improving satisfaction-driven behavioural commitment strategies that enhance long-term retention in coach-centric, goal-oriented coach-led fitness programmes. Value encompasses the perceived affordability and worth of the membership, process quality reflects the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery, and outcome quality pertains to the tangible fitness benefits and skill improvements achieved. By assessing these dimensions separately, this study aims to provide a more granular understanding of service quality's role in retention.

In structured, coach-led fitness programmes, such as gymnastics, martial arts, and competitive training academies, attendance frequency is a key determinant of progress and continued behavioural commitment. Unlike casual gym memberships, these programmes require members to adhere to a structured participation schedule, reinforcing habitual attendance patterns that, ideally, translate into long-term loyalty.

Satisfaction, derived from positive service experiences – including perceived value, efficient service delivery, and effective training outcomes has a substantial impact on attendance habit. Members who believe their fitness organisation provides high-quality service are more likely to engage consistently, build habitual attendance patterns, and develop a greater commitment to it (Huang & Kim, 2023) ^[22]. Despite these insights, the moderating role of attendance frequency in strengthening the satisfaction-retention link remains underexplored. Structured, coach-led, goal-based fitness development programmes are designed to foster commitment through goal-based progressions, expert coaching, and structured behavioural commitment models.

However, members who fail to establish consistent attendance patterns may struggle to experience the full benefits of such programmes, weakening their overall loyalty and likelihood of retention. By integrating attendance frequency as a moderating factor, this study extends existing service quality-retention frameworks to examine how structured participation influences long-term membership commitment.

This study is grounded in Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986) ^[5], which explains how personal, environmental, and behavioural factors interact to shape fitness commitment. In structured, coach-led, goal-based fitness development programmes, consistent participation, perceived service quality, and social reinforcement from coaches play a crucial role in shaping retention. SCT explains how behaviour is influenced by personal, environmental, and cognitive factors (Bandura, 1986) ^[5], highlighting the role of structured participation in reinforcing long-term commitment. Ahern *et al.* (2024) ^[1] further support this framework by demonstrating how structured behavioural interventions, grounded in self-efficacy and reinforcement principles, can improve exercise adherence in long-term programmes. Building on previous research grounded in Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), this study revisits the dynamics of loyalty development in structured, coach-led, goal-based fitness development programmes. While previous research has concentrated on the outcome of retention, this study examines how structured behavioural commitment and attendance habits, created by SCT's behaviour-reinforcement mechanisms, lead to long-term loyalty and commitment. Members who perceive high service quality and achieve expected fitness outcomes are more likely to develop structured participation reinforced through consistent attendance patterns, reinforcing long-term retention through positive feedback loops.

Therefore, this study addresses a critical gap in the literature by examining the specific relationships between value, process quality, outcome quality, satisfaction, loyalty, retention, and attendance frequency within the context of Malaysian coach-led, goal-based fitness development programmes. The overarching aim is to develop a comprehensive model that identifies the key drivers of sustained member commitment within this unique and under-researched context. This research contributes to the fitness management literature by providing a granular understanding of how service quality dimensions shape member experiences in structured training environments. Through the lens of multidimensional service quality (value, process quality, and outcome quality), this study offers actionable insights for fitness organizations on improving satisfaction-driven behavioural commitment strategies that enhance long-term retention in coach-led, goal-based fitness development programmes.

Contextual Problem

The Malaysian fitness industry has experienced significant growth, reaching a valuation of MYR 1.5 billion in 2023 (Tan & Low, 2023). However, market penetration remains low, with only 1% to 2% of Malaysians holding fitness centre memberships, compared to 5% in Singapore and 10–17% in Western nations (Khoo, Ismail, & Lim, 2022) ^[25]. This disparity highlights substantial growth potential within Malaysia's fitness sector, particularly in increasing participation rates and improving long-term retention strategies. Despite this expansion, the market penetration rate

of fitness centres in Malaysia remains between 1% and 2%, significantly lower than in neighbouring countries like Singapore, where the rate is approximately 5%, and Western nations, where it ranges between 10% and 17% (Othman, Rahim, & Chew, 2021) ^[30].

A critical challenge facing Malaysian fitness organisations is member retention. Many gyms struggle to retain customers due to a lack of innovative business strategies aimed at fostering long-term relationships (Rahman, Wahab, & Yusof, 2022) ^[32]. Factors such as service quality, perceived value, and member satisfaction are pivotal in influencing retention rates, with studies indicating that service quality dimensions significantly impact customer loyalty and sustained behavioural commitment (Piaralal *et al.*, 2020) ^[34]. High attrition not only affects the financial stability of these organisations but also impedes members' progress in skill development, particularly in structured, coach-led, goal-based fitness development programs where habitual attendance is essential for progression (Amin & Piaralal, 2020) ^[34].

The physical environment of fitness centres also plays a significant role in member retention. Research highlights that aspects like cleanliness, modern equipment, and facility maintenance strongly correlate with retention rates, suggesting that enhancing the physical environment can boost member satisfaction (Halim *et al.*, 2023) ^[18]. However, to effectively promote long-term retention, such enhancements must be combined with other service quality dimensions, particularly staff competence, communication, and personalisation of fitness services (Wong & Chong, 2021) ^[46]. For example, fitness centres that invest in well-trained, responsive staff and technology-driven behavioural commitment tools—such as personalised coaching apps and AI-driven retention models—are more likely to sustain higher loyalty levels (Dhesi, 2023) ^[10].

Addressing these issues is essential for the advancement and effectiveness of fitness initiatives in Malaysia. By focusing on improving service quality, implementing innovative behavioural commitment strategies, and enhancing the physical environment, fitness organisations can better retain members, enhance customer satisfaction, and capitalise on the sector's growth potential (Yeomans *et al.*, 2023) ^[51].

Study Contributions

This study contributes to the fitness management and behavioural commitment literature in three key ways. First, from a theoretical perspective, it applies Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986) ^[5] to reconceptualise loyalty as a dynamic behavioural outcome, shaped by satisfaction, structured behavioural commitment, and habitual attendance. By introducing frequency of attendance as a moderator, the study extends SCT applications to structured fitness environments and explains how behavioural reinforcement mechanisms drive commitment.

Second, the study offers a conceptual contribution by unpacking multidimensional service quality (value, process quality, and outcome quality), evaluating how value, process quality, and outcome quality distinctly shape satisfaction and loyalty. This granular approach advances understanding of service experience in coach-led, goal-based fitness development programmes.

Third, the study provides practical insights for fitness operators by highlighting how habit-building attendance structures, goal-based programming, and service consistency

can be leveraged to improve member retention — a particularly urgent concern in the Malaysian fitness context, where gym penetration is low and attrition remains high.

Literature Review

Member retention is a crucial aspect of fitness organisations, particularly coach-led, goal-based fitness development programs where behavioural commitment is tied to skill progression and goal achievement. Retention is broadly defined as a member's continued participation in an organisation over time and is influenced by several factors, including satisfaction, service quality, and habit formation (Yeomans *et al.*, 2023) ^[51]. While satisfaction has long been recognised as a key driver of loyalty and retention (Foroughi *et al.*, 2019) ^[14], recent studies highlight the importance of a multidimensional approach to service quality, incorporating value, process quality, and outcome quality as critical factors in shaping member commitment (García-Pascual *et al.*, 2020) ^[16]. In coach-led, goal-based fitness development programs such as gymnastics and martial arts, where members rely on consistent attendance to progress, the role of habitual behavioural commitment in strengthening long-term loyalty becomes increasingly relevant (Rodríguez-Rad & María-Elena, 2023) ^[39]. Structured participation in these programs is reinforced through external motivation, including goal-setting, peer accountability, and social influence, which aligns with Social Cognitive Theory's (SCT) emphasis on observational learning and self-regulation (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020) ^[41].

Service quality is a central determinant of retention, as members who perceive high service standards are more likely to develop a sense of loyalty and long-term commitment. Traditionally, service quality has been examined as a unidimensional construct, but contemporary research suggests that breaking it down into value, process quality, and outcome quality provides a clearer understanding of its impact (Howat & Assaker, 2016) ^[21]. The dimensions of service quality—including value, process, and outcome quality—play an integral role in determining satisfaction, which in turn influences loyalty and retention (Ferreira Barbosa *et al.*, 2022) ^[12]. Value represents the perceived worth of a membership relative to its cost, encompassing factors such as well-maintained facilities, structured, coach-led programs, and skilled coaching (Yusof *et al.*, 2018). Studies indicate that members who perceive higher value for money tend to report greater satisfaction and are less likely to switch to alternative fitness organisations.

Furthermore, advancements in fitness technology, such as mobile apps and digital tracking tools, have been shown to enhance behavioural commitment and retention by offering personalized coaching and progress monitoring (Aldossari *et al.*, 2022) ^[2]. Recent studies also propose expanding traditional service quality models by incorporating emotional and social service dimensions, particularly in group fitness settings, where community behavioural commitment fosters long-term commitment (Huang & Kim, 2023) ^[22].

Value, a key dimension of service quality, represents the perceived worth of a membership relative to its cost, encompassing factors such as well-maintained facilities, structured, coach-led programs, and skilled coaching (Yusof *et al.*, 2018). In addition to financial considerations, research suggests that perceived value is also influenced by members' progress toward their fitness goals, as achieving tangible results enhances emotional attachment to a fitness facility

(Huang & Ren, 2019)^[23]. Studies indicate that members who perceive higher value for money tend to report greater satisfaction and are less likely to switch to alternative fitness organisations.

Beyond value, process quality plays an essential role in shaping member experiences by focusing on service delivery efficiency. Elements such as cleanliness, staff professionalism, and organizational efficiency directly influence member satisfaction (Gjestvang *et al.*, 2020). More recent work highlights that process quality extends beyond operational efficiency to include personalized behavioural commitment and emotional support, particularly in coach-led, goal-based fitness development programs where guidance and feedback shape the member experience (Teixeira *et al.*, 2022)^[44]. In structured, coach-led, goal-based fitness development programs, staff responsiveness and expertise are particularly critical, as members depend on professional coaching and structured guidance to achieve their fitness goals (Huang & Ren, 2019). This aligns with research showing that high-quality coaching facilitates skill development and increases the likelihood of continued participation (García-Pascual *et al.*, 2021)^[17]. High levels of process quality also contribute to the formation of attendance habits, reinforcing member retention by creating a positive, consistent service experience. Furthermore, studies indicate that consistency in service delivery fosters trust and familiarity, which are critical components of long-term retention and retention (Yi *et al.*, 2020).

In addition to value and process quality, outcome quality—the perceived effectiveness of a fitness program in helping members achieve their personal goals—strongly influences retention. Recent findings indicate that outcome quality is a key determinant of long-term commitment, particularly for goal-oriented participants who rely on structured training programs for tangible progress (Pedragosa, Biscaia, & Correia, 2015)^[31]. Research indicates that members who experience measurable improvements in physical fitness, skill acquisition, and overall well-being are more likely to remain engaged (Pedragosa, Biscaia, & Correia, 2015)^[31]. Moreover, outcome quality is not limited to physical improvements; social and psychological benefits, such as stress reduction and increased self-confidence, have been identified as crucial retention factors (Eskiler & Safak, 2022)^[11]. Structured feedback mechanisms, performance tracking, and goal-setting frameworks can further enhance outcome quality, ensuring that members see tangible progress and develop a sense of achievement (Huang & Kim, 2023). When members perceive high outcome quality, their satisfaction increases, strengthening their loyalty and long-term retention. While satisfaction is a critical predictor of loyalty, the role of habitual attendance in reinforcing commitment remains underexplored. Research suggests that repeated participation strengthens habit formation, reinforcing both psychological and behavioural commitment (García-Pascual *et al.*, 2020)^[16]. This view is supported by Yoshida *et al.* (2023)^[52], who found that psychological involvement and structured participation significantly influence the evolution of customer loyalty in fitness settings. According to SCT, repeated exposure to positive reinforcement—such as achieving personal bests, receiving social encouragement, or earning fitness rewards—can accelerate habit formation and deepen member commitment (Bandura, 1986; Huang & Kim, 2023)^[5, 22]. In coach-led, goal-based fitness development programs, where attendance consistency is vital for

progression, members who participate regularly are more likely to experience the full benefits of the program, reinforcing their commitment (Iversen *et al.*, 2021)^[24]. In contrast, irregular attendance may disrupt habit formation, weakening members' emotional attachment to their fitness organisation.

This is further supported by studies showing that attendance gaps lead to a decline in intrinsic motivation, which in turn increases dropout risk (Teixeira *et al.*, 2022)^[44]. Additionally, recent research highlights that consistent attendance contributes to social belonging, with members forming connections through shared experiences, reinforcing behavioural commitment (Rodríguez-Rad & Sánchez del Río-Vázquez, 2023)^[39].

Moreover, service recovery satisfaction plays a vital role in reinforcing commitment, particularly in cases where members experience service failures or inconsistencies. A study on service recovery satisfaction in higher education settings found that effective service recovery mechanisms enhance satisfaction, fostering long-term loyalty (Amin *et al.*, 2020). This principle extends to fitness organisations, where members who perceive prompt and effective resolution of issues—such as scheduling conflicts, facility concerns, or instructor responsiveness—are more likely to remain committed despite temporary setbacks. Ensuring high service recovery satisfaction can therefore mitigate the negative impact of attendance disruptions, reinforcing member retention through sustained trust and behavioural commitment.

Additionally, research on antecedents and outcomes of service recovery satisfaction highlights that successful resolution of service issues not only improves satisfaction but also enhances perceived fairness and trust (Amin & Piaralal, 2020)^[34]. In the context of fitness organisations, when members believe that their concerns are handled fairly and efficiently, they are more likely to exhibit greater commitment and loyalty. This aligns with studies indicating that positive service recovery experiences reinforce long-term behavioural loyalty, reducing churn rates. Fitness organisations that actively address member concerns, implement structured service recovery protocols, and exceed expectations can strengthen both habitual attendance and member retention, ensuring a more sustainable and engaged customer base.

Given these insights, this study proposes a multidimensional service quality (value, process quality, and outcome quality) framework where value, process quality, and outcome quality contribute to satisfaction, which in turn drives loyalty and retention. Additionally, attendance frequency is examined as a moderating variable, assessing whether members with higher attendance consistency develop stronger satisfaction-loyalty-retention links. This builds on findings that show members who develop structured attendance habits are more likely to internalise fitness as part of their lifestyle, reducing attrition rates (Yeomans *et al.*, 2023)^[51]. Understanding these relationships is particularly relevant for coach-led, goal-based fitness development programs, where structured participation is fundamental to long-term retention. Furthermore, this study aligns with Expectation-Confirmation Theory (ECT), which suggests that continued behavioural commitment is reinforced when members' expectations align with perceived service quality, creating a self-reinforcing retention cycle (Oliver, 1999)^[29]. By integrating service quality dimensions with habitual

attendance patterns, this study offers a comprehensive approach to enhancing retention in Malaysian fitness organisations.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), Expectation-Confirmation Theory (ECT), and Self-Determination Theory (SDT) to provide a more comprehensive understanding of service quality-driven member retention. SCT posits that individual behaviour is shaped by the dynamic interplay of personal, environmental, and cognitive factors (Bandura, 1986) ^[5]. Within fitness organisations, structured participation, habit formation, goal-setting, and reinforcement mechanisms play crucial roles in shaping long-term commitment (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020) ^[41]. In coach-led, goal-based fitness development programs, members' behavioural commitment and retention are heavily influenced by self-efficacy, perceived service quality, and habitual attendance patterns.

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) and Habit Formation

This study is grounded in Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), developed by Bandura (1986) ^[5], which posits that behaviour is shaped through the interaction of personal, environmental, and behavioural factors. In the context of coach-led, goal-based fitness development programs, SCT provides a valuable lens for understanding how consistent behavioural commitment, goal setting, social reinforcement, and habit formation influence member behaviour. The theory suggests that repeated attendance and positive reinforcement through structured, coach-led environments help members internalize fitness behaviors, leading to deeper satisfaction and loyalty. By applying SCT, the study frames member retention not merely as an outcome of satisfaction, but as a behaviour shaped by environmental design and personal commitment reinforced over time.

SCT emphasises the role of self-efficacy and behavioural reinforcement in shaping consistent exercise habits. According to SCT, members who believe in their ability to achieve fitness goals (high self-efficacy) are more likely to engage in habitual attendance and sustain their commitment to a fitness organisation (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020) ^[41]. Research comparing different behavioural theories suggests that habit formation is best explained through SCT, as it accounts for both cognitive processes and environmental reinforcements (Frontiers in Psychology, 2021). Members develop habitual attendance patterns when positive reinforcement, structured goal-setting, and peer

accountability are present. These mechanisms enhance motivation and deepen commitment to long-term participation (Iversen *et al.*, 2021) ^[24].

Service quality serves as an environmental factor that enhances satisfaction, which in turn influences loyalty and retention. Members who perceive high-value services, efficient processes, and meaningful training outcomes are more likely to develop consistent attendance behaviours, reinforcing their long-term commitment. Attendance frequency is examined as a moderating factor, as frequent behavioral commitment strengthens the satisfaction-loyalty-retention link by reinforcing structured participation reinforced through consistent attendance in goal-based training programs (Huang & Kim, 2023) ^[22]. This perspective aligns with SCT's emphasis on self-regulation and habit formation, where structured attendance fosters a commitment cycle, reinforcing behavioral commitment and retention.

Conceptual Framework

Building on Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) and Expectation-Confirmation Theory (ECT), this study proposes a conceptual framework in which value, process quality, and outcome quality collectively influence member satisfaction, which in turn mediates the relationship with loyalty and retention. Additionally, frequency of attendance moderates the relationships between satisfaction, loyalty, and retention (Figure 1).

Hypotheses:

- H1: Satisfaction positively influences loyalty
- H1a: Value positively influences satisfaction.
- H1b: Process quality positively influences satisfaction.
- H1c: Outcome quality positively influences satisfaction.
- H2: Loyalty positively influences retention.
- H3: Loyalty mediates satisfaction and retention
- H4: Frequency of attendance moderates the satisfaction-loyalty relationship, strengthening it for frequent attendees.

This refined model extends prior research by incorporating habit formation mechanisms, recognising that structured participation reinforces consistent attendance patterns, self-efficacy, and long-term commitment. It also provides a more structured approach to examining the multidimensional satisfaction-loyalty-retention pathway, contributing both theoretical and managerial insights into fitness organisation management

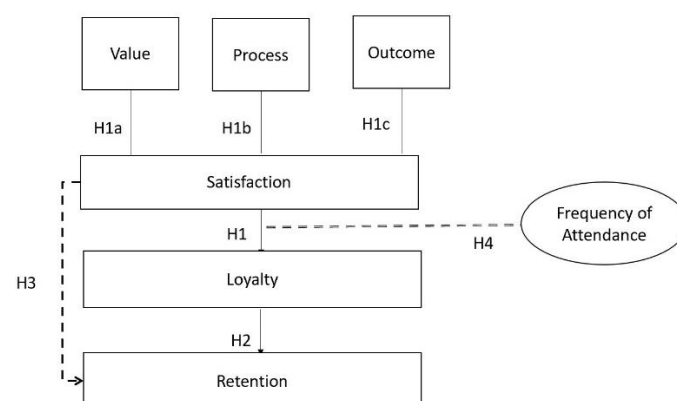


Fig 1: Conceptual Framework

Opportunities for Further Study

Future research can adopt a quantitative, cross-sectional design to explore the behavioural and psychological factors influencing member retention in coach-led, goal-based fitness development programmes. Drawing on Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), such studies could examine how structured behavioural commitment, environmental reinforcement, and personal expectations interact to shape long-term engagement. A survey-based approach may be particularly effective for investigating members' perceptions across disciplines such as gymnastics, martial arts, athletics, and dance-based fitness. These future investigations would help validate the proposed conceptual model and offer practical insights for improving member retention strategies in structured fitness settings.

Proposed Methodological Framework

1. Conceptual Sampling Strategy

This study conceptually targets members engaged in structured, subscription-based, coach-led, goal-oriented fitness development programmes. A purposive sampling approach is proposed to align with Social Cognitive Theory's triadic model, focusing on individuals immersed in environments where structured feedback, behavioural reinforcement, and goal progression are emphasised. For future empirical testing, participants should ideally have at least three months of continuous involvement in such programmes to ensure meaningful engagement with structured training processes.

- **Proposed Instrumentation Design**

The proposed survey instrument is informed by validated constructs from existing fitness service literature. It is intended to capture multidimensional service quality—comprising value, process quality, and outcome quality—alongside satisfaction, loyalty, retention intention, and frequency of attendance. Each construct is grounded in Social Cognitive Theory, reflecting environmental influences, personal motivation, and behavioural indicators. A five-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) is recommended for all items to ensure consistency and clarity in future studies.

- **Preliminary Conceptual Pretest**

Prior to full-scale empirical application, a limited conceptual pretest involving a small sample is recommended to refine question clarity and establish content reliability. This phase could involve expert review or pilot feedback to verify construct alignment. Reliability may be assessed through Cronbach's Alpha to ensure internal consistency, and minor wording adjustments should be made accordingly to improve construct validity.

- **Data Collection Strategy (For Future Application)**

While this study is conceptual in nature, future research may adopt a digital survey distribution strategy. Potential channels include fitness centre partnerships, social media outreach, QR code access points, and email invitations. To maintain sample relevance, respondents should meet inclusion criteria such as a minimum of three months of active participation in a coach-led programme.

- **Analytical Framework**

For empirical testing of the proposed model, Structural

Equation Modelling (SEM) is recommended, particularly using Partial Least Squares (PLS-SEM) due to its suitability for exploratory constructs. Factor analyses—both Exploratory and Confirmatory—should be employed to validate the measurement model and assess construct reliability and dimensionality.

- **Bias Control Considerations**

Future researchers are encouraged to apply common bias mitigation techniques. Harman's single-factor test can help assess the risk of common method variance. Multicollinearity among constructs should also be evaluated using Variance Inflation Factor (VIF), with values under 5 indicating acceptable thresholds. These steps will enhance the credibility of findings when empirical data are eventually collected.

Conclusion

This conceptual study contributes to the growing body of literature on member retention in fitness organisations by proposing a structured engagement framework grounded in Social Cognitive Theory (SCT). By integrating multidimensional service quality, satisfaction, loyalty, and the moderating role of attendance frequency, the framework offers a holistic lens to understand how behavioural reinforcement mechanisms operate within coach-led, goal-based programmes. Unlike generic gym models, these structured environments foster habitual participation and long-term commitment through consistent coaching, clear progression milestones, and social reinforcement.

The proposed model highlights loyalty not merely as an outcome of satisfaction, but as a dynamic, reinforced behavioural pattern shaped by repeated engagement. In this context, attendance frequency functions as a crucial moderator that strengthens the satisfaction–loyalty–retention pathway. This insight encourages fitness organisations to shift their focus from isolated service improvements to strategies that build sustained engagement and structured behavioural commitment.

As the industry adapts to post-pandemic demands and increasingly diverse member needs, this framework provides a strong conceptual foundation for future empirical research. It also offers practical guidance for fitness operators seeking to enhance retention through structured programming, digital tools, and coach-centric models tailored to different member profiles. Ultimately, this study invites further validation and exploration to advance retention strategies that are both evidence-based and contextually grounded.

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