Women and girls in Sportivate

Are women and girls more likely to be sustained in team sports or individual sports and activities within the Sportivate programme?
Overview

**Introduction**
This case study will firstly consider previous research, national trends, history and the social impact of female participation in team and individual sports. The online survey results (collected for this case study), together with this research and the Sportivate Annual Evaluation data, will serve to prove or disprove the theory that team sports* are more likely to sustain young women and girls in sport than individual sports within the Sportivate programme. The survey also gives a snap shot of the Sportivate sustainability success rate 6 months to 2.5 years after Sportivate.

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*For the purpose of this study, we defined team sports as sports that can ONLY be played in a team rather than any sport that COULD be played in a team. 27 sports were classified as team sports, 59 sports were classified as individual sports or activities.
**National trends**

Athletics, cycling and swimming are the top three most popular sports/activities for women on a weekly basis across all age groups.

Netball and football are the only team sports in the top 20 most popular activities list – #11 and #15 respectively.

16-24’s and over 65’s are the only age groups that recorded a decrease in participation amongst women. All other age groups increased.

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**Sportivate trends**

Netball, football and basketball are the top three most popular sports for women/girls on a weekly basis.

Gym/fitness & dance, are the two most popular activities.

As can be seen above, more team sports are played through Sportivate than amongst women and girls as a whole. Netball and football are the most popular team sports across the board, however they are played with far greater frequency within Sportivate than amongst the wider population. In both settings women and girls are most likely to take part in individual sports and activities.
Some people argue that the masculine image of team sports has inhibited women from participating in them for a long time. It is quite a recent event that women’s team sports began to develop and professional organisations of those sports emerged. In women’s professional sports, individual sports such as golf and bowling have much longer histories than team sports.

The Women’s Sport and Fitness Foundation (WSFF) identified that only 5% of sport media coverage is for women’s sport and research from the charity revealed that women’s sport receives just 0.5% of all commercial sponsorship, while only one in five board members of national governing bodies are women.
Team vs individual sports

Not only are there fewer team sports to take part in than individual sports, but the profile of the role models in individual sports is significantly higher than the profile of those taking part in team sports.

This means that inspiring and encouraging young women and girls to take part in team sports is even harder than for individual sports and activities.

Images were found using a Google Image search
Sportivate female participant survey

**Method:**
- We identified 20,812 female Sportivate participants, who took part in the programme in year 1 or year 2 and who agreed they were happy to receive further contact.
- We reviewed the sports list to define ‘team’ and ‘individual’ sports.
- We devised a simple questionnaire to capture an understanding of current participation, 6 months – 2.5 years after taking part in Sportivate.
- We circulated the same questionnaire to two separate lists – one to participants who took part in ‘individual’ activities (n=13,943) and one to those who took part in ‘team’ activities (n=6,869)*
- We analysed the responses as well as using initial data capture information from the portal.

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*27 sports classified as team sports, 59 sports classified as individual sports or activities
Results - Still taking part in sport

+10.4% difference between ‘individual’ and ‘team’

Individual: Are you still taking part in sport?

- Yes: 74.4% (n=215)
- No: 25.6% (n=74)

Team: Are you still taking part in Sport?

- Yes: 84.8% (n=89)
- No: 15.2% (n=16)

*Based on 289 responses
*Based on 105 responses
Results - If not, why not?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Individual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Afraid of getting hurt</td>
<td>n=1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know where sporting groups/clubs are</td>
<td>n=4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sportivate session ended</td>
<td>n=8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I left college/school</td>
<td>n=4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School/college/university work more important</td>
<td>n=12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No time</td>
<td>n=17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too expensive/cost</td>
<td>n=15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Injury/health problem</td>
<td>n=7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No sessions I want to attend*</td>
<td>n=11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No/poor motivation</td>
<td>n=5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor weather</td>
<td>n=3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No sports that I like</td>
<td>n=1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Team</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I left college/school</td>
<td>n=1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School/college/university work more important</td>
<td>n=3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No time</td>
<td>n=6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too expensive/cost</td>
<td>n=1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Injury/health problem</td>
<td>n=4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No sessions I want to attend*</td>
<td>n=2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have given up</td>
<td>n=1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No suitable facilities</td>
<td>n=2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Due to weather, location, time of year and poor facilities, or relocation

High response reason
- Individual
- Team

Low response reason
- Individual
- Team
Results - pre Sportivate activity levels

Individual: Are you still doing sport?

- Yes - 87%
- Yes - 67%
- Yes - 61%

Team: Are you still doing sport?

- Yes - 93%
- Yes - 82%
- Yes - 71%*  

*Based on less than n>30

^This is 6 months to three years after the initial programme
**Data analysis**

Whilst individual and team activity participants termed ‘sporty’ are fairly evenly matched in terms of their likelihood to continue participating, ‘semi sporty’ participants that took part in a team activity are 15% more likely to continue to participate than their individual activity counterparts. ‘Non sporty’ team participants are 10% more likely to continue to participate than their individual activity peers.

**Sustainability**

The most identified reason that girls are no longer taking part in sport across team and individual activities is a lack of time.

Those taking part in both team and in individual sports identified that women’s sport needs to be more accessible and flexible. This was backed up by the feeling that more female coaches are needed and more ‘all female environments’. It should be noted though, that all female environments were a greater priority for those who took part in individual sports than those that took part in team sports.

**Further comments summary - Negative**

Some of the more common reasons, identified by those from individual sports/activities for not taking part in sport did not feature from those that took part in team sports such as ‘the Sportivate sessions ended’ and ‘I don’t know where sporting groups or clubs are’.

The cost of taking part featured much more highly as a limiting factor from those who took part in individual sports than those who took part in team sports.

**Further comments summary - Positive**

The positive comments received from both groups reported that the sessions were fun and enjoyable and they helped build self esteem and improve their well being.

Team sports sustained 10.4% more young women and girls than individual sports. 25.6% of those doing individual sports did not continue to take part in sport.

*pre Sportivate activity level*
One CSP identified that there are fewer team sport activities offered, particularly for those over 16 years old. It was suggested that this could be as a result of sports clubs (the most common team sports setting) preferring to deliver through educational authorities due to the access to participants this gives, especially considering there is performance related pay in operation. Clubs are usually led by volunteers who may not have the capacity to invest the time to attract new participants.

Team sports could offer a greater opportunity for learning due to the coached nature of delivery and the greater technical challenge, perhaps offering a greater feeling of progression and development.

Opportunities to start a new team sport are harder to come by for young people than, for example attending an exercise class at a leisure centre. This could perhaps result in a greater early buy in from the young people attending a team sport activity than an individual activity.

The amount of training and experience a coach has may differ depending on the activity, for example, a level 2 rugby coach, compared to a jog leader. This may alter the level of experience they offer at their sessions and therefore the quality of the sessions.

The social aspect is vital and is often more present in team sport activities. Exit routes for team sport activities are often much clearer than for individual sports and activities, with clubs putting in strong applications with clear outcomes.

Although, as identified in ‘How to Develop a Sporting Habit for Life’, it has been found that longer term, women and girls are more likely to be sustained in individual sports, Sportivate creates the opportunity to offer a specific type of introduction or reintroduction to team sports. Clearly, the way these sports are offered is resulting in greater sustainability up to 2 years after taking part.
What do the experts say?

England Netball have conducted extensive research into who takes part in netball and why and can help us understand what it is about team sports that is sustaining females more successfully. In the development of 10 netball playing market segments, England Netball researchers identified that the key trends keeping all segments in the game are:

* **loyalty, selection** to be part of a team, and that players describe the sport as ‘**part of who we are**’. It was identified that team sports are more likely to be played at school from a younger age so confidence levels are likely to be higher. Team sports with the correct ‘product’ have seen the greatest growth.

Following the in depth customer insight collected, England Netball has invested extensively in creating appropriate marketing material and establishing role models. The steady growth in the number of people playing netball until October 2013 shows that the right product marketed correctly will have an impact.

The Women’s Sport and Fitness Foundation commented that the analysis undertaken by Sport Structures shows that the Sportivate programme is bucking the trend by engaging and retaining girls and young women in team sports. Sport England’s Active People Survey 7 shows that girls and women aged 14 plus are considerably less likely to take part in team sports than individual sports. As girls and young women move through the Sportivate age band they are significantly less likely to participate in team sports – 14-15 year olds have participated in a team sport in the last month this drops to 5.1% for 22-25 year olds*. What we now need to understand is what Sportivate is doing differently in terms of both delivery and communication to successfully sustain participation.

* Active People Survey 7
Recommendations

Consider specifically team sports for those **aged 16 and older** once they have finished in the education setting. How are team sports offered to this age group? How do they find out about the activities?

Use the fact that women and girls **know how to play** many of the team sports, having taken part in school as a way to encourage them to take part.

It’s **loyalty** to the team and being part of something that seems to be the trigger for staying involved – ensure individual sport activities do something to replicate the team environment to help sustain more girls. Ensure there is opportunity to interact within peer groups.

Ensure that team sport activities don’t shy away from **competition**. An exit route that can offer competition at the right level has a greater chance of keeping girls interested as they will continue to achieve progression.

Consider the value of investing slightly more time and resource in **marketing** the team sports activities. If more women and girls take part in these activities the long term prognosis for continued participation is good.

CSPs consulted have seen good success in **lacrosse** projects.

Establish local team sport **role models**, either using local elite performers or providing peer role models from within local team sports.

Use a **competition**, having young people nominate their local team sport hero.

If you have **provider/deliverer meetings**, tell them about the research – tell them what they can do to market their activity and attract girls to their sessions. Help them understand that one size doesn’t fit all in sports development.

Calculate your team sport to individual **activity ratio**. Could it be considered and amended in light of this research to achieve different results for your Sportivate programme?
Key findings - Team vs individual sports

Our literature and culture review says:

Evidence identifies that more women and girls take part in individual activities than team activities.

Women and girls often identify individual activities as activities in which they would rather take part.

Social acceptance, role models and the media directs young women and girls towards individual activities.

Our sample survey says:

Women and girls who took part in Sportivate are 10.4% more likely to be sustained longer term in a team activity environment rather than in an individual sport or activity environment.

What have we learnt:

Whilst individual sports engage, retain and sustain young women and girls with great success and should always be promoted and offered, we should also strive to create opportunities that could give more than a 10% greater yield on sustained participants in Sportivate by investing in team sport activities.

This may require a greater investment in resources such as marketing and raising the profile of role models for these activities, but if achieved could help us achieve better success in long term sustainability.
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