The Impact of Social Media and Social Media Influencers on Millennials Motivation Towards Gym usage.

Rachael Mooney

MSc in Marketing
National College of Ireland

Submitted to the National College of Ireland, August 2018

Abstract

The exponential growth of social media in the last decade of the twenty first century, means that it has excelled its initial purpose as a communication method for family and friends to connect. The plethora of social media platforms that have emerged in recent years have provided a multitude of opportunities for both individuals and organizations. In line with the growth of social media is the saturation of the fitness industry both solely in Ireland and worldwide.

This study seeks to investigate the impact that both social media and social media influencers can have on the motivation of millennials to attend the gym. Six men and women who belong to the millennial cohort were interviewed, a thematic approach was used in order to acquire themes relevant to the research aims and objectives. From the analysis of themes presented from the interviews, it was concluded that social media and social media influencers do impact the motivations of millennials to attend the gym, it was also found that various types of content encouraged both gym members and non-gym members to work out or rejoin the gym.

Submission of Thesis to Norma Smurfit Library, National College of Ireland

Student name: Rachael Mooney   Student number: 14493382

School: School of Business   Course: MSc Marketing

Degree to be awarded: MSc Marketing

Title of Thesis: The impact of social media and social media influencers on the motivation of millennials towards gym usage

One hard bound copy of your thesis will be lodged in the Norma Smurfit Library and will be available for consultation. The electronic copy will be accessible in TRAP (http://trap.ncirl.ie/), the National College of Ireland's Institutional Repository. In accordance with normal academic library practice all theses lodged in the National College of Ireland Institutional Repository (TRAP) are made available on open access.
I agree to a hard bound copy of my thesis being available for consultation in the library. I also agree to an electronic copy of my thesis being made publicly available on the National College of Ireland's Institutional Repository TRAP.

Signature of Candidate: _____

For completion by the School:
The aforementioned thesis was received by_____ Date:_____

This signed form must be appended to all hard bound and electronic copies of your thesis submitted to your school

Submission of Thesis and Dissertation

National College of Ireland
Research Students Declaration Form
(Thesis/Author Declaration Form)

Name:_____

Student Number:_____

Degree for which thesis is submitted:_____

Material submitted for award

(a) I declare that the work has been composed by myself.

(b) I declare that all verbatim extracts contained in the thesis have been distinguished by quotation marks and the sources of information specifically acknowledged.

(c) My thesis will be included in electronic format in the College Institutional Repository TRAP (thesis reports and projects)

(d) Either *I declare that no material contained in the thesis has been used in any other submission for an academic award.

Or *I declare that the following material contained in the thesis formed part of a submission for the award of

_____
State the award and the awarding body and list the material below)

Signature of research student:_____

Date:_____

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my Mother Helena and my Sister Johanna for their endless encouragement, support and guidance through my entire education.

Acknowledgements

I would firstly like to thank my supervisor Danielle McCartan-Quinn for all of her guidance, support and intuitive recommendations throughout this project.

I would also like to thank all participants that took part in the interview process. They were so generous with their time and enthusiastic to take part.

Lastly I would like to thank my family and friends for supporting me through the entire process and giving me the encouragement I needed during stressful situations.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Table 1 – Participant background information

Table 2 – Themes emerging based on research objective 1

Table 3 – Themes emerging based on research objective 2

Table 4 – Themes emerging based on research objective 3

Chapter 1   Introduction

The fitness industry is thriving in most parts of the world, however to date there is still very little research that considers if social media or social media influencers have an impact on the level of gym usage, particularly within the millennial cohort. As noted by Sassatelli (2010), the fitness industry today stretches much further than just the gym, fitness has become a phenomenon immersed in the lives of many individuals. Although there has been extensive research surrounding the online marketing of the fitness industry and gyms, the impact that social media and social media influencers has on the motivations of millennials to use the gym has been overlooked greatly. The use of social media by organizations has become imperative for branding, this is because it allows brands to communicate with their consumers in a more personal and interactive manner (Du Plessis, 2017). The ability of brands to improve their communication with consumers through the use of social media platforms, has not only led to the development of brand communities but also effects the financial positions of brands.

The researcher is a regular user of social media platforms such as Facebook, Snapchat and Instagram, as well as being an active member of a gym and having a keen interest in fitness in general. The ability of social media to influence the decision of individuals to use the gym is of particular interest to the researcher. It was this interest of social media and the surrounding area of digital marketing that developed the inspiration to conduct a study into this area of research.

The aim of this proposed research is to assess millennials usage and motivation towards the gym, as well as the impact that social media and social media influencers can have on their motivation towards gym usage. The proposed study will also assess the impact of the content shared across the profiles of social media influencers and gyms.

Overview of structure of report

Chapter 1- Introduction
This chapter consists of a brief introduction into the chosen research topic. Gaps in the literature on the impact social media and social influence has on millennial motivations to attend the gym are also identified as supporting justification for the chosen area of research and the overall aim of the study is outlined.

Chapter 2 -Literature Review
This chapter provides an in depth critical evaluation of the area being researched within this study. As this study is exploring the impact of social media and social media influencers on the motivation of millennials towards gym usage, several areas will be discussed within the literature review. This will include an overview of the millennial cohort, marketing communications social media, influence, social media influencers, the fitness industry, gym usage and gym membership.

Chapter 3 -Methodology
This methodology chapter provides a detailed account and insight into the researchers main objectives for this study and the methods selected for carrying out the research. An account of the sample are also included, as well as an in-depth description of how the research was conducted. The research limitations, data analysis methods are also included in this chapter.

Chapter 4 -Findings
The findings chapter presents the reader with the overall findings gathered from the primary research. The findings in this study are analysed using a thematic approach used to determine themes relevant to the research objectives outlined in chapter 3.

Chapter 5 -Discussion
Chapter 5 presents a critical reflection made by the researcher. The findings are compared and discussed with the initial secondary research from the literature review in order to gain a theoretical understanding of the studies phenomenon and conclude the study.

Chapter 6- Recommendations for future research

This chapter included recommendations made by the researcher for future studies in the topical area, as well as offering gym owners recommendations that will improve their marketing efforts towards both potential and existing consumers.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will contribute to framing the research question and objectives explained in further detail in Chapter 3, whilst critically evaluating the relevant literature of previous research, this will assist in positioning the research. Furthermore, this chapter will give the reader an opportunity to gain an understanding of the area of interest (Hart,1998). The researcher will coordinate the literature review using a funnel style, beginning broadly, with an aim of drawing a bigger picture, the chapter will begin addressing Millennials and social media and the way it has changed the way company's communicate with both existing and potential customers. The chapter will then continue by discussing marketing communications, influence and Social media influencers quite broadly before focusing on the fitness industry, fitness culture and gym usage and membership.

2.2 Millennials

The Millennial generation are defined as those born between 1982 and 2000 or alternatively those who were aged between 16 and 35 in 2016 (Moore, 2012; Mobolade, 2016). Born in the digital era at the beginning of the new millennium, millennials are often referred to as 'generation Y' or 'generation next' (Campione, 2014; Horvath-Csikos, 2016; Doyle, 2018). Mobolade (2016), suggests that millennials will be crucial to marketers for the foreseeable future, making up approximately 50% of the global workforce by 2020.

 Palfrey and Gasser (2008 p.4), describe millennials as being '*joined by a set of common practices, including the amount of time they spend using digital technologies, their tendency to multitask, their tendency to express themselves and relate to one another in ways mediated by digital technologies, and their patterns of using the technologies to access and use information and create new knowledge and art forms"*.

Millennials are the largest generational group since the baby boomers and are therefore a prime target market for many consumer industry's such as the growing fitness industry. The internet and social media allows millennials to broadcast their personal opinions, share images and connect with others through a variety of platforms such as that of Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. As pointed out by Tapscot (1998); Scott (2011), the internet has impacted the lives of the millennial generation in many ways. It has allowed millennials to influence control over markets by expressing their opinions. Duffet (2015), indicates that the majority of millennials would have first been introduced to computers as toddlers and experienced the interaction of the internet, mobile devices and social media as part of their interactive lives.

The key characteristics associated with millennials include; they are more optimistic and cheerful than previous generations as well as being much more stressed. Conversely, Sinek (2017), describes millennials as lazy and impatient individuals with unrealistic expectations. Additionally, a major fear for them is being bored or unoccupied and therefore they are constantly searching for distractions such as that of social media or online browsing (Bergh, Alders, Boullart and Bijnen, 2014). In agreement Gladdis, Robson and Beardsworth (2015), add that it can be extremely difficult to reach the '*attention deficit generation'*. This difficulty is caused by the cohort's constant distraction by social media such as Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat. Nonetheless, Weber (2015), parallels the idea that millennials are extremely materialistic, placing higher importance on extrinsic values such as image, fame, popularity, social status and money. To add Westerman, Bergman and Daly (2012), also found that there are higher levels of narcissism in millennials today, leading to a need of personal gratification and assurance than persons at their age in the past.

Instant access to the internet as they are tied to their smart phones has allowed the millennial cohort to experience an 'instant life' (Colòn, 2013). Researchers have proposed a variety of benefits from having connections to the internet, as millennials will become attentive, quick workers who will

promptly work through both personal and work related responsibilities (Karl, Allen, White, Pelchutte and Allen 2017). Furthermore, Krishnan, Bopaiah, Bajaj and Prasad (2013), discuss how millennials prefer to form both personal and work related relationships online through email or other sites, rather than in face to face encounters.

Aagan (2013), described how for millennials innovation is free from constraint, new groups are formed quickly at the post of tweet, and decision making involves less hierarchy's and is more inclusive. The tech savvy generation are adapted to appreciate diversity and are experienced multi taskers. Millennials are in no way worried about technology taking over from humanity, but instead they grasp technological developments and utilize modern technology's to live more efficiently and enhance their levels of creativity (Colvin, 2015). One could argue that millennials are obsessed with technology. In a study conducted by Pew Research Centre (2010), more than 80% of millennials admitted to sleeping with their phone on their bedside table ready to text, tweet or access their email (Weber, 2017).

The millennial generation grew up in an increasingly intense environment with the internet, email and mobile phones with instant access to information and the World wide web. Smith (2010), argues that millennials are more connected with others more than any other generation and are therefore constantly contributing to improvement of the world as we know it. As the generation continues to develop within the workforce, management teams are increasingly under pressure to reach the high and often unrealistic expectations of this enthusiastic generation (Landcaster and Stillman, 2010). Myers and Sadaghiani (2010), describe that as a workforce millennials work exceptional in teams and have a desire to have an impact on the organization, they too prefer open communication with management and are comfortable with communication technology.

2.3 Marketing Communication

The revolution of the internet has changed the way many company's carry out business in the current market environment, and in particular the way products and services are marketed to consumers (Manley, 2015). Chaffey (2015), describes the concept of Web 2.0 as a variety of web services that facilitate the interaction between web users to produce user generated content as well as encouraging behaviours such as social media participation. In addition Constantinides and Fountain (2008 p.233), conclude that "*Web 2.0 presents businesses with new challenges but also new opportunities for getting and staying in touch with their markets, learning about their needs and opinions of their customers as well as interacting with them in a direct and personalized way*".

The advances in the internet have resulted in a change in marketing theory and understanding. The way organizations are marketing their products and services has shifted from traditional to social media communications. Jobs and Gilfoil (2014 p. 237), describe the transition made by organizations from traditional to new marketing communications as *'a major marketing transformation characterized by increasingly active market involvement by customers and prospective buyers"*.

The effectiveness of traditional media is often questioned as technology advances continue. In relation to the traditional marketing paradigm, marketing is considered as a one-way interaction model that involves the producer being the sender of marketing messages and the consumer the receiver (Gruden and Lagrosen, 2014). In contrast, Scott (2010), suggests that social media is a multi-way marketing communication strategy whereby the roles carried out by both producers and consumers alternate. Hansson (2013), suggests that social media unlike other marketing communication methods is commonly accepted and observed by audiences as long as it is reasonable. Manley (2015), adds that although traditional marketing tools are effective in reaching larger target markets, millennials are a target segment that use social

media more often and are therefore more likely to be exposed to digital marketing communications.

According to Core Outlook (2018), although in Ireland traditional media forms have fallen, 55% of video consumption is consumed by adults aged between 15-34. Therefore, it may be argued that some forms of traditional media such a Television are well and truly thriving and should still be considered by marketers as part of their integrated marketing communications.

2.4 Social Media

Social Media have captivated considerable attention in recent years. In a study conducted by Pew Research center, it was found that over two thirds of online adults partake in social networking, this amounting to a tenfold increase over the last decade of the twenty first century (Greenwood, Perrin and Duggan, 2016). Since its establishment as a Web 2.0 innovation revolution in the early 2000's, social media have formed new opportunities and issues for both individuals and organizations (Ngai, Moon, Lam and Tao, 2015).

Hoffman *et al.* (2013), describe social media as not only the software applications but additionally the tools, without any simplification on whether they hardware devices or software means; '*The set of web-based and mobile tools and applications that allow people to create content that can be consumed by others and which enables and facilitates connections'*.

In a more recent definition Mount and Martinez (2014, p126), refer social media to "*a set of online tools open for public membership that support idea sharing, creating and editing content and building relationships through interaction and collaboration'*.

The evolution of social media has had a philosophical impact on the way in which brands communicate and connect with both their existing and new customers, however the way in which brands utilize such social media platforms as marketing strategies has been limited. The expansion and adoration of social media has meant it has exceeded the original intent of being a communication channel to connect friends and family to becoming a

crucial marketing communication tool used by brands globally. The advancements of technology and the internet has had a considerable influence on people's lives and celebrated cultures; developing tools such as social media, blogs and online communities, individuals began sharing their opinions and expressing themselves in their own personal way.

Social Media sites such as Facebook and Instagram are repeatedly considered marketing tools for organizations to communicate with both consumers and potential customers (Gummerus, Liljander, Weman and Philstrom, 2012). In contrast to traditional media, social media provides definite advantages for service- related businesses through the ability to obtain direct consumers (Wright, Williams and Byon, 2017). As pointed out by Filo, Lock and Karg (2015 pp.167), social media are, "*distinct from traditional media or communication tools"*. This is due to social media encouraging co-creation, interactivity, two way communication and speeding up the processing of information and feedback (Valos, Habibi, Casidy, Driesener and Maplestone, 2016). Furthermore, Dzamic, (2012), explored how social media can too be used for a variation of marketing functions such as building a brand, advertising, one-on-one communication with consumers, distributing content and generating content. Valos *et al.* (2016), suggest that social media should be integrated into the marketing communication mix because of these unique and constructive characteristics.

According to the CSO (2017), two thirds of Irish businesses are using social media to promote their company and communicate with both existing consumers and potential customers. The recent study found that the use of social media by Irish organizations increased from 64 percent in 2015 to 67 percent in 2017. The study also identified that Facebook was by far the most favored social media platform amongst Irish businesses to connect with their customers. In support of this, Barker *et al.* (2017), found that Facebook is the most popular social media platform, with over one billion active daily users. The popular social media site has become a crucial platform for the marketing mix efforts by fitness centers and gyms (Bayne and Cianfrone, 2013). Meier

and Gray (2014); Duffett (2015), parallel the idea that active Facebook users are those who appear to be fully immersed in the community, posting photos, updating their profile and interacting with others. In contrast, passive users are those who partake in activities such as browsing and scrolling through newsfeeds and occasionally pressing "like" on a photo or post.

The use of social media such as Facebook, Twitter or Instagram is dissimilar to less engaging traditional media. Due to social media sites being available to users 24/7, many users encounter continuous pressure to oversee if their personal information such as photos are presented to the public (Strubel, Petrie and Pookilangara, 2018). Social media platforms perform as a virtual stage for not only approval and gratification but criticism and solicited judgment through comparison to others (Perloff, 2014).

The widespread usage of social media platforms is credible with as many as two billion users globally (Barker, Barker, Bormann and Neher, 2017). It is social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook and Twitter that provide an exclusive and strategic means for businesses such as gyms to develop relationships with consumers and establish a strong consumer base (Wright *et al.* 2017). Organizations such as gyms are able to integrate social media marketing as part of their marketing strategies in ways such as "*increasing brand awareness, improving brand image, generating traffic to online platforms, reducing marketing costs and creating user interactivity on platforms by stimulating users to post or share content*" (Felix, Rauschnabel and Hinsch, 2017).

To date there is very little understanding about how online engagement and the type of content shared has an impact on business outcomes such as brand equity and the quality of relationships (Aachen,2017). In addition, there is very little knowledge in relation to ways to get customers to engage on social media, how customer are engaging online and the effect of customer engagement on the success of businesses (Schultz and Peltier, 2013). From a broad perspective Aachen (2017), described how social media meets

relationship marketing goals when businesses utilize them to enrich relationship value for customers, increase the level of satisfaction and understand customer needs. This is due to relationship marketing involving developing relationships with customers through two-way communication, creating added value and interactions.

As pointed out by Hutter, Hautz, Dennhardt and Fuller (2013), social media has influenced marketing communications by changing the way consumer communicate as well as impacting consumers purchasing behaviors. Keller (2009), suggests that social media can facilitate organizations in developing and portraying both perceptions and attitudes into the mind of consumers, this is crucial for maintaining a strong brand and securing brand loyalty.

Similarly, Shen and Bissel (2013), describe how previous studies have determined that many organizations across various industries have incorporated social media as part of their business models and by doing so as part of their branding propositions. Furthermore, Brodie (2013), suggests that this integration of social media channels has enabled brands to spread information, engage with consumers instantly as well as obtaining information from the online audience for market research purposes.

Schivincki and Dabrowski (2015), explored the impact that social media has on brands, the study concluded that social media does in fact impact brands in a number of ways. The study identified that social media impacted brand image, customer equity, brand association and brand awareness. The industries that were observed throughout this study were fashion, automobile, tourism, pharmaceuticals and mobile network industries.

The use of social media by organizations is changing the way businesses communicate. The transition made by organizations to use social media has enabled open communication, this has given organizations the ability to understand the needs of their customers better and motivates them to fulfill their needs efficiently (Parveen, Jaafer and Ainin, 2016).

Qualman (2013), suggests that the evolution of social media has resulted in a new revolution which is directed by not only people but also brands who are

continuing to use social media platforms to communicate with their existing and potential consumers. The use of social media platforms is at the epicenter of this 'new revolution' as described by Qualman (2013), and often results in the establishment of brand communities consisting of members whom share a similar interest. In the case of Gyms, many establishments will develop websites, Instagram, Twitter and Facebook profiles where members can interact with both staff and fellow gym members.

The application of social media as a marketing tool is well established, however the initial search for a point to begin engaging with an audience can be difficult for business owners (Janette, 2013). There has been a considerable shift in the way in which individuals communicate as well as how brands are choosing to market their business. Scott (2013), described how Web 2.0 has presented marketers with tremendous opportunities to reach out and provide products and services for potential niche consumers. Marketing through the use of social media is both affordable and easily accessible, not only can it increase brand exposure but it can create traffic and electronic word of mouth.

The type of content posted by organizations and brands across their social media channels has a significant effect on the sales and reach of the ascertained posts. As suggested by Kim *et al*. (2015), the last five years has seen a change in the style of content posted by businesses, in particular a devotion to quality illustrations to compliment the message the marketer wishes to send. Alternative research has found that the success of such social media platforms is due to the volume of posts, although contradicting studies suggests it's down to the quality of interactive posts. Cvikikj and Michahelles (2013), found that informative and interactive posts were much more likely to gain likes, comments and shares from audiences rather than plain and simple text content. Through a study conducted by Coelho and Oliveira (2015), it was concluded through quantitative research that Facebook and Instagram were increasingly employed when demonstrated as promotional mechanisms that provide the audience with personal benefits rather than direct advertisements of products or services.

According to a study conducted by Chaffey and Smith (2008), the online consumers have become substantially less sympathetic to inadequate service experiences. In the case of gym users, if one was to have a bad experience while attending the gym, they are likely to inform others by posting about their experience on social media or often on the organizations profile.

The availability of internet technology's, platforms and exposure to instant communication has awarded consumers with the ability to express their opinions and recommendations (Brown, 2007). In a study conducted by Xu (2012), a number of reasons for consumers to partake in social media interaction were established. The study found that gratification, utilizing motivation and social presence were among the main motivations encouraging users to partake in electronic word of mouth. Furthermore, it was argued within the existing literature that marketers may influence online word of mouth by alluring consumers to engage in specific product content by welcoming recommendations, ratings and opinions.

2.5 Electronic word of mouth e-wom

The internet and advancements of social media has changed the way people make purchasing decisions. Furthermore, the development of social media has resulted in the establishment of online consumer communities, encouraging consumers to generate content and voice the opinions to provide their peers with information in relation to their previous experience with the consumption of products or services (Xu, 2014). Cheung and Thadani (2010), describe the reviews and interactions as electronic word of mouth (eWom), which differs from traditional oral forms of communication. E-wom is described as "*any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the internet*" (Henning-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh and Gremler, 2004). Zhang and Awad (2007), conversley define e-Wom as internet-mediated recommendations, ratings and opinions on products or services from those who have previously experienced consumption.

In order for e-Wom to be an effective decision making aid, the consumer must have trust in the reviewer, who are often unknown to the consumer. Tang (2017), narrate how e-Wom has become one of the most crucial determinants in consumers purchasing decisions. Several studies conclude that consumer reviews on products and services have had effective impacts on sales, however the review platform and features of the products decrease the influence of e-wom on sales (Floyd, Kristopher, Freling and Cho (2014); eakkepatt and Joshi (2015).

In a report by UPS (2015), it was found that potential consumers value product information from both retailers and peer consumers. The report concluded that 77% of respondents believed product reviews were influential and an additional 54% claimed that the question and answers element on retailers websites was very important. Nevertheless, alternative research has suggested that positive reviews are not necessarily linked to the high performance of retail outlets (Tang, 2017). Additionally, Zhu and Zhang (2010), demonstrated using reviews from Gamespot.com that the impact of reviews on company sales is not always positive but subject to the consumer and specific product features and the result of availability, linguistic correctness and custom in the reviews.

2.6 Influence

The development of the internet and advances in technologies has greatly influenced the lives of people and todays known pop culture. These advancements have led to the development and availability of tools such as blogs, forums and social media, whereby people are free to voice their own personal opinions and communicate with those with a common interest. Belk (2013), suggests that the development of Web 2.0 has allowed users to communicate and interact with brands, service providers and others.

The internet has provided users with the ability to obtain and generate information instantly like never before; an example of this is Facebook, where users can create their own personal profile, connect with friends and post about their personal opinions and experiences.

Nonetheless, the accessibility of information from the use of the internet has brought about a number of challenges, primarily for marketers as users have become aware and conscious of marketing strategies online. Furthermore, Liljander, Gummerus and Söderlund (2015), describe how the ability of users to access information instantly about particular products, services and brands, can effect purchasing decisions; such as when choosing a gym to join. On the contrary, the development of Web 2.0 has not only provided the average users with benefits, this developing platform has connected organizations and brands to an audience of new customers that they never had access to before.

Additionally, Web 2.0 and social media have led to the formation of online communities, these communities allow consumers to voice their opinions, interact with other consumers and provide brands with relevant data for market research purposes. By interacting within the community and providing their opinions, consumers become part of the brands marketing strategy. In the case of this study, many gyms have developed Instagram and snapchat profiles that aim to entice consumers by providing tips, videos and dietary content. Cetina, Munthiu and Radulescu (2012), argue that organizations that intend on developing long-term relationships with their consumers should ensure to adapt their marketing strategies by implementing interactive platforms as well as customer relationship systems. Nowadays, consumers are relying heavily on online communication as part of their purchasing decision making process, it may be argued that social media is over taking traditional advertising methods.

Many Consumers encounter difficulties when making purchasing decision due to the lack of product or service information readily available to them. One solution to the inability to access such information are online reviews shared by social media influencers, celebrities or peer consumers. Online reviews are described as "*Product information created by users based on personal usage experiences*" (Chen and Xie, 2008).
Baek, Lee, Oh and Ahn (2015), express social influence as a prime research area in social psychology as it indicates how individuals are influenced by

others. Cialdini (2009), described how social influence may occur during the purchasing process for a consumer, such as when they are choosing what washing detergent to buy. In accordance to the dual process theory as initially proposed by Deutsch and Gerard (1955), social influence is divided into two kinds; informational social influence and Normative social influence. Baek *et al.* (2015), describe how informational influence is an influence that occurs from information received as evidence about reality, whilst normative influence is the influence that complies with the positive expectations of someone else. For example, the influence experiences when purchasing washing detergent is informational influence and the influence felt on a social media such as Facebook site is considered as normative influence. Djafarova and Rushworth (2016), describe how social media users with a large following or many subscribers to their channel are thought of as to being more trustworthy, popular and a legitimate source for information and judgement. It is for this reason that many brands now collaborate with bloggers and influencers that they believe are exceptional advocates for their brand and have the power to influence consumers purchasing decisions.

2.7 Social Media Influencers (SMI'S)

The last decade has seen a plethora in the number of Social Media Influencers, of which social media profiles have considerable amounts of followers. Freberg, Graham, McGaughey and Freberg (2010 p.3), describe social media influencers as '*representing a new type of independent third party endorser who shape audience attitudes through blogs, tweets and the use of other social media"*. Similarly, Mudge and Shaheen (2017), classify influencer marketing as a process of identifying individuals with a large following across their social media channels and then using them as a marketing channel to reach a specific segment of consumers indirectly. According to Smart Insights (2017), influencer marketing emphasizes the use of influencers to deliver a brands message to a specific target market. Furthermore, Freberg *et al.* (2011), add that in the era of the prevalent internet, social media influencers have become dynamic a third party endorsers.

Freberg *et al.* (2011), parallel the idea that although some scholars consider SMI's as competition for brands, others acknowledge the opportunities for developing alliances in order to promote a specific product or brand.

As pointed out by Tapinfluence (2017), based on the principles of influencer marketing, brands often invite social media influencers to be their brand ambassador. An example of this is in an Irish perspective is the link between Raw Gyms in Dublin and the well-known Irish fitness influencer Rob Lipsett (Figure 1). Messages shared by social media influencers are considered more reliable and powerful to consumers. Due to the convincing power of SMI's, the last decade has seen an influx of technologies designed to track and monitor influencers that are relevant to a particular organization or brand (Freberg *et al.* 2010).

According to a Nielson Marketing survey, influencer marketing has the ability to produce return on investments that are 11 times higher in comparison to digital marketing efforts (Tapinfluence, 2017). It is the potential high levels of return on investment that has convinced many brands to form alliances with social media influencers as endorsers of their brand in order to boost sales. To add Forbes (2017), concluded that approximately 80% of online marketers admitted that social media influencers are in fact potential endorsers whom have the ability to increase their online business's to higher rankings. Mudge *et al.* (2017), consider influencers as "new celebrities", describing them as ordinary individuals who began posting pictures or videos of themselves using their smart phone or camera. In addition, Mudge *et al.* (2017), parallel the idea that as a generation we are all influencer's of some sort, what we portray a product or service as may affect he purchasing decisions of those close to us.

Nonetheless, the use of social media influencers as a marketing tool for brands has its challenges. Wong (2014), found that one of the major challenges for companies is determining and selecting influencers whom will have a considerable impact on their target audience, as well as convincing

them to incorporate their brand into their posts. In order to overcome this challenge, De Veirman, Cauberghe and Hudders (2017), suggest that brands should engage with those who appear to be most likeable and trustworthy influencer rather than those with particularly large followings. Furthermore, the content that influencers post and the audience they reach in terms of interests and moral is extremely crucial to acknowledge when choosing an appropriate influencer for a brand. Through a study of the impact of the number of followers and product divergence has on brand attitude De Veirman *et al.* (2017), concluded that having more follower's increases likeability. The study indicated that the more followers an influencer has, the higher the perceptions of popularity which leads to the association of opinion leadership and subsequently higher likeability.

Lu, Chang and Chang (2014), argue that the success of sponsored content is entirely dependent on the credibility of the source, this is due to the opinions and potential bias that consumers may have towards the particular influencer which can disregard the marketing message entirely. Nowadays, social media influencers are subject to informing their followers when a post is sponsored or affiliated by brands. There are a number of ways that SMI's confirm they are endorsing a brand such as; tagging the brand in images, using the hashtags #sp or #ad, sharing their location or reviewing products with the inclusion of affiliate links.

There is no doubt that the emergence of social media influencer has changed the way company's market their business, however this study aims to determine if such social media influencers impact the decisions of millennials to use the gym.

2.8Fitness industry

The fitness industry has become one of the most saturated industries in Ireland. According to IHRSA (2018), the total industry revenue was an estimated 85.2 billion US dollars in 2017 and is estimated to increase to approximately 87.5 billion by the latter of 2018. Furthermore, there are approximately 201 thousand fitness centers worldwide with over 162 million members at present (Statista, 2018). Currently Ireland is considered the third wealthiest nation in Europe (World Atlas, 2018). It may be argued that this is a major factor influencing the plethora of gyms and fitness centers opened in Ireland in recent years.

Nonetheless, the question may arise as to "what is the fitness industry?", therefore the researcher would like to mention that the fitness industry is considered globally as all businesses that focus on health, exercise and body maintenance. The main objective of the fitness industry is to provide consumers with both products and services that promote exercise and overall good health and wellbeing. By promoting active lifestyles, modern gym and fitness centers are viewed worldwide as the potential solution to all kinds of health issues (Johansson and Andreasson, 2014).

The adaption of social media by gyms has provided management with the ability to not only market the organization online but also communicate with those within the industry that share a common interest. Furthermore, Feng and Xie (2015), claim that the use of social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook has become a method of obtaining and educating audiences with health and fitness information. The subscribers and followers of social media channels have the ability to not only choose the profiles they wish to follow but interact with such pages by commenting, liking or sharing posts.

The multitude of gyms and fitness centers that exist today are described generally as suitable places which provide individuals with the services and equipment needed to reach fitness goals. In essence, the content shared by Gyms across their social media may have the ability to influence both investment in gym membership and attendance at the gym. Through this

research, the researcher's main objective is to present a clear understanding of the impact that social Media and social media influencers can have on the motivation of millennials to attend the gym.

For many year's fitness professionals have expressed how swiftly the industry is changing. Fitness consumers are constantly improving their knowledge by going online in an attempt to get advice and tips to help them reach their personal goals. In a study conducted by the research firm Modellers, it was concluded that 80% of consumers consider search engines as the primary step to make decisions in relation to purchasing fitness services or products (Rosenthal, 2014).

According to Enterprise Ireland (2017), the gym and fitness club industry has benefited greatly from recent marketing campaigns aimed at tackling obesity, as well as the efforts made by consumers to improve their health. Additionally, the number of adults aged 20-64, the largest gym usage demographic, has grown and as a result there has been a huge demand for gym memberships (Enterprise Ireland 2017). Currently Ireland is considered the third wealthiest nation in Europe (World Atlas, 2018). It may be argued that this is a major factor influencing the plethora of gyms and fitness centers opened in Ireland in recent years.

2.9 Fitness culture

Although the initial use of Social media was to assist communication between individuals and allow family and friends to stay connected, its functional use has become much more diverse and monetary driven. The last decade has seen the evolution of a global fitness culture that social media has played a major role in along with traditional mass media. The aim of this new fitness culture is to promote healthy lifestyles, well–being, fitness and encourage individuals to achieve their fitness goals.

Sassatelli (2010), describes that although the fitness culture we are exposed to today is a lot broader than the gym, it is the fitness centers and gyms that are at the core of such culture. Stern (2011), parallels the idea that we have been witnessing since the 1970's, a rapid increase in the amount of gyms, fitness clubs, personal trainers, discount fitness centers and fitness

publications. It was the 1990's and predominately the first two decades of the twenty first century that brought about a plethora of fitness gyms including franchises and progressively more and more people have become to drawn to fitness (Andreasson and Johansson, 2014). Sassatelli (2010), adds that the fitness culture as being much more than just those individuals who actually regularly train and attend the gym.

Burke and Rains (2018), concluded through their survey of 230 people whom were active on social media that those who were inundated with fitness related content were more concerned about their body image and appearance (Time, 2018). The study also found that the effect of the fitness content was even more definite when the viewer thought of themselves as being similar to the image or content posted. However, the findings of Burke and Rains study were not all negative, it too was concluded that a percentage of those surveyed were likely to make "upward social comparisons" comparing themselves to fitness personas who they perceive as superior. In essence, although many social media users scroll through their feeds without paying full attention, Burke (2018), parallels the idea that although as viewers we may not realize it, we are continuously internalizing the content we scroll through which may be affecting our self- esteem and attitudes about ourselves. This research aims to determine if social media has an impact on the decisions of millennials to attend the gym and therefore it will consider if fitness related content is encouraging viewers to attend the gym or hindering their decisions to attend the gym.

In recent years the fitness industry has seen the establishment of a popular fitness trend commonly known as 'fitness inspiration' which is often abbreviated to 'fitspiration' (Raggart, Wright, Carrotte, Jenkinson, Prichard and Mulgrew, 2018). The popular health trend existing across social media involves people posting or viewing posts, images, quotes and educating information about fitness and nutrition (Tiggerman and Zaccardo, 2015). To comprehend the popularity of the trend an Instagram search (August 2018) of '#fitspo" returned over 58 million posts, whilst '#fitspiration' returned over 15 million posts.

Fitspiration content is created and shared across multiple social media sites, with many users engaging in online communities where they can share their opinions, success stories and tips. Boepple, Rum and Thompson (2016), suggest that one of the main focuses of the fitness inspiration content is healthy eating and exercising for body image reasons.

Despite the popularity of the trend Carrotte *et al.* (2017), have concluded that fitspiration content is commonly associated with negative subject matter. For instance, fitspiration content possesses objectifying images that illustrate an idealized slim-athletic female body type and mighty-muscular male body type (Boepple *et al.* 2016; Tiggerman *et al. 2017;* and Carrotte *et al.* 2017). In a study conducted by Holland and Tiggeman (2016), on women who contributed to the fitspiration trend on Instagram it was concluded that the participants disclosed more eating disorders and excessive exercise behaviors in comparison to participants who posted about travel experience.

2.10 Gym Usage

The Gym and Fitness center market consists of facilities that provide users with the equipment and services such as personal training, with an overall aim of improving and maintaining exceptional physical and mental health. The overall growth of European gyms has been exceptional over recent years. According to Mintel (2016), the health trend in Ireland is continuously growing, which is encouraging the nation to be more active and improve efforts to stay healthy and fit. Nonetheless, the market for gyms is changing, this is a result of the establishment of many new budget gyms such as Flyefit and Ben Dunne gyms. According to Mintel (2016), generally women attend the gym 1-2 times a week in comparison to men whom typically make three visits per week. Although the aim of many Irish gym users is to slim down or gain muscle, the overall top motivator is to improve overall health and fitness levels, with this is mind gym owners should promote their facilities as stepping stones in order to do so. Howson (2013) argued that gyms have become the most pursued leisure facilities in western society and have become a major part of modern cultures.

Scott (2011), argues that for many gym users the gym is more than just the physical exercise, it is also perceived as training for many aspects of life. Focused on a thematic study of 32 semi-structured interviews, it has been concluded that a workout in a gym has the ability for users to develop better versions of themselves on three different levels. Firstly, gym goers consider themselves as being productive and active for attending the gym and life in general. Secondly, gym usage is considered to increase the control that participants have over all aspects of their lives. Thirdly, gym users associate their workouts with their emotions, they believe their workout benefits not only their physique but also improves their psychological well-being (Dögan, 2015).

2.11 Gym membership

As mentioned by the International Health, Racquet and Sports Club Association (HRSA, 2006 p. 34) "*Member Loyalty is low in the fitness industry compared to other industries"*. The lower levels of retention within the fitness industry are strongly associated with the overall performance of the industry. The most common type of gym memberships are continuous, ending only when the membership was cancelled by the member. This meant there is no depending or pressure on the member to re-sign any form of contract.

In a recent study carried out by Deloitte and Europe active the number of gym members in Ireland was estimated to be 500,000, with total revenues approximately at 300 million euros (Irish Times, 2018). In a coinciding study by Deloitte (2018), it was fund that Irish consumers are paying the second highest amount for gym memberships in Europe, following after Luxemburg. The average cost for gym memberships in Ireland was recorded as €48 euro a month (Irish Examiner, 2018). The report also concluded that high costs of gym memberships was the main reason why individuals don't attend the gym. Furthermore, Europe has been ranked as the largest fitness industry in the world, with a net worth of over 26 billion euro. Sproles and Kendall (1986), describe consumer decision making as a psychological orientation that is expressed as a determinant of individuals' choices in selecting services,

products and for purchasing behavior. As customers have many different expectations and needs when completing a purchasing process, they make decisions based on their assessment of various factors, this too is the case when investing in a gym membership (Hwang and Won, 2008). In a study conducted in Iowa State University on 405 relatively healthy adults, researchers found that those who used their gym membership were 14 times more likely to meet the weekly physical activity guidelines.

2.12 Conclusion to literature review

Overall, the research gathered both old and current shows that the shift in marketing communications from traditional to digital has seen a plethora of new social media. Furthermore, the millennial cohort, born in the digital era present marketers with a number of challenges including getting the attention of the tech savvy, materialistic generation. Although millennials are engrossed with social media, they along with all online consumers have become conscious of online marketing efforts. Therefore, it is increasingly difficult for organisations, such as gyms to market their business to their target segments amongst the clutter. Although the literature revealed that the type of content shared on social media can attract and retain consumers to a business, there is a gap within the literature, that being evidence of content persuading millennials to attend the gym. From the research conducted by the author, it has been made evident that there is a lack of academia surrounding the fitness industry in Ireland. For this reason, it has led the author to believe it is an appropriate area to research and determine the factors that encourage millennials to consume such services.

Chapter 3   Methodology

3.1 Introduction

As stated by Saunders (2009), '*Methodology is the theory of how research should be undertaken including the theoretical and philosophical assumptions upon which research is based and the implications of these for the method or methods adopted'*.

This chapter will discuss the stages that the researcher took in order to develop, carry out and conclude the research. For the purpose of this study the methodology approach intended upon by the researcher is a qualitative approach. From the review of literature surrounding the topical areas of social media, social media influencers and their impact on millennials motivation towards gym usage and membership. The logic for proposing this form of research is due to the objectives and aims set out by the researcher. It is clear from the review of literature that there is a substantial gap in the literature surrounding the impact of social media and social media influencers on the decision of millennials to attend the gym in Ireland. A qualitative approach will expose the researcher to new ideas and an understanding of the effects social media can have on gym usage by millennials.

3.2 Aims and objectives

The primary aim of this research study is to fill the gaps in the existing literature and to add to the existing knowledge in the topical areas. The primary objective of this research study is to determine the impact of Social Media and social media influencer on the decision of millennials to attend or not attend the gym. The literature review has suggested that social media is becoming more and more prominent in consumer decision making, however the effect it has on gym usage and memberships is yet to be determined. Considering the nature of the chosen topic, the most useful way of determining if social media has an impact on the decision of millennials to

attend the gym, is to accustom an interpretivist qualitative approach which will allow for full engagement will all participants. The research will be directed toward Irish men and women born between 1982 and 2000 who are currently living in Dublin, Ireland.

The following research objectives will frame thus research study.

Research Question
To investigate the impact of social media and social media influencers on millennials motivations towards gym usage.

Research Objective 1
To assess millennials usage and motivation towards the gym.

Research Objective 2
To assess the impact social media has on millennials gym usage

Research Objective 3
To assess the impact of social media influencers content on millennials gym usage.

3.3 Research problem area

The research is focused on discovering the new trend of online marketing and social media influence which is commonly utilized by businesses, bloggers and social media influencers. The researcher examined the use of content across social media platforms within the fitness industry as well as observing the impact social media has on the levels of both gym usage and gym membership. Furthermore, the researcher assessed the usage of gyms by millennials and if social media or the content shared by social media influencers had an impact on their perspectives of the gym and the fitness culture as a whole.

The opinions and way in which the participants perceive the content available to them on their social media feeds has a direct link to the power exceptional content can have on purchasing decisions within the fitness industry. In essence, the researcher is going to observe and analyze the impact that social media as a whole has on the decisions of participants to join gyms as well as their decisions to attend the gym and by doing so distinguish what content works best for marketers within the fitness industry.

3.4 Limitations

One of the main limitations in conducting this qualitative research is the presence of bias interview responses by participants. Creswell (2007), stated that one of the major issues with qualitative interviews is "*distinguishing truth from authenticity*". Considering the sensitive nature of the topical area being researched, it may be difficult to confirm that the responses given by participants are credible, despite thorough planning of the questions.

A second limitation to note is that the use of semi-structure interviews only obtains data regarding what people say and not what they genuinely do. As aforementioned by Davies (2007), statements based on insights or memories may not represent a true picture. This research lacked balance due to all participants being from the same county, therefore it is difficult to generalize the findings.

Another limitation the researcher faced throughout this study is the time constraints. In order for the researcher to generate a more enriching account of the impact of social media on millennials motivation to attend the gym, the researcher would have liked to carry out interviews with participants from alternative locations in Ireland. Furthermore, the researcher would have liked to meet participants for further interviews following the first meeting to discuss any other considerations or thoughts they may have had. However, the time constraints for the completion of this study prevented the researcher from conducting any further interviews.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

The researcher considered The National College of Irelands recommendation in regards to ethics and therefore completed an ethical consideration form with the proposal of this dissertation. Furthermore, each participant was informed both verbally and in writing, of the nature of this research study and that their response would be publishes for academic purposes.

3.6 Research Design

3.6.1 Methodological Approach

As defined by Malhorta (1996 p.164), Qualitative research is "*an unstructured exploratory research methodology based on small samples that provide insights and understanding of problem solving*"
For the purpose of this study a Qualitative analyses approach was selected by the researcher in order to bring to light new areas of intelligence and build on existing literature, in the area of social media and the effects it has if any on gym usage by the millennial cohort. The Qualitative research approach includes interviews, unstructured interviews, semi-structured interviews, telephone interviews, observational studies or focus groups (Lewis, 2012).

Interviews are commonly used if there is an exploratory aspect to the research being conducted (Lewis, 2012). If carried out correctly, interviews can provide the researcher with rich and enlightening data (Cameron and Price, 2009). The use of interviews can provide the researcher with the opportunity to alter the way in which the question is asked if the participant is having difficulty with understanding what it is being asked. Interviews allow the researcher to gather a meaning of what the participant is saying instead of just offhand answers. An alternative benefit of interviews is that the researcher is able to take note of any non-verbal cues, such as body language which can provide as much information as the verbal answers spoken by the participant (Bougie and Sekaran, 2010). Furthermore, the data produced by the researcher who carried out the interviews is considered transparent as the audio recordings and written transcripts are stored (Cameron and Price, 2009). It is crucial that before conducting any sort of interview that the researcher decides what exactly it is they are looking for. It must be determined if they are seeking perceptions, beliefs, personal information, values, feelings or evaluations (Cameron and Price, 2009).

The structure of interviews can vary; unstructured, structured or semi-structured. In the case of unstructured interviews, the researcher has no specific predetermined questions, but instead asks the participants a number of open-ended questions in relation to the topical area. Throughout the unstructured interview, the researcher will tend to respond and probe the participant to elaborate on their responses where appropriate (Cameron and Price, 2009; Lewis, 2012).

Structured interviews are useful where the researcher is set on finding specific, precise information that is related to the aims and objectives of the study (Boogie and Sekaran, 2010). Throughout the structured interview the interviewer will ask the participant a number of questions and record the response they receive, anything else is considered irrelevant and ignored by the researcher. The main benefit of the structured interviews is that the concise, specific interviews can be compared to alternative interviews. However, the lack of flexibility is too considered a considerable disadvantage.

Semi- structured interviews are considered to be found in a balance between unstructured and structure interviews. The level of flexibility and openness for discussion can vary substantially depending on the nature of the study. Similarly to structured interviews, the interviewer will have a number of questions and themes to be discussed throughout the interview. Nonetheless, these questions may vary from interview to interview depending on the views and answers of the participant. For semi-structured interviews to be successful they must have clear, set out objectives.

For the purpose of this research, semi structured interviews will be conducted in order to gain a detailed and affluent viewpoint of each participants views and previous experience with social media throughout their experience with consuming fitness services. The interviews will include12-15 open ended questions. The rationale for the inclusion of open ended questions is so the participants have the opportunity to extend their responses and inform the interviewer of any other substantial information that may be of significant importance for the proposed study. The order that the questions are asked will

be free flow as this will allow the interviewer to utilize appropriate questions where necessary. Each interview will be conducted in a face-to-face manner and will take place in a private and easy accessible location within The National College of Ireland or any other location that is more suited to the participants. The duration of each interview will be approximately 35 minutes and will require an audio recording device. The rationale for using an audio recording device is so the interviewer will be able to give their full attention to the interviewee and ensure the conversation flows. Additionally, the audio-recording approach to the interviews will allow the interviewer to develop a rapport upon the participants and exhibit active listening skills (Hammersley, 2012).

3.6.2 Pilot study

A pilot study will be conducted with one participant whom uses social media and has invested in a gym membership in order to determine the appropriateness of the proposed questions. Once the pilot study had been completed, any alterations to the style of questions are executed if needed. The report and findings from the pilot study will not be included within the eventual analysis of the research findings.

3.7 Sampling and participant selection

Cooper and Schinder (2014 p.84), states that a sample "*examines a portion of the targeted population and the portion must be carefully selected to represent that portion*".

There are two types of sampling; Non-Probability and Probability sampling. The sampling method that has been selected for this study is non-probability sampling. For this reason, the findings of the research may not be positively generalized or exemplary of an entire population (Bougie and Sekaran, 2010). After considering various types of non-probability sampling, the research concluded that the most appropriate for this study would be the use of both purposive and snowball sampling.

The use of purposive sampling allows the researcher to decide who to include in the research. The criteria the researcher was looking for throughout this initial purposive sampling was individuals who were active on social media, had an interest in fitness, were part of the millennial cohort and were located in the Dublin area. The rationale for initially using purposive sampling was so that the researcher could identify a key informant who already suited the criterion for this study. The key informant was then asked at the conclusion of their interview if they would willingly recommend another participant to partake in the following interview, this is recognized as Snowball Sampling (Quinlan, 2011).

The use of snowball sampling was considered an appropriate method due to the first participant meeting the chosen criterion for this research and therefore could recommend other participants who were also part of the millennial cohort. Nonetheless, the perspective of alternative participants would differ and therefore provide enriching data.

The participants were in the age bracket of 16-34. The rationale for this age range is due to the research question being targeted at the millennial cohort in specifically.

The participants that took part in the interviews were fully informed of the objectives and procedures of the research study through both verbal and written communication methods. In addition, each participant was given the opportunity to voice any concerns or query's they had in relation to the research study. Furthermore, the participants were informed that the data gathered from the semi-structured interviews may be published for academic purposes. One of the semi-structured interviews was selected by the researcher at random and included in the Appendices (Appendix 2).

Table 1. Participant information

Participant A	Participant B	Participant C
Female	Male	Male
26	28	34
Dublin, Ireland	Dublin, Ireland	Dublin, Ireland
Makeup Artist	Electrician	Paramedic
Interview Date: 31/07/18	Interview Date: 1/08/18	Interview Date: 2/08/18
Location: Starbucks Airside	Location: NCI	Location NCI
Duration: 35 minutes	Duration: 33 minutes	Duration 35 minutes
Participant D	Participant E	Participant F
Female	Male	Female
Dublin, Ireland	Dublin, Ireland	Dublin, Ireland
24	29	29
Healthcare Assistant	Accountant	Occupational Therapist
Interview Date: 2/08/18	Interview date : 3/08/18	Interview date: 3/08/18
Location: Interviewees home	Location: NCI	Location: NCI
Duration 40 minutes	Duration: 35 minutes	Duration: 35 minutes

3.8 Research Philosophies

As pointed out by Quinlan (2011), any research study is influenced or supported by a philosophical framework. It is crucial that the researcher selects the most appropriate paradigm which will fundamentally influence the way the research is orchestrated and the type of conclusions the research will discover. At every stage in the research process we make assumptions, often regarding the nature of reality or the human knowledge (Saunders, Thornhill & Lewis, 2012). The assumptions we make consistently outline the way in which we approach the research question as well as how we portray the emerging findings. As suggested by Saunders et al (2012, p.127) research philosophies recognize "*the development of knowledge and the nature of that knowledge"*.

Quinlan (2011), parallels the idea that there is an array of different methodology factors for researchers to choose from and quite often research studies will present more than one philosophical framework. When considering a suitable research philosophy to follow, we look at the various epistemological considerations. Quinlan (2011), identifies the three epistemological positions as being; Positivism, Social Constructionism and Interpretivism.

A positivism approach is considered inappropriate for this study due to it being concerned with only one objective reality. In contrast, an interpretivist approach demonstrates that the reality is distinctive to each individual depending on their person life experiences (Quinlan, 2011).

Bryman and Bell (2015), point out that interpretivism is concerned with the emphatic understanding of the actions of humans. As this study aims at examining the impact of social media and social media influencers has on the motivations of millennials to use the gym, it is obligatory that the researcher takes an interpretivist approach. The philosophy is fixed on establishing the personal motives that frame a person's feelings and persuade their decisions to act in certain ways (Neuman, 2006). As each participant's views on social media and reasons for attending the gym are commonly different the

availability of subjectivity enhances a interpretivist approach. Furthermore, this study will follow an inductive approach as is enables the researcher to "*explore a topic and develop a theoretical explanation as the data is collected and analyzed*". (Saunders *et al.* 2012 p.48_.

3.8.1 Interpretivism

The interpretivism research philosophy involves the researcher interpreting certain elements of their study with human interest in mind. The interpretivism paradigm is based on a critique of positivism within social sciences and focuses strongly on Qualitative analyses rather than Qualitative. Throughout an interpretivist approach, the researcher is required as a social actor to acknowledge the diversity between people (Saunders *et al,* 2012). Johari (2009), suggests that the reasoning for the interpretivism philosophy popularity is due to its encouragement towards researchers to be more inductive rather than remaining disconfirming or confirming of a particular hypothesis. The researcher taking an interpretivist approach must not only be in the presence of the participants, but also ensure to develop a rapport with them and exhibit sensitivity so those partaking will be comfortable and confident that they can trust the researcher.

3.9 Data Analysis

In order to identify and analyze patterns within the data, a thematic approach was implemented. This thematic approach enabled the researcher to identify and analyze emerging themes from the results of the recorded semi-structured interviews (Clarke and Braun, 2013). When examining qualitative data, the researcher must develop explanations that are relative to concrete data. It involves trying to develop a picture and understanding of social life rather than testing a causal hypothesis (Neuman, 2006). The aim is to organize the raw data into a number of key themes or concepts. The analysis will include all raw data from the field research, such as the transcripts and both observational and field notes (Cameron and Price, 2009).

Each interview was recorded by the researcher using an audio device and additionally transcribed into a written processing format. The interviews were then listened to thoroughly by the researcher multiple times and any further notes were obtained. The thematic coding approach applied by the researcher was applied following the guidance of Creswell (2007). In order to interpret the responses from participants, each theme that was established by the researcher was then classified according to the aims and objectives outlined in Section 3.3.

Table 2.   Themes emerging based on research objective 1

Objective
To assess millennials usage and motivation towards the gym.
Themes   • Gym Usage   • Motivations

Table 3.   Themes emerging based on research objective 2

Objective
To assess the impact social media has on millennials gym usage.
Themes   • Effectiveness of social media for gym usage

Table 4. Themes emerging from research objective 3

Objective
To assess the impact of social media influencers content on millennials gym usage.

Themes
• Social Media Activity • Social Media Influencers

Chapter 4   Findings

As discussed in the methodology chapter, six semi-structured interviews were carried out between the 31st of July and the 3rd of August 2018. This chapter will discuss the findings in line with the themes that were established from the interviews as mentioned in section 3.8 of the methodology chapter.

4.1 Research Objective 1

Objective   To assess millennials usage and motivation towards the gym.
Themes   • Gym Usage   • Motivations

The themes relevant to the first research objective were discussed in the first part of the semi structured interviews, where participants discussed their usage of the gym and any motivations that encouraged them to attend or not attend the gym.

4.1.1   Gym Usage

A key theme emerging from the interviews with participants is the level of gym usage by millennials and the age they began attending the gym. From the six interviews, four out of six participants were members of a gym. Those participants who are members of gym all attend the gym regularly.

Participant A " *Yes, I have recently jumped back on the bandwagon after a few months off".*

In contrast one participant stated;

Participant B "*No, not at the moment but I used to be".*

Interestingly, of those who stated they did attend the gym, the majority began attending the gym at a young age. One participant began attending the gym as young as 16. However, one interviewee began attending the gym just one year ago at the age of 27.

Participant C "*I'd say I was about 16 when I was first properly brought into the gym with my rugby team*".

Participant F "*Last August*"

The number of days that participants attended the gym varied between 2 days a week to 5 days. The researcher also noted a sense of uncertainty amongst participants when asked how many days they attend the gym, this was obvious from body language and recorded in the field notes. The participants discussed how the number of days they attended the gym was dependant on other aspects of their busy lives such as work or other sporting activities. One participant discussed how the number of days a week she attends the gym depends on if she is working night shifts.

Participant D "*I try and go 3 or 4 times a week it really depends if I am working nights or not*".

Another participant stated;

Participant C " *Most weeks 4 or 5 times depending on matches or if I am busy in work I might give it a miss*".

Another interesting aspect to consider is the reasons why the participants attend or do not attend the gym. Of those who don't attend the gym the reasons why not were quite different. One participant explained how he finds the thought of even going to the gym quite daunting, whilst the other non-attendee didn't give a particular reason but continued to explain how his job is quite physical and requires a lot of energy.

Participant E "*I just find the thought of going quite daunting as I feel like I won't know what I am doing*".

Participant B " *Not really, I used to have a membership for my local gym but I never used it so I decided to cancel the membership about 3 months ago. My job requires a lot of energy and can be quite physical so I keep fit that way as well as playing soccer a few nights of the week*".

On the contrary, those participants who do attend the gym do so for a various number of reasons. Whilst one participant speaks about initially starting in the gym with his Rugby team, others describe how they joined with the intention of keeping fit, to lose weight and as one participant said to accompany her friend who was starting off in a new gym.

Participant F "*I was going on a holiday in November and decided I needed to do something about my weight before I went*".

Participant D " *well my best friend was joining and asked me would I be interested in joining with her and ever since then we have been gym buddies*".

Similarly, one participant expressed how going with her friend and younger sister makes going to the gym a lot easier, more fun and is a good way to get motivated by encouraging each other.

Participant A " *well the reason I go is to keep fit and improve my appearance…. Recently I have begun going to the gym with one of the girls and my younger sister so that makes going a lot easier and more fun and we motivate each other if one of us is not feeling up to it*".

4.1.2 Motivations

Another major emerging theme from the interviews was the different types of motivation that encourages the participants to use the gym. Three of the four participants expressed that their main motivator to attend the gym was to lose weight and improve their level of fitness.

Participant A " *hmm I'd say my main motivator to go is to get that dream body I have always wanted… oh and to improve my level of fitness*".

Participant D "*To lose a few pounds and keep fit"*

Conversely, one participant expressed how he attends the gym to keep fit and build muscle and strength.

Participant C "*To keep fit of course and to build muscle and strength…"*

Furthermore, all six participants expressed how posts and advertisements on social media have made them want to attend the gym. One interviewee stated that when the Kardashians, a famous American family share videos of their workouts it makes her want to attend the gym.

Participant D " *ok well I'm obsessed with the Kardashians and they are always posting videos on snapchat of them working out with their trainers which I'm sure costs them a bomb but anytime I watch them I automatically want to go to a gym class myself".*

Additionally, one participant who is not a member of a gym admitted that many advertisements and posts have made him think of exercising. Similarly, another participant who also is not a member of a gym, discussed how a FlyeFit campaign worked extremely well in terms of making him want to work out.

Participant B "*hmmm… that's a tough one I think we are constantly being targeted on social media so it's hard to observe every single advertisement or post but I think the Flyefit campaign where they used real people to tell their fitness stories worked really well*".

Another notable motivator that was discussed within the interviews was the content shared by the gyms that participants attended, across a variety of social media platforms. One participant epressed how she feels guilty when she views the live videos of classes in the gym when she is not there. The same participant added that the before and after photos of fellow members of the gym she attends are extremely inspiring.

Participant D ".. *I always feel guilty if I see the live videos up and I'm not in the class… also when I'm in work and I see they've posted a new timetable its makes me want to go.. oh and the before and after photos of people from my gym are so inspiring*".

When asked if the gym he attends uses social media to interact with clients one participant stated that the gym he attends shares informative, motivating content regular. This participant also expressed how the content shared by the gym encourages him to go.

Participant D "*yeah they do, they tend to share positive quotes, class information and then every few days they will post different exercises which I think is great… I'm pretty sure they also introduce all of the trainers in the gym via videos as well*".

Alternatively, Participant E a non-gym goer admitted the reason they don't attend the gym is because of the content that he is exposed to on social media. Furthermore, thus participant does not believe that the content posted by the gym he initially went to motivated him to attend the gym.

Participant E *"I think everyone is just obsessed with how they look, it is a factor that turns me off going to the gym…"*

4.2 Research Objective 2

Objective
To assess the impact social media has on millennials gym usage.
Themes
• Effectiveness of social media for gym usage

The theme relevant to the second research objective was discussed during the second section of the interviews. This included a discussion about the relationship between the gym and social media and considered if the gym affected the decisions of the millennial cohort to attend the gym. It also considered why or why not social media encourages millennials to attend the gym.

4.2.1 Effectiveness of social media for gym usage.

A key theme emerging from the interviews with participants is the effect that social media can have on the level of gym usage. Firstly, it is important to note that all participants are active on a variety of social media platforms. The age that participants began using social media varied from the early age of 15 to 22 years old. This suggests that the millennial cohort is very much engrossed in social media.

Participant D "*hmmm I think I first started using it when I was about 15 or 16 I'm not too sure but I can't really remember life without it*".

Participant A " *oh god it has been years, I think I was about 15 when I first started using the likes of Bebo…*".

Another interesting finding was how often the participants used social media. When asked how long they spent on social media, five out of the six

participants admitted to using social media on a daily basis. The researcher however observed a sense of embarrassment from all five participants which was observed from their body language such as rolling of the eyes and a sense of unease. One particular participant was very honest and expressed how she knows that she spends too much time on social media.

Participant A "*honestly more than I should, I'm always on my phone going from one platform to the next. I'd say I spend around 3-4 hours a day on social media which I think is terrible but I just can't help it*".

The use of social media to get motivation was also discussed by one participant who stated that she thinks social media is a good way to get motivated to go to the gym and live a healthy lifestyle.

Participant A *"... I thinks it's also such a good way to get motivated like I said earlier for the gym and a healthy lifestyle*".

Participants were also asked if they believed that social media is a reason that people attend the gym. Five of the six participants agreed that social media is a major reason that people go to the gym. The reasons why they thought this varied, some participants expressed how their Instagram feeds are full of images of the 'ideal body' type, whilst others expressed how social media puts a lot on pressure of people to look their best and to get fit and healthy.

Participant B "*Absolutely, it is one of the main reasons I think. Everyone Is trying to look their best and want to share images of themselves looking their best. I think social media has put a lot more pressure on people to get healthy and fit*".

Another participant discussed how he is unsure if social media encourages or discourages him to use the gym. However, this participant did suggest that social media motivates him to start training also.

Participant E "*I've never really thought about it that way but I suppose you could say yeah, I think everyone is just so obsessed with appearance and how they look, it is also a factor that turns me off the gym but on the other hand you could say it is what motivates me to start training too…*".

Despite the majority of participants agreeing that social media is a reason they attend the gym, one participant felt strongly against this idea. However, this participant interestingly noted that the gym is a good way to unwind after work.

Participant C " *No, I attend the gym for the physical health and fitness side of things, it's also a great way to clear the mind. I have a pretty intense and stressful job which requires my full attention so it's a good way to unwind*".

Conversely, a participant who is no longer a member of a gym was asked if the content posted on social media makes him want to re-join the gym. The participant agreed that yes it does make him want to re-join the gym, he also made some interesting comments. Firstly, the participant expressed how the pictures and success stories from clients of the gym are very motivating. Furthermore, this participant expressed his opinions about personal trainers within the fitness industry in relation to their appearance and how he perceives the way personal trainers behave.

Participant B "*yeah I have to say if I had more time I would of joined back a while ago. I think the pictures of success stories from clients that use the gym are really motivating. I also follow a fitness blogger Rob Lipsett and he seems like a cool guy. Unlike the majority of personal trainers and lads my age that attend the gym he is not covered in tattoos and doesn't seem to be in competition with anyone else around him to be the biggest…. *".

Finally, when asked what social media platforms they use the most the participants disclosed how Facebook and Instagram were the preferred platforms that they actively use. Furthermore, it appeared that the participants

had different motivations for using multiple social media accounts. The participants who actively use Facebook did so for connectivity reasons.

Participant E "*I use Facebook the most*"

"*I think everyone has Facebook and is easy to access and use..*".

Participant C " *I think I'm just used to Facebook and all my friends have it so it's a good way to keep in contact*".

In contrast, the participants who use Instagram the most said they use it to look at pictures and Instagram stories posted by both people they know personally and those who they don't know such as celebrities, athletes and social media influencers.

Participant B "*I think being able to see all the footballers photos and stories on Ins*tagram in pretty cool".

Participant C "… *well I love seeing what people are up to in their lives and being able to see what my favourite celebrities are doing is cool…*".

Another participant stated that the reason she prefers Instagram over other social media platform is because it has all the features that the other platforms have and better in her opinion.

Participant D "*I definitely use Instagram more than anything, it has everything all the other platforms have and better in my opinion*".

4.3 Research Objective 3

Objective
To assess the impact of social media influencers content on millennials gym usage.
Themes   • Social Media Fitness influencers   • Content

The themes relevant to the third research objective were discussed in the later stage of the interviews with participants. This included a discussion about fitness social media influencers, the type of social media influencer content that motivates participants and if the content shared by fitness influencers affects the decisions of participants to attend the gym.

4.3.1 Social Media Fitness Influencers

One of the most imperative themes discussed throughout the interviews was that the majority of participants follow fitness influencers on social media. However the reasons for following the fitness influencers varied from participant to participant. One of the main reasons that participants follow fitness influencers according to the interviews is for motivation and encouragement. One participant discussed how she follows a lot of fitness influencers for inspirations and encouragement to exercise.

Participant D "*yes I do, I follow loads actually.. I think for inspiration and encouragement to exercise..*".

Similarly another participant stated;

Participant A "*yes, I follow them mainly for motivation reasons and to get tips and tricks for the gym or healthy eating*".

Interestingly the only social media platforms that participants follow fitness influencers on are Instagram and Snapchat, however it is important to note that the participant who stated she follows them on Snapchat also stated that she does not watch them on that platform anymore as a result of the new update.

Participant A "*I follow them on Instagram and Snapchat but with the new updates on Snapchat I don't watch them as much on that*".

Another key development from the interviews was that from those who stated they follow fitness influencers, the male participants only followed male fitness influencers and the majority of females only followed female fitness influencers. Furthermore, the reasoning for this as pointed out by one participant is because she did not feel the content posted by male fitness influencers would benefit her and that the workouts posted by males would specifically be for males. In addition, another female participant admitted that she previously followed male fitness influencers, however she later unfollowed them because she did not believe the content they posted was useful.

Participant F "*All female, I used to follow a few males but I honestly didn't find the stuff they posted was useful for me personally*".

Participant A "*ehh definitely just female influencers, I would presume the workouts male fitness influencers share would only specifically be for men*".

In terms of encouragement to use the gym, all participants who actively follow fitness social media influencers agreed that they are encouraged by them to use the gym. One participant stated that when she is not in the mood to go to the gym or workout, she will always scroll through the pages of fitness influencers in order to get motivated to go to the gym.

Participant F "*yes absolutely, when I'm not in the mood for the gym I will always go on their pages and get myself in the zone to go to the gym*"

4.3.2 Content

The Final theme that emerged from research objective 3 was the content posted by social media influencers across the profiles and channels. This included discussions about the type of content that motivates participants to use the gym.

When asked what type of influencer content motivates them to use the gym, the majority of participants considered images and short videos of workouts the most motivating types of content. One participant stated that she prefers when someone records the fitness influencer doing their workouts and then its posted on their profile. Similarly, another participant enjoys workout video clips because she can learn different workouts for different body parts.

Participant D "*I think when they put up photos or videos of themselves in the gym or if they get someone else to take the videos of them working out, like OH Fitness she always gets people to record her in the gym and then she posts the videos to her channel*".

Participant A "*I really enjoy workout videos or short clips, it's a great way to learn about different exercises for different parts of the body.. I think Emily Skye is the best for sharing her workouts*".

Alternatively, one participant discussed how she enjoys following women she can compare herself to, like women her age. Furthermore, she also mentioned how she thinks a lot of social media influencers are posting fitness related content because fitness and health has become such a huge aspect of our lives as well as a huge part of social media.

Participant F "*..well I love following women I can compare myself to like girls my own age.. I actually think a lot of bloggers are now sharing motivational*

content because fitness has become such a big aspect of our lives and social media".

Summary of key findings

It is clear from the above research that, both social media and social media influencers have a considerable impact on the motivations of the millennial cohort participants of this study to use the gym. It has also been discovered that those who are not currently gym members, were also impacted by both social media and influencers in relation to their desire to re-join the gym. The research also concluded that the reasons why two of the six participants are not members of the gym is due to lack of time and fear of the unknown and intimidation.

On the contrary the reasons why participants do use the gym were also discovered which were to lose weight, build muscle and strength and unwind from work. Many participants also admitted that social media was partially the reason they attend the gym.

It is clear from the findings that the millennial cohort is very much engrossed in social media, this emerged from all participants admitting to using social media on a regular basis. Furthermore, it may be argued that the favourite social media platforms amongst the millennial cohort sample that participated in the interviews are Facebook and Instagram.

Finally, the research concluded that the type of content that participants found most encouraging and that impacted their decision to use the gym most was workout videos and images shared on Instagram. The reasons that the participants found video content so motivating is because it gave them inspiration for their workouts of different parts of the body and provided informative information. Other content that participants mentioned throughout the interviews to be motivating were client success stories and tips for exercising and healthy eating.

Chapter 5   Discussion

This chapter will build on the key findings derived from the data analysis and refer back to the literature review in order to highlight the salient points enclosed within the current study.

It was noted that all participants, whom are part of the Millennial cohort use social media on a regular basis. For example, one participant admitted she spends up to three or four hours on social media a day- this can be linked to Palfrey and Gassers (2008 p.4), description of millennials as being joined by a set of common practices, such as the amount of time they spend using digital technologies like social media and their ability to multi-task. Weber (2017), found that a study conducted by Pew Research center concluded that 80% of millennials admitted to keeping their phone on their bed side table for easy accessibility to social media and their email. In addition, Bergh *et al.* (2014), found that a major fear for the millennial cohort is being unoccupied and therefore it may be argued that this is the reason they are so engrossed with social media, social media influencers and the gym.

Participant A*: Honestly more than I should, I'm always on my phone going from one platform to the next. I'd say I spend around 3 or 4 hours a day on social media which I think is terrible but I just can't help it.*

It was observed from the interviews that the participants began using the gym at a young age. For example, one participant was as young as 16. In correlation to joining the gym at a young age, the participants of this study also discussed how they too began using social media at a young age. This relation between social media and gym usage may be linked to Feng and Xie (2015), argument that the usage of social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram have become a method of obtaining and educating audiences

with health and fitness information. Therefore, one could argue that social media is in fact educating and motivating millennials to use the gym. To add, gyms should note the age that millennials are beginning to use the gym, and consider adapting not only the services they provide but also the content shared across their website and social media sites.

Participant C "*I'd say I was about 16 when I was first properly brought into the gym with my rugby team*".

When asked if the gym they attend uses social media to interact with their clientele, five out of the six participants stated that they do. This can be linked to Aachen (2017), description of how social media meets relationship marketing goals when it is utilized by businesses to enrich relationship values for customers. This is due to relationship marketing encouraging businesses to develop two-way communication with consumers, creating added value and interactions. Furthermore, when asked what social media platforms they favored most, the majority of participants answered Instagram, whilst Facebook was inferior and favored by only a minority of participants. This is in contrast to Barker *et al.* (2017), research which found that Facebook was the most popular social media platform. It may be argued that although Barker *et al.* (2017), concluded that Facebook was the most favored social media site globally, with over one billion users, this does not reflect the millennial cohort represented in this research specifically. In addition, gym owners should ensure Instagram and Facebook are both Utilized as part of their two-way communication with both potential and existing consumers.

The study also brought to the attention of the researcher the type of content that the gyms attended by participants shared on across social media. Two particular types of content that were discussed throughout all six in-depth interviews were workout videos and client success stories. The use of video content by gyms is an exceptional way to get the attention of the fast pace, busy millennial cohort. Gladdis *et al.* (2015), described how it can be difficult to get the attention of the "*attention deficit generation*". Additionally, it can

be hard for businesses to get their marketing messages across as millennials and consumers in general have become very conscious of being targeted by marketing messages online.

The use of video content by gyms is a quick and convenient way to advertise as well as providing informative content for those followers whom are existing consumers. Furthermore, participants discussed that they found success stories and images of other gym goers extremely inspiring. One participant explained how she believed client success stories and pictures are a good way to retain existing clients by motivating them, as well as advertising the available programs available in the gym and the results that can be achieved. This is linked to Chen and Xie (2008), description of online reviews as being "*product information by users based on personal usage experience*".

Participant A "*Yes, they use Facebook to post their timetables and often share client stories and pictures. I think it's a good way to keep clients as well as using the platform for advertising the programs available and the results that those programs can achieve*".

Also interesting was the motivation and encouragement that the participants got from social media influencers, and in particular fitness influencers. For example, one participant stated that when she is not in the mood to go to the gym, she often views the profiles and content shared by fitness influencers. This may be linked to Freberg *et al.* (2010), who concluded that messages and content shared by social media influencers is considered powerful and reliable to consumers. Additionally, Tapinfluence (2017), through a Nielson marketing survey, concluded that influencer marketing has the ability to produce return on investments that are 11 times higher than digital marketing efforts. It may be therefore suggested that in order to increase their sales, gyms should consider collaborating with fitness influencers. One gym that has maintained an ongoing collaboration with a fitness influencer is Raw gym in Dublin, who have a collaboration with the Irish fitness influencer Rob Lipsett.

Participant F "*yes absolutely, when I am not in the mood for the gym I will always go on their pages and get myself in the zone to go to the gym*".

Another notable emergence from the interviews was that female participants only follow female influencers and males only follow male fitness influencers. Two participants expressed how they don't believe the content posted by the opposite sex would be suitable for them, such as workout videos. It is for this reason that social media influencers and specifically fitness influencers should share content suitable for both men and women across their profiles.

Participant A "*ehh definitely just female influencers, I would presume the workouts male fitness influencers share would only specifically be for men*".

Chapter 6 Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusion

The overall aim of this research was to determine if social media and social media influencers have an impact on millennials motivation towards gym usage. By accomplishing the three research objectives set out in section 3.2, it is believed that this research aim has been appropriately fulfilled. The qualitative nature of the semi-structured interviews carried out in this study has allowed the researcher to determine if social media and social media influencers impact millennials motivation towards gym usage.

Although the research aims and objectives were appropriately fulfilled, the research method chosen did present some limitations, for example the semi-structured interviews only obtained data regarding what people say they do and not what they actually do.

The current research sought to explore the impact social media can have on the decision of millennials to use the gym by adopting both open-ended and closed-ended interview questions where appropriate. Whilst the researcher had a list of set out questions (Appendix 1), the questions were only used as a guide.

Once the interviews had concluded, the data from the findings was then analyzed and presented using a thematic approach. The analysis of findings emphasized any salient points to the researcher, that were then used to develop the study and ultimately achieve the overall aim of the study. The data provided the researcher with compelling insights into millennials engagement with social media, their thoughts on social media influencers and their level of gym usage.

6.2 Recommendations

From the analysis of findings, the current study has identified some key issues that warrant further attention.

Firstly, further research should examine the gym usage of alternative cohorts. A more in-depth look at the level of usage among different cohorts may shed some light on when and why they use the gym, this would determine who gym owners should target with their advertising.

Further research should consider selecting an alternative methodological approach such as quantitative surveys, which would give the researcher a broader scope in terms of the location of participants. For example, the survey could be distributed to participants around Ireland rather than participants being solely from Dublin, as the case was for this research

It could also be suggested that further research should adopt more triangulated methods, using imagery throughout the interview process. Triangulated methods such as photo elicitation, if utilized properly can be valuable within interviews as it can reveal interesting perspectives from the participants, which can develop relevant insights into the phenomenon being investigated.

The current study also identified a number of recommendations for gym owners in relation to their marketing efforts towards the millennial cohort.

Firstly, it was concluded within the research and literature review that Facebook and Instagram are the favoured social media platforms amongst participants. Therefore, gym owners should ensure they are active on both platforms in order to reach both their existing and potential consumers.

The research also concluded that the participants found both video content and client success stories the most beneficial and motivating when shared by the gym they are currently members of. It is therefore recommended by the researcher that gyms post video content regularly and continue to share success stories from existing members of the gym. Alternatively, gyms could

create videos of existing clients similar to the ones developed by Flyefit as aforementioned by one participant.

Finally, gym owners should ensure to share content appropriate for both men and women, such as suitable workouts and dietary tips. The research found that multiple participants don't follow influencers of the opposite sex because they don't believe their content is applicable to them. It is for this reason that the content posted by gyms should be suitable for both men and women.

Bibliography

Aachen, R.M., (2017) Measuring social media marketing: moving towards a relationship marketing approach.

Aagan, T., (2013). Embracing the Millennials mindset at work. *New York Times, November 9,* www.nytimes.com

Andreasson, J. and Johansson, T. (2014). The global gym. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

Baek, H., Lee, S., Oh, Sehwan., and Ahn, J., (2015). Normative social influence and online review helpfulness: polynomial modeling and response surface analysis.

Barker, M., Barker, D.I., Bormann, N.F., and Neher, K.E. (2017). *Social media marketing; A strategic approach.* Boston.

Bayne, K.S., and Cianfrone, B.A. (2013). The effectiveness of social media marketing: the impact of Facebook status updates on a campus recreation event. *Recreational Sports Journal,* 37(2), 147-159

Belk, R. (2013). Extended Self in a Digital World: Table 1. Journal of Consumer Research, 40(3), pp.477-500.

Bergh, J. V. d., Alders, P., Boullart, A. & Bijnen, M. V., 2014. WARC.com. [Online] Available at: https://www.warc.com/SubscriberContent/Article/Getting_close_to_youth_ Understanding_millennials_themes_of_life_to_create_GenYproof_brands/1 03280

Bitsch, V. (2005). Qualitative Research: A grounded theory example and evaluation criteria Journal of Agribusiness, 23(1), pp. 75-91

Boepple, L., and Thompson, J.K., (2016). A content analytic comparison of fitspiration and thinspiration websites.

Bougie, U. S. &. R., 2010. Research methods for business: A skill building approach. 5th ed. West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

Brandon, M. (2011). How the Media Influences Teenagers. In examiner.com. Retrieved March 25, 2013, from http://www.examiner.com/article/how-the-mediainfluences-teenagers

Brodie, R.J., Ilic, A., Juric, B. and Hollebeek, L. (2013) Consumer engagement in a virtual brand community: An exploratory analysis. *Journal of Business Research 66(8): 105-114*

Brown, J., Broderick, A.J., and Lee, N., (2007). Word of mouth communication within online communities: Conceptualizing the online social network

Brown, J. D. (2014). Self-esteem and self-evaluation: Feeling is believing. In J. Suls (Ed.), *Psychological perspectives on the self* (pp. 27-58). New York, NY: Psychology Press.

Brown, S. (1995). Postmodern Marketing, Routledge, London.

Bryman, A., (2008) Social Research Methods. 3 rd Ed. New York: Oxford University Press.

Bryman, A. and Bell, E. (2015) Business Research Methods. 4th ed. Oxford: University Press.

Cameron, S. and Price, D. (2009). Business research methods: A practical approach 1st ed. London

Campione, W.A. (2014) 'The influence of supervisor race, gender, age, and cohort on millennials' job satisfaction'. Journal of Business Diversity, 14(1): pp. 18 – 34.

Carpenter, C., & Suto, M. (2008). Qualitative research for occupational and physical therapists: A practical guide. Blackwell pub

Carrotte, E. R., Prichard, I., & Lim, M. S. C. (2017). "Fitspiration" on Social Media: A Content Analysis of Gendered Images. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, *19*(3)

Cetina, I., Munthiu, M. C. and Radulescu, V. (2012). Psychological and social factors that influence online consumer behavior. Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences, Vol. 62, pp. 184-88.

Chaffey, D. (2015) Digital Business and E-Commerce Management. 6th ed. Pearson.

Chandon, P., Wasink, B. and Laurent, G. (2000), " A benefit congruency framework of sales promotion effectiveness", *Journal of Marketing,* Vol.64 No.4, pp. 65-81

Chen, Y., and Xie, J.,(2008). "Online Consumer review: Word-of-Mouth as a new element of marketing communication Mix," *Management Science,* Vol.54 No. 3

Cheung, C. M., Lee, M. K. & Neil, R., 2008. The Impact Of Online Electronic Word-Of-Mouth : The Adoption Of Online Opinions In Customer Communities. Internet Research, 18(3), pp. 229-247.

Chiang, I. P. and Hsieh, C. H. (2011). Exploring the impacts of blog marketing on consumers. Social Behavior and Personality, Vol. 39, pp. 1245-50.

Cialdinin, R.B. (2009). *Influence: Science and practice.* New York: William Morrow.

Clarke, V. & Braun, V. (2013). Teach thematic analysis: over -coming challenges and developing strategies for effective learning. *The Psychologist*, 26 (2), pp. 120-123.

Coelho, R., Oliveira, D. and Almeida, M. (2016). Does social media matter for post typology? Impact of post content on Facebook and Instagram metrics. Online Information Review, 40(4), pp.458-471.

Constantinides, E. and Fountain, S.J. (2008) "Web 2.0: Conceptual foundations and marketing issues", Journal of Direct, Data and Digital Marketing Practice, (9)3: pp. 231-244.

Colòn, M. (2013) 'Fountain of Youth'. SC Magazine, [Online] Available at: https://media.scmagazine.com/documents/54/sc_can_0613_13305.pdf [

Colvin, G. (2015) 'Humans are underrated'. [Online] Available at: http://fortune.com/2015/07/23/humans-are-underrated/

Core Outlook (2018). Marketing Institute of Ireland. [online] Available at: https://mii.ie/blogpost/1316142/295195/Core-s-Outlook-2018-Report-forecasts-a-6-7-increase-in-advertising-spend-in-Ireland [Accessed 20 Aug. 2018].

Cooper, D.R. and Schindler, P.S. (2014) Business Research Methods. 12th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill Education.

Creswell, J. W. (2007) Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches. Thousand Oaks: SAGE.

Creswell, J. W. (2003) Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches, 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks: SAGE.

Cvijikj, I.P. and Michahelles, F. (2013), "Online engagement factors on Facebook brand pages", *Social Network Analysis and Mining,* Vol.3 No.4, pp.843-861

Davies, M. B. (2007). *Doing a successful research project.* Basingstoke, England: Palgrave Macmillan.

Davison, T. E., & McCabe, M. P. (2005). Relationships between men's and women's body image and their psychological, social, and sexual functioning. Sex roles, 52(7-8), 463- 475.

De Veirman, M., Cauberghe, V., and Hudders, L., (2017) 'Marketing through Instagram influencers: the impact of number of followers and product divergence on brand attitude.

Deloitte Millennial Survey (2017) The 2017 Deloitte millennial survey - Apprehensive millennials: seeking stability and opportunities in an uncertain world[Online]Availableat:
https://www2.deloitte.com/global/en/pages/aboutdeloitte/articles/millennials urvey.html

Dellacrocas, C., Zhang, X., and Awad, N.F., (2007). Exploring the value of online product reviews in forecasting sales: The case of motion pictures. *Journal of Interactive Marketing.* 21(4), 2-20

Deutsch, M. and Gerrard, H. (1955), "A study of normative and informational social influence upon individual judgement", *Journal of Abnormal Social Psychology,* Vol.51 pp.629-36

Djafarova, E. and Rushworth, C. (2016). Exploring the credibility of online celebrities' Instagram profiles in influencing the purchase decisions of young female users. Computers in Human Behavior, Vol. 68, pp.1-7.

Doğan, C. (2015). Training at the Gym, Training for Life: Creating Better Versions of the Self Through Exercise. Europe's Journal of Psychology, 11(3), 442–458. http://doi.org/10.5964/ejop.v11i3.951

Doyle, S. (2018) Millennials at a glance: How Generation Y' is molding the modern workforce, [Online] Available at: http://swaay.com/millennials-glance-generation-ymolding-modern-workforce/

Ducharme, J. (2018). http://time.com. [online] Time. Available at: http://time.com/5172989/exercise-social-media-psychology/ [Accessed 14 Jul. 2018].

Duffet, R.G., (2015), "Facebook advertisings influence on intention-to – purchase and purchase amongst millennials", Internet Research, Vol.25 pp.498-526

Duggan, M., 2013. Photo and video sharing grow online. Pew Research Center, October 28.

Du Plessis, C. (2017), 'The role of content marketing in social media content communities', *South African Journal of Information Management* 19(1)

Dzamic, L. (2012). The hunt for the red herring; Measuring commercial effects of social media. *Journal of Direct, Data and Digital marketing Practice* 198-206

Featherstone M. (2010). Body, image and affect in consumer culture. Body & Society, 16(1), 193–221. 10.1177/1357034X09354357

Feng, Y., and Xie, W., (2015). Digital divide 2.0: the role of social networking sites in seeking health information online from a longitude perspective.

Felix, R, Rauschnabel, P and Hinsch, C (2017), 'Elements of strategic social media marketing: A holistic Framework', *Journal of Business Research, 70, pp.118-126*

Ferguson, C. J. (2013). In the eye of the beholder: Thin-ideal media affects some, but not most, viewers in a meta-analytic review of body dissatisfaction in women and men. Psychology of Popular Media Culture, 2, 20–37.

Ferrell, L. & O.C. Ferrell (2012). Redirecting direct selling: High-touch embraces high-tech. *Business Horizons, 55(3), 273-81*
Filo, K., Robinson, L, and Valette-Florence., (2015). Sport and Social media research: A review . Sport Management review, 18, 166-181.

Floyd, Kristopher, Ryan Freling, Saad Alhoquail, Hyun Young Cho and Traci Freing (2014), How online product reviews affect retail sales: A Meta-analysis," *Journal of Retailing. 90(2)*

Forbes (2017), *4 tips to help your business flourish on social media Available at* https://www.forbes.com/sites/ jpmorganchase/2017/03/20/4-tips-to-help-your-business-flourish-on-social-media/#605da1981dd2.

Freberg, L.A., McGaughey, K., Graham, K., and Freberg,K., (2010). Who are the social media influencers? A study of public perceptions of personality.

Gamson, J. (2011). The unwatched life is not worth living: The elevation of the ordinary in celebrity culture. PMLA, 126(4), 1061-1069. doi:10.1632/pmla.2011.126.4.1061

Garner, D. M., Garfinkel, P. E., Schwartz, D., & Thompson, M. (1980). Cultural expectations of thinness in women. Psychological Reports, 47, 483–491

Gladdis, S., Robson, P. & Beardsworth, J., 2015. Get Millennials' attention. s.l.:ADMAP (Magazine).

Greenwood, S., Perrin, A., & Duggan, M. (2016). Social Media Update 2016. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center. Retrieved from http://www .pewinternet.org/2016/11/11/social-media-update2016/

Grogan, S., (2008) Body Image: Understanding Body Dissatisfaction in Men, Women and Children. East Sussex: Psychology Press.

Grundén, K, 2014. Social Media marketing in the wellness industry. ., [Online]. Vol.26 No.3, [Accessed 11 June 2018].

Haferkamp, N., & Krämer, N. C. (2011). Social comparison 2.0: Examining the effects of online profiles on social-networking sites. Cyber psychology, Behavior, and Social Networking, 14, 309–314.

Hansson, L., Wrangmo, A. and Solberg Soilen, K. (2013), " Optimal ways for companies to use Facebook as a marketing channel", *Journal of Information, Communication and Ethics in Society,* Vol 11 No.2, pp. 112-127

Hart, C. (1998). Doing a literature review: Releasing the social science research imagination. London, UK: Sage.

Hammersley, M. (2012) What is Qualitative Research? London: Bloomsbury Academic

Henwood, K. G. (2002). The changing man. The psychologist , 15 (4), 182-186

Hennig-Thurau, T. (2004).Hennig-Thurau, T. (2004). Electronic word-of-mouth via consumer-opinion platforms; what motivates consumers to articulate themselves on the internet.

Herring, S.C., 2007. Questioning the generational divide: Technological exoticism and adult construction of online youth identity, in: Buckingham, D. (Ed.), Youth, Identity and Digital Media. MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, pp. 71–94.

Hoffman, E., and Daugherty, T., (2013). Ewom and the importance of capturing consumer attention within social media.

Holland, G., and Tiggemann, M., (2016). A systematic review of the impact of the use of social media sites on body image and disordered eating outcomes.

Horváth-Csikós, G., (2016), Y and Z generations at workplaces. Journal of competitiveness.

Howson, A. (2013). *The body in society: An introduction*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Polity Press.

Hutter, K., Hautz, J., Dennhardt, S., and Füller, J. (2013). The impact of user interactions in social media on brand awareness and purchase intention; The case of MINI on Facebook. *Journal of product and brand management.*

Hwang, Y. and Jeong, S. H. (2016). This is a sponsored blog post, but all opinions are my own": The effects of sponsorship disclosure on responses to sponsored blog posts. Computers in Human Behavior, Vol.62, pp.528-35.

Javellana, G.M., (2014), Influence of Media on Body image Satisfaction among adolescents, *Asia Pacific Journal of Education, Arts and Sciences*

Jerslev, A. (2016). In the Time of the Micro celebrity: Celebrification and the YouTuber Zoella. International Journal of Communication. Vol. 10, pp. 5233-51.

Jobs, C, G., AND Gilfoil, D.M. (2014). A Social Media Advertising model for reallocation of traditional advertising budgets

Johari, J. (2009) 'Interpretivism in Information Systems (IS) Research'. Integration & Dissemination, 2009: pp. 25-27.

Kaplan, A.M., Haelein, M. (2010). Users of the world unite! The challenges and opportunities of social media 53(1) 59-68

Kapidzic, S. and Martins, N. (2015) "Mirroring the Media: The Relationship Between Media Consumption, Media Internalization, and Profile Picture Characteristics on Facebook". Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 59(2): pp. 278-297

Karl, K., Allen, R.S., White, C.S., Pelcuhette, J.V. and Allen, D. E. (2017) Would you accept a Facebook friend request from your boss?: Examining the generational differences, [Online] Available from https://www.igi-global.com/article/would-you-accept-afacebook-friend-request-from-your-boss/180673

Keller, K.L. (2009), Building string brands in a modern marketing communications environment. *Journal of Marketing Communications* 15(2): 139-155

Kim, D.H, Spiller, L. and Hettche, M. (2015), "Analyzing media types and content orientations in Facebook for Global brands", *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing,* Vol.9 No.1, pp. 4-30.

Kratzman, V. A. & Stamford, F., 2002. US fitness industry market overview and entry strategies. 1st ed. Helsinki: National technology agency.

Krishnan, S. K., Bopaiah, S., Bajaj, D. and Prasad R. (2013). Organization, generation and communication – Infosys Experience. NHRD Journal, (10): pp. 85-93.

Landcaster, L. and Stillman, D. (2002), *When generations collide: who they are, why they clash, how to solve the generational puzzle at work.* New York: Harper Business.

Liljander, V., Gummerus, J., and Söderlund, M. (2015). Young consumers' responses to suspected covert and overt blog marketing. Internet Research, Vol. 25 (4), pp. 610-32

Lu, L. C., Chang, W. P., and Chang, H. H. (2014). Consumer attitudes toward blogger's sponsored recommendations and purchase intention: The effect of sponsorship type, product type, and brand awareness. Computers in Human Behavior. Vol.34, pp. 258-66.

Manley, L.L., (2015). The use of traditional versus e-marketing in SME's in a developing country: A comparative analysis

Market Research - Enterprise Ireland. (2018). Gym and Fitness Club Market Reports - Market Research - Enterprise Ireland. [online] Available at:

https://marketresearch.enterprise-ireland.com/gym-fitness-club-market-reports/ [Accessed 20 Aug. 2018].

Marwick, A. (2013). "Online Identity." In Hartley, J., Burgess, J. & Bruns, A. (eds), Companion to New Media Dynamics. Blackwell Companions to Cultural Studies. Malden, MA: Blackwell, pp. 355-364.

Marwick, A.E. (2012). The public domain: Social surveillance in everyday life. Surveillance & Society, 9(4), 378–393

Matthew, M. and Martinez, G.M. (2014) "Social Media: A Tool for Innovation". California Management Review, 56(4): pp. 124-143.

MNT (2014) "What is body image?" [Online]. MNT. Available from: http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/249190.php [Accessed 13/06/18].

Mobolade, O., 2016. How to market effectively to Millennials. WARC, pp. 1-6.

Moore, M., (2012) Interactive Media Usage among millennial consumers, *Journal of consumer marketing* Vol 29 (6)

Mount, M., and Martinez, M.g., (2014). Social Media: a tool for open innovation

Mudge, A.R., and Shaheen, R., (2017). Native advertising influencers and endorsements: where is the line between integrated content and deceptively formatted advertising.

Murtagh, E. M. et al., 2015. Prevalence and Correlates of Physical Inactivity in Community-Dwelling Older Adults in Ireland. pp. 1-11.

Myers, K.K., and Sadaghiani, K., (2010). Millennials in the workplace: A communication perspective on millennials, organizational relationships and performance. *Journal of Business Psychology,* 25, 225-238

Ngai, E.W., Taoa, S.S., and Moon, K.K. (2015). Social Media research: Theories, constructs and conceptual frameworks. *International journal of Information Management,* 35(1), 33-44

Ngak, C., 2012. Instagram launches online profiles. CBS News, November 5, 2012. http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-205_162-57545371/instagram-launches-online-profiles/

Nordqvist, C. (2012). What is Body Image?. In Medical News Today. Retrieved March 13, 2013, from http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/249190.php

Nueman, W.L. (2006). *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches .* 6th edition. USA: Pearson Education.

Palfrey, J., and Gasser, U., (2008). *Born Digital: Understanding the first generation of digital natives.* New York: Basic Books.

Parveen , F., Jaafar, N.I., Ainin, S. (2016). Social Medias impact on organizational performance and entrepreneurial orientation in organizations 54:9

Perloff, R.M., Tripp, M.M., and Harvey, P. (2002). Factorial and construct validity of the body parts satisfaction scale-revised: An examination of minority and nonminority women. *Psychology of women quarterly.*

Pew Research Centre. (2010). *Millennials:* A Portrait of generation next-confident. Connected, Open to change. www.pewresearch.org/millennials.

Phillips B. J. (2005). Working out: Consumers and the culture of exercise. Journal of Popular

Prichard I, Drummond C, Drummond M, Tiggemann M. Images of inspiration? The effects of viewing different types of #Fitspo images on mood, body image and exercise behavior. Youth Health Conference; 2015; Melbourne, Australia. 2015.

Psychology Today. (2018). Body Image | Psychology Today. [online] Available at: https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/basics/body-image [Accessed 12 Jun. 2018].

Qualman, E., (2013) Socialnomics: how social media transforms the way we live and do business. 2 nd ed. New Jersey: Wiley.

Quinlan, C. (2011) Business Research Methods. Hampshire, UK: Cengage Learning EME

Rosenberg, M. (1965). Society and the adolescent self-image. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Rosenthal, M., 2014. How Marketers Can Weigh in On Weight Loss. [Online] Available at: https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/articles/how-marketers-can-weigh-in-on-weightloss.html

Sassatelli, R. (2010). Fitness Culture Gyms and the Commercialization of Discipline and Fun. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Saunders, M., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A. (2012). Research Methods for Business Students. 6th ed. Essex: Pearson Education Limited.\

Senft, T. M (2013). Micro celebrity and the Branded Self. Published Online: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Schivinski, B. and Dabrowski, D. (2015), The impact of brand communication on brand equity through Facebook. *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing 9(1): 31-53*

Schultz, D.E. and Peltier, J. (2013). Social media slippery slope: Challenges, opportunities and future research directions. *Journal of research In interactive marketing,7* 86-99

Scott, S. (2011). *Total institutions and reinvented identities*. London, United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan.

Scott, D. M., 2013. The New Rules Marketing and PR : How to Use Social Media, online video, mobile applications, blogs, news releases, and viral marketing to reach buyers directly. 4th ed. s.l.:John Wiley & sons Inc.

Shen ,B. and Bissell, K. (2013) Social Media, social me: A content analysis of beauty companies' use of Facebook in marketing and branding. *Journal of promotion management* 19(5): 629-651.

Sinek, S. (2017) Millennials in the workplace. [Online] Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5MC2X-LRbkE

Smith, P. and Chaffey, D. (2008). EMarketing excellence. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.

Smith, T. (2009), The Social Media revolution. *International Journal of Market Research* 51(4): 559-561

Smith, K.T. (2010). Work-life balance perspectives of marketing professions in generation Y. *Services Marketing Quarterly* 31, 434-447.

Sprotles, G.B., Kendall, E.L., (2016), A methodology for profiling consumers decision making styles.

Statistics and facts on Health & Fitness Clubs. (2015). Retrieved from https://www.statista.com/topics/1141/health-and-fitness-clubs

Stern, M. (2011). Real or Rogue Charity? Private Health Clubs vs. the YMCA, 1970- 2010. Business and Economic History, On-Line, 9.

Stern M. (2008). The fitness movement and the fitness center industry 1960-2000. Business and Economic History On-Line, 6(1), 1–26.

Strubel, J, Petrie, T, & Pookulangara, S 2018, ''Like' me: Shopping, self-display, body image, and social networking sites', Psychology Of Popular Media Culture, 7, 3, pp. 328-344, PsycARTICLES, EBSCOhost, viewed 8 August 2018.

Tang, L., (2017), Mne Your Consumers or Mine your Business: The Moderating Role of Culture in online Word-of Mouth reviews. *Journal of International Marketing* Vol.25 No.2

Tapinfluence (2017) what is influencer marketing? https://www.tapinfluence.com/blog-what-is-influencer-marketing/.

Tapscott, D. (1988). Growing up digital: The rise of the next generation. New York: Mcgraw-Hill

Thompson, J. K., van den Berg, P., Roehrig, M., Guarda, A. S., & Heinberg, L. J. (2004). The sociocultural attitudes towards appearance scale-3 (SATAQ-3): Development and validation. International Journal of Eating Disorders, 35, 293– 304

Thompson, J. K., & Stice, E. (2001). Thin-ideal internalization: Mounting evidence for a new risk factor for body-image disturbance and eating pathology. Current Directions in Psychological Science, 10, 181–183.

Tiggemann, M., and Zaccardo, M. (2015). "Exercise to be fit, not skinny": the effect of fitspiration imagery on women's body image. *Body Image.*

Time. (2018). http://time.com. [online] Available at: http://time.com/4646135/why-you-really-need-to-join-the-gym/ [Accessed 9 Aug. 2018].

UPS (2015), "UPS pulse of the Online Shopper" research report. http;//www.pessroom.ups.com/assets/pdf/pressroom/fact%sheet/2015_domestic_pulse_of_the_online_shopper_executive_Summary.pdf.

Vadakkepatt, G., and Joshi, A.M., (2015). A Meta-Analysis of Electronic word of mouth Elasticity

Valkenburg, P., Peter, J. and Schouten, A. (2006) "Friend Networking Sites and Their Relationship to Adolescents Well-Being and Social Self-Esteem". CyberPsychology & Behavior, 9(5): pp. 584-590

Valos, M.J., Habibi, F.H., Casidy, R., Driesener, C.B., and Maplestone, V.L., (2016). Exploring the integration of social media within integrated marketing communication frameworks: Perspectives of Service marketers. *Marketing Intelligence and Planning,* 34 19-40.

Weber, J., (2017). Discovering the Millennials personal Value Orientation: A comparison to two managerial populations.

Weber, J., (2015) Discovering the Millennials personal values orientation: A comparison to Two managerial populations

Weinberg, T. (2009) *The new Community Rules: Marketing on the social web. New York: O'Reilly.*

Westerman, J.W., Bergman, J.Z., Bergman, S.M., and Daly, J.P (2012). Are universities creating millennial narcissistic employees? An empirical examination of narcissism in business school students and its implications. *Journal of management education, 36, 5-32.*

Wirtz, J. et al., 2013. Managing Brands and customer engagement in online brand communities. Journal of Service Management, 24(3), pp. 223-244.

Williamson, W. and Parolin, B. (2013) "Web 2.0 and Social Media Growth in Planning Practice: A longitudinal Study". Planning Practice and Research, 28(5): pp. 544-562

Wong, K. (2014). The explosive growth of influencer marketing and what it means to you. http://www.forbes.com/sites/kylewong/2014.

Woolf, J. (2008), "Competitive advantage in the health and fitness industry: developing service bundles", *Sport Management Review,* Vol.11 No.1, pp.51-75

World Atlas. (2018). The Richest Countries in Europe. [online] WorldAtlas. Available at: https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/the-richest-countries-in-europe.html [Accessed 19 Aug. 2018].

Wright, B.K., Williams, A.S., Byon, K, K., (2017) Brand marketing via Facebook: An investigation of the marketing mix, consumer-based brand equity, and purchase intention in the fitness industry

Xu, C., Ryan, S., Prybutok, V. and Wen, C. (2012), "It's is not for fun; an examination of social network site usage", Information & Management, Vol.49, pp. 210-217

Xu, Lizhen, Jason A. Duan, and Andrew Whinston (2014), "Path to Purchase: A Mutually Exciting Point Process Model for Online Advertising and Conversion," Management Science, 60 (6), 1392–412.

- Xu, C., Ryan, S., Prybutok, V. and Wen, C. (2012), "It is not for fun: an examination of social network site usage", Information & Management, Vol. 49, pp. 210-217.

Zanette, M. C., Brito, E. P. Z., and C. M. (2013). New influentials: An exploratory study on blogs. Journal of Direct, Data and Digital Marketing Practice, Vol.15, pp. 36-46.

Zeigner, S. (April 15, 2009). The Effects Media Has on Teenagers Body Image. In Love to Know Teens. Retrieved February 27 2013, from http://teens.lovetoknow.com/The_Effects_Media_Has_on _Teenagers_Body_Image.

Zhu, Fend and Xiaoquan Zhang (2010), "Impact of Online Consumer reviews on sales: The Moderating Role of product and consumer Characteristics," *Journal of Marketing 74 133-48*

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Interview Template Guide

Are you a member of a gym?

Do you use the gym you are a member of?

When did you begin attending the gym?

What motivates you to attend the gym?

Do you use the gym regularly? how many days a week?

What is the reason you attend/don't attend the gym?

Do you believe the reason you attend the gym is partially because of social media?

Does the gym you attend use social media to interact with members? If so what type of content do they use?

Does the content you view on social media encourage you to attend the gym?

Do you use social media?

When did you begin using social media?

What social media platforms do you have at the moment and actively use ?

How often do you find yourself using social media?

Can you recall an advertisement that made you want to attend the gym/workout?

What is the main reason you use social media?

Can you give me an example of products you have bought because of bloggers/ fitness influencers?

Has content posted across social media made you want to live a healthier lifestyle/ increase activity levels?

Do you follow fitness influencers online? why?

Which platform do you follow these influencers on most?

Do you feel these fitness influencers encourage you to work out or go to the gym?

What type of influencer content motivates/ encourages you?

Do you tend to follow female or male fitness influencers?

Appendix 2 - Sample Interview Transcript

Participant A   31/07/18

Interviewer: Are you a member of a gym?
interviewee: Yes, I have recently jumped back on the bandwagon after a few months off.

Interviewer: Do you use the gym you are a member of?
Interviewee: Yeah, because for my job I don't really have a set roster and I can literally be working any hour of the day I do find it harder to go but I make sure I go 3-4 times a week and if I can't make the gym ill always try and get out for a walk with my mom or friends.

Interviewer: When did you begin attending the gym?
Interviewee: I have been a member of a few gyms, I'd say I started going to the gym when I was about 18/19.

Interviewer: What motivates you to attend the gym?
Interviewee: Hmmm.. I'd say my main motivator to go is to get that dream body I've always wanted haha, oh and to improve my level of fitness.

Interviewer: Do you use the Gym regularly? How many days a week?
Interviewee: I usually try and go 3-4 times a week.

Interviewer: What is the reason you attend/ don't attend the gym?
Interviewee: Well the reason I go is to keep fit and improve my appearance and the main reason I don't go is because of my busy work schedule. Recently I have begun going to the gym with one of the girls and my younger sister so that makes going a lot more fun and we motivate each other if one of us is not feeling up to it.

Interviewer: Do you believe the reason you use the gym is partially because of social media?
Interviewee: Yes!!! Definitely my Instagram feed is constantly covered in skinny models or celebrities like the Kardashians which is definitely a motivator for me to get up and out to the gym.

Interviewer: Does the gym you attend use social media to interact with their members? If so what type of content do they use ?

Interviewee: Yes, they use Facebook to post their timetables and often share client stories and pictures. I think it's a good way to keep clients as well as using the platform for advertising the programs available and the results that those programs can achieve.

Interviewer: Does the content you view on social media encourage you to attend the gym?

Interviewee: Yes, I think it is a major factor of the reason I go to the gym, we all want to look and feel good and share photos whereby that is the case whether it be a night out or a selfie.

Interviewer: Can you recall a post/ advertisement that made you want to attend the gym/workout?

Interviewee: Hmmm… I follow a number of Irish bloggers like Sian Walton and Siobhan O'Hagan and quite often they'll post affiliated advertisement posts which have something to do with gym clothes or protein products. those posts can be quite encouraging and motivating to go to the gym.

Interviewer: Do you use social media?

Interviewee: Yes of course! I think I'm addicted to it at this stage.

Interviewer: When did you begin to use social media?

Interviewee: Oh god it has been years, I think I was about 15 when I first started using the likes of Bebo . I think social media and the reasons people use it have changed a lot since those days.

Interviewer: How do you think it's changed?

Interviewee: Well like nowadays people are using social media to make money, like for instance all the bloggers and You tubers. When I first started using it, it was a way people could contact their friends or family. I also think that people overshare and care too much about what they post across their profiles rather than just living in the moment, it's like when you go to a concert and someone is taking snapchats of the gig, that annoys me so much, why pay so much for a ticket and then just stand or sit there on your phone.

Interviewer: What social media platforms do you have at the moment that you actively use?

Interviewee: Them all!! Haha no I mainly use Instagram, Snapchat and Facebook. I used to have a Twitter account but I got bored of it. I use Facebook and Instagram for work to share client photos or share any free appointments I have.

Interviewer: How often do you find yourself using social media?
Interviewee: Honestly more than I should, I'm always on my phone going from one platform to the next. I'd say I spend around 3 or 4 hours a day on social media which I think is terrible but I just can't help it.

Interviewer: What is the main reason you use social media?
Interviewee: Hmmm… well I use it for work but also to catch up on any news, contact friends or to get fashion inspiration. I think it's also such a good way to get motivated like I said earlier for the gym and a healthy lifestyle.

Interviewer: What do you like/dislike about social media?
Interviewee: I don't like the nastiness that can be seen across it. I don't know if you saw but recently there was a page called 'bloggers unveiled' on Instagram which originally started out as calling out bloggers and influencers that were falsely advertising or just being unethical in general. Well after a few months it just became a platform for slagging and belittling people. The page used to call out bloggers for photo shopping how they looked which I think was a major eye opener for not only myself but for younger girls who are constantly trying to look like their favorite blogger. On the other hand though I can't help but feel sorry for those that have been caught altering the way they look using their laptops.

Interviewer: Which platforms do you use more than others?
Interviewee: Hmmm I'd say I use Facebook and Instagram more, I used to use snapchat an awful lot but since they got that new update a few months ago I think a lot of people were turned off it and as well Instagram has basically all the same features that Snapchat has so I don't see the point in using both.

Interviewer: What do you believe motivates you to use your favorite social media platform?
Interviewee: I think it depends on the platform that my friends are using to post and share. I also love the photography side of Instagram and the fact that so many celebrities have accounts.

Interviewer: From your experience do you think social media has an effect on men and women, in terms of their body image satisfaction and how they believe people see themselves?
Interviewee: Of course!, I think especially in the last number of years social media has had a huge effect on young girls and girls who are exposed to constant images of the 'perfect body'. As I am in the makeup and beauty industry I see a lot of young girls who have already at such a young age invest in cosmetic procedures such as Lip fillers and Botox. To be honest I find it quite sad that they think they have to inject themselves with the likes of lip fillers in order to 'look better' and feel accepted. It was Kylie Jenner who I believe started

that trend of Lip Fillers in young girls and even brought put her own makeup line of lip kits.
I think the content posted on social media definitely plays a major role in the way people feel about themselves.

Interviewer: What is your opinion on bloggers/ micro-celebrities?
Interviewee: Hmmm.. well I follow quite a few and do enjoy their content but I find It so obvious when they are getting paid to advertise products and that can be a bit misleading and annoying at times. I think it's great that they can make a living and a very good one from social media but I don't know if it will last to be honest as there is a sense of dishonestly from them. As I mentioned earlier there's a lot of pages pooping up which are attempting to damage bloggers and with the new laws brought it they have a lot more responsibilities.

Interviewer: Do you follow fitness influencers online? why?
Yes, I follow them mainly for motivation reasons and to get tips and tricks for the gym or healthy eating.

Interviewer: Which platform do you follow these influencers on most?
I follow them on Instagram and Snapchat but with the new updates on Snapchat I don't watch them as much on that.

Interviewer: Do you feel these fitness influencers encourage you to work out or go to the gym?
Yes, they are great motivation and also great for learning different exercises in the gym.

Interviewer: What type of influencer content motivates/ encourages you?
I really enjoy workout videos or short clips, it's a great way to learn about different exercises for different parts of the body… I think Emily Skye is the best for sharing her workouts.

Interviewer: Do you tend to follow female or male fitness influencers?
Ehh definitely just female influencers, I would presume the workouts male fitness influencers share would only specifically be for men ..

Interview4er: How do you feel when bloggers you follow share sponsored posts?
Interviewee: Like I said it can be quite annoying and it's hard to tell if they genuinely like a product or if they are just being paid in some form to speak or show it across their profiles. I have to admit though in the past I have purchased a lot of the stuff they show on their platforms.

Interviewer: Could you give me some examples of such products you have bought because of bloggers?

Interviewee: Well for instance Siobhan O'Hagan who is a female fitness blogger always posts about MyProtein and I ended up giving it a try not only because of her but my trainer at the time recommended I introduced more protein into my diet so I thought I would give it ago.

Interviewer: Were you happy with the product?

Interviewee: Yes, I have continued to buy it and that's one blogger who I believe is genuine when it comes to standing by products that are good quality. I've also use discount codes that are shared by bloggers for certain brands which are handy, who doesn't love a discount.

Interviewer: Do you find yourself following/interacting with fitness pages i.e. your gym social media pages?

Interviewee: Hmmm yes and no, I interact with my own gyms Facebook page and I follow a few fitness bloggers but I don't really comment on their posts. If there's a competition running then I will usually share the post or follow the steps to enter. There's a protein and supplement shop called Body First nutrition and I always enter their competitions.

Interviewer: Do you follow athletes/ fitness bloggers on social media?

Yes, I follow mainly female fitness bloggers and maybe one or two athletes

The ultimate motivation though for me is Khloe Kardashian, her workouts she[posts make me want to go to the gym.

Interviewer: Has content posted across social media ever wanted you to live a heathier lifestyle/ increase activity levels?

All the time! I follow Rosanna Purcell and the Happy Pear and they always make me want to become vegan, I actually tried it but only lasted a week.

Interviewer: What is your opinion of people being 'influenced' by bloggers/ social media stars?

Interviewee: There's two sides to it in my opinion, I think it's great when bloggers and social media stars are genuine and honest but then I think those who alter their images and perceive themselves to be something they themselves are not, are just giving negative messages to especially younger audiences. I also think that those who have such a big following can share important messages and raise awareness.

Can you recall a time where an influencer raised awareness about an important topic?

Yes, a while back RSA Ireland ran a campaign with a number of Irish social media stars such as Rob Lipsett and TheMakeupFairy where they posted a number of times across their channels a demonstration of how to wear your safety belt properly.

Interviewer: Do you think that campaign was successful?
Interviewee: Yeah, in my opinion it was especially so that younger audiences can see that it 'cool' to wear your safety belt. After all if they are fans of such bloggers and are willing to buy the clothing or makeup that they use than they are more than likely to catch on to that campaign also.

Interviewer: Can you recall a time where you may have been influenced?
Yes, just recently I bought a pair of runners that one of the bloggers that I can't actually remember who it was showed on their Instagram stories with a link attached to buy them. I'm pretty sure they were from Zara.

Interviewer: What is your opinion on the content posted by fitness/ lifestyle influencers across social media?
Interviewee: Hmmm.. at this stage I don't think too much about it although I do think that some of them especially the female fitness influencers show a bit too much skin for social media.

Interviewer: What is your opinion on digitally altered images posted on social media, i.e. Photoshop?
Interviewee: I am completely against it and it's so obvious to tell when a photo has been altered.

Interviewer: Would you agree that digitally altered images have an effect on body image satisfaction of those who are exposed to such images?
Interviewee: Absolutely, I think it's become a huge issue in today's world and there's so much pressure on young people to look a certain way and live a certain life. I also think it's not just social media its advertising and marketing in general.

Interviewer: Would you ever find yourself comparing the way you look to images you see on social media?
Interviewee: Yes initially I would but then I have to remind myself that image is more than likely touched up in some way.

Appendix 3 – Figure 1

Social Media Fitness Influencer Rob Lipsett's Collaboration campaign with Raw Gyms Dublin.