

Factors Affecting the Use of Personal Training Services in the Syracuse, New York Area

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Executive Summary

One of the main assets Blink Fitness boasts is the personal training service. Blink Fitness offers flexible 30 or 60-minute sessions with personal trainers who are NCSF and NASM certified, and the company goes to extensive lengths to make sure these trainers are educated and supported so that they can provide the best customer satisfaction to their clients. However, a concern brought up by the Blink Fitness Liverpool team was the use of their qualified trainers by their gym members.

Under Blink Fitness' monthly personal training plan, a single session with a personal trainer is approximately the same price as an entire month under a regular Blink gym membership. This makes personal trainer plans a very lucrative department for Blink. Our research team decided to hone in on this aspect to see which part of a personal trainer is most attractive to the target customer.

The research we have conducted on previous studies reveals why many do not use a personal training service at whatever gym they attend. The main disincentives are reported to be cost, negative feelings regarding their bodies' condition, a lack of education about what to expect from the service, a fear of injury, and apprehension about commitment. Our survey was designed to shed further light on these deterrents presented in previous research, except catered to our target population in the Syracuse area.

This report discusses the results of the survey to determine how Blink Fitness of Liverpool can best advertise and improve its personal training service to be used by the most people. Data were collected through an online survey with 91 respondents. The survey was posted on social media channels, sent to peers and family members of the research team and shared with the Blink Fitness of Liverpool management team.

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Background and Objectives of Research

There are a plethora of aspects and components that make some gyms more popular than others. Whether it be the amenities offered at the gym, the location, or even the price, each is a factor that affects a customer's loyalty, as well as amount of clientele. One amenity that could set Blink Fitness apart from other nearby fitness facilities, as well as attracting customers, is its personal training service.

The personal training service could enhance the experience of future gym members, guaranteeing their return and use of the service. Our research team believes that by conducting a survey involving community members and their opinions on personal trainers, and/or on a personal training service, we can provide Blink Fitness with an advantage over other local gyms in the area.

Our research can help improve the personal training service at Blink Fitness as well as increase use of the service itself. From this study, our research team learned about why some people prefer to use personal training services, and for those who do not, what would incentivize them to use the service.

Research Question

Why people do or do not use personal training services, and what would incentivize them to do so?

Public(s) and Concepts

The target public studied were those in the age group of 18-45 with medium income. These publics also show interest in events that involve physical activity, perhaps meaning they themselves are active as well, or are interested in becoming active. Both of these scenarios would help Blink Fitness because it means they are currently in a gym now, but if given the right incentive, would change to Blink Fitness; or they could be interested in joining Blink Fitness after learning about it. Our goal is to reach a key audience and help Blink Fitness provide their customers with a quality gym experience supplemented by a personal training service.

Literature Review

Personal training is a \$9.3 billion industry in the United States and is growing by about 3% each year. The overall gym and fitness franchise industry is also experiencing consistent growth at about 5% annually over the last five years (Cohen 2018). However, the industry as whole must compete heavily with cheaper do it yourself options, such as watching videos online, which takes up a lot of space in the area of instructional

exercise. Since cheaper alternatives are often chosen instead of paying for a personal trainer the main target market in the personal training industry are individuals between the ages of 35 and 64. At this age individuals tend to have more stable and disposable income than younger fitness enthusiasts.

The personal training industry has a very high level of competition. It is estimated that there are just under 600,000 personal trainers working in the United States. This tough competition has made it very important for personal trainers to focus on a niche market. For example, focusing on training people who need rehabilitative exercise after an accident or offering dietary training programs would be ways to service a specific market in the industry. In addition to taking advantage of opportunities in niche markets there are several other key success factors in the industry. According to IBISWorld's industry report for the personal training industry the four most important key success factors for the industry are as follows.

Ability to effectively communicate and negotiate: Personal trainers should have excellent communication skills to attract and retain clients.

Receiving the benefits of word of mouth recommendations: Having an effective training program, which encourages word-of-mouth recommendations and referrals, is a key factor of success for personal trainers.

Easy access for clients: A high profile or convenient location that offers easy access and parking can provide a competitive advantage for industry operators.

Ability to effectively change community behavior: Industry operators should have the ability to change a customer's lifestyle and attitude towards working out.

Additionally, to differentiate from competition, it is important for companies to invest heavily in promotional campaigns as well as marketing and other outreach efforts. This is especially important during the early stages of a franchise opening (Cohen 2017).

Taking a look the reasons people hire trainers as well as why other individual do not pay for personal trainers is helpful in determining how to best incentivize the target market to begin using a personal training service. The main deterrents for using a personal training service are cost, feeling too out of shape, not knowing what to expect from the service, fear of injury, and fear of commitment. Overall, lots of people who don't want to use personal trainers seem to feel this way do to a lack of understanding of the service and what they can expect the experience to be like.

The main reason that people do use personal training services include factors such as wanting to look good, wanting exercising to be a more emotional and exciting experience, and wanting to have an expert opinion. Another major factor in the use of personal trainers is that clients often are drawn to the therapist like relationship they have with their trainer. Having this person of trust who helps them achieve goals draws a large appeal to the practice, making the attitudes of a company's personal trainers important (McGarry, 2012).

Another interesting benefit of using a personal trainer is the effect that using such a service has on individuals attitude towards weight training. The School of Health Promotion and Human Development, University of Wisconsin, USA conducted a study that showed after using a personal trainer for several weeks individuals attitudes towards physical activity improved (Mcclaran, 2001). This shows how personal training has the potential to create long term customers and create positive feelings towards going to a gym.

Overall, from reading about the personal training industry as well as some of the grievances and advantages of having a personal trainer a lot can be learned about how to best market the service. Doing further research into what specific factors prevent or encourage individuals to use a personal training service will be beneficial in furthering this understanding in getting more people to use such personal trainers.

Methods

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine who is interested in personal training, why they may or may not be, and what would encourage them to use personal training services. This report can be used to determine how Blink Fitness may improve its personal training services and encourage more people to use the service.

Subjects

The target population was between the age of 18-45 with a medium income, as this is the demographic that Blink usually focuses on . Possible subjects either currently belong to a gym or personal training service, or are interested in possibly joining one.

These individuals were selected through sharing a survey through the use of social media. 91 people responded to the survey through platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and emails. The survey was also shared with the management team of the Liverpool Blink Fitness so that they could share the survey through their channels.

Representativeness

The sample was fairly representative of the target population. 83% of respondents were between our target age of 18-45 (Figure 1). Out of the 90 responses for the gender of the participants, 63% were female and 37% were male (Figure 2). The survey was posted on social media in places that aimed to get responses from the greater Syracuse area.

Figure 1

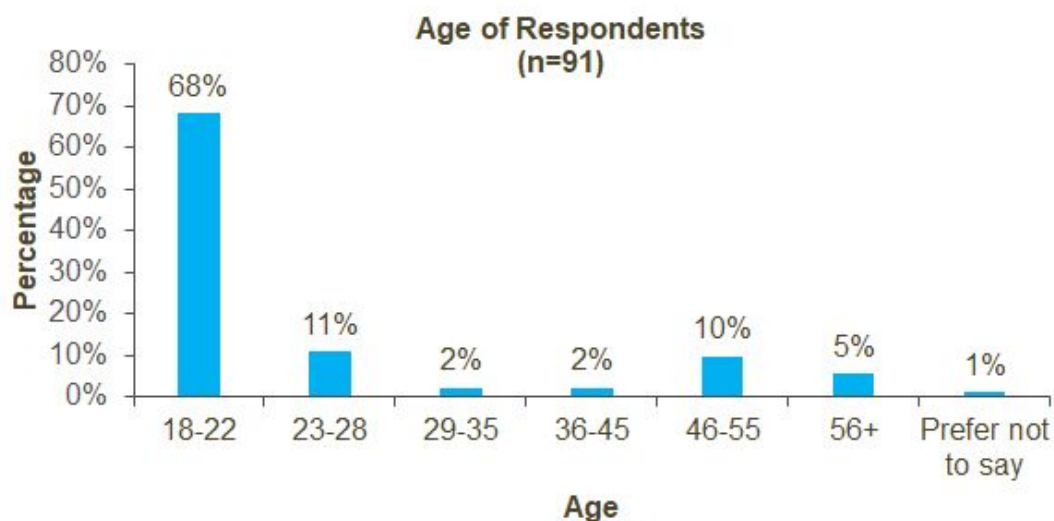
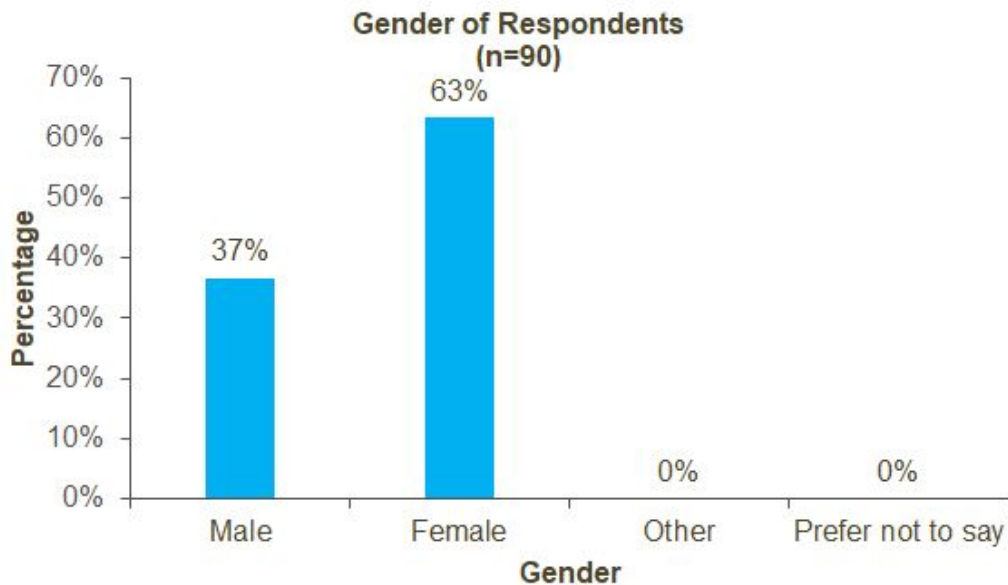


Figure 2



Data Collection

Data was collected through the survey (found in Appendix I) developed by the research team. Questions were developed to guide the subject through a series of questions, asking about personal fitness, gym habits, interest in personal training services and what the subject looks for in a personal trainer. Furthermore, the survey sought to determine why the subject would or would not use a personal trainer, how much they would be willing to pay for a trainer, and general demographic information such as age and gender.

Concepts were operationalized by whether or not the subject used a gym or a personal trainer in the past or currently uses a gym or personal trainer, 5 possible different factors for not wanting to use a personal trainer, 7 different ranges for how much a subject would be willing to pay for a personal trainer, 7 age ranges and gender, with the option to opt out of the age and gender questions.

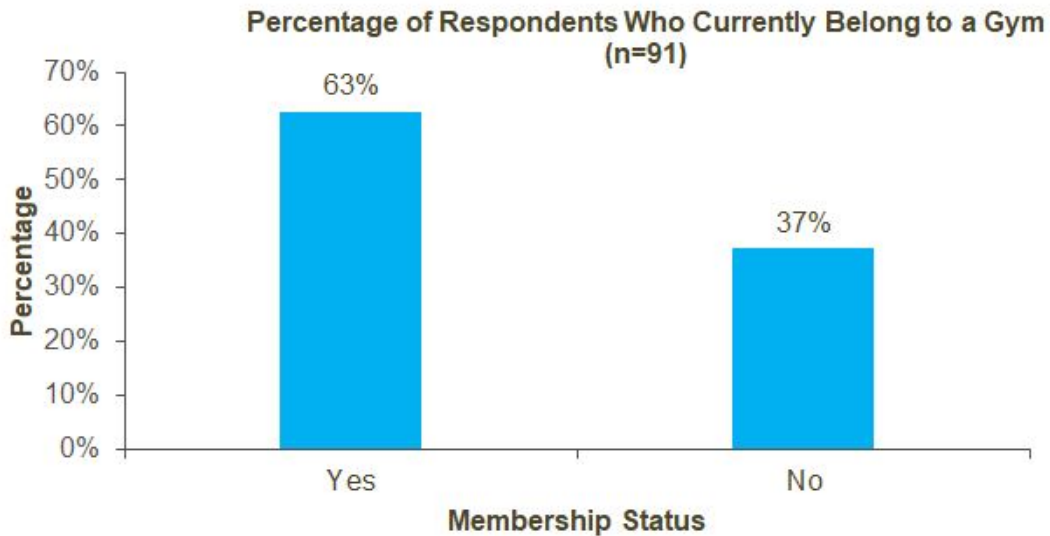
Analysis Techniques

After the survey closed, the research team analyzed the data to understand different habits for those who have gone to the gym or used personal trainers and those who have not. Responses to these questions gave valuable information to the research team about the subject's individual experience with personal training. This information was then used to form a recommendation for Blink Fitness to best position its personal training services. Demographic information was used to understand what different ages and genders prefer for personal training as well as what factors prevented them from using this service.

Further analysis of the survey results also informed the research team of why people choose not to use personal trainers and how much people would be willing to pay for personal trainers. These results will help Blink Fitness understand why clients may choose not to use the personal training service.

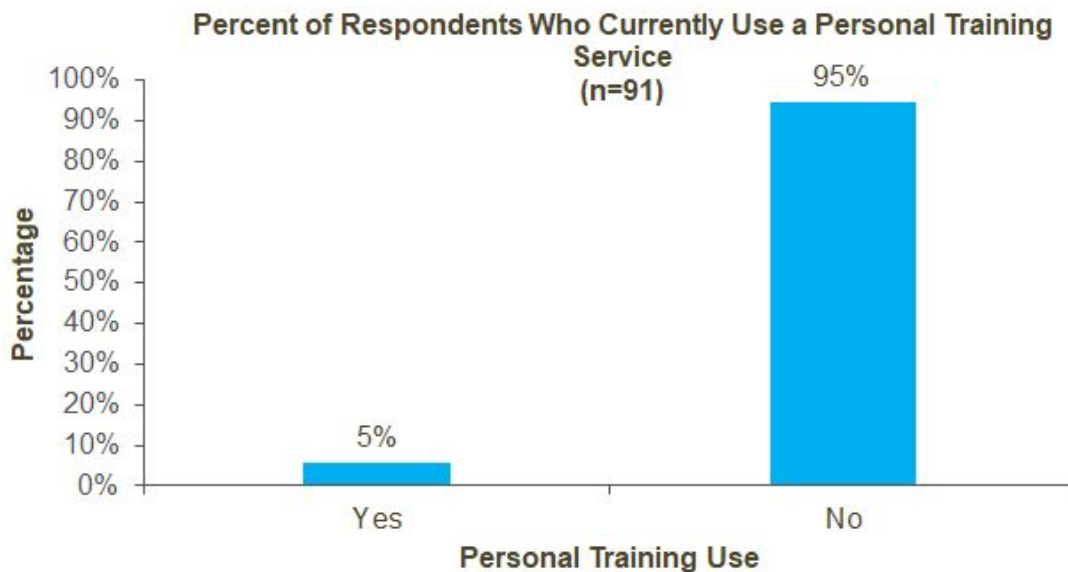
Findings

Finding 1: 63% of respondents said they currently belong to a gym.



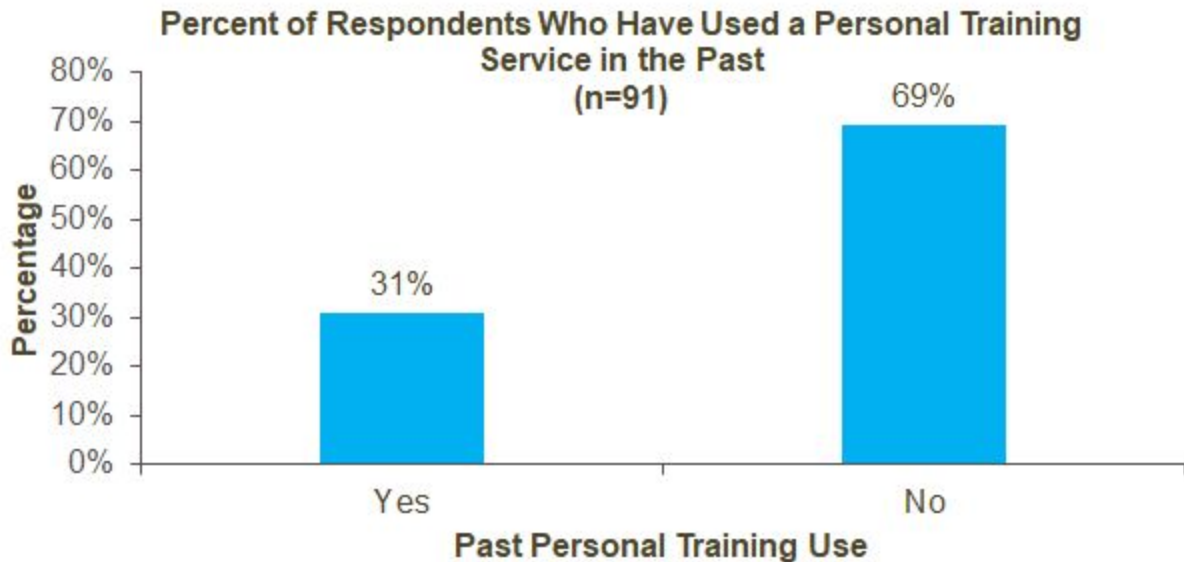
Source: Data collected for Blink Fitness by Sarah Kelly, Yena Kim, Ben Nordwick and Michelle Velez, PRL315: Public Relations Research, Syracuse University, December 2018.

Finding 2: 95% of respondents said they currently do not use a personal training service.



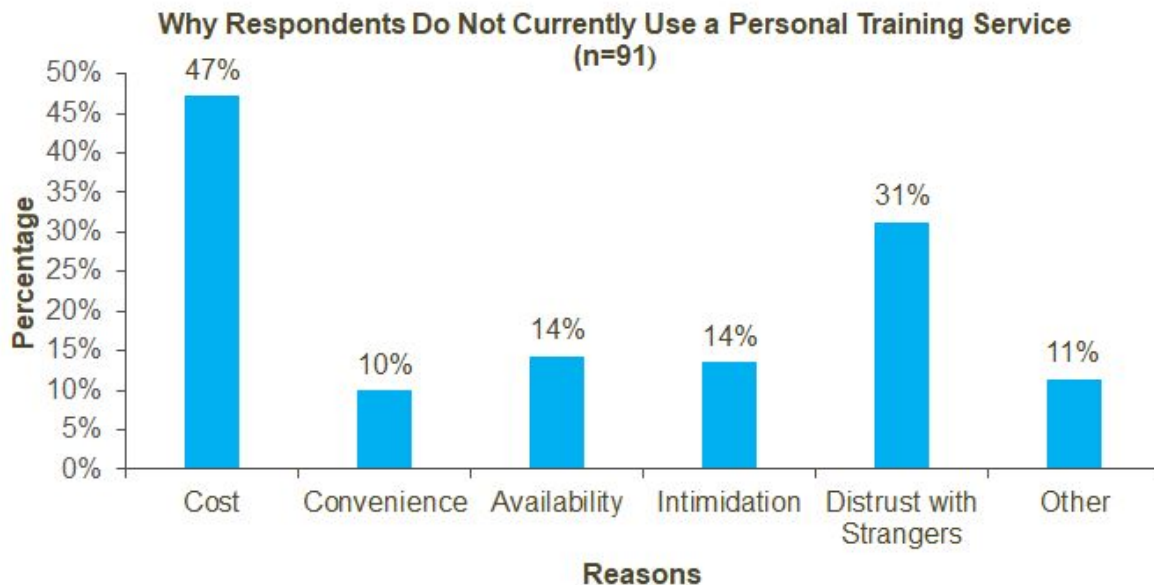
Source: Data collected for Blink Fitness by Sarah Kelly, Yena Kim, Ben Nordwick and Michelle Velez, PRL315: Public Relations Research, Syracuse University, December 2018.

Finding 3: 69% of respondents said they have not used a personal training service in the past.



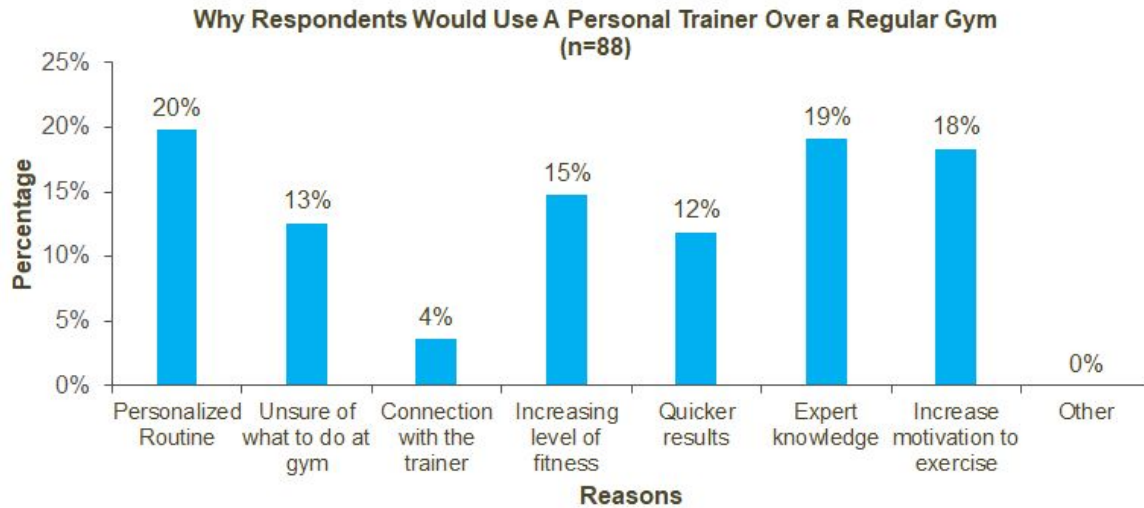
Source: Data collected for Blink Fitness by Sarah Kelly, Yena Kim, Ben Nordwick and Michelle Velez, PRL315: Public Relations Research, Syracuse University, December 2018.

Finding 4: 47% of respondents said cost is a reason for not currently using a personal training service.



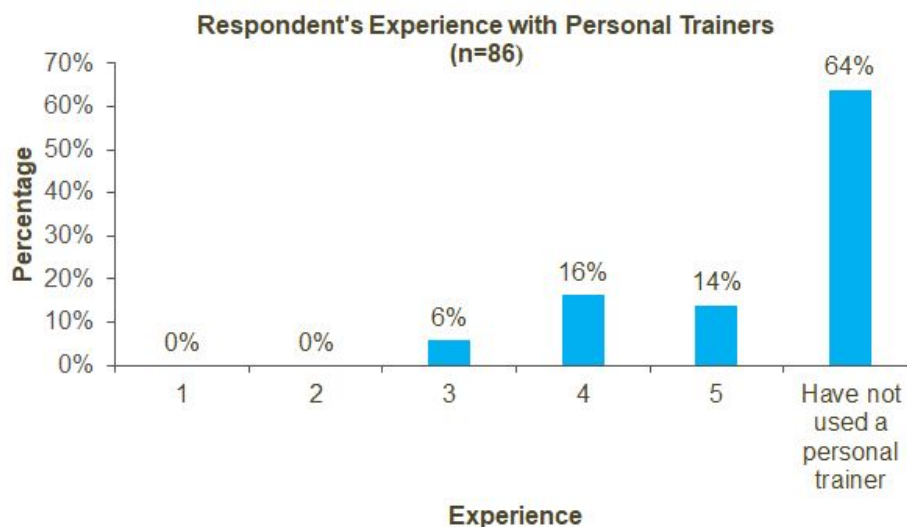
Source: Data collected for Blink Fitness by Sarah Kelly, Yena Kim, Ben Nordwick and Michelle Velez, PRL315: Public Relations Research, Syracuse University, December 2018.

Finding 5: The most frequently selected responses were “personalized routine” (20%), “expert knowledge” (19%) and “increase motivation to exercise” (18%) when describing reasons for using a personal trainer over a regular gym.



Source: Data collected for Blink Fitness by Sarah Kelly, Yena Kim, Ben Nordwick and Michelle Velez, PRL315: Public Relations Research, Syracuse University, December 2018.

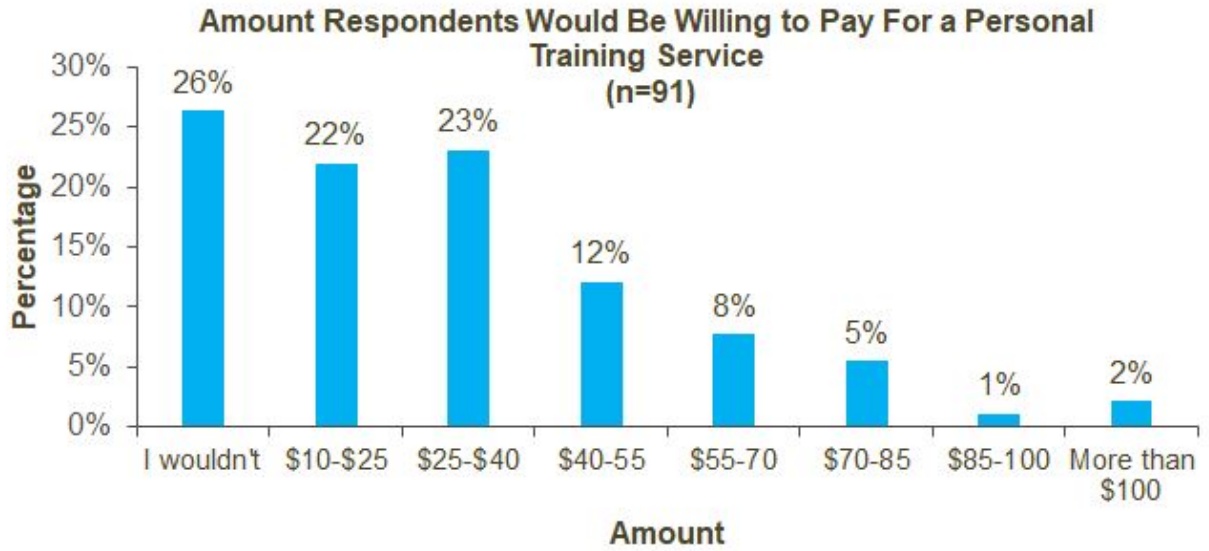
Finding 6: 64% of respondents have not used a personal trainer and could not rate their experience. Of those who have used a personal trainer, 16% rated the experience as a “4” on a 1-5 scale, with 1 being a bad experience and 5 being a great experience.



1-5 Scale, with 1 being a bad experience and 5 being a great experience

Source: Data collected for Blink Fitness by Sarah Kelly, Yena Kim, Ben Nordwick and Michelle Velez, PRL315: Public Relations Research, Syracuse University, December 2018.

Finding 7: 26% of respondents said they would not be willing to pay for a personal training service. 23% of respondents said they would be willing to pay \$25-\$40 for a personal training service.



Source: Data collected for Blink Fitness by Sarah Kelly, Yena Kim, Ben Nordwick and Michelle Velez, PRL315: Public Relations Research, Syracuse University, December 2018.

Finding 8: 24 respondents would not be willing to pay for a personal training service, 20 respondents would be willing to pay \$10-\$25 for a personal training service and 21 respondents would be willing to pay \$25-\$40 for a personal training service.

Gym Membership vs. Cost Willing to Pay for a Personal Training Service

		Do you currently belong to a gym?		Total
		Yes	No	
How much would you be willing to pay for a personal training service?	I wouldn't	13	11	24
	\$10-\$25	12	8	20
	\$25-\$40	14	7	21
	\$40-\$55	7	4	11
	\$55-\$70	6	1	7
	\$70-\$85	2	3	5
	\$85-\$100	1	0	1
	More than \$100	2	0	2
	Total	57	34	91

		Do you currently belong to a gym?
		How much would you be willing to pay for a personal training service?
	Degrees of Freedom	7
	p-value	0.61

**Note: The Chi-Square approximation may be inaccurate - expected frequency less than 5.*

Source: Data collected for Blink Fitness by Sarah Kelly, Yena Kim, Ben Nordwick and Michelle Velez, PRL315: Public Relations Research, Syracuse University, December 2018.

Finding 9: 38 respondents who currently belong to a gym and 28 respondents who do not currently belong to a gym said cost is a reason for not currently using a personal training service.

Gym Membership vs. Reasons for Not Currently Using a Personal Training Service

		Do you currently belong to a gym?		Total
		Yes	No	
If you don't currently use a personal training service, why not? (Check all that apply)	Cost	38	28	66
	Convenience	5	9	14
	Availability	11	9	20
	Intimidation	7	12	19
	Distrust with strangers	3	2	5
	Other (please explain)	13	3	16
	Total	51	33	84

		Do you currently belong to a gym?
If you don't currently use a personal training service, why not? (Check all that apply)	Chi Square	11.58*
	Degrees of Freedom	5
	p-value	0.04

**Note: The Chi-Square approximation may be inaccurate - expected frequency less than 5.*

Source: Data collected for Blink Fitness by Sarah Kelly, Yena Kim, Ben Nordwick and Michelle Velez, PRL315: Public Relations Research, Syracuse University, December 2018.

Finding 10: 31 respondents who currently belong to a gym said they would use a personal trainer over a regular gym for a personalized routine. A “personalized routine” was the most frequently selected response for using a personal trainer over a gym (55 respondents), with “expert knowledge” (53 respondents) and “increase motivation to exercise” (51) as the next most frequently selected responses.

Gym Membership vs. Reasons for Using a Personal Trainer Over a Regular Gym

		Do you currently belong to a gym?		Total
		Yes	No	
Why would you use a personal trainer over a regular gym?	Personalized routine	31	24	55
	Unsure of what to do at a gym	18	17	35
	Connection with the trainer	7	3	10
	Increasing level of fitness	26	15	41
	Quicker results	19	14	33
	Expert knowledge	31	22	53
	Increase motivation to exercise	29	22	51
	Other (please specify)	0	0	0
Total		56	32	88

		Do you currently belong to a gym?
Why would you use a personal trainer over a regular gym?	Chi Square	5.83*
	Degrees of Freedom	7
	p-value	0.56

**Note: The Chi-Square approximation may be inaccurate - expected frequency less than 5.*

Source: Data collected for Blink Fitness by Sarah Kelly, Yena Kim, Ben Nordwick and Michelle Velez, PRL315: Public Relations Research, Syracuse University, December 2018.

Finding 11: 47 respondents age 18-22 said cost was a reason for not currently using a personal training service. Cost was the most frequently selected reason, with 66 respondents saying cost was a reason for not currently using a personal training service.

Respondent's Age vs. Reasons for Not Currently Using a Personal Training Service

		What is your age?						Total	
		18-22	23-28	29-35	36-45	46-55	56+		Prefer not to say
If you don't currently use a personal training service, why not? (Check all that apply)	Cost	47	6	1	2	6	3	1	66
	Convenience	11	0	0	0	2	1	0	14
	Availability	16	1	0	0	1	1	1	20
	Intimidation	15	2	0	0	0	2	0	19
	Distrust with strangers	4	0	0	0	0	1	0	5
	Other (please explain)	8	4	1	0	2	1	0	16
	Total	58	9	1	2	8	5	1	84

		What is your age?
If you don't currently use a personal training service, why not? (Check all that apply)	Chi Square	22.66*
	Degrees of Freedom	30
	p-value	0.83

**Note: The Chi-Square approximation may be inaccurate - expected frequency less than 5.*

Source: Data collected for Blink Fitness by Sarah Kelly, Yena Kim, Ben Nordwick and Michelle Velez, PRL315: Public Relations Research, Syracuse University, December 2018.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Our research provided key insights as to why individuals both use and do not use personal training services. While cost seemed to be the largest deterrent from using such a service, totaling 47% of responses, distrust of strangers, availability and intimidation were also major areas of concern making up 31%, 14% and 14% respectively.

In addition to understanding what is preventing the target population from using a personal training service, the survey results also showed what factors would attract these individuals to use a personal trainer. These results were more evenly distributed than reasons for not using a personal training service. Participants in the survey identified a personalized routine, expert knowledge and increased motivation to exercise as the main draws to using a trainer, making up 20%, 19% and 18% of the responses. We believe that focusing on these factors could be beneficial for Blink Fitness' growth of its personal training business segment.

Based on these findings, making changes to cost would be the ideal path of action. While simply lowering the price at which Blink Fitness offers its personal training service may not be a viable option, there are some other solutions to help with the issue of price. This could include attempting to market the service to higher income individuals who do not view cost as a major factor in using a personal trainer. Another potential solution for combating the problem of cost could be offering group sessions for personal training. Not only would this allow for the personal training service to be offered at a lower price point per individual, but it would also increase the profitability of the personal training service for Blink Fitness and help diminish the feelings of distrust of strangers mentioned above. Furthermore, when prompted to specify the "other" reason of why respondents do not currently use personal training services, some respondents said they prefer to exercise in group atmospheres.

Another recommendation that could be beneficial for Blink Fitness would be to increase the social media presence of the Liverpool Blink Fitness' personal trainers. Together, intimidation and distrust of strangers were identified by 45% of respondents as the main reason for not using a personal trainer. We believe that having personal trainers interact with the target market through social media will create a sense of familiarity and increase trust with Blink Fitness trainers. This practice could help the local fitness community get to know the trainers at Blink on a more personal and individual basis. Focusing messages around positivity and feeling good will stay inline with Blink Fitness' values and help lower intimidation and increase trust. It is likely that this would translate directly into increased sales of the personal training service,

especially if the trainers are able to reach individuals who are already members of Blink Fitness or are interested in beginning to use a personal trainer.

One limitation of these recommendations is that the research group has not been able to study the effect of social media presence on levels of trust towards personal trainers. Doing further research on this hypothesized effect could be beneficial in fine tuning the social media campaigns of Blink's personal trainers. Another limitation of the research is that only 31% of the 91 respondents had ever used a personal trainer, limiting the feedback from those who have actually used such a service. Further research could include increasing the overall sample size allowing for more of these individuals to be reached. However, understanding the perceptions of those who have never used a personal trainer is also very valuable in attempting to attract new customers.

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Appendices

Appendix I: Infographic


BLINK FITNESS PRESENTS:

HOW TO PROMOTE YOUR PERSONAL TRAINING services on Instagram!



1. UPLOAD ONLY HIGH QUALITY PHOTOS & VIDEOS


The quality standard on all social media platforms has only been increasing, so people are turned off by lower quality content. High quality content is more eye-catching and people will be more inclined to share them onto their own feeds.



2. POST VIDEOS OF WORKOUT ROUTINES


There is a whole section on Instagram for people looking to add to their own routines. If you post videos of you or your client doing workouts, people will stumble onto your feed after looking to spice up their routines.

**THESE ARE JUST THE BASICS.
LET'S TRY SOMETHING MORE ADVANCED!**



3. MAKE SURE YOUR BIO HAS ALL OF YOUR INFO,

Include the gym you work at, your phone number or e-mail, and any credentials you have at the bare minimum. Remember to identify yourself as a professional personal trainer as people feel more comfortable knowing that you are qualified. This way, when people stumble onto your feed, they have several ways of contacting you easily!



4. BE ACTIVE ON INSTAGRAM.

Follow other popular fitness accounts and use common hashtags. Like other fitness accounts' photos to grow your own community. If a client DMs you a question, answer it immediately. Finally, never post less than 4 times a week! You want to keep your feed fresh and updated.

VISIT BLINKFITNESS.COM TO LEARN HOW YOU CAN BE A TRAINER TODAY!

Appendix II: Measuring Instrument

1. Do you currently belong to a gym?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
2. Do you currently use a personal training service?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
3. Have you used a personal training service in the past?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
4. If you don't currently use a personal training service, why not? (Check all that apply)
 - a. Cost
 - b. Convenience
 - c. Availability
 - d. Intimidation
 - e. Distrust with strangers
 - f. Other: short answer
5. Why would you use a personal trainer over a regular gym?
 - a. Personalized Routine
 - b. Unsure of what to do at a gym
 - c. Connection with the trainer
 - d. Increasing level of fitness
 - e. Quicker results
 - f. Expert knowledge
 - g. Increase motivation to exercise
 - h. Other: short answer
6. If you currently use or previously used a personal trainer, what was your experience like? Please rate on a scale of 1-5, with 1 being a bad experience and 5 being a great experience
 - a. 1
 - b. 2
 - c. 3
 - d. 4
 - e. 5
 - f. Have not used a personal trainer
7. How much would you be willing to pay for a personal training service?
 - a. I wouldn't
 - b. \$10-\$25

- c. \$25-\$40
 - d. \$40-\$55
 - e. \$55-\$70
 - f. \$70-\$85
 - g. \$85-\$100
 - h. More than \$100
8. What is your age?
- a. 18-22
 - b. 23-28
 - c. 29-35
 - d. 36-45
 - e. 46-55
 - f. 56+
 - g. Prefer not to say
9. What is your gender?
- a. Male
 - b. Female
 - c. Other
 - d. Prefer not to say
10. Any other comments you would like to add?
- a. Open-ended

Appendix III: Biographies

Sarah Kelly is a junior at Syracuse University majoring in policy studies and public relations with a minor in Spanish. On campus, Kelly works in the Policy Studies Department and is captain of the women's club ice hockey team. Kelly was born and raised in Albany, New York.

Yena Kim is a senior at Syracuse University double majoring in public relations (emphasis in financial and investor communications) and psychology with a minor in marketing. Born and raised in northern New Jersey, Kim moved to Seoul, South Korea at the age of 10 and graduated from an international high school there. She hopes to start her post-undergraduate career in New York City but is planning on working in many cities in many different industries across the world throughout her lifetime.

Ben Nordwick is a senior at Syracuse University majoring in finance and public relations with an emphasis in financial and investor communications. From a small town in New Hampshire, Nordwick hopes to live in New York City after graduation and work in investment banking.

Michelle Velez is a junior at Syracuse University majoring in public relations, as well as minoring in strategic management. She lives in New York City but aspires to start her career in public relations in Los Angeles, hopefully working in the entertainment industry.



**Factors Affecting the Use of Personal
Training Services in the Syracuse, New York
Area**

Sarah Kelly, Yena Kim, Ben Nordwick, Michelle Velez

Background and Objectives

Background and Objectives

Personal training is a growing industry with large profit potentials for Blink Fitness. Finding the factors that both deter and drive the use of personal trainers will allow for Blink Fitness of Liverpool to best position its service within the Syracuse, New York area.

Research Question

Why people do or do not use personal training services, and what would incentivize them to do so?



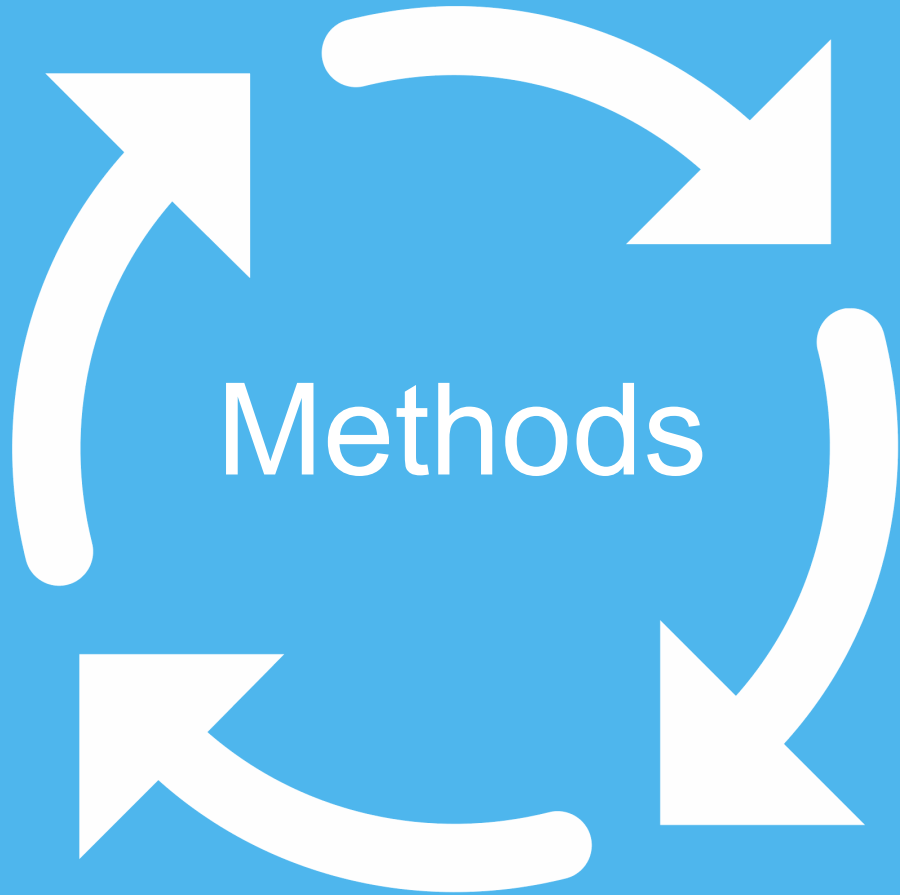
Public and Concepts Studied

Target Public: age 18-45 with a medium income

Concepts:

- Reach the target public who may potentially have interest in using a personal training service or those who already use a personal training service.
- Understand why people do or do not use personal training services





Research Design

Short survey designed to determine who is interested in personal training, why they may or may not be, and what would encourage them to use personal training services.



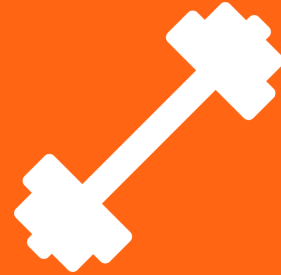
Subjects



- Age 18-45



- Medium income



- Uses a personal training service or has interest in using this service in the future

Data Collection

- 10 question survey
 - Gym habits
 - Past history with personal trainers
 - Deterrents to using personal trainers
 - Price willing to pay for a personal trainer
- Operationalized via set responses for each question with the option to add other factors
- Individuals were selected through sharing a survey through the use of social media. 91 people responded to the survey through platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and emails. The survey was also shared with the management team of the Liverpool Blink Fitness so they could share the survey through their channels.

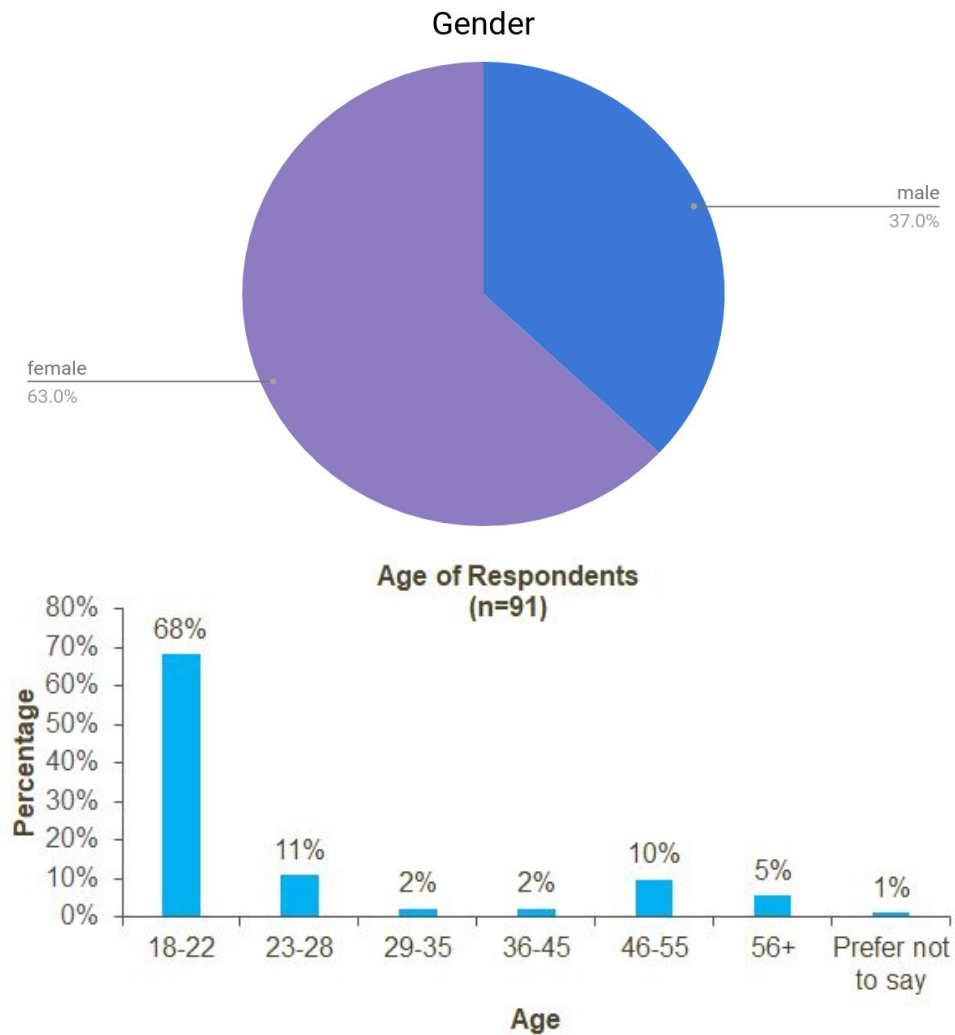
Representativeness

Age:

- 68% of respondents age 18-22
- 11% of respondents age 23-28
- 10% of respondents age 46-55

Gender:

- 63% female
- 37% male



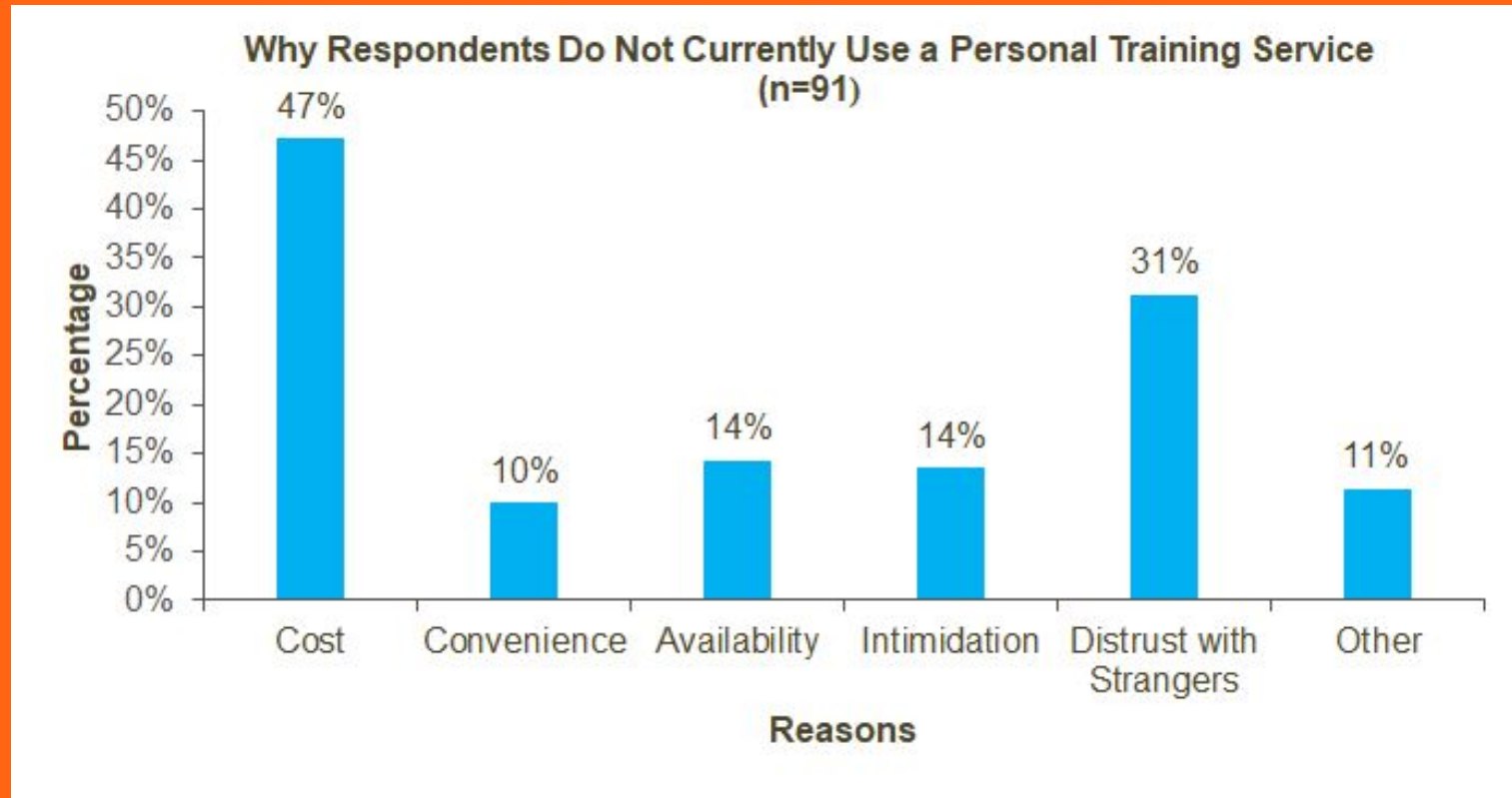
Analysis Techniques

- Option to provide additional answers besides the given multiple choice options to provide subject's personal experience with personal trainers and what they did or did not like
- Determined if there are any differences in gym and personal training use by demographics
- Allows Blink Fitness to understand what different people look for in a personal trainer or why they don't currently use one

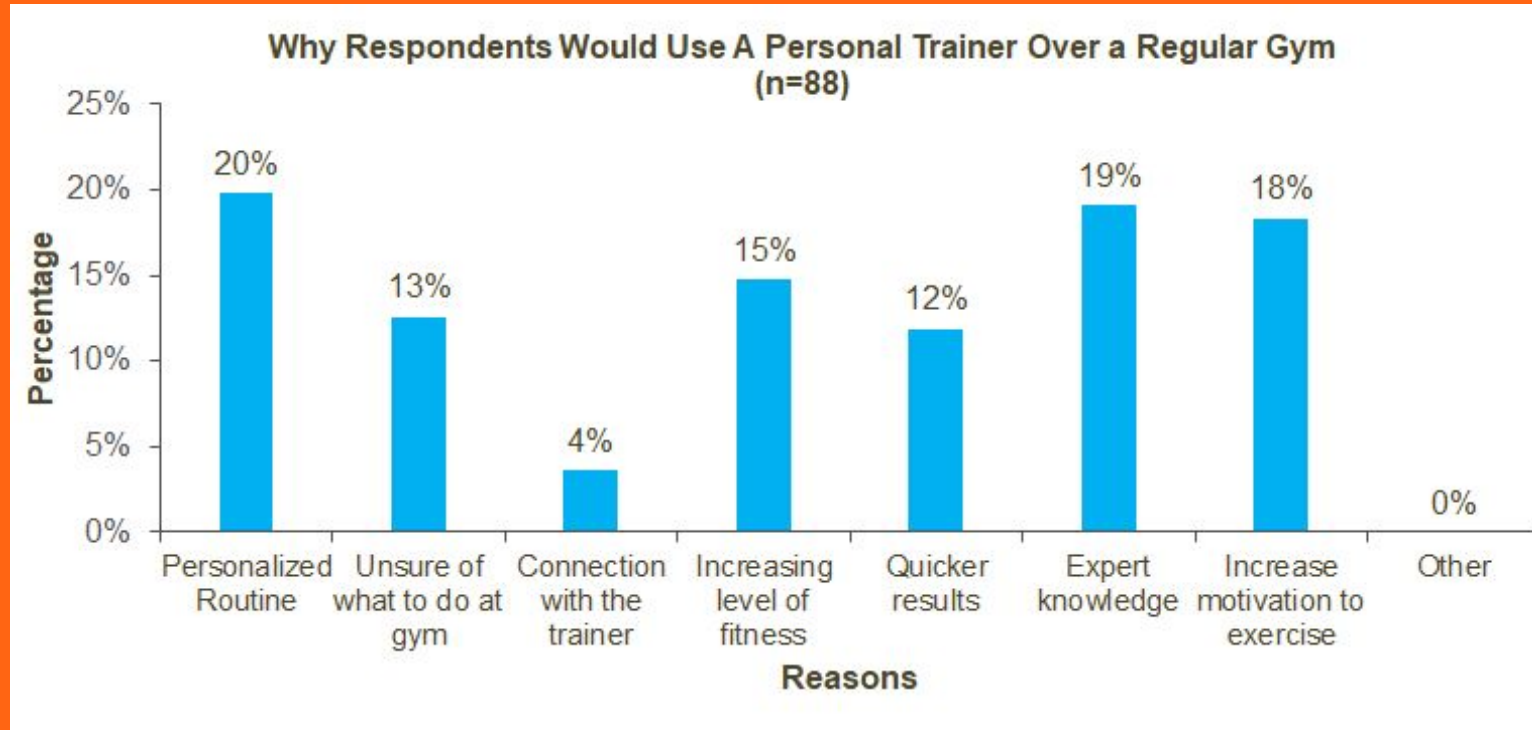


Findings

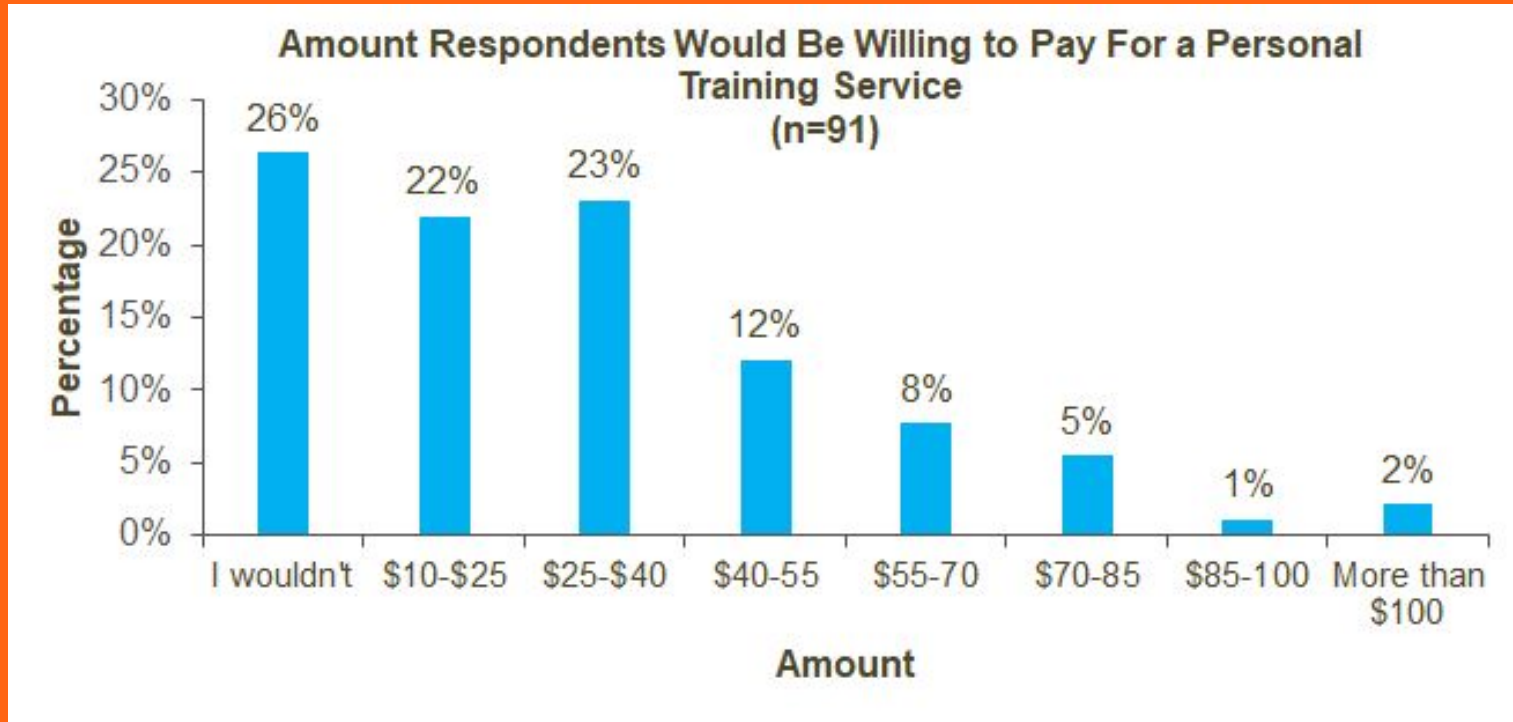
Findings: 47% of respondents said cost is a reason for not currently using a personal training service.



Findings: The most frequently selected responses were “personalized routine” (20%), “expert knowledge” (19%) and “increase motivation to exercise” (18%) when describing reasons for using a personal trainer over a regular gym.



Findings: 26% of respondents said they would not be willing to pay for a personal training service. 23% of respondents said they would be willing to pay \$25-\$40 for a personal training service.





Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion and Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Minimizing the issue of cost for the target population

- Cost was the #1 factor for not using a personal trainer
- Solutions:
 - Focus marketing efforts for personal trainers on higher income individuals
 - Offer group sessions as a cheaper alternative
 - Also helps with issues of trust in strangers by being able to go with friends
 - Lower cost per individual

Recommendation 2: Increasing social media presence of Blink's personal trainers.

- Intimidation and distrust of strangers made up 45% of reasons for not using a personal trainer
- Solution:
 - Have Blink Fitness personal trainers interact with target market on social media
 - Focus message around positivity and feeling good to increase trust and lower intimidation while following Blink's Branding

Thank you!