

MARKET RESEARCH BJJ INDUSTRY



October, 2015

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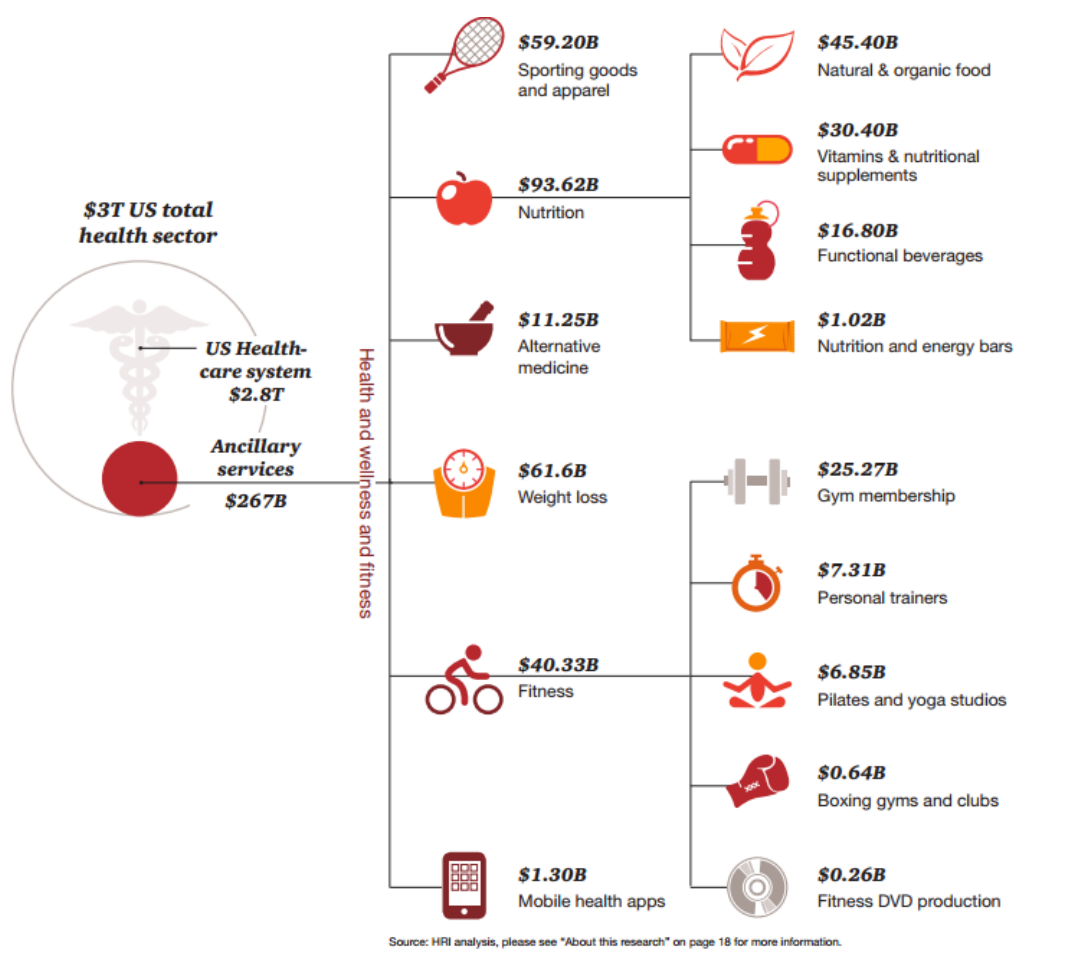
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Where Does Your BJJ Business Fit In A \$2.7 Billion Industry?

BJJ is, first and foremost, a martial art, but still, it has the potential to do more in changing diet, exercise, and general health practices than most doctors' appointments—ask anyone who's lost a significant amount of weight, or changed the way they approach stress since they started training.

I am a firm believer that Brazilian jiu jitsu, in its many offerings, is a part of the healthcare industry—and that it can do more.

I might be biased, since my background is in the money and marketing of healthcare, but I ran across a study today on new entrants into the health and healthcare markets that not only reinforced that point, but also highlighted a potential for growth that I think some BJJ schools and companies will be able to take advantage of.



Source: <http://groundworkbjj.com/articles-and-books/business-in-bjj/bjj-business-fit-2-7-billion-industry/>

What This Means For BJJ

The study is relatively short and has some very useful graphics, but if you don't feel like giving PwC your email or filtering through the 20 pages of results, here are the highlights that hold the most potential for business in Brazilian jiu jitsu.

We're part of a growing industry. The health and wellness market is a \$2.67 Billion dollar industry—a small section of healthcare in general, but large in its own right.

The customer is at the wheel. The industry can be slow to move, but is finally being shaken up by a shift toward consumer-driven business models (meaning listening to your students and customers will become even more important as time progresses.)

Healthcare is moving. The report emphasizes that consumers no longer see health as something that only happens in traditional care settings (doctors' offices and hospitals.) They are now looking at health and health options as something they want to be able to access whenever they need it and wherever they are.

Customers want value from their health options. BJJ is able to deliver on this on levels many organizations struggle with.

Partnerships are essential. Again, BJJ is already solving problems with little effort that frustrate much of the healthcare industry. It may be a difficult tie to make, but your local health community is likely full of entities and organizations looking for new and innovative ways to bring their customers benefits that are inherent in training jiu jitsu.

Consumers want something new. "Consumers are ready to abandon traditional care models for ones that echo experiences in banking, retail and entertainment." No, we're not manufacturing at-home strep tests, but the shift in attitude about health in general, means that consumers are more likely to think creatively about how they integrate health practices into their daily lives.

I have to add, that many instructors, many students even, have zero interest in addressing health through training—understandable, since to many, BJJ is studied as an art unto itself, with purely martial applications. But for those instructors and business owners who are interested in integrating the practice of BJJ into the way their students and customers care for their bodies within a larger system, this study is definitely worth a read.¹

IBISWorld's Martial Arts Studios market research report can be used to help you: understand market size and growth potential; major companies; draft business plans and pitch books; and conduct benchmarking and SWOT analysis.

Market Share of Companies

There are no companies with a dominant market share in this industry

Industry Statistics & Market Size


Revenue

\$3bn

Annual Growth 09-14

1.2%

Annual Growth 14-19

X.X% 

Profit

X.X% 

Employment

56,839

Businesses

8,588

Source: <http://www.ibisworld.com/industry/martial-arts-studios.html>

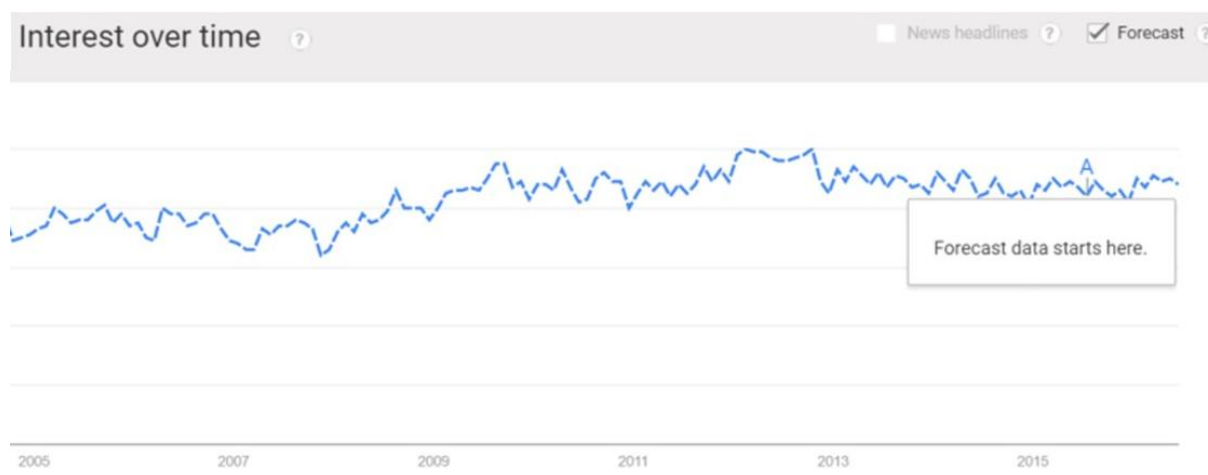
¹ <http://groundworkbjj.com/articles-and-books/business-in-bjj/bjj-business-fit-2-7-billion-industry/>

Martial Arts Studios industry growth was hampered early in the current five-year period as the recession set in and the economy sagged. However, as the economic recovery took hold, rising per capita disposable income propelled consumers to increase spending on fitness, including martial arts instruction, supporting revenue growth. In the five years to 2019, the industry is expected to grow at an even faster rate. A robust economic recovery is expected to endow consumers with higher disposable income levels, enabling them to spend more money on martial arts instruction, particularly costly private lessons.²

According to De La Riva website, jiu jitsu in brazil is the fastest growing individual sport, with 200 thousand practitioner only in the main capitals Rio de Janeiro, Belo Horizonte, São Paulo, Fortaleza (my city), Recife e Brasília. I don;t know how old these numbers are, but based on how fast the sport is growing I would say that it is closer to 300 thousand nowadays. I know for a fact that jiu jitsu here in Brazil is extremely spread, and not at all something that you will find more in the capitals. Tiny countryside cities have jiu jitsu teams and competitions, and i have even travelled to the countryside to compete. Based on this, I would estimate that there are at LEAST 600 thousand practitioners in Brazil today.

Source: <http://forums.sherdog.com/forums/f12/how-many-people-currently-train-bjj-us-worldwide-2488859/index4.html>

Is Jiu Jitsu Growth Flat?



Source: <http://bishopbjj.com/2015/07/01/jiu-jitsu-growth-flat/>

As a digital marketing professional, I spend a ton of time on analytics. I evaluate trends and data to determine how well a campaign, website, piece of media, etc. might perform given the current conditions. I'm also always on the look out for the next technology or subject that will innovate the marketplace.

² <http://www.ibisworld.com/industry/martial-arts-studios.html>

In doing this, I spend a lot of time looking at product or subject growth. One of the best indicators I have found for this is Google Trends. It's a very basic tool, and available to everyone. Almost all savvy digital marketing experts use it, because it gives you a very good idea of a subject or topics popularity, and where it's headed in the future.

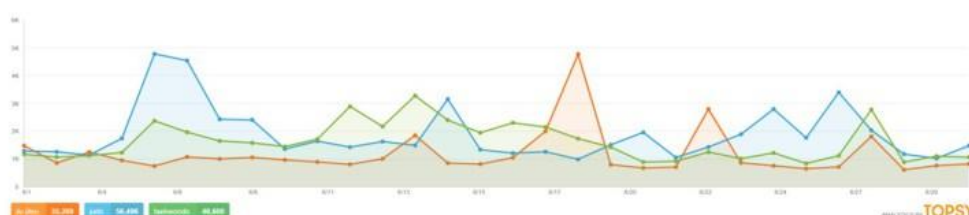
During a recently product development project, we started looking at advanced metrics to evaluate the timeline for popularity of cloud software inside the manufacturing industry. Simple enough, there were a suite of proprietary tools we used to do this. At the end of the project I kept find myself asking. I wonder what jiu jitsu growth would look like if I was to run it through these same filters?

The results surprised me. Based on all of indicators, and confirmed by Google Trends, is the evidence that suggests that jiu jitsu's growth is relatively flat. This can't be so, right? According to social, digital, and popularity data records it is.

Jiu Jitsu really hasn't seen a dramatic rise in popularity in the last 10 years. Although tournaments and organization may have improved, the influx of popularity and new growth simply doesn't seem to be there. It makes sense too. When someone starts jiu jitsu, they may do it for the rest of their life, or they may quit tomorrow, who knows. Over time there will certainly be more practitioners, but that doesn't really mean that growth is increasing. Jiu Jitsu's growth is relatively steady.

Based on subjects of similar scope, it is my opinion that this is likely going to remain fixed. Given all of the cultural and technical innovations that have occurred over the last 10 years, jiu jitsu's growth rate has held very flat. That leads me to believe it is likely to remain this way.

For fun, here's a last 30 days analysis of how jiu jitsu compares with Judo and Taekwondo in popularity using a conglomeration of social metrics.



Source: <http://bishopbjj.com/2015/07/01/jiu-jitsu-growth-flat/>

So what does that say about jiu jitsu long term?

It's unlikely that we see some grand explosion in popularity soon. That would require a spike, and based on the environment of the last 10 years, it's hard to imagine something significant coming along and changing that. That's not to say that the jiu jitsu population may grow; leading to greater innovation of services, tournaments, and practitioners, but it's unlikely to see the mainstream jiu jitsu growth that many are clamoring for.

Some 2012 BJJ Worlds statistics, odds and ends and records³

2642

There are 2,642 competitors signed up for the 2012 Jiu-Jitsu World Championship, set to begin May 31 in California. That's about 400 more than there were at the 2011 installment.

3

Three athletes have a shot at equalling the record set by Roger Gracie, the first and only black belt ever to win three absolute world titles, who will be absent from the contest due to a July 14 fight with Keith Jardine under the Strikeforce banner. The two-time absolute champions signed up for the 2012 Worlds are: Xande Ribeiro (heavyweight) and Rodrigo Comprido and Marcio "Pé de Pano" Cruz (both ultraheavyweights).

1

Though Rubens "Cobrinha" is a four-time world champion and Rafael Mendes has won it twice, the most riveting rivalry of the championship in Long Beach doesn't have much of a tradition at the main Jiu-Jitsu event of the year. If both make it to the final, it will only be the second time Rafa and Cobrinha square off in the final of a World Championship. Their lone encounter in the tournament decider took place in 2010.

357

This year 357 black belts will take to the mats in the Long Beach Pyramid. May there be enough açaí to content them.

7

How many members of the Gracie family will join the mix at the 2012 Jiu-Jitsu World Championship? Our count has seven. They are: white belt Nayef Gracie Chamma, blue belt and tennis whiz Roggan Gracie, brown belt Ronis and black belts Clark, Kron, Kyra and Neiman Gracie Stambowsky.

4

It's little wonder middleweight purple belt Keenan Kai-James Cornelius has legions of fans on Facebook and comments about him galore here on GRACIEMAG.com. The Lloyd Irvin student is gearing up for an historic achievement in 2012: to win his weight and the open-weight classes at all four of the main IBJJF tournaments on the same year: the Europeans, Pan, Brazilian Nationals and the Worlds. Not long ago Alexander Trans came close to achieving this particular Grand Slam. In 2011, as a brown belt, the Danish CheckMat product only missed out on producing the absolute title at the Brazilian Nationals.

374

The number of women competing at the Worlds went up as well. This year there are 374 of them. In 2010, to give you an idea of how much the division has grown, there were 176 ladies in the contest.

³ <http://www.graciemag.com/2012/05/some-2012-bjj-worlds-statistics-odds-and-ends-and-recordsthe/>

BJJ Industry - Quora⁴

Question: How much money is the BJJ industry worth? How much money is there in...

- tournaments
- clothing brands
- instructional dvds
- running a gym



Lesley Harrison, Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu blue belt and assistant coach at Origin Sports
277 Views

It depends on the area you're based in, how much competition there is and the population of the area.

I assist with the running of a gym and the running of tournaments, and the gym owner in question barely breaks even in spite of being highly qualified, having a marketable BJJ and MMA record and being a very good teacher. Maintaining a gym is expensive and competition is fierce. The amount of work required - not just turning up to class and teaching, but also staying up to date with the latest news (inevitably someone will come in and say "Can you break down that awesome sweep from Polaris/Metamoris") as well staying on top of stuff like cleaning the mats, maintaining the facility, accounts, training for first/aid, safeguarding qualifications that you need to work with kids, etc.

He runs five tournaments a year. Hall hire, insurance, paying referees, set up time, medals, etc makes that a huge time sink for not much return either.

The instructor is a full time BJJ person - he teaches, competes, runs BJJ tournaments and runs MMA shows. He does it because he loves it, and he's able to pay the bills, but it's far from easy.

I have a friend who runs a clothing brand associated with BJJ - he's doing OK (not rich, but it seems like a viable side-business), but it took him a long, long time to get it off the ground. He's a skilled graphic designer and he had to put a lot of research into finding suppliers, marketing the brand, sponsoring athletes, etc. Even he has another job, though. I'm not sure if he'd ever be able to run his clothing line as his only source of income.

Written 14 Feb • View Upvotes

⁴ <https://www.quora.com/How-much-money-is-the-BJJ-industry-worth>



Joshua Palmer, Commentator for Polaris & Others + BJJ Brown Belt

126 Views

Every category you mentioned has some immense variables so it's almost impossible to say. They can all range from negligible to absolute money-making powerhouses. For example:

- Tournaments: I've run events where we cleared £2K profit from just 200 competitors but I've also run events where we barely broke even. An interclub or small domestic tournament can pull in a small side income but nothing groundbreaking. Then on the other end of the scale you have the IBJJF who are charging \$100 USD with a couple of thousand competitors. In the case of the Euros for example, they don't even pay venue hire so you can only imagine what kind of profit they rake in.

- Clothing brands: Again, variable. I have friends with brands that are complete side projects turning over anything from £2K-100K per year and then I also know brands who are turning over multiple millions. Any of the big names you might buy are in a very good place with a big market!

- DVDs: YouTube/Piracy has slightly decimated this market but obviously there's also been the shift to online content like MGinAction which is of course very profitable, granted there are few people who can pull it off. There's still a place for instructionals with a very reasonable ROI considering that producing the content isn't particularly technically challenging. More and more though new models with cheaper pricing are appearing. eg: apps and video sales through online distribution.

Running a gym: Unsurprisingly, this one is variable too. I'm one of the lucky guys who hasn't had to pay gym dues anywhere for over 5 years but again it's massively dependant on where you are etc. I know guys with very small gyms who only charge £45 per month and have maybe 20 students on the mat. I also know gyms who charge £100 per month and have 40-50 on the mat in each class. I even have a friend running a gym with over 400 paying monthly members at around £70 a month. Beyond that, take a stab at what Renzos etc takes in. Sure there are more overheads due to location but it's not hard to imagine what kind of money they're taking home.

TL;DR: Everything is variable and positioned right, it's a huge, profitable and growing market in a great niche.

Written 10 Jul



Rebecca Breves

161 Views

As Lesley Harrison said, it depends on your area. I can try and give you a general idea on how to calculate and things to consider.

Tournaments

Revenue:

Most tournaments charge between \$40-100 per division. A small tournament would have 50-100 competitors, large tournaments can run into the 1000s. Many competitors sign up for 2 divisions. You can also sell tables, banners, and advertising space for \$50 and up. Many tournaments also sell merchandise such as t-shirts, gis, belts, and gym bags.

Costs:

Unless you own a huge space, you will need to rent. Rental rates vary widely from region to region, even within cities. You also will need liability insurance. Other things you will need to spend on: medals, tables, mats (unless you already own them), some form of scoring system, an EMT or two, referees, score and time keepers, and prizes (if you are giving them).

Clothing Brands

This is a tough one. If you mean t-shirt designs, this is easy to get into, but your success can vary greatly from design to design. You can get your designs printed for as little as \$8/shirt. Clothing brands can get really expensive to produce and there is no guarantee for an individuals brand success. Clothing is a totally separate industry from BJJ and if I were going into both I would treat it as two separate ventures. You can order custom gis from \$55/gi and up. If you have a gym to sell out of merchandise can really help your profit margin.

Instructional DVDs

The guys that sell these usually have already made a name for themselves. So the barrier to entry for these is pretty high. Things to consider would be the cost of filming (lights, camera, space, etc), editing the videos, the cost of production (the cover design, the cases, and DVDs themselves) and marketing and distribution costs. Since the accessibility of youtube, the value of the DVDs has been greatly reduced. In my opinion, using youtube videos to promote a gym would be a better use of time and resources.

Running a Gym

Running a gym is serious, hands on, hard work, but it can be very profitable. Gyms range from unprofitable to million dollar assets if you are running associations or have more than one. If you aren't a black belt yourself, you will need to hire one...and they can be very expensive to keep. Most black belts have at least 10 years of experience. Ones that you would hire probably have 15-20 or more. You will need to pay them accordingly with their experience and enough to dissuade them from opening up their own gym. Other than the instructor you will need someone for reception, sales, marketing, and accounting. You will need to rent or buy a space with changing rooms, a bathroom, a reception area, a mat area, and storage, at the very least. How much you charge also varies by the region from \$50 at the very low end (unlikely a black belt teaching and probably for 2 classes/week) and up depending on the general living expenses of the region.

I hope I've given you a good idea of what to look for and how to research for your area.

Written 19 Mar

BJJ Industry - Reddit⁵

So, I'm on the verge of my brown belt and not making a wonderful living at the moment.

In a year or so I was thinking of opening a gym in a higher income area about 30 minutes from my home. There are no BJJ gyms within a 30 minute radius of this proposed location.

I only desire a comfortable middle class income for the Midwest.

My instructor has approximately 100 students that he built up over 3 or 4 years and a few years ago he bought a nice house off nothing but the income from his one gym. His wife works only part time.

One complaint is that the individual health care market will eat your income alive. I do not need health insurance as I get this through my wife's job.

OK, how crazy am I?

[-] **wotoan** 20 bodova prije 1 godina

⬆ The biggest factor to success or failure will be your business skills, not your BJJ skills. Honestly evaluate where you are at.

I've seen gyms run by people with average grappling skill make boatloads of money and gym run by the best guy in the city close up shop after a year or two. You are selling BJJ - which means you need to have two skillsets, business and BJJ, or hire someone with the business skillset.

stalna poveznica

⬆ [-] **relax_on_the_mat** Newborn Cascão -2 bodova prije 1 godina

⬆ I would disagree with this. I've witnessed a BJJ black belt who had excellent marketing skills close up shop b/c his instruction style and knowledge were less desirable than those of lower belts in the same area. If you are passionate about the sport and know your shit, you'll do fine once you get a core group of people established.

⬆ [-] **richielaw** 9 bodova prije 1 godina

⬆ You will lose money your first year. Bank on that.

Seriously.

If you don't, awesome. You're ahead of the game.

Your biggest costs will be rent and insurance. If you can put together a capital investment of at least a year for rent and insurance, then I would say go for it. I would not use your life savings for this as you could lose everything.

The other option that someone mentioned is starting at another school to build up a student-base. This is an EXCELLENT suggestion. You want to grow into your school, not start off with something too big that ultimately fails.

Next: LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION. If there are no bjj gyms within 30 minutes and you're in a somewhat metropolitan area then you are in a good spot. How is public transportation, etc.?

The other thing to keep in mind is Groupon. As a service provider rather than a goods provider, Groupon is a good way to get students in the door. Understand that they take half of anything you make and will discount your prices substantially. I would highly suggest you limit the groupon to a set time period or number of classes. One great way to do this is by offering a groupon for "ramp up classes" or a "beginner's bootcamp" with a limited duration and that allows you to concentrate on the basics with new students. Also, half of your Groupon students will come to one class and never show up again or just never show up at all.

The next thing you'll want to look at is pricing. What do CrossFit gyms in the area charge? You'll be marketing to a similar clientele and you can see what the market will bear. I think quantity of students is better than higher prices. If you undercut specialized athletic training to a proper degree you'll be able to make more money off of more students.

So, to answer your question, yes, you are crazy. You're making a significant life choice that could very well end up with heartache and failure. But, if you're smart, you could do something amazing and that a lot of people never do, which is work while doing something they love.

Good luck!

Source: Ran a moderately successful niche fitness business for a couple of years.

⁵ https://www.reddit.com/r/bjj/comments/2eqbfu/how_crazy_his_it_to_start_a_gym/

[-]

Dielawnnn

1 bod prije 1 godina

I agree as well. My gym primarily focuses on BJJ but it also has muay thai, boxing, and strength and development classes. They also have MMA training sessions but it's invite only. You don't necessarily need an octagon in your gym to teach/train MMA. Having a cage in your gym can be somewhat intimidating to someone who just walks in looking to get in shape or learn a martial art.

[-]

kyt

Marcelo Carvalho - GF Team 5 bodova prije 1 godina

I think like starting any business people tend to underestimate the grind it takes.

When my instructor started he was basically there 6am - 9pm every week day, then 9am - 3pm on Saturdays and sometimes Sundays. It wasn't all training either, there was a lot of minutae he had to do: clean the mats, do admin work, work on sales and marketing, etc. He never took vacations because no one else would be there and it would mean he'd have to close and not make any money.

And this is before all the "real" work of being an BJJ instructor. Being a good instructor is a craft that you have to constantly hone. You have to build lesson plans that may need constant adjustment (especially when you are starting out). You need to study new techniques and positions so you can be ready for questions. You may have to come up with new drills and activities to keep your students engaged. You have to mentor and followup with students. You know those days where you are feeling lazy and not feeling up for BJJ? doesn't matter you have to go because now your welfare depends on it.

Basically to do this and be successful, you have to go all in and really committ to it.

It wasn't until my instructor had promoted a few regular and dependable guys to purple belt (this took YEARS), that he could even take a night off. It wasn't until he had 2 brownbelts a few years after that where he could take a vacation.

[-]

bjjjj

1 bod prije 1 godina

What is a comfortable middle class income for the Midwest?

stalna poveznica

[-]

RatioFitness

[S] 1 bod prije 1 godina

I'd be happy with a net income of \$40,000/year. I'll have to figure out how much revenue I need to make that.

stalna poveznica nadređeni

[-]

[deleted]

1 bod prije 1 godina

You'll be extremely lucky to break even after start-up costs and expenses for the first year or two. Extremely lucky.

Top 5 Jiu Jitsu Cities in the USA

Outside of Brazil, the United States has become the place to be if you want to train Brazilian Jiu Jitsu. The rise in popularity in BJJ all started with the Gracie Family and the first UFC back in 1993. Royce Gracie's run in the first 5 UFC events served as infomercial for BJJ, since it showcased how a smaller, average look guy like Royce was able to defeat much larger and athletic monsters like Ken Shamrock, Kimo Leopoldo and Dan Severn with technique over pure brawn. The publicity generated by the Gracies and the UFC created business opportunities for Gracie family members and their students to spread BJJ all across the United States and the rest of the world. The migration of top level instructors to the United States during the 1990s and 2000s built the cities/metro areas listed below the top places to train in not only the good ole USA, but the world.

Los Angeles/Orange County: Brazilians love great weather and surfing so it makes sense that their top instructors would want to migrate to Southern California. Los Angeles is home to so many great academies and high level instructors. Los Angeles is also the home of the Mundials, NoGi Worlds, and a number of monthly tournaments that keeps BJJ

practitioners very active. Some of the best and most iconic academies in Los Angeles include the Gracie Academy in Torrance, Gracie Barra HQ in Irvine, CheckMat HQ in Long Beach, Gracie Barra Northridge Romulo Barral, Art of Jiu-Jitsu in Costa Mesa, Jean Jacques Machado in Tarzana, Cobrinha's in Los Angeles, 10th Planet HQ in Downtown Los Angeles, and Rickson/Kron Gracie's in Culver City. There are also a number of schools affiliated with these academies scattered throughout the region.

San Diego: Like Los Angeles, San Diego offers great weather, surfing, food, and Jiu Jitsu. It is one of the major reasons why BJJ legends like Andre Galvao, Leticia Ribero, Saulo and Xande Ribero Royler Gracie, Dean Lister, Jeff Glover, Clark Gracie, Rodrigo Medeiros, Baret Yoshida, Fabio Santos, and Eduardo Telles set up shop in this great city. Academies such as Atos, University of Jiu Jitsu, and Gracie Humaita have attracted BJJ competitors from all over the world that want to train with the best and live in paradise. San Diego has become such a hot spot for BJJ tourism, a site called bjjhostels.com has popped up to provide housing for the tourists.



Andre Galvao teaching the kid's class at Atos HQ in San Diego, California.

Source: <https://www.jiujitsutimes.com/top-5-jiu-jitsu-cities-in-the-usa/>

New York City: Renzo Gracie was the first BJJ instructor to make his mark in NYC back in the early 1990s. By being the first mover in the Big Apple, he has been able to build 3 large academies and a number of affiliates in the tri-state region led by top instructors including Matt Serra and Ricardo Almeida. However, Renzo is far from the only major player in town. Marcelo Garcia is arguably the greatest of all-time and has opened an academy that has drawn in some of the top BJJ competitors from around the world. Multiple time World Champion and accomplished MMA fighter Shaolin Ribeiro also runs a very successful academy in NYC and the scene is only getting hotter with the emergence of Unity BJJ led by Murilo Santana and featuring the Miyao Brothers.

San Francisco/San Jose: The San Francisco/San Jose market is ripe with top level coaching and competitors. Dot.com millionaires and techies have access to great academies and instructors including Caio Terra, Dave Camarillo, Ralph Gracie, Cesar Gracie, Kurt Oslander, Carley Gracie, Charles Gracie, Gumby Marques, and Romulo Melo to name a few. Many of the great instructors and teams in the Bay Area have roots with Ralph Gracie, who has spawned many affiliate locations and instructors such as Gumby Marques and Dave Camarillo who started their own schools.

Las Vegas: Las Vegas is the home of the UFC corporate office and considered the MMA capital of the world. A lot of top-level MMA fighters live and train in Las Vegas which

creates a demand for high level BJJ instructors. Robert Drysdale and his Zenith team have their HQ and many affiliates around the Las Vegas area. There is also Syndicate MMA, where ADCC Champion Vinny Magalhaes coaches many UFC fighters. Sin City also is the home of Sergio Penha, multiple-time World Champion Fredson Paixao, and Cobrai Kai. The Fight Capital is also home to numerous IBJJF, NAGA, and other grappling tournaments that draws competitors in from around the country.⁶

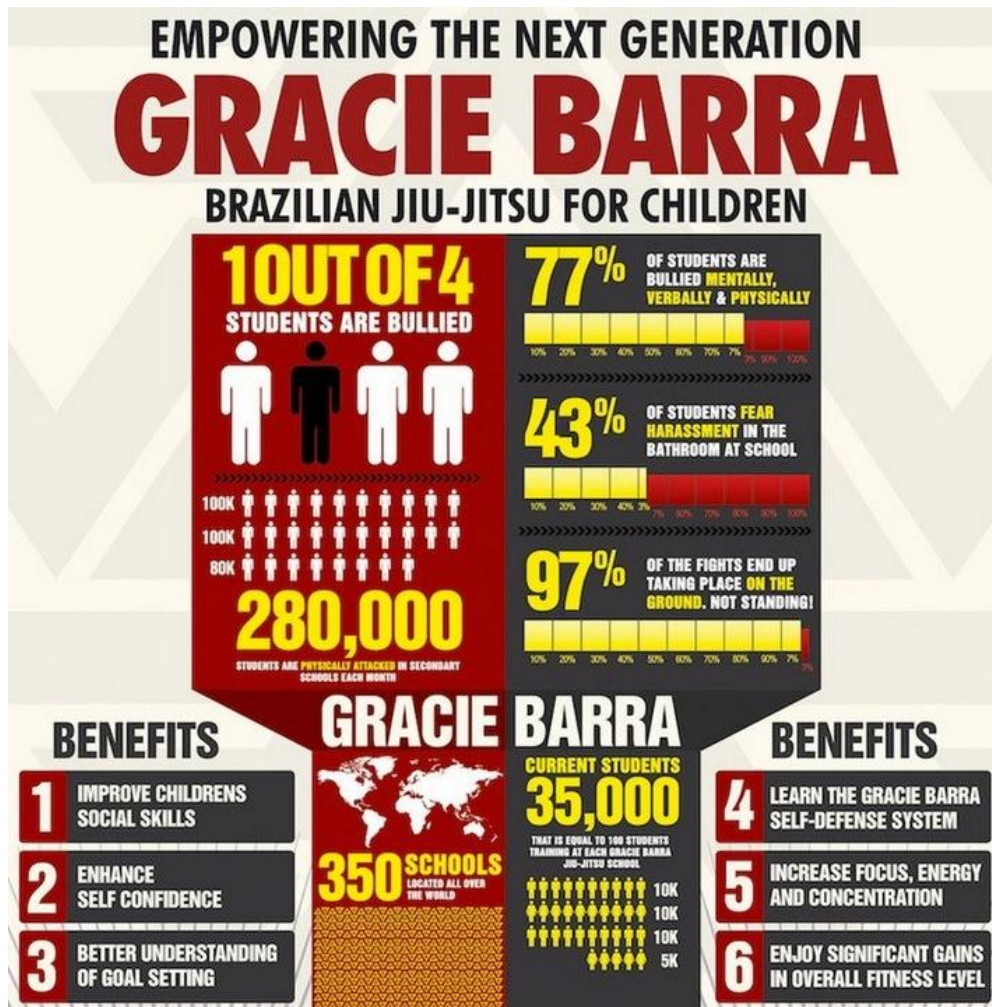
Benefits of BJJ Infographic



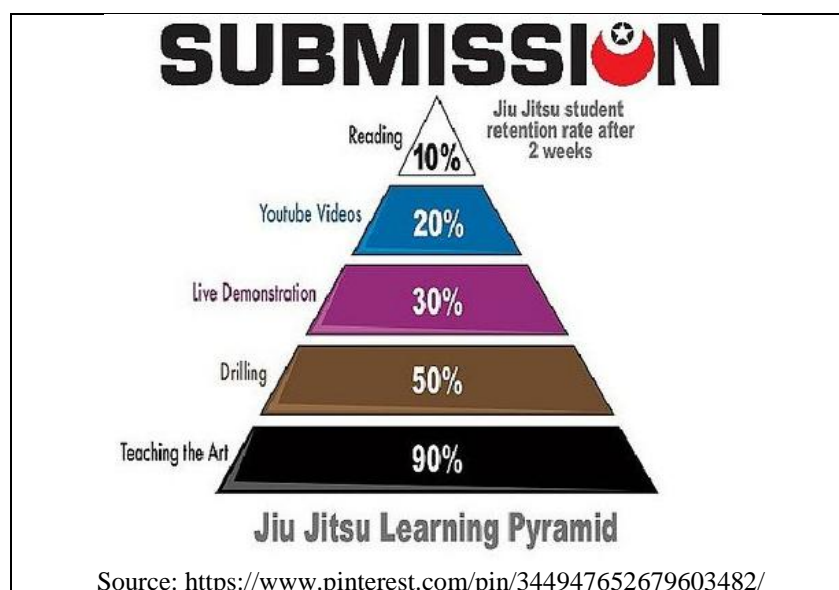
Source: <http://www.spiderjiujitsu.com/benefits-bjj-infographic/>

⁶ <https://www.jiujitsutimes.com/top-5-jiu-jitsu-cities-in-the-usa/>

Gracie Barra: With more than 350 schools and over 35,000 Students worldwide we know we can make a difference on stopping bullying.



Source: <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/346777240030174904/>



Source: <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/344947652679603482/>

6 Reasons The BJJ Gi Market Doesn't Play By "Normal" Business Rules

I saw a question today, posted by Meerkatsu, asking if the gi market were oversaturated. It's a question I've asked myself, and been asked many times. My standard answer is that yes, some amazing innovation aside, the market is saturated—but the question today got me thinking about how difficult it is to pin down the BJJ market and a few reasons why that might be.⁷

It doesn't fit the supply and demand model: ...at least not neatly. Business terms like "supply and demand" and "market forces" get thrown out a lot. I feel bad for them—tossed around without concern for who they are or how they work. "Supply and demand" though, might get the bulk of the abuse. The model really is useful, but there are some assumptions that come along with it. One of the biggest is the assumption of perfect information, which basically says that consumers know pretty much everything about every product all the time. Since we actually use our gis, learning about fit, competition legality, weaves and all the other details that make up a gi takes time and experience. Stack that up with the white belt-heavy demographic that we boast, and we're not even taking the first step toward applicability of this business model.

Instructors are in the way: Ok, they're not "in the way", but from being new students' only source of information when it comes to gis, to flat out dictating what gi students will wear, we're looking at a very different market than, say, cell phones, where information is coming from standardized sources, and most consumers are free to choose what they'd like. No one really knows who's training: There are a lot of people training BJJ these days. Too bad nobody knows how many "a lot" is. Not only do we not know how many, but at a macro level, we have very little (by that I mean "almost no") reliable information as to what the group of people who train BJJ think, want or believe. We don't really know who's starting or why they're leaving. We don't know where they're coming from or why they're sticking around. The Internet doesn't likely provide an accurate sampling since it's disproportionately heavy with avid practitioners. It's hard to even start a discussion about a market when you don't know who's in it or why.

We live in the past: When it comes to markets, one of the things that can move that saturation point is innovation. Innovation is tricky in BJJ. Anyone who trains in the gi is, at some level, a traditionalist. We value lineages and tattered belts and Gracies. In an environment like ours though, that innovation might be seen as sacrilege. Hemp gis are still met with a lot of resistance, and the same goes for unconventional colors, ripstop and even new drawstring types. While most industries welcome innovation as an answer to questions, gi innovation is frequently aesthetic and not done for the sake of problem solving. There's a reason no one's suggested belts that never come undone.

We've got no formal financials: It's not that money can't be made in the gi market...it really can and there are big names out there that demonstrate that. Too bad we'll never know what's going on with them. None of them have to report their income to anyone really, so we

⁷ <http://groundworkbjj.com/articles-and-books/business-in-bjj/6-reasons-bjj-gi-market-doesnt-play-normal-business-rules/>

have no idea if they're just burning through investor capital or raking cash in hand over fist. The smaller companies, one can only guess what's going on.

We've got lifestyle businesses all over the place: Let's be real-not everybody who starts a gi company has aspirations of being the next Koral, or quitting that desk job and peddling their gis at every IBJJF tournament. I had a guy at my gym who, for the longest time, considered starting down the gi business path "for fun". Some people only care about seeing their beautiful (or blindingly hideous) new logo on a few Atama knockoffs at local tournaments. Some people just like the idea of saying they're starting a business in an industry they love...and all that's ok. What it means though, is that we run into some speed bumps when it comes to applying business concepts, many of which assume that a company wants to be profitable.

All that isn't to say that no traditional principles of business apply...many do. Brazilian jiu jitsu is simply special, with many twists, turns and dark corners.⁸

Demographic

Survey results

Well, its almost one year ago that I launched the belt promotion/grading survey and I haven't managed to get round to posting the results, as initially promised. I've got lots of good excuses for this (including having a newborn son, moving to Japan and being crushed by PhD work) but the fact remains that an update for the BJJ community, who collectively put hundreds of hours into completing the survey, is long overdue!

As such, from now I'll be starting to post weekly updates that break down the interesting findings from the survey and hopefully help to provide some (partial) answers to longstanding questions surrounding BJJ belt promotions. I'll also be detailing how the findings relate to the ritual project I work on at Oxford and what exactly some of the more unusual questions were about ... but first up today is the basic demographics to help introduce who exactly the respondents are.

In total there were actually over 1,000 responses collected but due to dropouts/requests to keep data anonymous the final total sample ended up being 727. Women seem quite poorly represented with only 36 respondents but this could be representative of the overall proportion of women training (5% fits with my experience but I wonder if everyone else agrees?). There was a nice mix of experience levels but less national and ethnic diversity than hoped for. That said, given that the survey was in English and most respondents came from a selection of popular North American message forums such a skew was somewhat predictable.

⁸ <http://groundworkbjj.com/articles-and-books/business-in-bjj/6-reasons-bjj-gi-market-doesnt-play-normal-business-rules/>

I've represented the data in some infographics below and while some of it is rather unlikely to be relevant to the results or people's training experiences it is good to get a better idea of who the data analysed comes from.

BJJ Grading/Promotion Survey Demographics

 **691**

Male Respondents.

 **36**

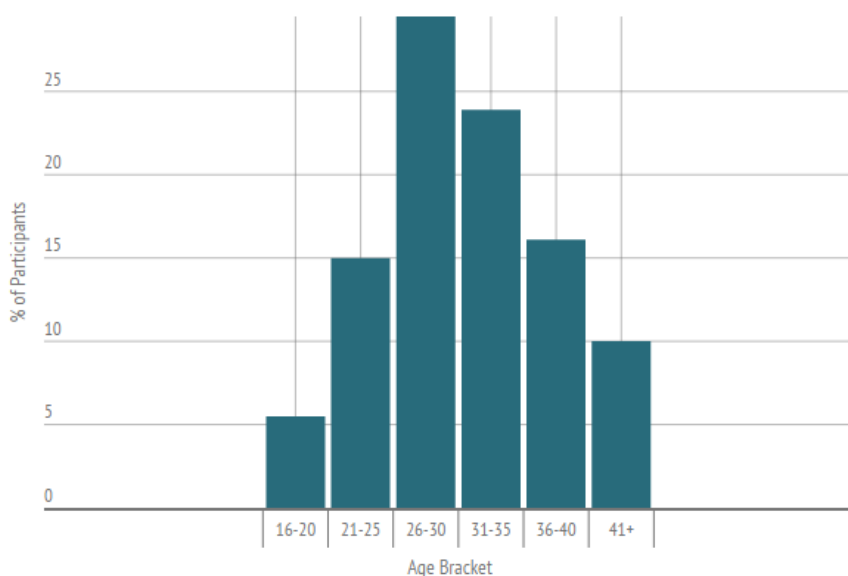
Female Respondents.

Belt Representation



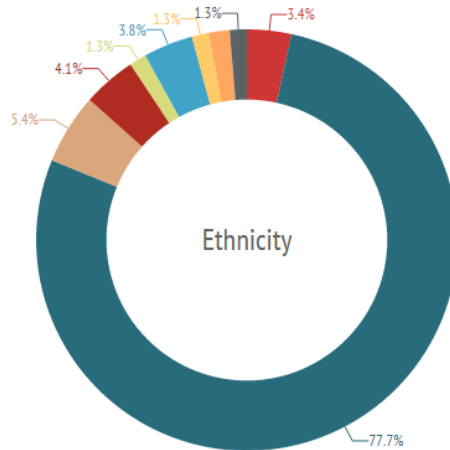
 White Belt  Blue Belt  Purple Belt  Brown Belt  Black Belt

Age Distribution

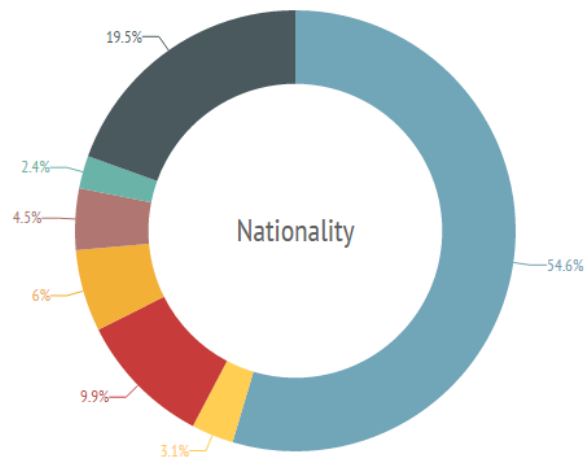


Source: <http://www.bjjsurveys.com/>

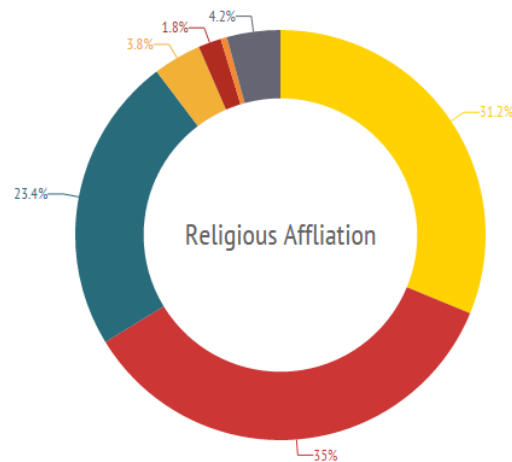
Ethnicity, Nationality & Religion



● Afro Caribbean
 ● Caucasian
 ● Hispanic
 ● East Asian
 ● South Asian
 ● Southeast Asian
 ● Arabic
 ● Polynesian
 ● Other



● American
 ● Australian
 ● British
 ● Canadian
 ● German
 ● New Zealander



● Christian
 ● Agnostic
 ● Atheist
 ● Buddhist
 ● Jewish
 ● Muslim
 ● Other

Source: <http://www.bjjsurveys.com/>

The results/trends reported are all based on averages (corrected for outliers), but even with that it's important to bear the general demographics of the sample in mind, before drawing any broader conclusions.

Still, despite the typical survey limitations there are some nice trends which are likely to apply to their wider BJJ population (such as the time spent training by various belts, the proportion of roles for each belt, etc.). There are also some things that surprised me from the data, specifically⁹:

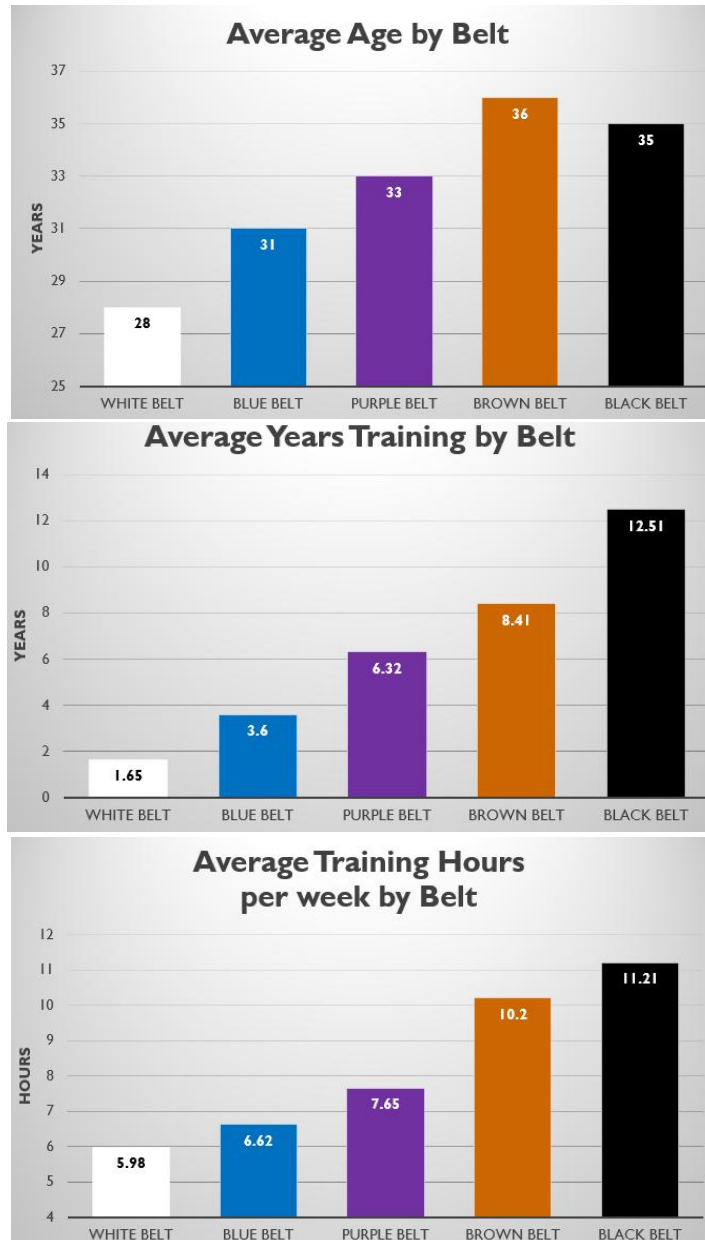
- The relatively high average age of people training in BJJ: I had kind of expected averages, at least for white and blue belts, to be in the low twenties, maybe teenagers and people in the early 20s aren't taking online surveys?
- Committed white belts: 6 hours would translate to roughly 3 x 2 hr classes a week or 4 x 1.5 hr classes. 3/4 sessions a week is certainly normal for lots of white belts but the average? It seems a bit higher than my personal experience suggests!
- 6 hours being the mean/median average amount of hours trained: Again I had expected there would be more beginners training once a week that would pull down the average but while there are plenty of people who meet that profile they are offset by a large group training more frequently (typically 3-5 times a week). On a side note, the highest hours training a week reported was 40 and the lowest predictably was 0.

There's plenty more data to come and I haven't even touched the topic of gradings/belt promotions yet! So feel free to drop me a line if there is any specific data you are curious about. I'm also happy to share more detailed results with anyone interested in the statistical nitty gritty.



Source: <http://www.bjjsurveys.com/>

⁹ Source: <http://www.bjjsurveys.com/>



Most Common Profile



30 Years old

(and male)



6 Hours

Training per week



Blue Belt

(with 2 stripes)



1-2 Competitions

Participated in each year



3.5 Years

Time training



Gracie Barra

Club Affiliation



1 Year

Gaps in training

Source: <http://www.bjjsurveys.com/>

Korea BJJ Demographic¹⁰

Table 1. Participants' demographics where N = 159.

Number	Variable	Category	N	%
1	Gender	Male	148	93.01%
		Female	11	6.99%
2	Age	17 and under	3	1.61%
		18-30	82	51.61%
		31-45	72	45.16%
		over 45	3	1.61%
3	Nationality	Korean	127	80.11%
		Japanese	0	0.00%
		American	23	14.52%
		Canadian	4	2.69%
		Australian	1	0.54%
		Other	3	2.15%
4	Marital Status	Single	113	71.35%
		Married	46	28.65%
5	Number of Children	One	15	9.14%
		Two	18	11.29%
		Three or four	3	1.61%
		Five or six	0	0.00%
		seven or more	0	0.00%
		None	124	77.96%
6	Annual Income	Under \$9,999	55	34.78%
		\$10,000-14,999	5	3.26%
		\$15,000-24,999	16	9.78%
		\$25,000-34,999	22	13.59%
		\$35,000-49,999	32	20.11%
		\$50,000-74,999	18	11.41%
		\$75,000-99,999	4	2.72%
		Over \$100,000	7	4.35%
7	Occupation	Management	30	18.92%
		Professional	26	16.22%
		Technical	6	3.78%
		Education	16	10.27%
		Sales	1	0.54%
		Military	9	5.41%
		Student	46	28.65%
		Others	20	12.43%
		Unemployed	6	3.78%
8	Education	Some high school	6	3.76%
		High school graduate	12	7.53%
		Some university	42	26.34%
		University graduate	74	46.77%
		Graduate degree	25	15.59%
		\$1,000-1,499	62	39.25%
		\$1,500-1,999	32	20.43%

¹⁰ <http://www.gsmi-ijgb.com/Documents/JMM%20V4%20N1%20P03%20-Corey%20A.%20Nelson%20-Services%20Marketing.pdf>

Table 2. Participants' relationships to Jiu Jitsu where N = 159.

Number	Variable	Category	N	%
1	Length of training Jiu Jitsu	Less than a year	39	24.32%
		One or two years	35	22.16%
		Two or three years	22	14.05%
		Three or four years	15	9.19%
		Four or five years	21	13.51%
		Five or six years	8	4.86%
		Six or seven years	5	3.24%
		Over seven	14	8.65%
2	Belt Rank	White	69	43.24%
		Blue	61	38.38%
		Purple	21	13.51%
		Brown	5	3.24%
		Black	3	1.62%
3	Frequency of Training	1-2 times a week	46	28.80%
		3-4 times a week	81	51.09%
		5-7 times a week	32	20.11%
4	Annual Financial Investment	Under \$999	55	34.41%
		\$1,000-1,499	62	39.25%
		\$1,500-1,999	32	20.43%
		\$2,000 and over	9	5.91%

Table 3. Benefits of Jiu Jitsu

There are many possible benefits to training Jiu Jitsu. Rank each benefits importance to you.					
Variable	Not at all important	Slightly important	Moderately important	Very important	Extremely important
Building character	9% (15)	19% (31)	26% (42)	25% (41)	18% (30)
Learning patience	9% (14)	15% (24)	22% (36)	33% (54)	19% (31)
Improving health	1% (2)	1% (2)	13% (22)	26% (43)	55% (90)
Developing self discipline	4% (6)	10% (16)	20% (33)	26% (43)	38% (61)
Maintaining a positive attitude	4% (7)	8% (12)	22% (37)	31% (51)	32% (52)
Increasing self confidence	3% (5)	6% (9)	12% (20)	25% (41)	51% (84)
Learning humility	6% (10)	4% (6)	26% (42)	26% (43)	36% (58)
Creating a strong work ethic	13% (21)	15% (25)	33% (54)	22% (35)	15% (24)
Releasing stress	1% (2)	6% (9)	14% (24)	27% (44)	49% (80)
Rank each characteristic's importance when you chose your current instructor.					
Qualifications	2% (3)	4% (7)	14% (23)	28% (46)	49% (80)
Friendliness	0% (0)	4% (6)	20% (32)	35% (58)	39% (63)
Depth of knowledge	0% (1)	2% (3)	11% (18)	34% (56)	50% (81)
Reputation	17% (28)	20% (33)	25% (42)	22% (36)	12% (20)

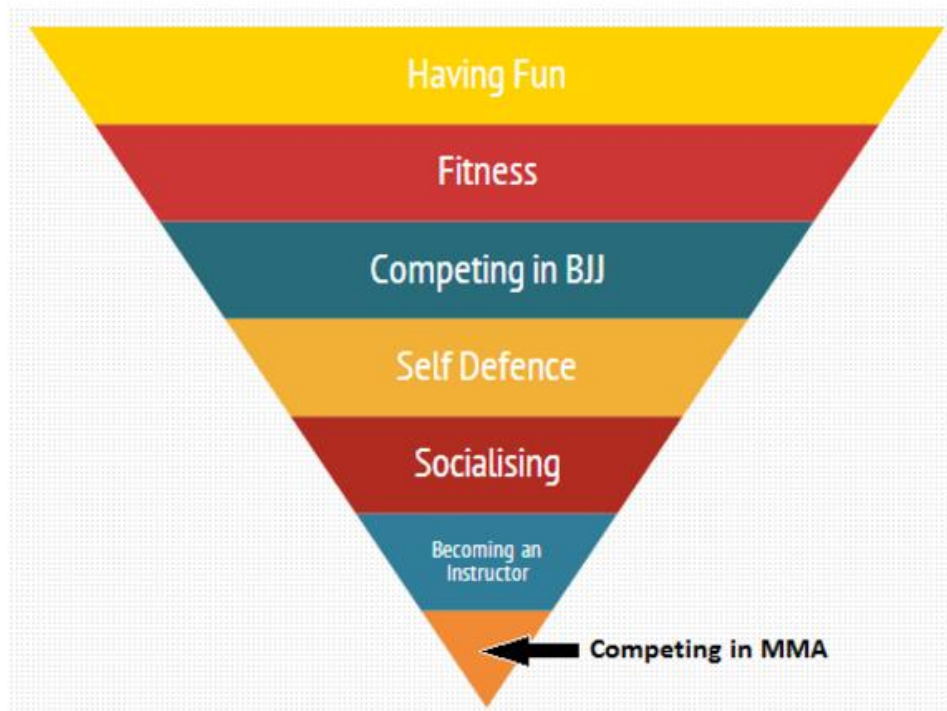
Table 4. Academy's Characteristics

Rank each characteristics importance when you chose your current Jiu Jitsu academy.					
Variable	Not at all important	Slightly important	Moderately important	Very important	Extremely important
Flexible payment	36% (59)	23% (37)	25% (40)	8% (13)	6% (10)
School appearance	39% (63)	25% (40)	25% (40)	9% (14)	1% (2)
Reasonable membership fees	18% (29)	19% (31)	28% (46)	18% (30)	14% (23)
Adequate space	16% (26)	18% (29)	26% (42)	29% (47)	9% (15)
Cleanliness	10% (16)	15% (24)	25% (41)	30% (49)	18% (29)
Advanced and Beginner classes	18% (29)	19% (31)	28% (47)	18% (29)	14% (23)
Reasonable refund policy	43% (70)	23% (38)	20% (32)	5% (8)	7% (11)
Self defense classes	19% (31)	19% (30)	25% (41)	16% (26)	19% (31)

Psychology

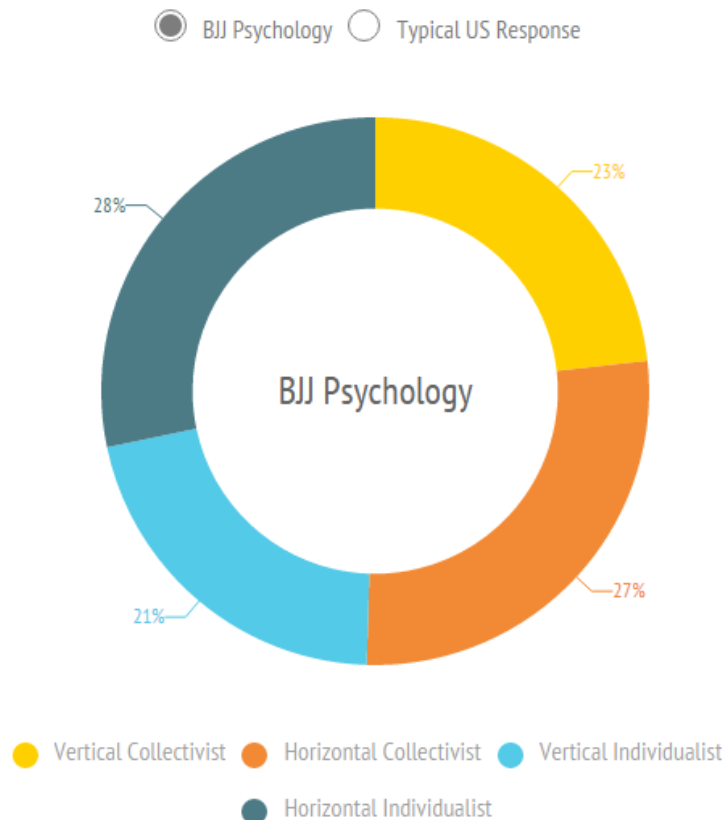
Motivations for Training

The pyramid below shows the motivations for training, in descending order of importance i.e. 'Having Fun' was most commonly rated as the most important motivation for training while competing in MMA was ranked as least important. There was also very little difference in ranking between 'Competing in BJJ' & 'Self Defence'.



Source: <http://www.bjjsurveys.com/>

People, just like countries, are rarely made up of a single all defining 'personality type' and as such people can be both collectivists (putting the group first) and individualists (putting their own motivations first), depending on the situation. What changes between individuals (and countries) is the relative likelihood of drawing on an individualist or collectivist response. The data below then shows the average proportion of individualist/collectivist personality tendencies displayed in the BJJ community (the graph applies to the full sample but the pattern was essentially the same for each belt)



So, in order of prevalence, here is a short description of what each personality orientation emphasises:



Horizontal Individualist

People want to be unique and self-reliant, but they are not especially interested in becoming distinguished or having high status.



Horizontal Collectivist

People perceive themselves as an aspect of in-group and emphasize common goals with others.



Vertical Collectivist

People sacrifice their personal goals for the sake of in-group goals, but the members of the in-group are different from each other, some having more status than others.



Vertical Individualist

People try to compete with others for distinction and status.

Source: <http://www.bjjsurveys.com/>

Pain Points¹¹

Poor Time Management

Proper time management is one of the most important skills that any person can have. It allows people to reach their full potential by accomplishing as many things as possible on a daily basis. If you choose to start jiu-jitsu, you will quickly learn that it's not something that can be taken lightly, especially if you become addicted. It requires dedication, and that means being on the mats as much as possible.

One of the most common excuses I've heard when people decide to stop training is "man, I just can't find time, I work too much and I have my family." The truth is, if this is your excuse, then you just don't like jiu-jitsu enough – which is your choice, but don't use that as an excuse. Many of you reading this now probably have full time jobs, children, or are full-time students. Yet, you are finding time to train. The truth is, you can find ways to make it work. Sure, you don't have to train every day, that's true. But even three days a week can keep you progressing and in shape.

In Brazil, I have seen some of the most dedicated guys in my entire life. These were not competitors or guys born with genetics from Hercules. They have professional jobs and a family. So what do they do? The most extreme of these every day guys, wake up early in the morning to catch the early-bird class, shower at the gym and go straight to work. They train again right after work and go home to their families. They repeat this Monday to Friday and then use Saturday and Sunday to relax with their families. That's ten training sessions per week. Now, not all gyms have this kind of vast schedule available, but if your gym does, and you still use this as an excuse, then shame on you! You don't have to train as hard as the guys in the example I gave you, but you can definitely squeeze three classes a week...if you really wanted to. So the real question is, how badly do you want it?

Many of us have probably heard in the past; "if you want it bad enough, you'll find a way". Well, it's true. How far are you willing to go? That's another question that only you can answer.

Lack of Motivation

Motivation is what we all need to accomplish anything worthwhile. Considering the amount of dedication that jiu-jitsu requires in order to reach the ultimate goal (a black belt for most of us, if not a championship medal), a lack of motivation can easily lead to a person dropping the sport altogether.

So what causes a person to lose motivation once they are enrolled in an academy? There are plenty of things that can go wrong and we don't even realize. One of the major factors is a lack of leadership.

The job of the head instructor, or any instructor for that matter, is to not just teach, but to lead. Jiu-Jitsu is more than just a sport - it's a way of life. The best way to demonstrate this is for the professor to be the example. If your instructor just pops in to just show some techniques and then leave, you are going to see a decline in how many students renew their

¹¹ <http://blog.gameness.com/top-3-reasons-people-stop-training-bjj>

membership. Students shouldn't just feel like they are part of a club or gym, they need to feel that they are part of an institution that helps them live their lives to the fullest, because that's one of the lessons that can be extracted from jiu-jitsu. The behavior of the instructor is detrimental to the motivation level of his students. So one huge reason why people stop doing BJJ is because their instructors are not doing enough to keep them interested.

Another thing that can cause someone to drop the sport is when they hit a plateau for too long. Plateaus happen to all of us – it's the wall you reach that blocks your path to improvement. Once again, it's your instructor's responsibility to find as many ways as possible to help you push through it. But there are many cases where someone loses motivation when they don't see an improvement. It's human nature. The differentiating factor between those who quit and those who do not is sheer willpower. There are those that get angry and push harder when they don't improve, some people just give up. So the truth is, if you decide to quit because you feel you haven't improved in a while, then you're doing something wrong. Perhaps finding a new school, or taking a new approach to your training is needed, but quitting should be the last option. If you're the kind of person that will quit on something as great as jiu-jitsu, it just shows how you probably treat the rest of your life.

One last thing that can destroy someone's motivation is the vibe that an academy has. A lot of overly competitive schools fail in this area because they make casual practitioners feel self-conscious and unappreciated. Competitions and competitors drive our sport in many ways - there is no doubt - however, things can easily go overboard when someone underperforms and feels rejected, or if the standards are set so high, that people feel immense pressure from their teacher and teammates. Even when that pressure actually doesn't exist, many competitors and casual practitioners can imagine it because that's the vibe that is set by the instructor and his students. So what is the solution? Make everyone feel welcome. Winning is important, tapping folks is important too, but it's not the most important thing. Students need to feel great about themselves, whether they win, lose or even if they don't compete.

Ego

This particular reason for quitting BJJ seems more like a myth for people but it's a reality. It applies more to very ripe beginners who may have only been training less than a year. If you've earned your blue belt, or even if you're close to blue belt, you've definitely already swallowed your pride at some point in your training. You have been embarrassed by the higher belts and have been able to accept this in order to improve and develop, not only as a jiu-jitsu practitioner, but also a person.

However, some people just can't handle the heat. It's true. I've seen it and I've heard the stories. I think generalizing is usually a bad thing, and I'm guilty of it from time to time, but it seems that there is a 'type' of person that fits the shoe in this case. These guys are usually people who consider themselves 'alpha' males before they even step foot into the gym. They are either very successful in another field of their life and have received a lot of praise for their achievements. They think that the respect that they earned in these other fields translates into automatic respect elsewhere. The truth is, on the mats, the only things that count is your skill and how you treat your partners – that's how you earn respect. Your money, your status and your background are utterly useless - no one cares. Once you put on

the gi, the closest thing you can find to status is your belt. So when these ‘hot shots’ come to the gym, they receive a rude awakening like never before. Big muscle-heads get controlled by men and women half their size.

I’ve seen people with egos so inflated - they couldn’t even last until the end of their first class. Yes, it’s true. People have barged out of jiu-jitsu class because of frustration and never returned. Sometimes these people even try to bend the rules and find excuses, and you would be shocked at the things they say sometimes. These excuses usually include the famous “What? Why can’t I grab his fingers or throat? These rules are ridiculous.” All the way to “It’s stupid that there is no striking. If there was striking, it would be different”.

Clearly they didn’t read the description of the sport or maybe they did, and they don’t even care. You will often find people who have such little respect for jiu-jitsu (sometimes it will be higher belts from traditional martial art backgrounds) that they think they could walk in with no experience and defeat black belts. Again, those people are in for a rude awakening

Middle-aged professionals¹²

Middle-aged professionals are increasingly taking to the mats to practice Brazilian jiu-jitsu, a combat sport used by mixed martial arts fighters and popularized by the Ultimate Fighting Championship. As a writer and BJJ hobbyist, I decided to explore why white-collar men are donning kimonos and wrestling each other to the ground.

Wall Street banker Alexander Benassi leads a double life. By day, the 37-year-old is a vice president at a private bank’s Chicago headquarters, working out of his suburban office from about 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. The slick-haired and eloquent Benassi helps manage the portfolios of some of the company’s wealthiest clients, including several executives of Fortune 500 companies.

However, three times a week after work, the 6-foot-1, 230-pound banker trades his button-down shirt and briefcase for a blue cotton kimono called a gi and enters the Ramboesque world of Brazilian jiu-jitsu. At the Ultimate Fitness mixed martial arts gym in Evanston, Ill., Benassi wrestles barefoot with his instructor and teammates on a patchwork of gray mats. While his colleagues practice their putts at the country club, Benassi hones takedowns and submission techniques such as the elbow hypertension called the armbar and the carotid-squeezing arrangement of legs aptly christened the triangle choke.

Sometimes he even packs his gi next to a suit to train at local gyms during his downtime on business trips.

“It’s probably the only thing I can legitimately think of which I do right now that can clear my head,” Benassi said one night after a particularly grueling class, his face ruddy from the hour-long workout. It was almost 9 p.m., and within an hour, he hopes to be asleep so he can wake up before dawn to lift weights, as he does six days a week with an ethos the former power lifter and swimmer carries into his work.

“I really love [jiu-jitsu],” he said. “Like many people, I just wish I had found it 10 years ago.”

¹² <http://www.sherdog.com/news/articles/1/Brazilian-JiuJitsu-and-the-Middle-Ages-55361>

Benassi is part of a growing legion of middle-aged, white-collar Brazilian jiu-jitsu aficionados looking to get fit and, in some cases, test themselves in organized competition. The sport is booming in the United States after two decades of exposure in MMA's flagship promotion, the Ultimate Fighting Championship, and competition organizers have sought to meet growing demand from BJJ practitioners of all ages and skill with tournaments across the country.

A ground fighting martial art derived from judo and traditional Japanese jiu-jitsu, BJJ, as it is often called, uses techniques intended to subdue an opponent without strikes, from hyperextending arms to choking off circulation to the head.

"There's definitely been a huge explosion in the sport's popularity in the last few years," said Renner Gracie, grandson of one of BJJ's creators, Helio Gracie, and owner of Gracie Jiu-Jitsu Academy headquarters in Torrance, Calif. "By far, [middle-aged students] are our largest demographic, and that's because there's little impact, almost no injuries, it's easy on the body and there's an intellectual stimulation associated with BJJ."

The sport's variation of techniques and positions has led some to compare it to "human chess." One of the most prominent competition teams is called Checkmat.

The growth of schools affiliated with the Gracie family, which pioneered the martial art a century ago in Brazil and first brought it to the U.S. in the 1970s, shows a clear-cut trend in the sport's popularity, though most gyms and academies, including Ultimate Fitness, are not associated with them.

The number of Gracie academies in the U.S. has doubled to about 1,400 since 2006, and there is at least one in every state, according to Renner Gracie. More than half of the network's 35,000 students are middle-aged; of these, a third are white-collar professionals. In Chicago, at least 20 schools, including five Gracie-affiliates, offer instruction.

Experts credit BJJ's popularity to the rise of mixed martial arts, which is now the number four most popular sport in the U.S. among the coveted demographic of men, ages 18 to 34; it trails only football, baseball and basketball, according to research by Scarborough Sports Marketing in New York. The annual pay-per-view audience for the UFC first exceeded boxing and professional wrestling in 2006, and two years ago, the promotion signed a lucrative seven-year deal with Fox for cable and broadcast rights.

"There's definitely a huge overlap between the popularity of MMA and Brazilian jiu-jitsu," said Shane Logan, a Ph.D. candidate in sociology at the University of California, Davis, who last year gave a TED Talk lecture on MMA. "Had [Brazilian jiu-jitsu fighter] Royce Gracie not been such a bad-ass in these early tournaments, it'd probably be just like any [of the] other martial arts."

Brazilian jiu-jitsu emphasizes the use of leverage and timing to overcome larger and more athletic opponents. The sport's effective submissions and positional techniques make it an essential discipline for mixed martial artists today, distinguishing it from karate and taekwondo, in which physical contact is minimal. It is also very accessible: BJJ can just as easily be practiced in a T-shirt and shorts as it is in a gi, the latter of which can be used as a

weapon to choke and hold down an opponent; practitioners can choose between training and competing with a gi and without one.

BJJ's ascent also signals a cultural shift. Gone are the days of America's affinity for karate and the masculine gravitas of Bruce Lee, who popularized martial arts here in the 1970s. Hollywood has been quick to reflect this change, as MMA-inspired movies like "Never Back Down" and "Warrior" have replaced Mr. Miyagi and "The Karate Kid" series -- Jaden Smith and Jackie Chan might argue otherwise -- and professional fighters like Randy Couture and Gina Carano showcase MMA's most riveting moves; the alluring Carano is known for her on-screen flying armbar in blockbuster flicks like "The Expendables" and the "Fast and the Furious 6."

Across the country, schools that previously only offered traditional martial arts now advertise instruction in jiu-jitsu and other combat sports. The dojo chain at which I trained karate as a boy in New York, Tiger Schulmann's Karate, became Tiger Schulmann's Mixed Martial Arts a few years ago.

"You have [karate] black belts who have never hit somebody or been hit and have never done anything but punch or kick air," says Benassi, who trained karate in college. "There's a sort of competitiveness to jiu-jitsu, you know, testing yourself."

O'Neill holds the rank of black belt.

Celebrities have also caught on to the latest martial arts craze. "Modern Family" star Ed O'Neil, 67, is a black belt who took up the sport in his 40s, and Ottavia Bourdain, wife of "No Reservations" television show host Anthony Bourdain, is a known jiu-jitsu fanatic and competitor, showing that women are also getting hooked, although in smaller numbers. Tim Tebow and other famous athletes have dabbled in Brazilian jiu-jitsu and other combat sports for supplementary training.

At 21, I am often the youngest on the mats at Ultimate Fitness. Half of the 90 students in the BJJ program there are over 35, and the majority of these are white-collar professionals coming in to tussle after a day at the office, according to our instructor Jeff Serafin.

"They can't go to work with a concussion or bloody nose," he said. "Jiu-jitsu allows those who like MMA or competitive sports to train and compete."

Benassi, a former power lifter who had to stop following a spell of back and knee injuries, took up Thai kickboxing for a few months after watching the UFC one night. He quit smoking and practiced the sport for about three months while he ran his own hedge fund in Peoria, Ill. After his current company tapped him, he dropped kickboxing for BJJ.

"When you're dealing with the client base that I deal with, you can't really show up to meetings with black eyes or broken noses or things like that, so I had to stop," he said. "At the time, I had started training Brazilian jiu-jitsu, as well, so I just switched full time to that."

A few months ago, Benassi -- who holds a white belt, the lowest of eight ranks -- took his hobby of two years a step further. He began competing at regional tournaments that draw hundreds of participants from across the country; sweat, pain and sometimes blood culminate in only three men at the winner's podium for every weight and rank division. He has found success, too. In March, he took home the gold in the super heavyweight division for white belts over 35 at the International Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu Federation's Chicago Open, this after

falling short in his previous two tournament outings. He beat his first two opponents by points in close matches, before winning his final match with an armbar.

“It’s almost meditative in the sense that you can do it and not worry about what’s going on at work,” Benassi said. “You’re not thinking about anything but that weight on top of you.”

More than a sport or an organized chance to fight, Brazilian jiu-jitsu is a fraternity that opens doors and friendships across the country, my teammate, Thomas Mulroy, told me one night as he changed back into a button-down shirt and slacks. Mulroy, 40, is an attorney who represents hospitals in medical malpractice suits, and, like Benassi, he often trains where he travels for business, including in Texas, New York and California -- a state considered to be a BJJ mecca. Mulroy, a purple belt who occasionally competes, appreciates what he calls the philosophical side of BJJ.

“It will translate over to your regular life,” he said. “So when you have setbacks in life, you can refer to those setbacks you had in jiu-jitsu to realize that you do get through these things, and having peaks and valleys is a natural part of progressing in life, no matter what you’re doing.”

David Mayeda, a sociology professor at the University of Auckland in New Zealand, says BJJ offers white-collar men a new lease on life by serving as an outlet for testosterone-fueled aggression and comradery. Mayeda studies the relationship between mixed martial arts and masculinity and co-authored the book “Fighting for Acceptance: Mixed Martial Arts and Violence in American Society.” He has also fought on the amateur MMA circuits in the name of research.

“Men who are not engaged in physically laborious labor are looking for ways to redefine their manhood,” Mayeda said. “It gives them a chance to establish a sense of manhood they don’t necessarily have when they’re lawyers, dentists and bankers, for instance.”

Sound familiar? In the 1999 cult classic “Fight Club,” Edward Norton plays an unnamed, pencil-pushing narrator who runs a fight club created by his alter ego, portrayed by Brad Pitt. The group’s quest to reclaim their masculinity and combat a commercialized culture soon devolves into an anarchist attempt to topple corporate America. In one memorable scene, a black-eyed Norton bares his bloodied teeth in response to a question during an office meeting, leaving his co-workers and supervisor aghast.

Copycats sprang up in schools, neighborhoods and even workplaces in the film’s wake. A 2006 Associated Press story describes the gruesome escapades of a Silicon Valley techies fight club. Despite the movie’s twist at the end, there are strong similarities between Chuck Palahniuk’s creation and the pugnacious camaraderie of Brazilian jiu-jitsu, though unlike Norton’s character, Benassi and most of the other white-collar men on the mats are trying to avoid black eyes and raised eyebrows at the water cooler.

How much did “Fight Club” -- which has been called a manifesto for a generation of boys and men looking to reconnect with their masculinity -- contribute to the popularity of BJJ and mixed martial arts today?

“There’s definitely that search for manhood that’s lost when you live in a service economy,” Mayeda said.

However, he gives the UFC most of the credit for the rise of both. During the hodgepodge melees of the promotion’s early tournaments, slender BJJ black belt Royce Gracie dominated his opponents -- boxers, kickboxers, professional wrestlers and karate black belts -- with a mix of grappling and submissions. Fight fans across the world were captivated, and many BJJ fighters from Brazil flocked to the U.S. to teach as demand grew, particularly to California, Renner Gracie said.

In 2005, Brazilian jiu-jitsu gained mainstream exposure when “The Ultimate Fighter” reality show made its way to Spike TV, Mayeda said. Soon after the show’s popularity became apparent, Ultimate Fitness began to offer BJJ in addition to boxing -- its previous focus -- in order to capitalize on BJJ’s trendiness, which, according to Serafin, has grown along with the UFC.

How to Attract and Retain Women in BJJ

A few weeks ago, my editor Becca told me that fellow Breaking Muscle contributor Sally Arsenault wondered if I’d be willing to write a story about how to attract women to BJJ and how to keep them there once they start. I was a bit surprised by the request because I’ve been asked this question many times over the years, so I assumed numerous people had already written about it. After doing my own research, however, I discovered that there isn’t nearly as much “out there” as I had assumed. It will not be surprising to those of us who know her that Breaking Muscle favorite Krista Scott-Dixon collaborated with Stephan Kesting to write a useful and enlightening article on this very topic.



Source: <https://breakingmuscle.com/brazilian-jiu-jitsu/from-the-experts-how-to-attract-and-retain-women-in-bjj>

Other than that, however, I have not been able to find much. So, with apologies to Becca and Sally, and with thanks to Sally for the request, I decided to contribute to this conversation by providing a synopsis of some data I have (unscientifically) collected on the topic from the people who would know best: female grapplers. I posted the following question on the Women's Grappling Camp page on Facebook: "What should grappling academies do to attract and retain women?"

And I got a veritable outpouring of heartfelt, thoughtful responses, including some surprises and home truths. For those of you reading, if you take nothing else away from this article, take away the following: If this cross-section of lady grapplers is any indication, women care about BJJ. We want to train, we want to be good teammates, and we want to bring other people, male and female, into the fold. If you are reading this, chances are you share this goal. So we have some common ground right there. Even if we have different beliefs about the path, many of us want to get to the same destination.

I mention the concept of multiple paths because when I distilled the information the respondents provided, there were definite trends, but there were also exceptions to every trend. In other words, if most respondents commented that X strategy would help attract and retain women, at least one noted that X strategy had little or no bearing on how they found and persisted in BJJ. So another important takeaway for all of us, as instructors, dedicated students, or even "lifers," is that we need to make sure not to be blinded by our own preferences or proclivities. If we are unable or unwilling to acknowledge that different people have different needs, we might be missing out on an opportunity to make progress on our shared goal.

What follows is an encapsulation of the feedback I got from these very gracious informants. I am fairly confident I was unable to do them justice, though I did try. While some of these ladies were willing to allow me to use their names, not all of them confirmed they were comfortable with this. So I won't identify the provider of any specific information, instead encouraging them to do so and to elaborate, if they so desire, in the comments section. Any quoted material is courtesy of the respondents. If you read any of these observations and think, "Well, duh," that's fine, but do take a moment to make sure your academy actually embodies these things. Knowing and doing are two different things.

How to Keep Women

Make space for women. Provide a separate changing room and bathroom for women, "not some closet with cleaning supplies that doubles as our changing room." And make sure the space is clean and inviting. This was probably the most-mentioned request.

Create a friendly environment. "Retention seems to rely heavily on having some consistent, higher rank training partners around who are welcoming and encouraging. When I started there weren't too many consistent women but there were friendly guys who had time for girls and that was key. Ultimately, it starts at the top...Good attitude trickles down from owner to instructor to students." It is important for both male and female students to be willing to work with new women. Women shouldn't always have to be the ones to work with the new students, because if they are paying customers they want to get in their own training, but they should curb any tendency "to want to be the only woman in the gym."

Promote collaborative gender relations. Just as a friendly environment starts at the top, so too does an equal opportunity environment. Don't make or allow jokes along the lines of "You're going to take that from a girl?" It may seem harmless, but it can breed resentment or skewed expectations, where men feel belittled and like they must "beat" women at all costs. Some respondents suggested keeping the focus on the differences between men and women to a minimum as much as possible in a co-ed class.

If possible, offer women's-only classes and have women teach them. Many of the women stressed this as an important draw, particularly the idea of having friendly upper belt women around as role models, though a vocal minority indicated that having female training partners isn't as important to them, particularly if they weigh 100 pounds and are always paired with the only other woman, who happens to weigh 170. What seems to be important overall is making sure women don't feel like they are the odd person out or always last to be picked. This is something both the instructor and the current students can help with.

How to Attract Women

I also asked the women how they got into grappling themselves, as we can only attempt to retain women who show up in the first place. Here's what they said:

They found BJJ through other martial arts. "I feel like many women have a 'gateway' martial art, like tae kwon do or muay Thai before starting jiu jitsu. I'm not sure if this is because women that like punching and kicking things are more likely to like jiu jitsu, or if it's just a great way to introduce such a sport." Others noted that women who are drawn to BJJ are likely to be athletic themselves, having enjoyed and excelled at team or other individual sports in the past.

Their significant other brought them. "My boyfriend dragged me, and now I'm probably more into it than he is (Bahahahah)." Another respondent's husband came home from his first day of training and told her she'd never train because of her personal space preferences, which she viewed as an opportunity to challenge herself ("The rest is sweaty, sweaty history."). The point is, women who are in relationships with people who currently grapple might be likely candidates for conscription to the cause, first because they may have a sense of what it entails due to said significant others trying moves on them, and second because it might give them the opportunity to spend more time with said significant others.

They wanted to get fit. There's no denying that the physical requirements of grappling are intense for the novice. One respondent observed she "just wanted a great workout...Now it's what I go to bed and wake up thinking about." Others said similar things, that they were challenged physically during training and eventually became hooked because it challenged them mentally and psychologically as well.

Obviously, those of us who train can't force others to love it as much as we do. Further, it is also very important to strike a balance between accommodating needs and setting realistic expectations about the realities of BJJ. As one respondent noted, "I am honest with new ladies, though; there are tons of moments where sweaty feet, groins, pits, and chests are in your face." (And that's just the locker room.) But as someone who believes good intentions get a bad rap as the devil's linoleum, engaging in conversations like this one can

help all of us learn more about how to make BJJ available to many more people, including, arguably, some of the people who could benefit from it the most.

Internet Marketing In BJJ

I've begun to wonder if it's possible to make a living online in BJJ without completely disregarding the sanctity of people's email. I think it is, of course, possible, but some recent launches of new secret-awesome-gamechanging-unbeatable-limitedtime techniques has me thinking that it's anything but probable.

And at some level, I get that.

Making any money online beyond covering your gas bill is not easy. I do it. I have friends that do it. I've seen people that do it very well. Still, while some people envision dreams of going to bed and waking up to thousands deposited in their PayPal accounts as they slept, the reality is, that online income—livable, ethical, sustainable online income—is founded on brand building (personal or otherwise), marketable skills (some that take decades to develop), and a lot of leg work in the land that is the Internet.

Basically, doing it without being a carbuncle on the inner thigh of the Internet is hard. Doing it in an slow-money industry like BJJ is very hard. Doing it while appealing to the segment of the BJJ market that probably has the least disposable income coming in? Downright near impossible.

...which is why I get it. I get the link-building and the Dan Kennedy protégés out there. (It's worth noting that Lloyd Irvin did not invent "spammy" techniques. He, like so many, if not all people doing business in BJJ, are simply applying business principles that worked in other industries, to the sale of our practice.) I understand why our biggest and most respected stars, so frequently resort to business tactics that reflect exactly zero of the principles of competition and respect that they espouse on the mats. And yet it still turns my stomach.

I'm not going to bash Kennedy's techniques—he's far from the only one out there using them and most are based on principles of human behavior that are as old as humans ourselves. I do though, encourage you to check out the Twitter stream from his "Insider Circle" and see if they don't sound a lot like the last opportunity you had to get one step closer to becoming a berimbolo god (especially this post on turning your hobby into a "money-making business"). Some of the advice is good. Some is questionable. Most though, follows a theme that I think highlights an important distinction between doing business in BJJ, and in other industries.

A quick visit to any site teaching you how to leave your day job, or grow your online business, or make money from your hobby will, 99% of the time, be talking about selling products, services and information that you are not personally invested in. If I wanted to make money off Minecraft, or my love of Tolkein mythology, I could set up a site, toss up some ebooks and guides and sell to my heart's content. If the communities themselves fell apart, I'd still, as an individual, be left to enjoy reading and playing on my own.

Jiu jitsu is quite different. An influx of a certain type of student into a gym can change your experience with the art. The perception of the community as a whole, for better or worse, changes schools' abilities to make an income (there's a reason Enter the Dojo exists). That's what happens when a hobby or lifestyle is a true community. We're all connected by more than just a shared interest. We live what we do—in competitions and seminars and every day training—so that no action genuinely lives unto itself. It's why, when we refer to the "community" of jiu jitsu, we use the word in its most undiluted form.

Whenever I'm annoyed by some tricky affiliate link or spammy product push (I subscribe to a few, just to see what they're up to), I know that, regardless of how much I like the person delivering the latest instructional (I've definitely been disappointed by some of my favorite athletes) that they've ultimately gone into business without regard for either the online BJJ community (special unto itself) or the jiu jitsu community as a whole.

I believe that sometimes it's done out of genuine ignorance of what online communities are. Sometimes it's done with malicious disregard. Sometimes, with utter contempt. For the most part though, at least when it comes to high level competitors, I think it happens because business, and its impact on a community, is simply not on their radars. Our practice is small and money is short. Devoting your life to BJJ, is ultimately very risky when it comes to long-term financial well-being...and that's even if you're elite. The opportunity cost of the samurai mentality can ultimately, be quite high.

Is the spammier-set ever going to disappear completely? Of course not. I do think though, that BJJ has already has all the tools we need to, as a whole, do a little bit better.¹³

The BJJ community has given so much to me in the form of a new lifestyle, hobby and obsession, so I want to give something back to the community to hopefully help those starving professors breathe new life into their gym and get the new bodies through the door for 2015.¹⁴

Create Walking Billboards

The best way to market your product is to have other people do it for you. Whether it be through word of mouth or subliminally through clothing. If you start selling branded clothing, such as t-shirts and training hoodies, you students will wear them out and about, letting everyone know where you train. It's not about plastering your name about the place, it's about subliminally influencing people to train at your gym.

Free Giveaways

Everyone who drops by to tour your school and picks up information leaflet can receive a free keyring and sticker. The gift does not have to be expensive, especially if the recipients are children. The main money makers of any martial arts club are the children and if you can persuade them to come, the parents will normally follow.

Reward Referrals

Make a policy to reward student and parent referrals. When a student brings in a friend or relative to sign up, give the student a gift of appreciation, such as a patch or t-shirt. As an

¹³ <http://groundworkbjj.com/articles-and-book>

¹⁴ <https://www.attacktheback.com/10-ways-market-bjj-academy/>

added incentive, give a small gift to the new student as well, whether it be a keyring or sticker, it just gives them that little extra incentive to return.

Cater For The Spectators

Make your waiting room “parent friendly” with a place for younger brothers and sisters to play and a comfortable reading area for parents. A play area can be as simple as a few child size chairs with a table. Ask junior students to donate suitable toys that they no longer use. Remember to inspect the toys for small parts that might be swallowed or sharp edges that toddlers might injure themselves on. For parents, purchase some comfortable chairs and install some creature comforts to help them pass the time.

Display Your News

Hang them on the walls or pass them out. Past publicity is better than any advertising or promotional literature you can create. Give copies of positive articles to everyone who comes in for information. Post articles on the bulletin board or frame them in the waiting room. Make students feel good about your school.

Raise Money

Not only do you help a good cause, you get plenty of free, positive publicity and exposure. Just take a look at the coverage that Slideyfoot’s grapplethon at Artemis has.

Press Releases

Submit press releases to the local newspapers about a noteworthy event at your school or a human interest story. Did someone get promoted to black belt? Did your students compete in a tournament and clean up? This is all news. Tell someone about it.

Free Lessons

Give a free self-defence or fitness seminar at your school. Invite members of the public and students’ family members to participate. A seminar gives them the chance to see your school and have a very positive introduction to what you teach. Don’t forget to invite the local newspaper.

Flexible Training Hours

Offer a class at lunch time, mid-afternoon, pre-dawn or late evening. People who cannot arrange their schedule to attend evening classes at other schools in the area will be excited to find a convenient class and you will establish a unique market share.

Online Marketing

So when it comes to martial arts, there’s no point in reaching for big keywords such as “Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu”, you need to be hunting local phrases such as BJJ in your county or state. Register social media pages to promote your club to followers and use that to offer up discounts to followers.

Everything i’ve said here are pretty standard marketing practices, but it’s always good to re-iterate the basics and get bodies through the door. Oss.

Branding In BJJ: Mastering Criticism

In a practice where having your ego broken and rebuilt is as elemental as sweat, you would think that everyone entering the business of Brazilian jiu jitsu would have an amazing skill set for navigating the trials of criticism. All too often though, we see critique met with insults, and questions countered with indignation. Translate that behavior to the mats, and you see textbook white belt behavior.

Just this morning, I ran across a great example of someone getting at least the first step right. Tom Callos (purple belt in BJJ, who has decades of experience in other arts, not to mention running successful gyms) posted criticism of the video below. Scathing Facebook comments (and questioning of the subject's business practices) ensued. Though it's not BJJ, there's something to learn here.

How did Jules (one of the subjects in the video) respond? Here's what he posted on Tom's Facebook thread.¹⁵

"I have no problems with this (Tom's) post. I find it amusing actually. I remember your visit very clearly and my students still talk of you today some of these students also performed on that very same day in their own demonstration. For teenage students I am very proud of them...All I know is I give my heart and soul to my students and Master Tom was the one in the beginning to install some faith in me. Maybe in the future I will learn to say no to people performing in public places...Thanks for the advice sir. I also learnt from you to always keep your sense of humour Very nice words thank you. Problem = opportunity. See I was listening that day."

Jules' response to this thread illustrates the application of dealing with two different types of criticism...

Experts in the field: This is the scary one, because it's basically like having a random black belt approach you and tell you why you lost your last competition. Intimidation factor aside, ask yourself why they're an expert, if their expertise applies to the situation in question and let it soak in. If an expert is taking the time to give you feedback, and they don't have a track record of being absolutely evil or unfair, take a step back and see what you can learn. You customers/students/target market: Shut up and listen. No really. Yes, to everyone. Yes, even if they sound completely insane. Every comment from them is insight. You don't know everything about who you're serving and someone just offered you free market research...so step away from your love of your product and all the praise you've gotten in the past, and make notes of what the person is really saying about their interactions with you and what you've offered the world. You may learn your targeting is wrong, or that your product is off. It's like tapping. You either win, you learn or some combination of the two.

And there's the public response...Jules did this well. Social media has changed EVERYTHING. Companies and individuals catch flak for not answering Tweets or being rude in blog posts. Every word you post online is now a part of your brand. Jules acknowledged his mistakes, in the face of some brutal and widespread criticism (check out the

¹⁵ <http://groundworkbjj.com/articles-and-books/business-in-bjj/branding-bjj-mastering-criticism/>

YouTube comments), he was gracious and able to see Tom's criticism as an opportunity for growth. Whether he'll actually do anything with it, we can't know, but what we do know, is that he's represented his personal image, and that of his business in a way that appears mature, reflective and open to improvement.

You may be starting your BJJ business just for fun or challenge, but I urge you to make another consideration. The concept of community can sound cliché or cheesy, but considering how much people invest into jiu jitsu, and how much we're putting ourselves at risk, BJJ consumers are more than a market. Each practitioner has time, safety and emotion invested into the products and services they purchase, and each one deserves respect from the business community. That said, there are additional reasons why your brand deserves some thought and planning...

Your audience is informed-Some things we buy, we have no idea what goes into them...cars, food, electronics, the majority of consumers buy in ignorance. In BJJ, everyone but the newest of new white belts is experiencing the art first hand on a regular basis. There are no loose connections.

The community is small-And not just Internet-small...the gis you sell in Tblisi can make their way through the online BJJ world in a matter of hours, but it's also likely that a world champion from the US is over in Georgia giving a seminar when some unfortunate student finds out first hand that you skimmed on the jacket stitching. Product quality is part of the brand.

You want to stick around-I'm assuming you're not just pouring time and effort into your project because you're bored. Your brand is a part of your story, and your story is what your customers buy. Learn how to tell a good story that people care about.

It reflects on all of us-I remember when the Lloyd Irving scandal hit, a friend came to me, with no affiliation with BJJ, and said they'd heard about him. That's an extreme example, but be aware that in your quest for attention, future community members might be watching, learning, and getting an impression of what jiu jitsu is.¹⁶

Running any endeavor in BJJ is just like stepping onto the mats as a white belt...it's hard, you're going to doubt yourself and there will be times you wonder if starting was worth it in the first place (it probably was). Just like training though, commit yourself to something bigger, and you'll see results.

The Lloyd Irvin scandal has been the most recent and best example, but BJJ as an industry is growing to the point where brand matters...a lot. Branding isn't so important in situations where consumers don't have a lot of choices. Think of salt. Morton's has a distinct brand, and most people know that little girl with the umbrella, but when we're talking regular old, iodized table salt in the US, you've got a choice between that and maybe the store brand. Habit and price most likely make the choice for you. You don't know what Morton's stands for and you're not excited by the dark blue cylinder. You can't show off your name brand salt to your buddies. Save maybe tape, BJJ is very different.

¹⁶ <http://groundworkbjj.com/articles-and-books/business-in-bjj/branding-important-bjj/>

The world of BJJ is made up of hundreds of gi companies, countless t-shirt/lifestyle brand ventures and more YouTube videos than there are white belts who've quit training. If a person or organizations has any serious desire at all to stick around, make any kind of profit and not fight tooth and nail for every last dollar, they have to take their branding seriously. Branding is a story. It's not just a font choice, a website or a shirt (no, not even if your logo is awesome). It's the experience that anyone has when interacting with what you've created. It's the Twitter account, your customer service policy, the fact that the toilet in the locker room is always clogged.

To talk more about this, we're kicking off a series about all things branding. The good, the bad, lists, ideas, definitions...we'll be taking questions, suggestions, rants and raves...but first, we need to get two things out on the table...what a brand is, and why you should care.

If you're thinking of starting any kind of venture in BJJ (charity folk, that includes you) do yourself a huge favor and Google "branding". You might think you know what it is, but even if you've sat through years of business classes, or think you're a natural, it's easy to forget exactly how deeply it goes. Do this before you start a website, or scout gym locations, or write up an Indiegogo description...even before you open a Facebook page.

Everything you do in your project, literally everything, should align with your mission statement. It doesn't have to be some stale, formal document you spent hours on, but you should have something documented SOMEWHERE that spells out what exactly you're pouring your energy into. Once you have that statement, be consistent. If your object is to make money, you don't get a whole lot of awesome-person points, but fine (though BJJ might not be the best place to do that). If you've set out to educate the community about self-defense, make sure your efforts focus toward that instead of competition. If you're marketing gis to women and children, you probably shouldn't have half naked models on your website. When in doubt about any decision, pull out that mission statement, and ask if what you're doing fits. "But it's cool" isn't a valid excuse to deviate...neither is "But my friends like it"...unless of course your goal is to get compliments and impress your friends.

Why should you care?

If you cared enough to start a project, you should care enough to continue with some sort of purpose. You should care because your brand is talking all...the...time. It's drawing people in, it's turning people off, it's telling people who you are, and people talk to other people. It's the first line of interaction anyone has with your company, and it's a major factor in whether or not you'll achieve what you want to.

A brand sets up potential future customers to either be attracted to, or turned off by you. It tells donors whether or not they should give their \$5 to you instead of Starbucks. Your brand says "Hey, I care about the same things you do." or "I'm here because I thought it would be fun." Next time you decide to spring for an Atama or donate to Tap Cancer Out, ask why you did this time and not earlier. Ask if you'd do it again. The answer might not be immediately clear, but it's always somewhere in a brand.

So keep checking back or sign up for our business newsletter. We'll be bringing you more on branding in our business section. In the meantime, take a look at two interviews we did a while back with Saulo Ribeiro and Roy Dean. They come from very different

backgrounds and are known in BJJ for different reasons, but both have created easily recognizable and thoughtful images of themselves in the community.



A Short History of BJJ Brands in the UK¹⁷

UK based Brazilian Jiu Jitsu gi making is ten years old! I say this because as far as I am aware, the very first British company to make a BJJ gi was Evolution Fightwear - who released their eponymous debut gi way back in late 2003 and beginning of 2004. The photo above shows Dave 'Speedy' Elliot wearing that very first gi!

Andy Smith, owner of Evolution, tells me: "Evolution began in 2001 and the first BJJ gi I believe was not until the end 2003 beginning 2004 I only made 12 or something like that as a test run and they went well ,they were made in Brazil, I can only find one picture of Dave Speedy in it which is dated Oct 2004 (Im sure this was the first design) I don't recall any other UK brands at the time."

¹⁷ <http://meerkat69.blogspot.ba/2014/02/a-short-history-of-bjj-brands-in-uk.html>

While Evolution were most probably the first, they were soon followed by a number of brands - all of whom have been pivotal in shaping the fightwear and jiu jitsu clothing scene we have today. Here is a brief timeline and rundown of the major players in the past ten years:



Black Eagle opened up shop in 2005 selling traditional martial arts uniforms and equipment. They entered the BJJ market with their gi in 2007. According to this interview with owner Steve Turner, Black Eagle have endured ups and downs, but they're still here and still selling BJJ uniforms.



South Wales based **Tatami Fightwear** began in November 2008 with a number of gi models. Co-owner Gareth Drummer tells me: "Tatami started in November 2008 but our first real batch did not arrive until February 2009. We started by renting out a friends spare bedroom to store stock. Now we have a 5000sq foot warehouse and employ 8 people."



Also in 2008 - 2009 an internet sensation began popping up across UK fightwear forums and boards. The person taking on the character of a tough, old school Brazilian fighter, was called **Faixa Rua**. These posts were incredibly funny - so long as you understood it was all intended as a parody. When the gi brand Faixa Rua was launched, the following was such that immediate success was assured. Sadly I can no longer find these old forum posts, perhaps they have been archived somewhere?



Another gi brand worth noting that opened up shop in 2008 is **Grab and Pull**. Run by UK based Brazilian Gus Oliveira, the Grab and Pull line was marketed as both a fightwear brand and a tournament circuit. The latter now being renamed to **BJJ247**. Their first gi came out in 2009.



Scramble also opened their doors around this time. Initially offering just a series of Japanese themed t-shirts and tops, their brand really kicked off with the introduction of their first 'spats' and then their 'ichiban' kimono. Scramble co-owner Ben Tong says: "We began in 2009, in Costa Coffee over a pastry and Americano, if I remember rightly."

Since the early days of British BJJ and fightwear companies there has been nothing short of an explosion of new brands and new designs. It is interesting for me, as an industry observer, to witness this growth and also the way many of these companies are getting some serious traffic not only in the UK, but around the world as well.

In no particular order, here is a list of all the British companies that I know who make BJJ uniforms¹⁸:

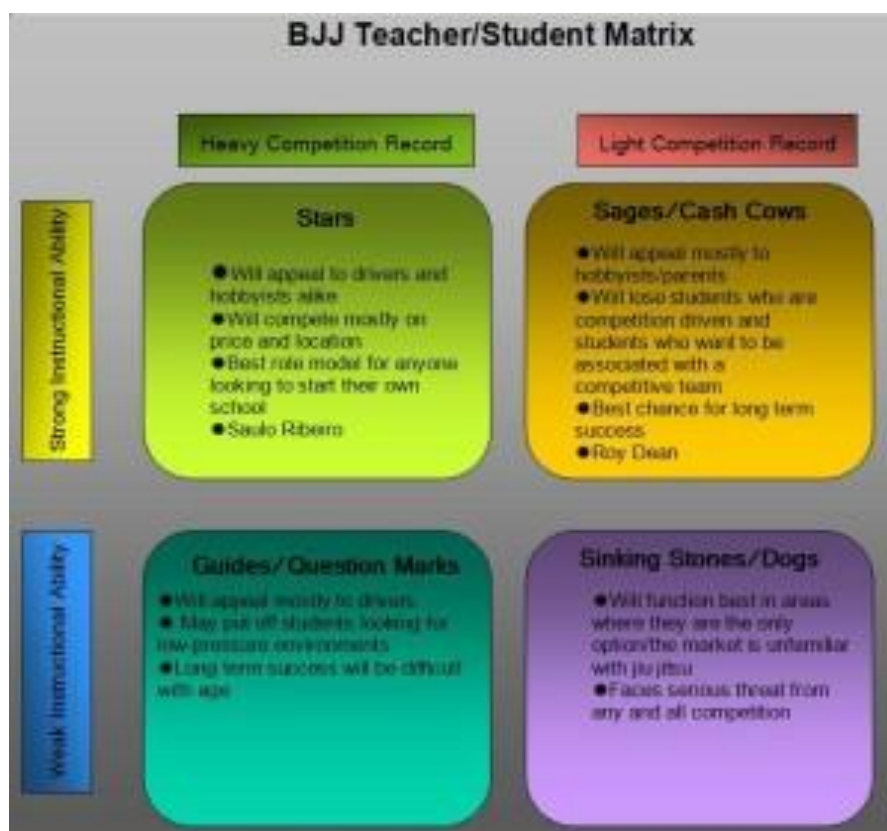
1. **Tatami Fightwear**
2. **Faix rua**
3. **TUFF Fightwear**
4. **Black Eagle**
5. **Valor Gis**
6. **Scramble**
7. **Blitz Sport**
8. **KII Fightgear**
9. **Battle Gear.**
10. **Submission Sniper**
11. **Strike Fightwear**
12. **Evolution Fightwear**
13. **Gawakoto**
14. **Grab & Pull**
15. **Aesthetic**
16. **Rei Gi**

¹⁸ <http://meerkat69.blogspot.ba/2014/02/a-short-history-of-bjj-brands-in-uk.html>

Business In BJJ: Teachers, Competitors And Economic Success

Spend some time on any BJJ forum and you'll run across people looking to train, compete, win a whole bushel of medals and then start their own schools. It seems that there is a common line of thought that the skills needed to start and run a school come along with more training and education in jiu jitsu. It's much more likely that starting a school puts an instructor back at the white belt level in new areas of practice (contract negotiation, hiring/firing, customer service, law, recruiting, marketing, all that good stuff).

We decided to play around with the BCG growth-share matrix and put a bit of a twist on it. It really could apply to language teachers, music instructors, dance, cupcakery...any area where the general public is paying for instruction and has full choice in instructor (as opposed to say, a school/university).



Source: <http://groundworkbjj.com/articles-and-books/family-and-community/kids-and-family/business-in-bjj-teachers-competitors-and-economic-success/>

The original version was and is used to analyze corporate departments and product lines. It's also of some use to instructors starting a new school, or honestly are already in business and are looking to to improve/draw more business. No instructor is stuck in any particular box and that anyone can grow out of one or get lazy and fall into another.

Some factors that have a large impact on maintaining a successful school that aren't taken into account in the diagram...

Business skill and application...VITAL at any level. Business skills can make a Dog or sink a Star in a heartbeat. The application of business skills is the big difference between a

Roy Dean and a John Danaher...They'd likely fall under the Sage/Cashcow category, but Roy Dean has a much stronger application of his business skills, and therefore, a bigger name, though both are successful in their chosen areas.

Personality...big deal in making a good first impression. How an instructor relates to a student will make an enormous difference in student attraction and retention.

Price...depending on the income of an area, competitors' pricing and economic factors, this can turn everything on its head.

US registered BJJ Schools

The information herein is made available to the public by the International Brazilian Jiu Jitsu Federation (IBJJF) and simply lists academies that are certified by the IBJJF. To be a certified academy simply means that: The academy has a head professor who is a member of IBJJF with the rank of black belt and that the academy's students are able to participate in IBJJF events.

This link: <http://ibjjf.org/registered/> contain approx 1000 registered BJJ worldwide schools (US: approx 220 schools)

2015 REGISTERED

Search by name...						Clear
Name	Responsible	Federation	Country	Address	Website / Email	
Ris-Rosenberg Jiu-Jitsu	Steven Rosenberg	USBJJF	United States of America	525 S. McClintock Dr. Ste 103 - Tempe - AZ - United States of America - CEP 85281	azcombatsports.com /	
Wand FT Gold Team	Leandro de Lorenço Lima	USBJJF	United States of America	3061 Business Ln - Las Vegas - NV - United States of America - CEP 89103	www.wandfightteam.vegas / lorenco.leandro@gmail.com	
James Shook Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu	James K. Shook	USBJJF	United States of America	5780 C.H. James PKWY Ste 130 - Powder Springs - GA - United States of America - CEP 30127	www.tekniquesbjj.com / tekniques@tekniquesbjj.com	
127 BJJ	Eamon Patrick Knittel	USBJJF	United States of America	116 Fountain St - Ste. B - Philadelphia - PA - United States of America - CEP 19127	www.127bjj.com / 127bjj@gmail.com	
Black House Redondo Beach	Ricardo Cerri Arrivabene	USBJJF	United States of America	2416 artesia blvd - redondo beach - ca - United States of America	blackhouseredondo.com / arriva10@hotmail.com	
Gracie Barra Doral	Paulo Roberto de Castro	USBJJF	United States of America	9851 NW 58th St #106 - Doral - FL - United States of America - CEP 33178	/	
Team Alves Pagels Jiu-Jitsu	Emmanuel Maieiro Maximiano Alves	USBJJF	United States of America	2441 Tangerine Dr - Sarasota - FL - United States of America - CEP 34239	http://thealvesjiujitsu.com/ / bjjkimono@yahoo.com	
AOA Champion JJ	Bruce William Harvard	USBJJF	United States of America	662 S. Wheeling Road - Wheeling - IL - United States of America - CEP 60990	www.championjiujitsu.com / championjiujitsu@att.net	

Source: <http://ibjjf.org/registered/>

The Top Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu Tournaments In The World¹⁹

Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu is one of the most popular and exciting sports in the world. It goes without saying that it has become more popular in recent years with the exposure of the sport through MMA companies like the UFC. However, aside from the UFC, there are also BJJ tournaments in the world that are where many athletes get their start and make a name for themselves. If you're a Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu fan, but you've only seen BJJ in the form of UFC, you're missing out on a whole different element to the sport. This review will take a look at the top tournaments for BJJ athletes.

THE WORLD JIU-JITSU CHAMPIONSHIP

The World Jiu-Jitsu Championship is quiet possibly the most popular BJJ tournament on the planet. The tournament, also called the Mundials, began in 1996 and has been held each year by the International Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu Federation. The venue of this event was commonly held in Brazil for many years, until being moved to California for the first time in 2007. Each year the tournament grows in size and the crowd at the events usually is in excess of 10,000 people. Many of the world's best BJJ athletes compete at the Mundials. And as it should come as no surprise to fans of the sport that the athlete with the most wins is Roger Gracie, with ten.

PAN-AMERICAN CHAMPIONSHIP

Starting in 1995, the Pan-American Championship has been held in the United States to find the top BJJ athletes in the world. Outside of the Mundials, the Pan-American Championship is the largest in North America and has helped grow the sport in tremendous ways. As new athletes win the tournament and go on to make big names for themselves, the prestige that goes with the event also continues to grow. In recent years, it has been considered as one of the top tournaments in the world. In 2012, the Pan-American Championship had 1,700 competitors, setting a new record for the tournament.

WORLD PROFESSIONAL JIU-JITSU CUP

The World Professional Jiu-Jitsu Cup has been running since 2009 and is touted as the largest BJJ event in the world. The tournament is held exclusively in Abu Dhabi and held at the request of Mohammed bin Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the Supreme Prince of the United Arab Emirates. The World Pro Cup also offers the largest grand prize purse for winning the tournament. In 2011, the total was over \$200,000 and it continues to grow each year. The tournament is more exclusive than others, as it has only a few hundred of the world's top competitors (compared to thousands in the Pan-American Championship).

EUROPEAN OPEN

Each year in Europe, the European Open is held for BJJ competitors. In 2013 the event was held in Portugal, but the venue changes regularly, allowing for people throughout Europe and the rest of the world to compete in different locations. Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu continues to

¹⁹ <http://www.valleyforgebjj.com/top-brazilian-jiu-jitsu-tournaments-in-the-world/>

grow in Europe, and the exposure of the European Open drastically helps with to increase popularity among athletes.

INTERNATIONAL BRAZILIAN JIU-JITSU

This list has compiled information with some of the most popular Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu tournaments in the world. However, there are others that are still widely popular and held in other locations throughout the world.

US Tournaments



USA BJJ TOURNAMENTS.COM

HOME ☆ TOURNAMENTS ☆ RULES ☆ REGISTRATION ☆ RESULTS ☆ GALLERY ☆ CONTACT

TOURNAMENT INFO

The Michigan Open GI 2015 is scheduled for Sunday Oct 11

The 2015 tournament schedules are being established. The Hoosier Open date is set for Saturday, June 6th.

We've hosted 35 tournaments over the past 10 years and many satisfied competitors continue to return to our events year after year. In 2015 we will continue our commitment in providing you with high quality tournaments as we've done in the past.

Here's what former participants are saying about our tournaments:

"I just wanted to let you know that my family and I had a great time at the tournament yesterday. We were all impressed with how well it was ran. I talked to a guy who was over 50 years old and came to compete from Missouri. It was his second year in a row he has come to the tournament. He said that the Hoosier Open is one of the best and well put together tournaments that he has ever been to. I talked to many people yesterday and all of them had the same opinion. I know that you put a LOT of work into making the Hoosier Open a quality event. So, I thought you should know that it shows and is appreciated. Take care" - Officer Brandon C. Thomas

"I wanted to let you know that this was the best BJJ event we have attended. It was well run and the staff were really helpful and friendly. Thank you and we will be attending again next year!" - Sinead

TOURNAMENT RESULTS

Michigan Open 2015 Team Results:


Kids Team

1st Team Caique JJ
2nd Team Ribeiro JJ
3rd Team Machado JJ

Adult Team

1st Team Caique JJ

Source: <http://www.usabjjtournaments.com/>



USA Jiu Jitsu Tournaments

Official USA Jiu Jitsu Tournaments

Tournament Questions?

Contact tournaments@usajj.com or call us at 1-888-694-2335

Become a Certified USA Jiu Jitsu Champion

USAJJ will be hosting the Annual National Championship and also Regional tournaments.

This is your chance to compete amongst the top athletes in Jiu-Jitsu for a very affordable rate.

Come join us and test your skills among the best in the sport.

The tournaments are open to everybody, but USAJJ members have preference on the pre-registration and receive a considerable discount on their entry fee.

Annual USA Jiu Jitsu National Amateur Championship

Building The Sport

"We are a service organization", says [USAJJ Commissioner PapaJohn Gorman](#), "and as such, we want to bring the Jiu-Jitsu and related martial arts community together to provide more effective and cost efficient services for our members. As a group we can focus on solving many of the problems that plague our sport."

He indicated that USA Jiu-Jitsu was in effect a consumer organization.

We are here to help our members solve their problems.

If they are having difficulties dealing with billing and credit card companies, we want to assist them. USAJJ also evaluates and certifies rank, credentials, and [certify instructors](#).

USAJJ Regional Tournaments

FREE USA JIU JITSU TIPS

Receive weekly videos, pictures, techniques, and workout tips from the black belts of USA Jiu Jitsu. It's free, just enter your email below:

enter email here

Source: <http://www.usajj.com/jiu-jitsu-tournaments/>

BRAZILIAN JIU-JITSU TOURNAMENTS

ABOUT TOURNAMENTS 2015 CALENDAR MEDIA RANKING CONTACT

BJJTOUR

CHECK THE RESULTS
Click to check out all the Results

20 YEARS US OPEN
BRAZILIAN JIU-JITSU TOURNAMENT

**REGISTER TODAY!
REGISTRATION NOW OPEN!**

GENERAL INFORMATION

One of the biggest and most traditional event in Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu in the world!

The **U.S. Open** is in its 20th edition and is the most durable tournament on the west coast of the United States.

**NO REGISTRATION WILL BE ACCEPTED
AFTER October 19th, 11:59 PM PST.**

LOCATION
KAISER PERMANENTE ARENA,
SANTA CRUZ, CA

BY GOLD	ACADEMY NAME	BY GOLD	ACADEMY NAME	BY GOLD	ACADEMY NAME	BY GOLD	ACADEMY NAME
1	CheckMat	21	14	15	246	1	RGCT
2	CrashMat	13	20	15	102	2	CrashMat
3	Rice Bros. BJJ	9	3	1	91	3	Pinkie's BJJ
4	Gracie Barra	8	3	6	87	4	CHECKMATE
5	Meta Jiu Jitsu	8	3	4	85	5	Gracie Jiu Jitsu

Source: <http://bjjtour.com/tournaments/u-s-open/#>

NORTH AMERICAN BRAZILIAN JIU-JITSU FEDERATION

2015 **WORLD'S** NOVEMBER 21 & 22

ABOUT US MEMBERSHIP BELT SYSTEM TOURNAMENT NABJJ MEDIA REFEREE SPONSORS FAQ CONTACT US

BRINGIT *Honra e Respeito*
BRINGITBJJ.COM

2015-2016 Tournaments

All Tournaments are Gi & NoGi, All Ages, All Belts, All Levels

2015 SJJIF Kids

TEAM RANKING
Join Our Email List

2016 NABJJF Tournaments

NABJJF All Americas Tournament
Kids & Adults
Gi & NoGi
January 23-24, 2016
Cerritos College

Source: <http://www.nabjjf.com/index.php/tournament>

2015 SJJIF Team Ranking

TEAM RANKING

Current 2015 list for the Team Ranking for the year:
Tournaments currently accounted in the ranking:
2014 Nationals (USA) – 2015 All Americas (USA) – 2015 Lone Star (USA) – 2015 Grand Canyon (USA) – 2015 Rio Challenge (BR) – 2015 Brasil Open (BR) – 2015 LA Open (USA) – 2015 Pan-American (BR) – 2015 North American (USA) – 2015 Lisboa Open (Portugal)

Kids Gi Team Ranking

Kids NoGi Team Ranking

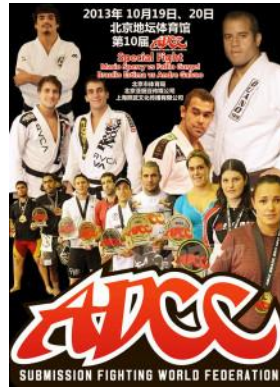
Adult Gi Team Ranking

Adult NoGi Team Ranking

Source: <http://sjjif.com/2015-sjjif-team-ranking/>

\$60 To Watch The ADCC In Beijing?

I'm REALLY curious how many people paid to watch the ADCC Championship over the weekend (I'm sure the stats will never be released). I honestly did a double take when I read that they were charging \$60 to watch all three mats, which basically broke down as the option to watch mats individually at \$20 each. After BudoVideos premiered its multimat technology for IBJJF viewing, I expected to see standards shift.



I decided to take a quick look at the difference prices for attending vs. viewing a couple of high level BJJ events²⁰:

- Metamoris (Long Beach, CA, USA)
 - In Person: \$20-350
 - Online: \$20
- IBJJF (LA, CA, USA)
 - In Person: \$12-15
 - Online: \$12-49.95 (all access through BudoVideos)
- ADCC (Beijing, China)
 - In Person: \$16.40-\$41
 - Online: \$60

Now of course, in-person prices are more heavily dependent on local pricing pressures than online options, so you could argue that the difference in pricing in Beijing isn't as drastic as it looks. While the ADCC looks to be comparable to the IBJJF rates, when you compared the quality (multimat vs three channels that could not be easily toggled), it seems a bit off base.

All that said though, my real guess is that the prices are most heavily influenced by who event organizers expected to be the biggest viewing audience, and how much they expected to recoup from the events overall. While the pricing of this event made me rethink my stance against torrenting BJJ events (in favor of putting more \$ into events we all care about), I still think there is room, especially in the case of the ADCC, to drop the price of online viewing options, if only for the sake of solidifying the event experience across the global community and opening that up to more participants.

²⁰ <http://groundworkbjj.com/articles-and-books/business-in-bjj/60-adcc/>

Competitors

BJJ Clothing Brands²¹

Online Stores

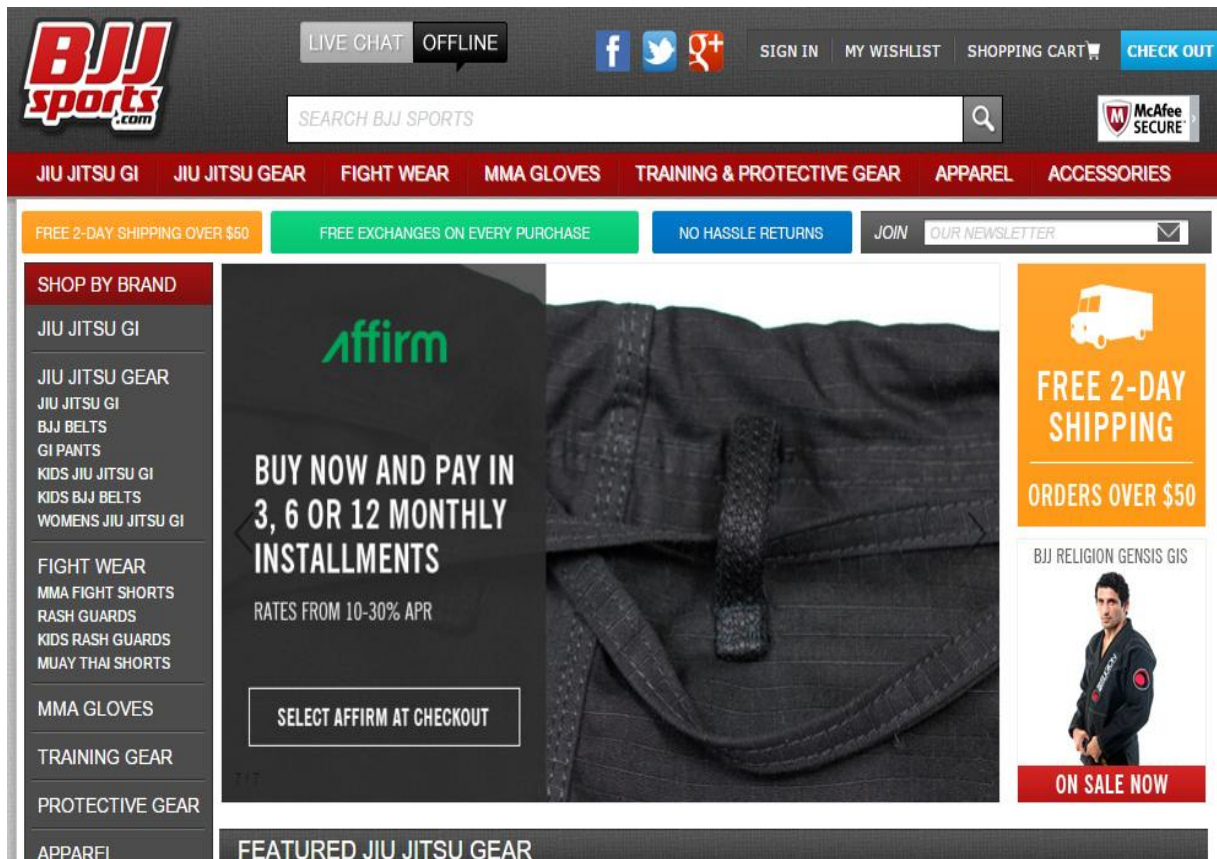
- Budovideos --> budovideos.com (Great selection, costly shipping and tax for non-Americans)
- OTM --> onthemat.com (OTM gis are good quality)
- Fighters' Market --> fightersmarket.ca (solid options for gi's and gear, low shipping costs for Canadians until they move to the US)
- MMA gear pimp --> mmagearpimp.com (terrible name, poor customer service, but low shipping and no tariffs for Canadian customers)
- Jiu Jitsu Pro gear --> jiujitsuprogear.com (wide selection of gear, great in-house gi's)
- Brazilian Fightwear --> brazilianfightwear.com (sells over patched gi's and WAR belts)
- Bull Terrier --> btfightgear.com (Japanese distributor of hard to find brands)
- MMA Warehouse --> mmawarehouse.com (Good selection)
- Fighter Girls --> fightergirls.com (Great selection of gear for women)
- North American BJJ --> nabjjf.com (Good prices on various gear)

Individual Companies

- Atama --> atama-kimonos.com (still the industry standard)
- Fushida --> fushida.ca (high quality BJJ and Judo gi's from Vancouver)
- Isami --> chokesports.com [Isami and Reversal brands)
- Scramble --> scramblestuff.com (Jiu Jitsu clothing from the UK)
- Koral --> koralusa.com (industry leader)
- Gameness --> www.gameness.com makes ugly but bomb-proof gi's)
- HCK --> howardliu.com (makes even uglier, even more bomb-proof gi's)
- Faixa Rua --> faixarua.co.uk/ (Koral knock-offs for the UK market)
- Tatami --> tatamifightwear.com (very flashy gi's made in the UK)
- No-Gi --> nogi.com/ (great no-gi gear, what else?)
- Fenom Kimonos --> fenomkimonos.com (High quality gis for women)
- Fight Chix --> fightchix.com (Gi and No-Gi gear for women)

²¹ https://m.reddit.com/r/bjj/comments/jh2kx/is_there_a_comprehensive_best_places_to_buy_gear/

BJJ Sports



Source: <http://www.bjjsports.com/>

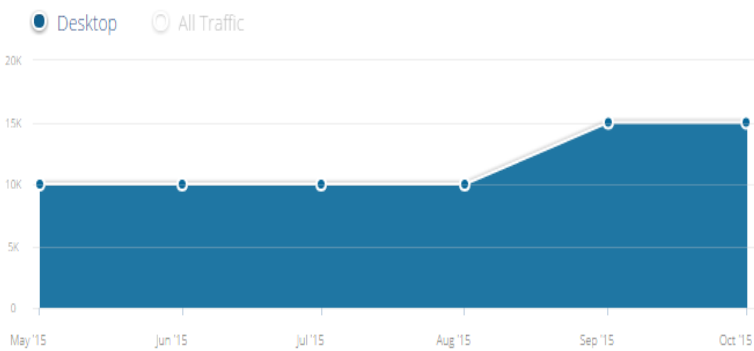
Mission²²:

- Provide the best shopping experience for Jiu Jitsu and MMA Gear
BJJ Sports strives to provide our customers with the best possible shopping experience - this means a great product selection, ease of finding what you are looking for, knowing what it is you are buying, all backed with fast and friendly customer service.
- Support all aspects of the sport Whether you are into traditional BJJ with a Gi, no-gi BJJ, or MMA in general, we want to make it easy to get the gear you need.
- Promote the growth of Brazilian Jiu Jitsu and MMA We all win when there is a healthy following of our sport - whether we are talking about more traditional IBJJF competitions or Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) and UFC.

²² <http://www.bjjsports.com/>

Estimated Monthly Visits ⓘ

Showing last 6 months



Engagement

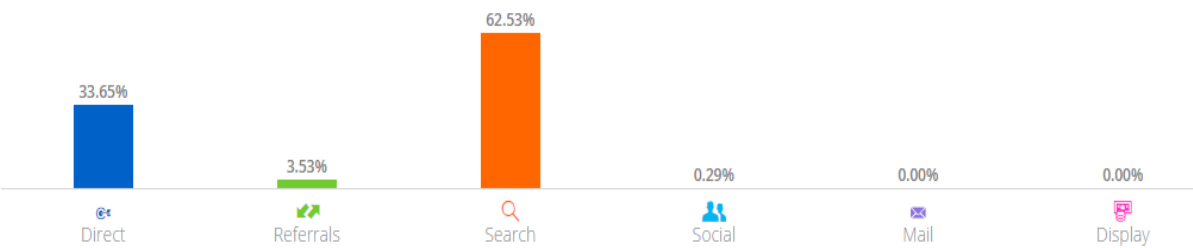
On Desktop, in October, 2015

Visits	15K
⌚ Time On Site	00:02:03
📄 Page Views	3.52
↪ Bounce Rate	61.16%

🇺🇸 United States	61.74%
🇵🇭 Philippines	7.74%
🇮🇹 Italy	4.19%
🇦🇺 Australia	2.46%
🇨🇦 Canada	2.29%

Traffic Sources ⓘ

On Desktop, Last 3 months



Search ①



62.53%
Of traffic is from Search

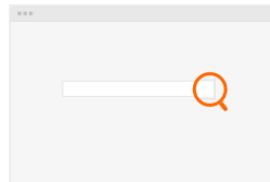
95.95%
Organic Searches



4.05%
Paid Searches

Organic Keywords: ①

bjj gi
jiu jitsu gi
bjj gear
kimono bjj
bjj gis



Paid Keywords: ①

bjj gi
high quality ...
cheap bjj gis
jiu jitsu gi
jaco hybrid t...

Social ①



0.29%

Of traffic is from Social

Reddit

Facebook

88.94%

11.06%

Source: <http://www.similarweb.com/website/bjjsports.com>

Competition

Top Organic Competitors

1	fightersmarket.com
2	bjjwarehouse.com
3	rollmore.com
4	krugans-usa.com
5	jiujitsuprogear.com

Top Paid Competitors

1	fightersmarket.com
2	wholesale-bjj-gis.com
3	bjjwarehouse.com
4	wartribegear.com
5	martialartssupplies.com

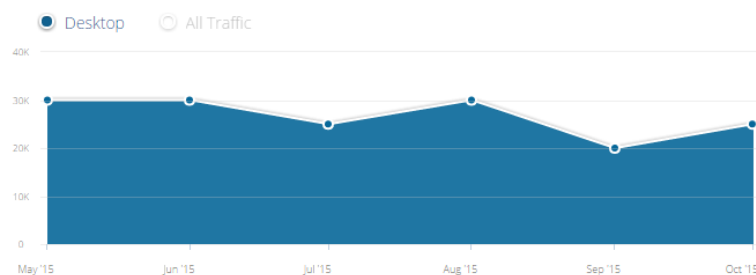
Source: <http://www.spyfu.com/overview/domain?query=bjjsports.com>

RollMore

<http://www.rollmore.com/>

Estimated Monthly Visits ①

Showing last 6 months



Engagement

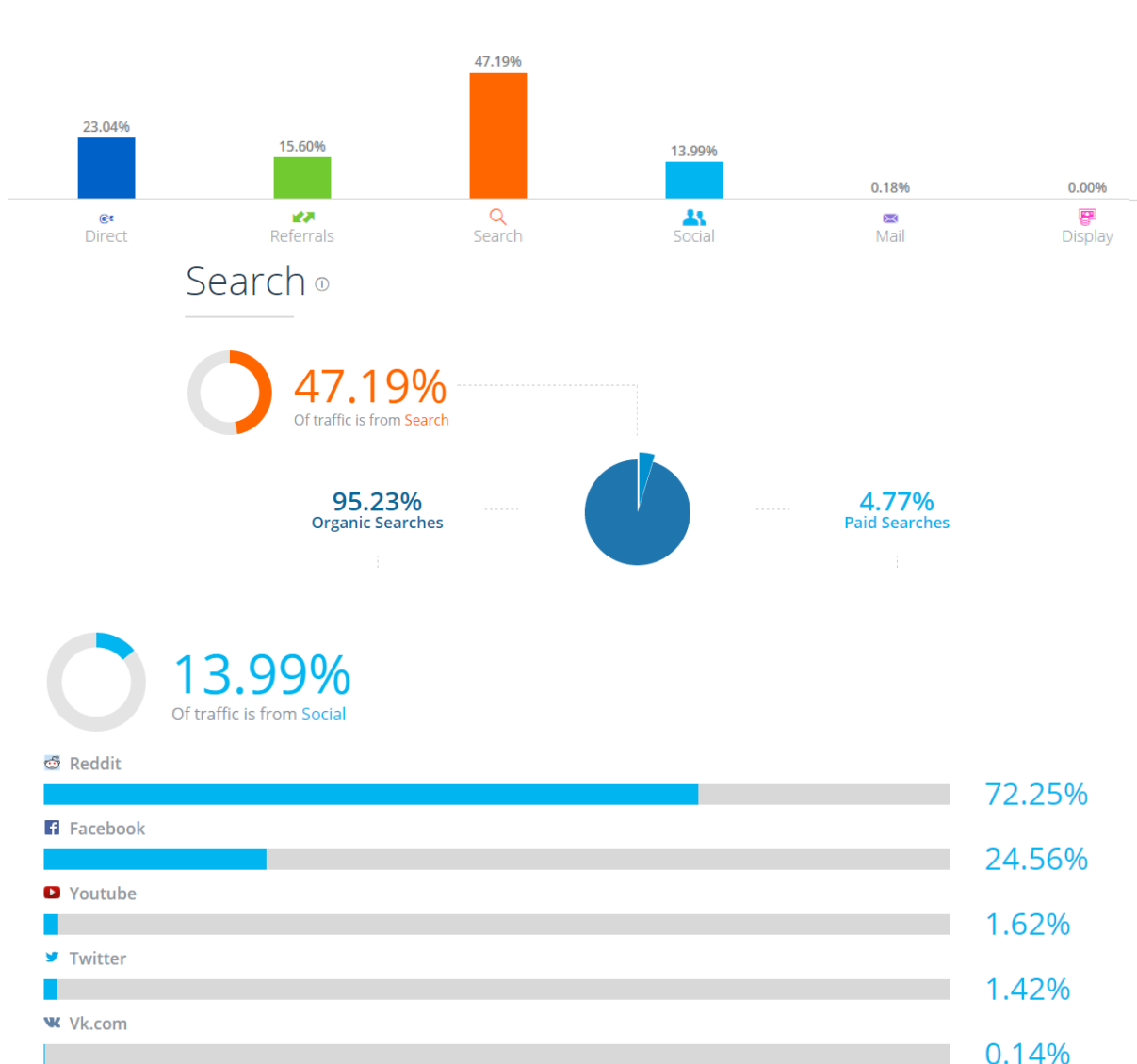
On Desktop, in October, 2015

Visits	25K
⌚ Time On Site	00:03:57
📄 Page Views	6.09
➡ Bounce Rate	37.47%

🇺🇸 United States	71.71%
🇨🇦 Canada	5.84%
🇬🇧 United Kingdom	2.34%
🇵🇱 Poland	1.94%
🇦🇺 Australia	1.94%

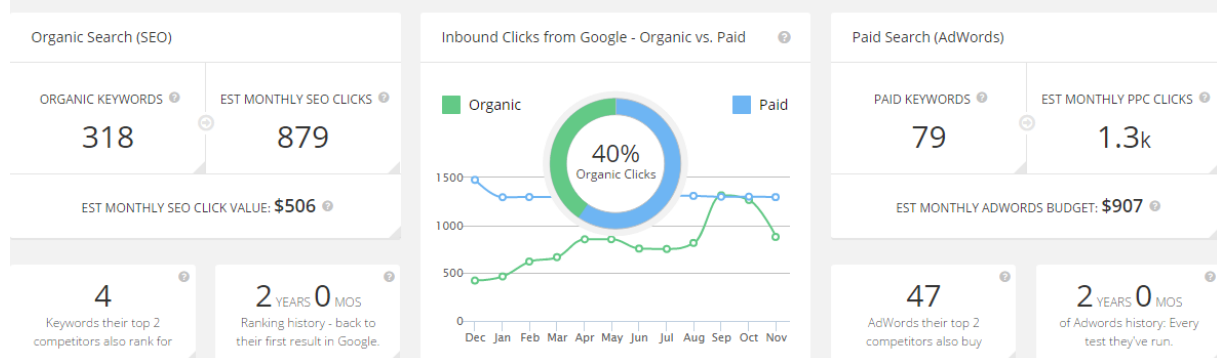
Traffic Sources ①

On Desktop, Last 3 months



Source: <http://www.similarweb.com/website/rollmore.com>

Monthly Domain Overview - rollmore.com



Source: <http://www.spyfu.com/overview/domain?query=rollmore.com>

Other competitors

- <https://www.thejiujitsushop.com/>
- <http://www.graciebarrawear.com/>
- <https://www.venum.com/sports/brazilian-jiu-jitsu.html>
- <http://www.scramblestuff.us/usa-homepage/>
- <http://www.jiujitsuprogear.com/>
- <http://www.mantousa.com/>
- <http://www.jiu-jitsu-usa.com/>
- <http://www.stormkimonos.com/>
- <http://www.checkmatbjj.us/>
- <http://www.atamausa.com/>

Competition Judo Vs. Competition BJJ - What BJJ Can Learn²³

Complaints about IBJJF rules have become like background music in competition BJJ...but they're the only game in town, so few people, from big name competitors to people new to the sport, are willing to take the chance at boycotting or complaining at any noticeable level...that means something though. It's a stance that acts, every day, on the health of jiu jitsu around the world.

This quote from the article below says it all, especially since BJJ won't always have the advantage of always being the newest "game in town".

When someone trains even moderately hard, he or she will be unhappy to go into an event, wait around for hours to compete, only to lose a match due to holding the uniform in an unacceptable manner or touching the leg, or anyone of a great number of other infractions which make no sense. The number of judo matches in the U.S. decided by penalties far exceeds anything I have ever seen in any other contact sport.

The attitude toward coaches and players for years has been

"Screw 'em, what are they going to do? Not compete?" In fact, it appears that what they are going to do is not compete in judo, but rather, compete in something very like judo. We're not the only game in town any more.

Why There Are Fewer Competitors In Judo : The Enemy Is Us

There is no denying the fact that there are fewer people competing in judo than twenty or thirty years ago. Many explanations have been offered for this, pretty much all of which can be summarized as the U.S. is a bunch of lazy slackers and judo is the second-biggest sport in the world, so there! In fact, there is considerable evidence to suggest that judo is NOT the second-biggest sport in the world, if one defines "biggest" as the one with the most spectators or the most participants or the most competitors, but that is a myth to be busted another day.

²³ <http://groundworkbjj.com/articles-and-books/the-academy/competition-killing-judo-bjj-pay-attention/>

Let's take our myths one at a time, shall we? Three new sports have become extremely popular in the U.S. – grappling, mixed martial arts and Brazilian jiu-jitsu. While jiu-jitsu has been around for a long time, the particular style that has given rise to all the new schools is relatively new. If the soft, wienie theory were true, it is hard to understand why a sport that allows you to slam people on really thin mats (grappling) or punch people in the face AND armbar them, is gaining players by the day. Let's look at the four P's they teach you in marketing – price, product, promotion and place. Of those four, the one we are the worst on is product. I can hear the screams of outrage already – judo is a wonderful sport! We love it! If people only knew ...

I believe we have at least two major problems with judo as a product. The first is the lack of respect we give to our consumers / students.

Look how judo is taught in many clubs (not all clubs, but too many). Some old men tell a lot of young people to do exercises. They get to do this because they have a higher rank. If anyone complains that practice is the same every day or asks why they are doing a certain drill, it is pointed out that the instructor is a volunteer. I have been in judo classes many times in many places where the instructor will yell at students,

“You're not here to have fun!”

Well, what are they here for, then? Personally, I had a great time when I trained and I won a lot. I did it because it was fun. I've heard instructors say,

“They'll have fun when they win.”

Yes, winning is an awesome amount of fun, but someone who is a really good athlete can probably win at something besides judo, too, and maybe that thing will be more fun. You see, most people think the whole point of recreational activities is, well, recreation. Sports are SUPPOSED to be fun.

Contrast this with grappling or MMA. People come in and work out. The person running the class does some demonstration of techniques. Since they have no belt to validate their qualifications, people make a judgement as to whether this person knows what he or she is talking about or not. No one yells at them to tie their belt, their uniform is not tucked in, or they forgot to bow.

Some might argue that judo teaches you respect. This is true, in some schools, but respect is not how you dress, it is how you behave and it is mutual.

I meet people who are in grappling, MMA and jiu-jitsu all of the time. Some of them are complete jerks – just like some people in judo. Most of them are extremely polite, just like people in judo. I'm not stupid. I realize that part of that politeness is because I'm an older woman and people are raised to be polite to older women, and most especially to mothers, because being impolite to someone's mother may earn you a kick in the teeth. The fact that I'm the mother of four beautiful daughters is not lost on me and no doubt adds to the politeness factor.

My point – and you may by now have despaired of me having one – is that I haven't seen any evidence that yelling at people to tie their belts, tuck in their judo gis, and bow properly has caused a drastically higher level of politeness.

This may seem to contradict the experience of some older instructors at tournaments, who will tell me that they have been extremely rudely spoken to by young people from MMA clubs. I believe respect is mutual. If you walk up to a person you don't know and berate him

for the way he's dressed, bowing, shoes, etc. you see it as your right because you are a higher rank. He just sees it as a stranger yelling at him about something trivial that's none of his business. Seriously, what gives you that right?

This isn't to say I haven't made some young people unhappy. For example, I've told 18- 20 year old men at tournaments that they can't be drinking beer in the lobby because they are under age, it's illegal, they were being bad role models to younger children, people who provide funds to our organization could see them and it could hurt our chances for additional funding, and a lot of other reasons. They were NOT happy, but they quit drinking in public when I was around. What I did NOT say was because I said so, I am a sixth-degree black belt, I am a referee. What I hope they understood (and I think they did) is that I talked to them because I care about them, our younger players, and any players who might lose out on funding due to their bad behavior. What gives me the right is I'm a person in the judo community, with no or more less rights than them or their parents.

The second area where we have failed as a product is the arbitrary and capricious rules. Rules change at random with no input from the coaches or players and no apparent rhyme or reason. I've been in judo 40 years and I have a Ph.D. and I can't figure out why one year a certain throw will be legal and the next year not or why a certain grip is illegal. Judo matches are determined by the referees' intervention FAR more than other contact sports I have watched.

Read this next paragraph slowly because I think it is key — When someone trains even moderately hard, he or she will be unhappy to go into an event, wait around for hours to compete, only to lose a match due to holding the uniform in an unacceptable manner or touching the leg, or anyone of a great number of other infractions which make no sense. The number of judo matches in the U.S. decided by penalties far exceeds anything I have ever seen in any other contact sport.

The attitude toward coaches and players for years has been

“Screw 'em, what are they going to do? Not compete?”

In fact, it appears that what they are going to do is not compete in judo, but rather, compete in something very like judo. We're not the only game in town any more.

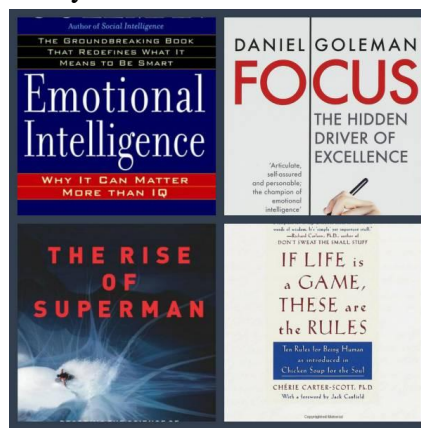
One explanation I have heard for the rule changes is to differentiate judo more from wrestling and grappling. Let me get this right, someone thought it was a good idea to change to be LESS like the sports that were more popular? Sure, that'll work.

2014 BJJ Lovers Holiday Shopping Guide²⁴

Here are my recommendations for some of the best gifts for the BJJ practitioner in your life:

Books and Magazines

Some of the books I've chosen are recommended because they will improve your mental game. Emotional Intelligence, by Daniel Goleman, can help you to self-motivate, be a better teammate, and manage your stress level. Focus, by the same author, will help you focus. The Rise of Superman, by Steven Kotler Price, will help you to identify and create flow in your training. If Life Is a Game, These Are the Rules, by Cherie Carter-Scott, will help you to be a better person and be kind to yourself and others.



Emotional Intelligence by Daniel Goleman

- Price: \$20.20
- Where to Get It: [Amazon](#)

Focus: The Hidden Driver of Excellence by Daniel Goleman

- Price: \$22.56
- Where to Get It: [Amazon](#)

The Rise of Superman by Steven Kotler Price

- Price: \$20.69
- Where to Get It: [Amazon](#)

If Life Is a Game, These Are the Rules by Cherie Carter-Scott

- Price: \$15.88
- Where to Get It: [Amazon](#)

It's great to be mentally strong, but in jiu jitsu, we also need to keep our conditioning in tip-top shape. I recommend Joel Jamieson's Ultimate MMA Conditioning and

²⁴ <http://breakingmuscle.com/brazilian-jiu-jitsu/2014-bjj-lovers-holiday-shopping-guide>

the Conditioning Blueprint DVD to those who want to complement their jiu jitsu training with strength and conditioning.

Not into heavy reading? That's why we have magazines! I love finding Jiu Jitsu Style in my mailbox, and so will your loved ones.



Ultimate MMA Conditioning and Conditioning Blueprint

- Price: \$97.00
- Where to Get It: [8 Weeks Out](#)

Jiu Jitsu Style Magazine Subscription

- Price: \$61.00
- Where to Get It: [BJJ Style](#)

DVDs

The DVDs below are ones that I've heard good things about or have found to help my training a lot over the years. I love Ryan Hall's in-depth explanations of jiu jitsu theory and how the body works in relation to other bodies. Stephan Kesting is a huge asset to the BJJ community. Every DVD set of his I've seen answers questions I didn't even know to ask, whether he's alone or with Emily Kwok or Brandon Mullins. Mastering the Crucifix can help your entire game, and I love that you don't have to worry about keeping track of DVDs. It's all available online.

Beyond Technique, with Nic Gregoriades

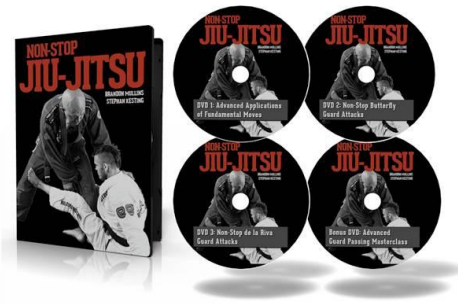
- Price: \$59.99
- Where to Get It: [Go Beyond Technique](#)

Mastering the Crucifix, with Matt Kirtley and Marshal D. Carper

- Price: \$39.95
- Where to Get It: [Artechoke Media](#)

Non-Stop Jiu Jitsu, with Brandon Mullins and Stephan Kesting

- Price: \$147.00
- Where to Get It: [Grapple Arts](#)



Ryan Hall DVD Set

- Price: \$124.99 each
- Where to Get It: [Ground Fighter](#)

Takedown Blueprint, with Jimmy Pedro and Travis Stevens

- Price: \$67.00
- Where to Get It: [Take Down Blueprint](#)

Tournament Photos

Wouldn't it be wonderful to have a framed photo from your competition? Fortunately, the BJJ community has some amazing photographers. Photographers like David Brown and Mike Calimbas capture our moments perfectly and offer prints for competitors and family members.

Supplements and Massage Tools

Supplements and massage tools are a big part of BJJ training for me, but you may not know what supplements your athlete might like. A gift card is always a great idea. I'm sponsored by Q5 Sports Nutrition so I'm most familiar with their products, but I hear some people would kill for a Quest bar. A box of Quest bars goes a long way. I'm still trying to finish the box I was sent to review. Another favorite for me is BioX protein bars. So delicious!

Other great gift items are massage tools from RAD roller and the Revolutionary Foam Roller from Epitome Fitness. And as always, I recommend BioForce HRV to ensure you're getting the most out of your training.

BioForce HRV

- Price: \$247.00
- Where to Get It: [Bio Force HRV](#)

Quest Bars

- Price: \$24.99
- Where to Get It: [Quest Nutrition](#)

BioX Bars

- Price: \$29.99

- Where to Get It: [Bodybuilding](#)



Q5 Sports Nutrition

- Price: Varies
- Where to Get It: [Q5 Sports Nutrition](#)

RAD Roller

- Price: \$24.99
- Where to Get It: [Rad Roller](#)

Epitome Fitness Revolutionary Foam Roller

- Price: \$35.00
- Where to Get It: [Amazon](#)



Clothing

On Sundays, I don't feel like wearing real clothes when I go to BJJ. I'm all about the hoodies and the gym pants. For slobs like me, unwrapping a Scramble hoodie or a pair of UA joggers would make Christmas the best day ever. Still comfortable but a million times more stylish is the epic track jacket from Grips Athletics. I've worn this a lot, but haven't reviewed it yet due to my lack of running.

Grips Athletic Chill Out Track Top

- Price: \$119.00
- Where to Get It: [Grips Athletics](#)

lululemon Scuba Hoodie II

- Price: \$108.00
- Where to Get It: [lululemon](#)



Scramble “IQ Wrestler” Full Zip Hoodie

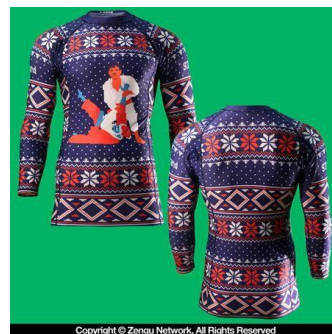
- Price: \$79.99
- Where to Get It: [Scramble](#)

Scramble “Relax-a-Tron” Joggers

- Price: \$74.99
- Where to Get It: [Scramble](#)

Under Armour Legacy French Terry Pant

- Price: \$69.99
- Where to Get It: [Under Armour](#)



Rashguards and Training Pants

I like the gi, but I like no-gi just as much. Mostly because the gear is so awesome. With all of those graphics and shiny fabrics, what’s not to like? My picks for no gi gear are below.

Combat Skin Combat Warrior Rashguard and Spats

- Price: \$59.00
- Where to Get It: [Combat Skin](#)

93 Brand Ugly Sweater Rashguard

- Price: \$59.99

- Where to Get It: [Roll More](#)

93 Brand Rollers 7/8 Sleeve Rashguard

- Price: \$59.99
- Where to Get It: [Roll More](#)

Grips Athletics Flower Power Rashguard

- Price: \$64.90
- Where to Get It: [Grips Athletics](#)

Groundswell Grappling Rashguard

- Price: \$60.00
- Where to Get It: [Groundswell Grappling Concepts](#)

Scramble x Sakuraba “Water” Rashguard

- Price: \$55.00
- Where to Get It: [Scramble](#)

JACO Hybrid Training Shorts

- Price: \$59.99
- Where to Get It: [JACO Clothing](#)

JACO Women’s Training Tights

- Price: \$49.99
- Where to Get It: [JACO Clothing](#)

Manto Black Pro Logo Shorts

- Price: \$49.99
- Where to Get It: [Roll More](#)



Mitmunk Leggings

- Price: \$79.00
- Where to Get It: [Etsy](#)



Gis

Finally, the most important item: the gi. But which one is best? There is no best. I always looked for “the one,” but there are so many awesome gis, it’s hard to choose these days. Below are both ones I have loved and ones I would love to try. I think they would be welcomed by any BJJ practitioner.

93 Brand x Meerkatsu Zodiac Gi

- Price: \$149.99
- Where to Get It: [Roll More](#)

Fenom Gi

- Price: \$85 to \$100
- Where to Get It: [Fenom Kimonos](#)

Adidas Gi

- Price: \$178.00 to \$195.00
- Where to Get It: [Adidas Combat Sports](#)



Scramble Rebel Gi

- Price: \$154.99
- Where to Get It: [Roll More](#)



Inverted Gear Gi

Price: \$129.99 to \$149.99

Where to Get It: [Roll More](#)

Killer Bee Custom Gi

Price: \$150.00 to \$225.00

Where to Get It: [Killer Bee Custom Gi](#)

Tatami Estilo 4.0

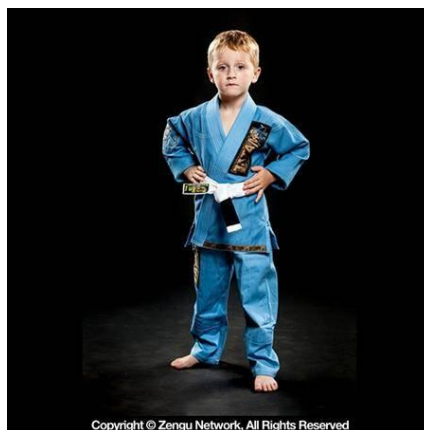
Price: \$119.99

Where to Get It: [Roll More](#)

Tatami Animal Gi (For the kids)

Price: \$64.99

Where to Get It: [Roll More](#)



Gear Bags

The gear is ready, but it has to be carried in something! What about an awesome new gear bag?

Tatami Meiyo BJJ Duffel Bag

- Price: \$59.99
- Where to Get It: [Roll More](#)

lululemon Weekend Warrior Bag

- Price: \$148.00
- Where to Get It: [lululemon](#)



Datusara Gear Bag Pro

- Price: \$145.00
- Where to Get It: [DS Gear](#)

Nupak

- Price: \$99.00
- Where to Get It: [Nupak USA](#)

Grips Athletics Duffel Backpack

- Price: \$89.90
- Where to Get It: [Grips Athletics](#)



Source: <http://breakingmuscle.com/brazilian-jiu-jitsu/2014-bjj-lovers-holiday-shopping-guide>

Appendix 1: Top 10 BJJ Online Resources

My instructors at **Titans Fitness Academy**, Renzo Gracie black belts Kevin Taylor and Peter Martell, discovered Brazilian jiu jitsu before there was a lot of content available on the Internet. They learned technique through visits to Renzo's academy in New York, VHS tapes, and trial and error. These days, we are fortunate to have access to anything we want with the wave of a mouse.

When I look for BJJ content online, my focus is technical videos and theory, training tips, interviews, and gear reviews. Others enjoy chatting in online communities and reading about other people's experiences in the BJJ world. Here is my list (in alphabetical order) of ten online resources that offer something for everyone:

BJJ Legends

My teammate Scott Nauss was a big fan of BJJ Legends long before I discovered it. Where he has a similar build to contributor Matt Corley, he frequently reads his gear reviews and also enjoys his BJJ DVD set reviews. The site also offers reviews on related products such as supplements and electronics, reports BJJ/MMA news, provides technical videos and breakdowns, and they publish a magazine with great deals on subscriptions.

BJJ Legends

Gi Reviews

Brendan and Dan at Gi Reviews know gis and want to share their knowledge with you. They and their guest reviewers, including females, have reviewed pretty much every brand of gi out there and offer guides for purchasing your first gi and fitting unique body types. There are also how-to guides for gi shrinkage, patch removal, and many more gi-related alterations. Brandon loves gis so much he created his own brand, OK! Kimonos. Keep your eye out for our interview here on Breaking Muscle where he talks about how and why he created his own line of kimonos and what differentiates it from all the rest.

The Gracie Breakdown Channel

Have you ever watched a fight in the UFC and thought, "Wow! How did (s)he do that!?" The Gracie Brothers, Ryron and Renner, are sons of one of the founders of the Ultimate Fighting Championship, Rorion Gracie. They offer breakdowns of notable fights in the UFC and a lot of other detailed technical instruction. I love their explanations of why things work and what mistakes to avoid. I enjoy watching the actual fight as I watch the breakdown. My most recent favorite is the breakdown of Ronda Rousey and Liz Carmouche's fight.

Grapplearts

Stephan Kesting has thirty years of martial arts experience. He shares both his knowledge and the knowledge of others from the BJJ community in the form of technical videos on YouTube, articles, apps, and DVD sets. Any question I've ever had about BJJ, I've been able to find answers on Grapplearts. Kesting's affiliate site, Beginning BJJ is invaluable for people who are new to jiu jitsu. It offers a newsletter and free content to help newbies wrap their head around the fundamentals of jiu jitsu. I recommend signing up for his

newsletter and downloading his Roadmap to BJJ to all of the students in my women's BJJ class as well as those in the beginner's class at Titans Fitness Academy.

The Jiu Jitsu Lab

David, a purple belt in BJJ, is the mind behind The Jiu Jitsu Lab, a blog that offers in-depth technical analysis, competitor profiles, and overviews of their winning strategies. He explains singular techniques and positions from multiple angles and gives readers a new way of looking at game concepts and pulling everything together.

Lapel Choke

I love Lapel Choke a lot. I follow them on [Facebook](#) and they're always posting great technique videos that are relevant to my game.

Meerkatsu

Seymour Yang AKA Meerkatsu is a BJJ brown belt whose gear designs have become popular in the BJJ community. He has worked with brands like Tatami, OK! Kimonos, and 93 Brand Jiu Jitsu and has opened his own webstore for people to buy his self-designed products. Before his success in design, he was well known for his gear and gi reviews. Although I'm a female and much smaller than Seymour, I always check his site for reviews about the cut and fit of any gi I'm thinking of buying because I know I'm about three sizes smaller and so if a gi fits him in a particular way, I feel I'll get similar results if I buy a gi a few sizes down. It's a theory anyway. I also really like the quality of his photography and the attention to detail he includes in all of his reviews.

Megjitsu

Meg Smitley's blog was the first I found with reviews of women's gear when I searched about three years ago. Her reviews are thorough, with lots of photos, and her sense of humor and good nature shine through. She also covers topics such as injury recovery, competition, women's issues, open mats, and - with her recent new addition - pregnancy and jiu jitsu. Meg is a Gracie Barra purple belt under Dave Birkett and Marc Walder. She trains at Dartford BJJ in Dartford, Kent in the United Kingdom.

Sherdog Forum

I don't spend a lot of time on online communities these days but there is a lot of good content on Sherdog regarding gear for BJJ and MMA. A lot of the reviewers share links to their reviews in the Equipment and Gear Review section and there are areas for members to discuss everything BJJ and MMA related. I don't read much more than the reviews but it's a very popular online community for those in combat sports.

Valerie Worthington on Breaking Muscle

I don't read a lot of articles about BJJ unless it's "how to" or "what to buy," but I really like Valerie Worthington's insight and read all of her work as it comes out. She received a black belt from New Breed Academy in Santa Fe Springs, California, and is a co-head instructor for Women's Grappling Camp. Valerie has a bachelor's degree in English

literature from Dartmouth College and a doctorate in educational psychology from Michigan State University. Her education and experience are apparent in her writing, but what I like best is the way she rationally explains her thoughts in a way everyone can understand and respect. Not everything in BJJ is gear and technique based. Valerie helps us to decipher a lot of the mental aspects of the game and navigate the BJJ world more intelligently.

Source: <http://breakingmuscle.com/brazilian-jiu-jitsu/top-10-bjj-online-resources>

Appendix 2: Other Interesting details

MMA Events – attendance, TV, Pay per View, Sponsors

- <http://mmapayout.com/blue-book>

BJJ - Academy owners and student rates

- <http://m.mixedmartialarts.com/forum/Academy-owners--and-students-rates-2334209-1>

International Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu Federation – Calendar Of Events - 2015

- <http://ibjjf.org/championships/calendar/>

100+ Top Apps for Jiu Jitsu (iPhone/iPad)

- <http://appcrawlr.com/ios-apps/best-apps-jiu-jitsu>

Sources:

- <http://groundworkbjj.com/articles-and-books/business-in-bjj/bjj-business-fit-2-7-billion-industry/>
- <http://www.ibisworld.com/industry/martial-arts-studios.html>
- <http://bishopbjj.com/2015/07/01/jiu-jitsu-growth-flat/>
- <https://www.quora.com/How-much-money-is-the-BJJ-industry-worth>
- https://www.reddit.com/r/bjj/comments/2eqbfu/how_crazy_his_it_to_start_a_gym/
- <https://www.jiujitsutimes.com/top-5-jiu-jitsu-cities-in-the-usa/>
- <http://groundworkbjj.com/articles-and-books/business-in-bjj/6-reasons-bjj-gi-market-doesnt-play-normal-business-rules/>
- <http://www.bjjsurveys.com/>
- <http://www.gsmi-ijgb.com/Documents/JMM%20V4%20N1%20P03%20-Corey%20A.%20Nelson%20-Services%20Marketing.pdf>
- <http://blog.gameness.com/top-3-reasons-people-stop-training-bjj>
- <http://www.sherdog.com/news/articles/1/Brazilian-JiuJitsu-and-the-Middle-Ages-55361>
- <https://breakingmuscle.com/brazilian-jiu-jitsu/from-the-experts-how-to-attract-and-retain-women-in-bjj>
- <https://www.attacktheback.com/10-ways-market-bjj-academy/>
- <http://www.fightersmarket.com/Brands-s/172.htm>
- <http://meerkat69.blogspot.ba/2014/02/a-short-history-of-bjj-brands-in-uk.html>
- <http://www.valleyforgebjj.com/top-brazilian-jiu-jitsu-tournaments-in-the-world/>
- https://m.reddit.com/r/bjj/comments/jh2kx/is_there_a_comprehensive_best_places_to_buy_gear/
- <http://www.bjjsports.com/>
- <http://www.similarweb.com>
- <http://www.spyfu.com>
- <http://breakingmuscle.com/brazilian-jiu-jitsu/2014-bjj-lovers-holiday-shopping-guide>
- <http://breakingmuscle.com/brazilian-jiu-jitsu/top-10-bjj-online-resources>