

2014

# LSM Sports Development – Final Report

Organisational Consultancy Assignment

4/29/2014

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# Organisational consultancy project

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## Executive summary

### *Main findings – research*

Questionnaire trends reveal that traditional sports are becoming less popular among university students, with the shift towards more lifestyle sports and active recreation.

The questionnaire also revealed that the idea of certain sports being associated with specific genders does not always apply to university students.

Finally, the questionnaire revealed that 50% of respondents were dissatisfied with the sporting provision available at the university.

An audit of the available sports facilities and participation opportunities revealed that there are several outlets and providers in easy access range of the students.

### *Audit*

The audit of the facilities and provision around the city revealed a strong trend towards fitness provision, with a lack of traditional team games facilities and clubs within the acceptable proximity areas.

### *Events and media strategies*

The give sport ago event was a success, attracting over 150 students and a variety of sponsors who all gave positive feedback. The event also managed to generate a substantial social media interest, being featured on the LC2 page.

The social media strategies have so far been generally well received, with the exception of the YouTube platform.

### *Conclusions and recommendations*

The main conclusion from the report is that the main barriers to participation were identified as the nature of the provision in Swansea and the awareness of the activities available.

## 1. Introduction

This is the final report for the organisational consultancy project for UWTSD Swansea. This report will present the main findings and analysis of the research undertaken during the project's duration. The purpose of this report is to analyse the percentage of the students in the university who regularly participate in sport, the barriers that prevent students from regular participation, and what demand there is for alternative forms of active recreation. The report also highlights the strategies that were undertaken in the wake of this research in order to achieve the targets of the project, which are described below.

## Project aims

- To investigate the current demand for sport amongst UWTSD students
- To Audit the existing provision of activities around Swansea
- To attempt to utilise events and social media to counteract these barriers

## 1.1 Literature Review

In regards to student participation, there are several sources of literature available to build a hypothesis of the most effective methods. One of the most applicable pieces of existing research, in that it directly relates to the aims of the project, is the Sport England Active Universities research (2013). In this report, the research has highlighted several key trends in regards to student participation in sport, with various barriers to participation, such as proximity, costs and sociological factors, all being discussed in detail. These barriers are well documented, and range from practical, tangible factors such as provision, proximity and price (National Audit Office , 2010), to more sociological factors such as gender (Delaney & Madigan, 2009) (Hamil et al, 2012). This research also provides a series of case studies with examples of mitigating factors, which can be applied to facilitate universities across the country. One issue to be wary of however, is that some of this information, while relevant, is an assessment of English universities, and therefore some of the issues, resources available and mitigating steps may not translate well to welsh universities.

Research has shown that in the past engaging with university students has been problematic, owing to the large number of distractions in their lives (King, 2002). Recent research by QS Top Universities, a university market research company, yielded that students are more than ever using social media websites and other online platforms as mediums for communication (QS Top Universities, 2013), (The Guardian, 2013). However, for this to be of any use, one has to assume that these data trends directly apply to the UWTSD students.

Recent research has shown that the participation in sports is shifting to accommodate more "Lifestyle" sports (Van Bottenburg & Salome, 2010), such as adventure and street sports. The rationale behind this trend is investigated by Ritzer (2008), who stated that the Instant gratification, or "Mcdonaldisation" (Ritzer, 2008) of the youth culture, is leading to a drop in traditional forms of sports participation. This is reflected in the Sports England Active People survey (Sport England, 2013), which shows that previously popular traditional sports are decreasing in participation. However, these statistics do not necessarily apply to Wales and UWTSD, but the research available for Participation by sport in Wales sporadic when compared to sport England, with the most recent Active Adults survey at the time of writing this report being undertaken in 2008 (Sport Wales , 2010). For the purposes of this report, the term "Traditional sports" will refer to the sports which are historically associated with mass participation in the UK. These sports are categorised through their reliance on public sector funding, as identified in the European Sports Funding report (Eurostrategies, 2011), and share key characteristics, such as team games(football, rugby) and Olympic sports (Swimming, athletics).

## **1.2 Research Methodology**

The initial phase of the research process was in the form of an online questionnaire, designed and distributed through the online platform SurveyMonkey.com (See Appendices). The questionnaire was designed to gather data about the sport and physical activity preferences of the university students, and utilised a mix of open and closed questions to yield a mix of qualitative and quantitative data (Brace, 2013).

The survey was piloted through a closed group on Facebook, which allowed the responses to be monitored online to detect any anomalies, and also provide a feedback point to fine tune the questionnaire before it was distributed throughout the university. The first iteration of the questionnaire was completed by one student, then the questions were amended to include more quantitative data points, and limited answer questions, to save time on the final analysis of the data, and provide clearer trends and cross reference points. The second iteration was piloted on the wider LETS year 3 group, to which it received four respondents. Obviously this sample size is too small to draw any significant conclusions, so the scope of the questionnaire was extended to include the entire university through the medium of a student wide e-mail channel.

The questionnaire was distributed in its final draught in February, and was redistributed in March to maximise the potential responses.

In order to ascertain the demand from the students first hand, a "Give sport a go" event was set up to gauge how students responded to the different activities on offer. The event utilised local sponsors and activity providers to showcase what was going on around Swansea for students to become more active.

Finally, in order to determine the provision available for the university students, the team undertook an audit of the facilities and providers within the proximity tolerances identified in the Active Universities Research (Sport England , 2013).

## **2. Main findings**

### **2.1 Questionnaire findings**

The questionnaire identified the following trends in quantitative data:

The majority of respondents to the questionnaire were female, with 62.5% of majority. However, this does not reflect the actual statistics of the university, as there are more male than female students in the Swansea campuses, at 53% and 47% respectively (Student Guide Book, 2014). This could mean that females have a greater propensity to take part in questionnaires than men, and as such, may affect the validity of the results, and should be taken into consideration when analysing the rest of the data.

The most prevalent age group among the respondents was 18-24 years old; with a majority of 62.5% this is line with the universities statistics on student numbers, with only 27% of undergraduates that are mature on entry (Student Guide Book, 2014).

75% of all the respondents were enrolled on a sports related course (Appendice 1). This could be due to the linkage between the content of the survey and the nature of sporting courses. However, this means that the sample size for the questionnaire is disproportionately weighted in favour of this particular student group, and thus may affect the quality of the data (Brace, 2013).

The percentage of students who rarely participated in sport was 43.75%. Of these, 71% were enrolled on sports related courses. This could demonstrate that there is no definitive link between sports courses and propensity to participate. This could be due to the fact that sports students still have to deal with the pressure that non students have to face, as highlighted by Delaney and Madigan (2009).

The most prevalent barrier to participation was lack of free time with 54.55%. The second most prevalent barrier was tied between lack of facilities and lack of disposable income, at 36.36% each. These data points are all linked, as disparities in availability, which would seem to indicate a poor level of provision for students in the area. However, closer analysis of the surrounding area of Swansea has revealed that there are several outlets of sport and physical activity available to students, all within easy access of the university campuses (see appendices), which could eliminate that particular barrier (See Audit below). The next factor is the cost of participation, which involves travel costs, admission fees, facility hire, equipment and a range of other supplementary factors which make up the total cost of participation.

The qualitative data from the questionnaire revealed the following:

The most prevalent sports played by the participants of the survey were all fitness and lifestyle based, with running, swimming and fitness (Gym) activities all scoring highly. This trend could be seen as the reflection of the activity provision around the university campuses, with low cost fitness gyms being extremely prevalent in the town centre (See facility audit below). This would also account for the rising trend in lifestyle sports identified in industry research (Sport England, 2013), and the relative lack of "Traditional" University sports, such as rugby, football and hockey from the survey data.

The one exception to this trend was the popularity of netball, which was the only "Traditional" sport to rank highly. This could be as a result of the high percentage of female participants in the survey, as netball is traditionally seen as a feminine sport (Hamil et al, 2012,).

The survey found that the most prevalent reason for taking part in sport was enjoyment, with 32%. The second most prevalent factor was to keep fit, or improve health, which ultimately reflects on the previous preference for fitness and lifestyle based sports identified in the survey, and also in industry research (Kokolakakis et al, 2012).

The sport that was in most demand was football, with 23% of respondents choosing this sport. At first glance this might seem to contradict the earlier research which stated that traditional team games were in decline. However, when cross referenced with gender, the survey found that the traditional team sports were in demand from the female participants, with 70% of female respondents opting to choose traditional team games. Meanwhile, 50% of all male respondents all chose individualised sports, such as swimming and badminton. What this demonstrates is that the

drop in football participation could be due to a shift in the traditionally male participant base to individualised sports, whilst females are tending to choose team orientated games. In terms of the UWTSD project, this means that providing sports participation is likely to be gender sensitive, and the appeal that each sport has to each gender will be based on its team or individualised structure.

Finally, the questionnaire found that 50% of respondents felt that the provision of sports at the university was poor. Of these respondents, it is worth noting that either the sports they played regularly or the sports that they wanted to try were not provided by the university, which could be a reason for their rating.

## **2.2 Give sport a go event**

The event was organised in an attempt to evaluate the demand for different sports among the university students. The event attracted approximately 150 students, and also managed to attract several sponsors, including branded names such as the LC2 Swansea, Water sports 360 and local providers of martial arts, roller derby and commercial retail. The event was promoted using social media platforms, as per the initial project plan, and was featured on Bay leisure's twitter feed.

The event was also used as a vehicle for coach education for the university students who are enrolled on coaching courses, giving them an opportunity to practice and be assessed on delivering coaching sessions on a variety of sports.

In order to capitalise on the recent trend towards lifestyle and fitness activities identified in the earlier research, the team drafted in a parkour (Free running) instructor and Fitness instructors to deliver to the students. These instructors were all university students, so the costs were kept at a minimum.

An evaluation of the student audience revealed that the vast majority of them were all involved in or enrolled in sports courses at the university. The trend revealed in the questionnaire showed that sports students do not necessarily participate regularly in sports participation, so the event still provided a good opportunity to help achieve the project aims of raising participation.

The feedback from the external sponsor companies was mostly positive, with all of the companies stating that they would be happy to work with the university again in the future. From this, the project's aim of building partnerships with existing companies was achieved. However, criticism of the event was that there was a lack of female participants at the event.

## **2.3 LSM Team planning sessions**

The LSM development team used the Lecture slots on Mondays to plan the events and strategies described in the Project Initiation Document. The planning process for the event is described below, and took place over two weeks leading up to the event on the 11<sup>th</sup> of February. The planning for the meeting took place in meetings and via the social media forums that were set up, including LinkedIn and Facebook.

#### **Monday 27<sup>th</sup> January – LSM lecture slot**

Theme of event was decided, goal of raising participation and sponsor engagement. Specific sponsor's targets delegated to various team members. Event venue and timings, settled on LC2 in week commencing 10<sup>th</sup> February, as it coincided with university RAG week. Delegated social media marketing strategy to various members of development team.

Marketing strategy finalised; logo and branding incorporated into posters and flyers (see appendices 4).

Monday 10<sup>th</sup> February – Final Brief on event for instructors and marshals. Clarification of event set up times and sponsor attendees.

#### **2.4 Social media strategies**

As per the Project initiation document, and on the recommendations of the Sport England research (Sport England , 2013), the project utilised social media platforms in an attempt to engage with the students.

Facebook™, Twitter™ and YouTube™ were all selected as part of the social media marketing strategy. The Twitter™ Strategy allowed the team to develop partnerships with external organisations and people, as when the LC2 featured the Give sport a go event on their Twitter feed. The Facebook page was utilised to directly interact with the students groups to raise awareness for the event, as well as signposting other activities. YouTube was intended to feature videos regarding the performance teams of the University, in order to raise their profile. The channel also linked in with the facebook and twitter strategies to further promote the events around Swansea by subscribing to different channels.

## 2.5 Audit of Activity provision

The map below illustrates the availability of Sports and activity participation opportunities within the proximity identified within the active universities research (Sport England , 2013).



UWTSD Campuses -



Fitness Facility -



Parks (Outdoor facilities) -



Catchment areas -



As the audit shows, there is a distinct dominance of fitness provision throughout the city, with provision of conventional sports falling way outside of the acceptable catchment areas for the UWTSD campuses. This reflects the trends revealed in the questionnaire, and could account for the popularity of fitness and lifestyle sports in those students who do regularly participate, whilst also defining a barrier for those who wish to engage in other activities.

### 3. Conclusions

In hindsight, the research methodology for the project ultimately reflected the risks and limitations identified in the project contract. Even despite utilising the methods of student engagement that research dictated would be the most effective, the fact is that the survey only yielded a small sample size, and as such, this must be taken into account when forming conclusions from the data. From the literature review, one of the more prominent social media networking sites was found to be twitter rather than face book, and maybe this platform would have yielded a larger audience to gather data.

From the survey results, the key trends reveal the type of activities programming that is most likely to appeal to the students, activities that are enjoyable, involve health related benefits and do not conform to historical stereotypes. What this demonstrates is that the literature surrounding student participation in England is indeed transferrable to the students at UWTSD, and therefore the solutions for their barriers to participation also have a good chance of working for Welsh students.

The audit of the facilities revealed that even though there are several participation opportunities available for the students, there is still a problem concerning regular participation. As the audit highlighted, proximity and price were not the issue, so it follows logically that the main barrier is either the nature of the activity or lack of awareness. Given that the main motivation for participation identified in the questionnaire was enjoyment, it could mean that the types of activities on offer do not appeal to the students at the university.

Ultimately, the marketing for the event was flawed, in that only one specific group of students was targeted, which accounted for the limited demographic and the sponsors complaints. Also, this does not meet the aims of the project overall, as the aim was to engage with the entire student demographic of the university. Marketing theory (Withey & Lancaster, 2013) dictates that the marketing for the event should be compatible with the targeted audience, given that the target audience was so broad, the marketing strategy should have been less specifically targeted at sports students.

The planning process for the event was also problematic, with sporadic meetings and reliance on social media channels of communication. There are several strategies available to implement to make this process more efficient, identified in the sports development guidance from Quest (2013).

#### Recommendations

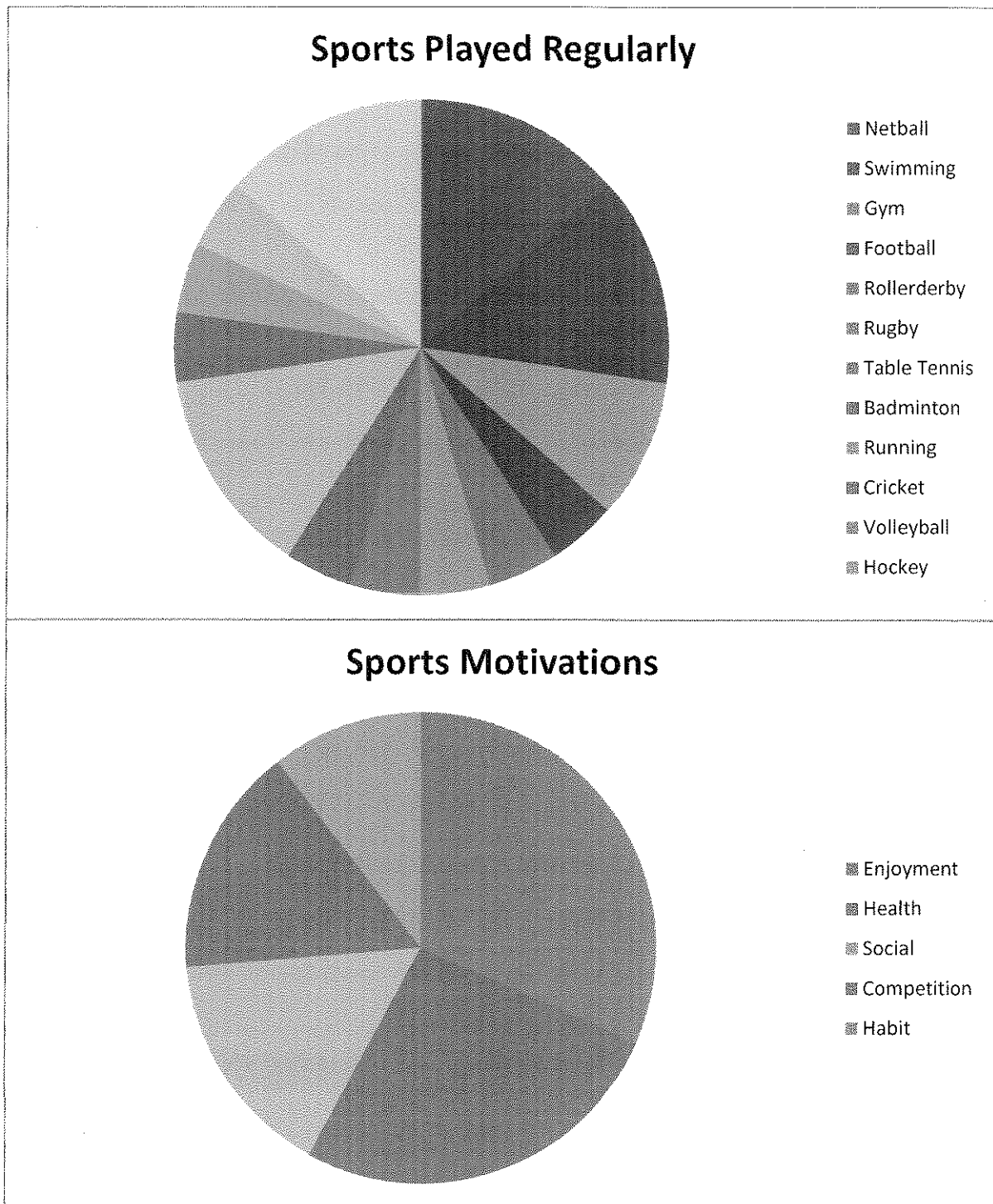
1. The team should look to develop and build upon the partnerships fostered through the give sport a go event, in order to develop the participation opportunities to meet the student demand.
2. The team should make use of the Quest sports development guidance (2013) in order to streamline and improve the planning and communication for the events.
3. Continue to utilise the social media platforms to raise awareness of participation opportunities around Swansea.

## 4. References

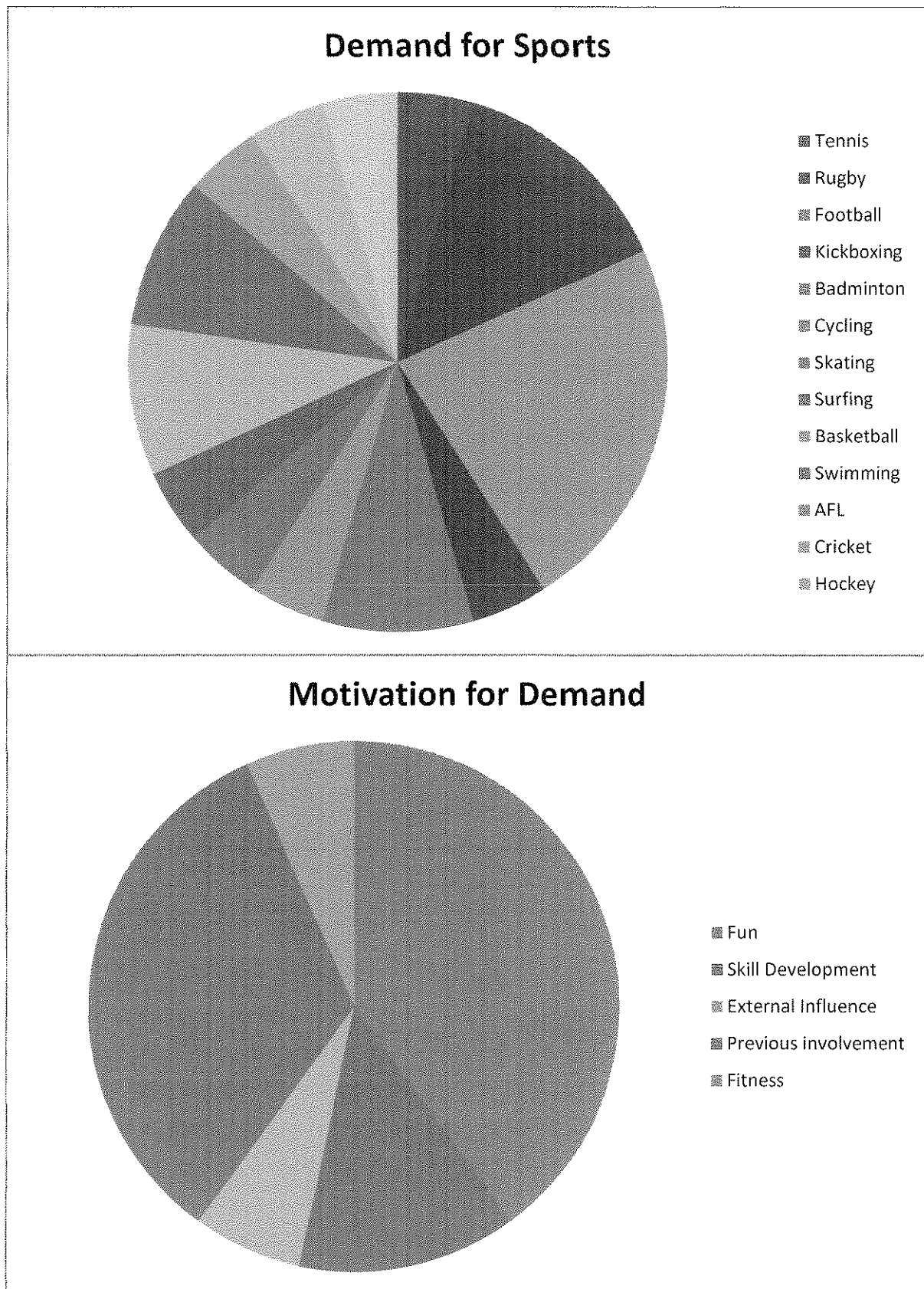
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## 5. Appendices

### 1. Qualitative analysis data



2.



3.

**Questionnaire Example**

**PAGE 1**

**Q1: What is your age?**

- 18 to 24

**Q2: What is your gender?**

- Female

**Q3: Is the course you are on sports related?**

- Yes

**Q4: How often do you play sport?**

- Rarely (Less than 60 minutes per week)

**Q5: If you do not regularly engage in physical activity, which of these barriers to regular participation most relates to you?**

- Lack of facilities close to you

- Lack of free time

**Q6: What sport do you play?**

Netball

**Q7: What motivates you to play this sport?**

Enjoy playing it

**Q8: Would you be interested in trying another sport? If so, which one?**

I have always wanted to be able to play tennis

**Q9: What is your reason for wanting to try this sport?**

Looks fun

**Q10: How would you rate the provision of sporting opportunities at the University?**

- Excellent

4.

