

STUDY REGARDING THE ACTIVITY OF THE FITNESS CENTRES FROM THE CITY OF IASI

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Abstract: *Lately the practice of body maintenance activities designed rooms has grown due to increased demands special adult population. The study was conducted by the sociological survey technique at all gyms in Iaşi (25) and 250 practitioners. The research aimed to identify the main aspects of practitioners (motivation, satisfaction, expectations) as well as some elements of managing directors from fitness centers. After processing the data showed that most practiced requested and effective physical activities are exercises in analytic appliances muscle and cardio request (treadmills and stationary bicycles). Most people are like male practitioners (61%) and aged between 20-45 years for men and 18-35 for women. The main quality required, by both practitioners and employers, it is the level of communication.*

Key words: *fitness, practitioners, administrators, optimization.*

1. Introduction

It has been said that “sports have become much more of a game to be called business and at the same time, it is much more of a business to be regarded any longer as just a game” [3] There are indeed very few areas in which the personal benefits can be combined with the financial benefits within the legal framework of a business. Moreover, which business offers you a healthy lifestyle, involving a lot of movement and gives you the opportunity to be yourself, without norms that require you to have a rigid conduct? The answer has been given by the sports organizations that offer precisely this legal, institutionalized framework, where people that consider sports much more than a lifestyle can turn this passion into a true profession [5].

One of the ways chosen to develop a business out of the passion for sports is a

fitness complex. It remains a challenge from the management point of view because it maintains the subject matter specific to the management science. The subject matter consists of the management relationships which represent the total number of the relations between the elements involved in an organization and between these elements and the external factors [8]. Thus, the management refers both to the company and the intrinsic variables, respectively its set up and the processes performed within an organization and the conditions in which the company develops its activity, respectively the extrinsic factors, meaning the micro and macro environment elements of the company.

The functioning of a fitness complex presently involves a series of new elements related to the appearance of new demands and offers of sports services. The

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designing and the management of a fitness complex involves a wide range of different activities and interdisciplinary professional proficiencies [4].

It is known that the sports activity must be performed in a certain space that must be fully taken advantage of and used [2]. Thus, we have to take into account both the utilities and the auxiliary installations (water supply, electricity, heating, autonomous power generator, heaters, air conditioning, etc.), and a series of main or secondary facilities, such as locker rooms, showers, toilets, medical consulting room (internal medicine, physiotherapy, etc.), stockrooms or spaces intended for the storage of the sports materials. All of them must be included as part of a minimum equipping of a fitness complex so as to provide quality services. A clever designing of these auxiliary installations and the related facilities will result in an efficient use of the available space and their optimal functioning [1].

The manager (administrator) must be permanently preoccupied with the spaces, the equipment, the installations and the environmental conditions of a fitness complex due to the fact that the attaining the objectives by the beneficiaries of these services depends on their high quality and level. The improvisations to the sports equipment, the cheap and the low quality materials can make the beneficiaries of the services feel dissatisfaction, which in some cases can lead to decrease of the value perceived in relation to the offered service or even giving up these services. The spaces intended for the clients include the entry points, fully equipped locker rooms, recovery rooms provided with water tubs, toilets and showers and outside parking spaces.

The potential of offering other additional services, such as bar services, exclusively selling refreshments and energy drinks, as well as a wide range of nutritive supplements, sauna, tanning equipment, can be ways of obtaining financial resources and attracting the wide public [7].

The administrator is entirely responsible for the designing and the management of a fitness complex and depending on its capacity or size can resort to one or more employees and the manager must clearly state their responsibilities and the deadlines [6].

The manager or the administrator must be in charge and deal as efficient as possible with the “issues” that might occur at any point in the setup of the activities and the use of the space and the related installations [8].

The economic growth of the society during the last period has determined the accelerated increase of the number of practitioners of regular physical activities. Although there is a wide range of appealing regular physical activities, most of the practitioners’ resort to fitness complexes. As a result of the more and more numerous demands, the number of these complexes has increased proportionally, as well as the available types of activities. The number of these complexes has doubled in the last 10 years, respectively has tripled in the last 15 years in the city of Iasi. Therefore, the number of the specialists that provide a good performance of the activity has also increased.

2. Research Objectives

The purpose of the present study is to identify the main set up, management and optimization elements related to the activity of the fitness complexes through an opinion survey conducted on a number of 250 clients (140 men and 110 women). The research took place between May – June 2016 with the help of 56 operators, Master’s degree students at the Faculty of Physical Training and Sports from Iasi. The students had access to the fitness complexes on the basis of a collaboration agreement concluded between the centres and the faculty.

3. Study Design

The focus of the questionnaire intended for the clients is to establish the type of subscription and the type of the performed activity, the reason for choosing the centre, the expectations in relation to the specialty personnel, as well as the experience regarding other centres.

At the same time, the study is also focused on the administrators of the fitness centres regarding the following tasks:

- to establish the most required types of physical activities, the most demanded by the clients, the types of subscriptions, the busiest time of the day and of the year;
- to record the opinions of the administrators in relation to the specialty personnel (instructors, trainers).

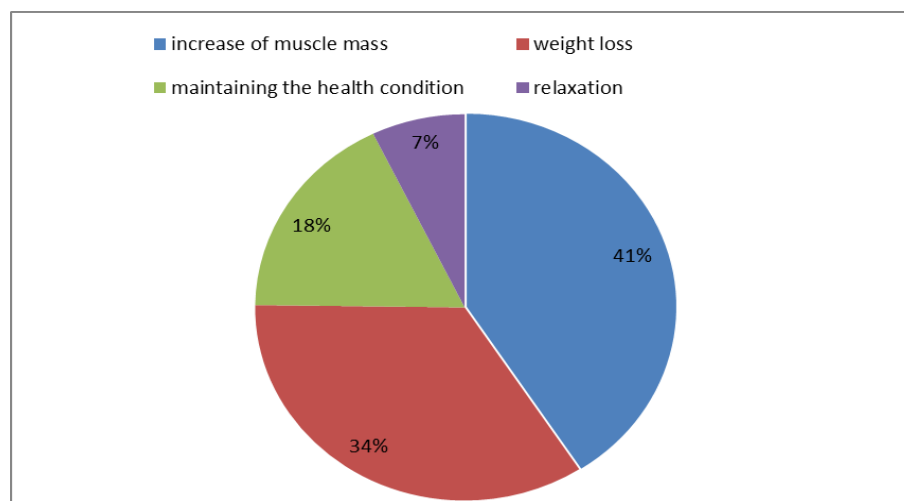
4. Results and Discussions

The favourite type of subscription (in terms of duration) preferred by the clients is 90% the monthly one, 8% the payment of each session and only 2% annual subscriptions. Therefore, we must mention

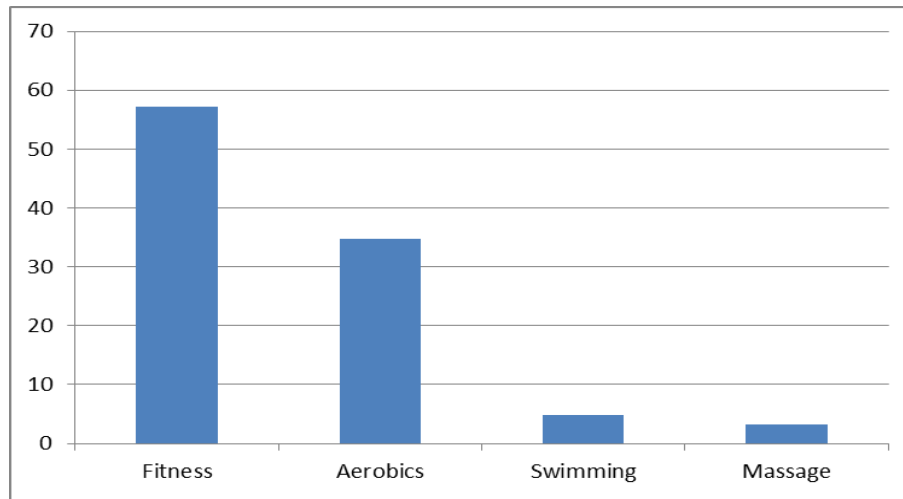
that only 12% of the total number of centers gives the possibility of purchasing annual subscriptions. Thus, we can come to the conclusion that the activity is relatively spontaneous and sporadic. The same also results from the fact that 52% of the clients that participated in the survey have been coming to the centre for 1-2 months, 24% for a year, 16% for two years and 8% for three and four years.

The main reasons why the clients that participated in the survey resort to the services offered by the fitness centers are: increase of the muscle tone, decrease of the muscle weight, maintaining the health condition, relaxation (see graphic no. 1). This classification corresponds to the type of physical activities preferred by the clients that participated in the survey.

The most demanded activity is the one performed in centres with exercise equipment (fitness in popular terms), different forms of aerobic gymnastics, swimming (only 20% of the complexes offer this type of service) and massage (graphic no.2).



Graph 1. Reason practition



Graph 2. *Preferred activities*

Working on exercise equipment is the most demanded type of physical activity because 56% of the clients included in the survey are male and they attain their goals exclusively by lifting weights and even a percentage of the women prefer this form of movement (2%). We consider this choice to be a logical option taking into account that it doesn't require the presence of an instructor, a certain time or a minimum number of clients. At the same time, working on exercise equipment can successfully lead to attaining the goals beginning with losing weight, increasing the muscle mass, body shaping and many times, medical recovery.

Another question asked to the clients is related to the reason for choosing the fitness complex where they exercise (graphic no. 3). From this diagram it results that the best place to open a fitness complex is the heavily populated neighbourhoods or at least near some stations or junctures of the means of public transportation.

Another item in our survey refers to expressing an opinion regarding the clients' expectations from the instructors. Therefore, most of them declare that they are satisfied by the quality of the professional knowledge,

but at the same time they recommend (an important percentage of 40%) a better communication.

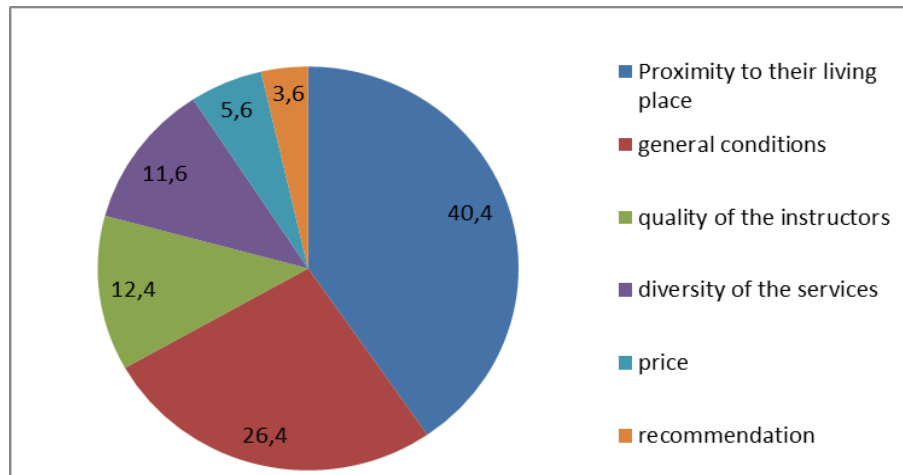
Regarding the survey intended for the administrators of the fitness centres, it emphasizes the fact that all of them have exercise equipment and different forms of aerobics, 48% offer sauna and massage services, 20% offer tanning and swimming and an insignificant percentage offers martial arts programs, salt mine and medical recovery services.

Another question asked to the administrators refers to the most demanded types of physical activities by the clients. The centralization of the data has confirmed the answers of the clients, more precisely the fact that the most demanded activity is the fitness gym, followed by different forms of aerobics, the activity from the "cardio" area (electric treadmills, stationary bikes, elliptical bikes), swimming, tanning and massage.

From the financial point of view, the most efficient services for the administrators of the centres are the fitness gym subscriptions, followed by the subscriptions on hour intervals, the mixt subscriptions (offers the possibility to perform several activities or different hour

intervals) and in the end, the aerobics subscriptions. This order is explained by the fact that a fitness gym instructor is paid less than an aerobics instructor, the

exercising is not conditioned by a certain hour and the number of simultaneous beneficiaries is higher.



Graph 3. Reasons for choosing the complex

Another question refers to the aspects that differentiate the centre from other complexes. Most of the participants have answered that the difference consists in the range of services (64%), the quality of the personnel (40%), the low prices (24%). Other answers refer to the fact that it offers a parking space, the location is in a quiet neighbourhood, the place is clean and it provides additional services for special subscriptions. From our point of view, we can classify the centres into two main differentiation categories: centres that offer fitness gyms with exercise equipment (this category also includes “cardio” equipment) and complexes that also offer SPA services. It also results that only two centres out of 25 centres are entirely addressed to women.

The busiest time of the day is 14-22 o'clock, with a peak during the hour interval 17-21. Regarding the times of the year, most of the people have said that there are two: January – May and October – December. We can notice that most of the clients come during the cold season when the possibility to practice physical activities outdoors is very limited.

Regarding the satisfaction in connection with the employed personnel, the participants in the survey have declared that they are satisfied and they expect from them nutrition, anatomy, first aid knowledge and communication skills.

For the administrators, the ideal employee must be first of all communicative (56%), to have professional experience (24%), to be ambitious and persevering (20%), athletic and devoted (12%). We also notice here a correspondence between the expectations of the clients and the employers from the specialty instructors, more precisely, communication.

In order to help the instructors' improve their professional knowledge, most of the employers say that they support them financially by paying the fees for some further professional development training courses (52%), 12% do not care about it and an insignificant percentage say that they give them financial bonuses or agree that they also worked in other centres.

From the statistical calculus, it results that there are 122 instructors employed in the 25 fitness centres and 19 more

employees are necessary. Nevertheless, only 44% say that they are interested in working with volunteers. Our idea is to bring forth the possibility that the students from the Master's degree program "Fitness and body aesthetics!" performed traineeships.

Regarding the gender ratio among the clients, many of them consider that most of the clients are male, age between 21-40 years old and in the case of the female clients, the age range is between 18-35 years old.

5. Conclusions

The research emphasizes the increasing demand of the population for regular physical activities, as well as the evolution of the number of locations and equipment. The following aspects have resulted from the perspectives of the beneficiaries of the fitness centres: most of the purchased subscriptions are the monthly ones, for exercising on fitness equipment; they prefer nearby complexes; they are satisfied with the performance of the instructors; they expect a better communication with the instructors.

From the analysis of the answers given by the administrators, we can say that the most demanded activity, as well as the most financially efficient activity is working on fitness equipment; they intend to diversify the range of offered services; they prefer communicative employees; they are satisfied with their employees' professional performance; they are interested in the professional training of the employees.

Overall, we can say that most of the clients are male, age between 21-40 years old and the age range of most of the women that exercise is between 18-35 years old. The busiest time of the year is the winter season and the busiest time of the day is 17-21.

6. Recommendations

There are some recommendations that

result from the study, such as: the opening of a fitness complex should depend on a space with modern exercise equipment, in intensely populated urban areas or close to the stations of the means of transportation and the permanent diversification of the offered activities.

We also recommend to the institutions that organize training and professional development courses for sports instructors to initiate and to teach communication and relating courses.

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